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1 The photocatalytic decomposition of microcystin-LR

² using selected titanium dioxide materials.

- 3
- ⁴ Iain Liu^a, Linda A. Lawton^b, Detlef. W. Bahnemann^c, Lei Liu^c, Bernd
- 5 Proft^d and Peter K.J. Robertson^{a*}
- ⁶ ^a Centre for Research in Energy and the Environment, The Robert
- 7 Gordon University, Schoolhill, Aberdeen, AB10 1FR.
- ⁸ ^b School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences, The Robert Gordon
- 9 University, St Andrew Street, Aberdeen, AB25 1HG.
- ¹⁰ ^c Institut fuer Technische Chemie, Universitaet Hannover,
- 11 Callinstrasse 3, D-30167 Hannover, Germany,
- ^d Sachtleben Chemie GmbH, SE-Kat, Dr.-Rudolf-Sachtleben-Str. 4,
- 13 D-47198 Duisburg/Germany
- 14
- ^{*} Corresponding Author: Tel: +44-1224-263750; Fax: +44-1224-
- 16 **262759.**
- 17 E-mail address: peter.robertson@rgu.ac.uk
- 18
- 19 **Keywords:** TiO₂, photocatalyst, cyanotoxin, microcystin-LR.

20 Abstract

Microcystins (cyclic heptapeptides) produced by a number of 21 freshwater cyanobacteria are a potential cause for concern in 22 potable water supplies due to their acute and chronic toxicity. 23 TiO₂ photocatalysis is a promising technology for removal of 24 these toxins from drinking water. It is, however, necessary to 25 have a sufficient knowledge of how the catalyst materials cause the 26 27 degradation of the toxins through the photocatalytic process. The present study reports microcystin degradation products of the 28 photocatalytic oxidation by using a number of commercial TiO₂ 29 powder (P25, PC50, PC500 and UV100) and granular (KO1, KO3, 30 TiCat-C, TiCat-S) materials, SO aiding the mechanistic 31 understanding of this process. Liquid chromatography-mass 32 spectrometry analysis demonstrated that the major destruction 33 pathway of microcystin for all the catalysts tested followed almost 34 the same pathway for each of the materials, indicating the physical 35 properties of the catalysts had little effects on the degradation 36 pathway of microcystin-LR. 37

38

39

40 **1. Introduction**

Cyanotoxins are a group of naturally produced biomolecules from 41 several genera of cyanobacteria that occur in freshwaters around 42 the world and have been well documented as a potential hazard to 43 human health (Carmichael, 1995; Sivonen, 1996). Microcystins are 44 reported to be the most commonly occurring cyanotoxins found in 45 water, and have been linked with poisonings of animals and humans 46 exposed to contaminated water (Codd et al., 1989). The most 47 commonly detected microcystin is microcystin-LR. Acute exposure 48 can results in hepatic injury and in extreme cases this can prove 49 fatal (Dunn, 1996). One such incident reported from South America 50 resulted in the death of over 50 dialysis patients due to the use of 51 microcystin-contaminated water in their treatment (Dunn, 1996). 52 Exposure to low levels of microcystin in drinking water over a 53 prolonged period may contribute to life threatening illnesses such as 54 primary liver cancer (PLC) through the known tumour-promoting 55 activities of these compounds (Yu, 1994). 56

57

58 Cyanotoxins present in drinking water sources are a serious concern 59 world-wide and may pose a considerable threat to human health, 60 therefore various treatments have been evaluated for their removal 61 (Lawton et al., 1999). Most conventional water treatment systems, 62 however, are not reliable for the elimination of these toxins from 63 potable water (Lawton et al., 1999, Keijola et al., 1988, Lahtik et

al., 1989). One particular challenge with chlorination is the 64 formation of chlorinated by products of microcyctins. This was 65 reported by Merel et al. in their study of the byproducts generated 66 when chorination was used as a treatment process for the removal 67 of microcystin-LR (Merel et al., 2009). The biodegradation of 68 cyanotoxins have also been previously reported (Edwards et al., 69 2003; Torunska et al., 2008). Edwards et al. reported the half life 70 for the biodegradation of microcystin-LR, -LF and nodularin in water 71 of between 4 and 18 days (Edwards et al., 2003). 72

73

TiO₂ photocatalysis has previously been shown to effectively destroy 74 microcystin-LR and related toxins in aqueous solutions even at 75 extremely high concentrations (Robertson et al., 1997, Lawton et 76 al., 1999, Liu et al., 2002). A number of by-products were 77 generated by the photocatalytic oxidation of microcystin-LR and this 78 has enabled the elucidation of some of the possible degradation 79 pathways (Lawton et al., 1999, Liu et al., 2003). Another study has 80 also evaluated the potential toxicity of degradation products using 81 protein phosphatase inhibition assay and brine shrimp bioassay (Liu 82 et al., 2002). 83

84

To date, most work performed on the photocatalytic destruction of microcystins has been performed using Degussa P25. In addition to P25, there are a number of commercially available TiO₂ catalyst

materials that could be used for microcystin destruction. This paper
reports a study of the destruction of microcystin using a range of
commercially TiO₂ photocatalyst powder materials, including
Degussa P25. In addition a number of novel granular TiO₂
photocatalysts have also been examined.

95 **2. Materials and Methods.**

96 2.1. Materials

Microcystin-LR was purified from a laboratory culture of *Microcystis* 97 aeruginosa PCC7820 using the procedure previously detailed 98 (Edwards et al., 1996). Titanium dioxide P25 (Degussa), PC50 99 (Millennium Chemicals), PC-500 (Millennium Chemicals) and UV-100 100 (Hombikat) were used as received. TiO₂ catalysts KO1, KO3, TiCat-101 S and TiCat-C are synthesized granular materials supplied by 102 Sachtleben Chemie GmbH and were also used as received. The 103 properties of these catalysts are summarized in Table 1. All 104 solutions were prepared in Milli-Q water and all other reagents and 105 solvents used were of analytical or HPLC grade. 106

107

108 2.2. Photocatalysis

Aqueous solutions of microcystin-LR containing 0.1% (w/v) TiO₂ 109 were illuminated in the presence of air with a 480 W xenon lamp 110 (Uvalight Technology Ltd.; spectral output 330-450 nm). The 111 reactions were carried out in glass bottles with constant stirring. 112 The distance from the UV lamp to the surface of the test solution 113 was 30 cm, with an intensity of 11.0 mW cm⁻² measured using a UV 114 meter (Dr. Honle GmbH, Martinsried, Germany). At timed intervals, 115 samples were taken and centrifuged to remove TiO₂ prior to 116 analysis by LC-MS. The initial concentration of microcystin-LR was 117 10 μ g mL⁻¹. 118

The reactor experiments were performed in a simple packed bed 119 flow reactor (figure 1). The microcystin solutions (350 ng mL⁻¹) was 120 pumped from a reservoir through a series of five glass columns 121 packed with TiO₂ pellets (TiCat-C), weight 1.80 g per column with a 122 total catalyst surface area exposed to UV light of 6.6 cm². The mass 123 of catalyst in the five columns totalled 9.0 g of TiO_2 in weight, 33 124 cm² in surface area exposed to UV light and passing flow length 35 125 cm. The unit was irradiated with a 480 W xenon lamp, 30 cm 126 distance to glass column of TiO₂. In addition a mirror was positioned 127 4 cm from the back of the reactor unit to facilitate irradiation of the 128 reverse side of the packed columns. At specific time intervals, the 129 treated solution was collected and analysed using LC-MS as detailed 130 in section 2.3. 131

132

133 2.3. Analysis

The LC-MS system used in the study consisted of Waters Alliance 134 2690 HPLC Pump connected with Waters 996 PDA and Micromass 135 ZQ Mass spectrometer with electrospray ionisation source. HPLC 136 column was Waters Symmetry 300TM C18 column (5 μ m, 2.1 × 150 137 mm, Waters, USA). The injection volume was between 10-50 μ L and 138 the Mobile phase was a gradient elution of water and acetonitrile, 139 both containing 0.05% trifluoroacetic acids (TFA). The gradient 140 elution was programmed as 5-20% of acetonitrile in 10 minute 141 followed by an increase to 80% by 35 minutes. The mass data was 142

obtained in the positive ion mode by full scanning from m/z 1001100 with a dwell time of 2 seconds and Select Ion Recording (SIR)
acquisition with a dwell time 0.75 seconds. Masslynx software
workstation was used for the LC-MS instrument control, data
acquisition and data processing.

149 **3. Results and discussion**

Previously we reported the destruction of microcystin-LR using 150 Degussa P25 TiO₂ powders (Robertson et al., 1997; Lawton et al., 151 1999; Cornish et al., 2000; Liu et al., 2002, 2003]. One of the 152 objectives of this study was to evaluate the photocatalytic efficiency 153 of a range of different powder catalysts compared with P25. The 154 photocatalytic degradation of microcystin-LR on the different TiO₂ 155 powders (P25, PC50, PC100, PC500 and UV100) as a function of 156 irradiation times are shown in figure 2. It can be seen that the 157 photocatalytic degradation of microcystin-LR on the five TiO₂ 158 powders was rapid and complete after 100 min irradiation. From the 159 results it is clear that P25 appeared to be the most effective catalyst 160 with greater than 90% of the toxin destroyed within 20 minutes 161 irradiation (835 ng mL⁻¹ remained). Within this irradiation period the 162 other catalysts only achieved between 25% to 60% microcystin 163 destruction, with 3961, 4876, 3886 and 7633 ng mL⁻¹ of the toxin 164 remaining for PC50, PC100, PC500 and UV100 respectively. 165 Therefore, the effectiveness of the photocatalysts for destruction of 166 microcystin-LR within a 20 minute irradiation, was in the order of 167 P25>PC500>PC50>PC100>UV100. After 100 minutes 168 photocatalysis, however, the order of efficiency changed to 169 PC25>UV100> PC100>PC500> and PC50 due to increased 170 destruction rate of UV 100 and PC 100 over PC 500 and PC 50 171 (Figure 2.) This observation indicated that the reaction rate during 172

different phases of photocatalysis was not consistent, but variable. It is interesting to note that the photocatalytic activity of TiO₂ in the degradation of microcystin-LR does not appear to depend on surface area. PC500 and UV100 have significant larger surface area compared to both P25 and PC50 (Table 1), respectively. The photocatalytic activities of PC500 and UV100, however, were similar PC50 and poorer than P25.

180

Previously we proposed the mechanism of the photocatalytic 181 destruction of microcystin-LR using а Degussa P25 TiO₂ 182 photocatalyst through analysis of the by-products using LCMS 183 (Lawton et al., 1999; Liu et al., 2002, 2003). The degradation 184 products with the various powder photocatalysts examined in this 185 study were explored to determine if there were any differences in 186 the mechanism. Ion extraction techniques were used to establish 187 extracted-ion chromatogram for further characterisation of the 188 byproducts peaks and calculation of peak area. Table 2 shows the 189 peak areas of breakdown products together with their protonated 190 retention times at various time periods of the ions and 191 photocatalytic process. A total of 14 degradation products were 192 detected by LC-MS analysis. The structural assignment of the 193 products photocatalytic breakdown of the destruction of 194 microcystin-LR was based on the analysis of the LC-Mass 195

chromatogram and correspondent mass spectrum of by-products
(peaks 1-14) (Liu et al., 2003).

198

Based on the LCMS data it was found that for each of the catalysts 199 the breakdown mechanism was similar to that previously reported 200 by us (Liu et al., 2003) for Degussa P25. This involved an initial 201 photoisomerisation of the microcystin, followed by hydroxyl radical 202 attack and subsequent cleavage of the Adda conjugated diene 203 structure. This is then followed by cleavage of the Mdha double 204 bond with subsequent residue oxidation and peptide bond 205 hydrolysis. The LCMS data also suggested that the photocatalytic 206 degradation of microcystin-LR followed the same pathway on all 207 four of the powder catalysts. Figure 3 presents the relative ratios of 208 each of the degradation products generated and from this it is clear 209 that the same breakdown products were generated in similar ratios 210 for each of the powder catalysts examined. In this figure the peak 211 areas correspond to the sum of the each of the 14 products over the 212 100 min from table 2 and not at an individual time. 213

214

When compared to the powder TiO₂ samples discussed above, the granular catalysts (figure 4) displayed much lower photocatalytic destruction efficiencies for microcystin-LR. After 100 minutes photocatalysis, the percentage destruction of microcystin-LR was 79%, 75%, 63% and 4% for KO1, KO3, TiCat-C, and TiCat-S

respectively. Studies on physical and chemical characterisations of 220 the catalysts revealed that the granular catalysts showed similar 221 spectroscopic properties with each other (Wood, 2009). The 222 adsorption surface area was similar too for KO3 (41.7 m²g⁻¹), TiCat-223 C (40.8 m^2q^{-1}) and KO1 (48.6 m^2q^{-1}), but was substantially higher 224 for TiCat-S (199.6 m²g⁻¹) (Wood, 2009). It has previously been 225 suggested that adsorption surface area of catalyst might play an 226 important role in photocatalysis efficiency (Hoffman et. al., 1995). 227 Interestingly, the TiCat-S material which had the largest adsorption 228 area displayed the lowest photocatalytic activity for microcystin 229 destruction (figure 4). This observation indicated that photocatalytic 230 efficiency of the granules appeared to be related to not only to their 231 adsorption surface area but also exposure area to UV light. In the 232 reactor filled with granules, the adsorption surface area of catalysts 233 is not equal to its surface area exposed to UV light because the 234 inner matrix of the particle while contributing to surface area and 235 potentially adsorption may be shielded from UV light and hence not 236 activated. Consequently the area exposed to light should be 237 considered together with adsorption area in the case of photoactive 238 granule catalysts. This hypothesis could explain why granules had a 239 lower efficiency than powders in the photocatalytic destruction of 240 the toxin. 241

242

While both KO1 and KO3 appeared to be more effective 243 photocatalysts than TiCat-C, it was noted that TiCat-C was a more 244 robust material. While the TiCat-C material remained intact, the 245 KO1 and KO3 materials physically decomposed to powders during 246 the course of the experiments. The utilisation of the TiCat-C catalyst 247 in a basic packed bed flow reactors was investigated as a potential 248 device for larger scale assessment of toxin destruction (figure 1). 249 On photocatalysis in the back bed flow reactor the concentration of 250 microcystin was reduced from an initial concentration of 333 ng mL⁻ 251 ¹ to 23 ng mL⁻¹ (Figure 5), which corresponded to greater than 90% 252 toxin destruction. Since the concentration limit of microcystin in 253 drinking water recommended by WHO is 1.0 μ g L⁻¹ (1 ng mL⁻¹), the 254 microcystin-containing water used in this study was more than 300 255 fold higher than the limit concentration. It was observed that the 256 slower the flow rates the greater the destruction of microcystin 257 (Figure 5). This is not surprising since at slower flow rates the 258 microcystin solution will be in contact with the photocatalyst longer 259 hence allowing more destruction. From the above observation, it is 260 proposed that in a device to remove microcystin in passing flow, 261 catalyst surface area exposed to UV irradiation and flow duration 262 exposed to photocatalysis appeared to be the most important 263 factors related to efficacy as previously suggested. For this design 264 of reactor air bubbles in the system are not considered to pose a 265 significant problem with the efficiency of the unit. These crucial 266

factors should be to considered in future reactor development. It is 267 important to note that this particular reactor design would not be 268 the optimum configuration and in the up-scaled process. In 269 particular it will be critical to ensure the minimisation of photonic 270 loss due to reflections in practical process. any 271

4. Conclusions

Each of the photocatalyst materials examined in this study 273 successfully degraded microcystin-LR. In comparing to the four 274 commercial TiO₂ powders the effectiveness for toxin destruction was 275 found to be in the order of P25>PC500>PC50>PC100>UV100. 276 Degussa P25 appeared to be the most effective catalyst with more 277 than 90% microcystin destruction achieved within 20 minutes while 278 each of the other catalysts only destroyed around 25% to 60% of 279 microcystin over the same time frame. It would appear that surface 280 area of the photocatalysts did not influence the photocatalytic 281 degradation of microcystin-LR. The major photocatalytic 282 degradation mechanism for each of the powder catalysts examined 283 appears to follow the same pathway, with isomerisation, hydroxyl 284 radical attack and cleavage of the Adda conjugated diene structure, 285 Mdha double bond cleavage followed by residue oxidation and 286 peptide bone hydrolysis. The physical properties of the selected 287 commercial catalysts had little effects on the degradation pathway 288 of microcystin-LR. 289

290

Although the photocatalytic efficiencies of the granular TiO₂ samples appeared to be lower than those of powder catalysts, the great advantage of the granular materials over their powder counterparts would be their applicability in practical water treatment systems. With these materials separation of the catalysts from the treated

water would be much simpler than is the case with powder samples. Furthermore, the lower efficiency of granular materials could be compensated by increasing the quantity of catalyst in the reactor since large quantity of granular materials would be acceptable if isolation is unnecessary.

301

The simple flow reactor system proved to be an effective test bed 302 unit for the assessment of the granular and powder photocatalysts 303 which will be utilised in the larger scale reactors. In addition it has 304 provided useful detail on the effects of flow rate, contact time and 305 light distribution on the efficiency of the photocatalytic destruction 306 of the microcystins. It is important to emphasize that the results 307 obtained in the simple reactor study are only semi quantitative. 308 Consequently these are initial exploratory observations and further 309 work will be necessary to further elucidate the important 310 parameters that need to be considered in large scale water 311 treatment systems. 312

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- 315

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393 Legends for Figures and Tables.

Figure 1. Packed Bed Flow Photocatalytic Reactor. 1-Reservoir of water containing microcystins, 2-Pump controlling flow rate. 3-Tubing, 4-Glass column packed with TiO₂ pellets 5-Sample collection point, 6-UV lamp, 480 W xenon lamp (Uvalight Technology Ltd.; spectral output 330-450 nm), 30 cm distance to glass column of TiO_{2.}, 7- Mirror.

- 400 **Figure 2**. The photocatalytic degradation of Microcystin-LR on TiO₂
- 401 (P25, PC50, PC500 and UV100) over 100 min irradiation times.
- 402 Figure 3. Total peak area of breakdown products of microcystin-LR
- 403 during photocatalysis (0-100 min)
- 404 **Figure 4**. Decomposition of microcystin-LR with granular TiO_2

405 catalysts

- ⁴⁰⁶ **Figure 5**. Concentration variation of microcystin-LR (ng mL⁻¹)
- during photocatalysis with flow reactor at flow rates of 5 and 1 mL \min^{-1} .
- 409 **Table 1**. The properties of TiO₂ catalysts.
- 410 **Table 2.** Peak area (count \times 10⁶) of by-products of microcystin-LR
- 411 with photocatalysis with selected TiO₂ catalysts
- 412
- 413
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- 416
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 418
 419
 Figure 1.



430
431 Figure 3.
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433









Catalyst TiO ₂	Anatase	Rutile	BET Surface
			Area/ m ² g ⁻¹
Degussa P25	75%	25%	50
Millennium PC50	99%	1%	44
Millennium	100%	0%	284
PC500			
Hombikat UV100	100%	0%	280
K01	100%	0%	42
КО3	100%	0%	49
TiCat-C	100%	0%	41
TiCat-S	100%	0%	200

Table 1.

Table 2.

	Product name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	MCLR
	[M+H] ⁺	272	323 *	495	853	795	783	835	907	175	102 9	759	787	965 *	162	996
	Retention time	2.1-	6.7-	8.9-	10.	10.	10.	12.	15.	16.	17.	2.3-	20.	23.	26.	21.4-
	(min)	2.3	7.0	9.1	5-	5-	5-	9-	5- 15	3- 16	8- 20	20. 5	8- 21	8-	5-	21.8
					7	8	8	1	7	4	20.	5	0	24. 1	20. 6	
TiO ₂	Photocatalysis				-		U		-		U		Ū		U	I
	time															
	(min)			1	1	1		1	1	1				1		
	Original	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Degussa							1				1		1		1	
	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	391. 5
	2	-	-	-	-	0.4	0.5	4.6	0.5	-	0.5	-	-	-	-	279. 0
	5	-	-	-	-	0.4	0.7	7.3	1.8	0.7	1.1	0.3	0.8	-	-	176. 5
	10	0.2	0.2	0.2	-	0.4	0.7	6.2	2.0	1.1	24. 0	0.4	1.4	-	0.9	92.5
	20	0.4	0.3	0.2	-	0.3	0.5	4.6	1.2	2.1	12. 9	0.6	1.2	-	1.0	22.1
	30	1.1	0.3	1.0	-	0.2	0.6	3.9	0.8	2.2	0.5	0.3	0.9	-	1.1	2.7
	45	1.0	0.2	0.3	-	0.1	0.2	1.7	0.2	1.1	0.6	0.1	0.2	-	0.9	-
	60	0.3	0.2	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PC50		T	1	T	T	T	1	T		T	1	1	1	T	1	
	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	540.

																2	
	2	-	-	-	-	0.4	0.5	4.5	1.5	-	4.2	-	0.3	0.1	-	420	•
	5	0.4	-	-	-	0.3	0.7	6.3	1.6	0.6	16.	-	0.7	0.1	-	285	
											3					4	
	10	1.4	0.1	-	-	0.3	0.7	5.5	1.6	1.1	20. 6	0.5	1.7	0.2	0.9	109 0	•
	20	1.9	0.3	0.2	0.2	-	0.4	3.2	1.9	1.5	2.7	0.4	1.5	0.6	2.5	4.4	
	30	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.1	-	0.3	2.4	1.7	1.7	2.4	0.2	1.1	-	2.9	0.3	
	45	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.1	-	0.1	0.9	0.3	0.5	1.5	-	0.1	-	3.7	0.1	
	60	0.2	0.3	-	-	-	-	0.1	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	1.3	-	
	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
PC500			1														
	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.9	-	-		-	-	-	-	1263 .4
	2	-	-	-	-	-	0.3	7.1	2.3	-	2.6		0.2	0.3	0.7	-	874. 2
	5	-	0.1	-	-	-	0.3	8.3	1.4	-	4.4		1.3	0.7	0.2	-	612. 7
	10	-	0.3	-	0.2	-	0.3	8.8	0.6	0.7	14.5		3.2	1.6	0.4	1.0	223. 0
	20	-	0.4	-	0.2	-	0.2	6.1	1.0	1.0	3.4		3.3	1.1	0.1	2.6	68.0
	30	-	0.5	-	0.3	-	0.2	3.4	0.8	1.1	3.7		2.6	0.5	0.1	3.1	9.1
	45	-	0.4	-	0.2	-	-	1.6	0.5	0.8	1.0		0.9	-	-	3.2	0.5
	60	-	0.5	-	0.1	-	-	0.4	-	-	0.4		0.1	-	-	1.6	0.1
	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-
UV100			·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·						•
	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	-		-	-	-	-	961. 9

2	-	0.1	-	0.1	-	0.2	4.7	0.9	-	18.4	0.2	0.3	0.4	-	505. 5
5	-	0.2	-	0.2	-	0.2	6.9	1.4	-	2.4	0.7	0.4	0.6	0.3	401. 9
10	-	0.4	-	0.2	-	0.1	4.4	1.2	-	5.3	0.9	0.7	0.1	1.1	83.3
20	-	0.6	-	0.2	-	-	1.4	1.1	0.5	1.6	1.2	0.3	0.1	2.5	2.3
30	-	0.6	-	0.1	-	-	0.9	1.2	0.4	1.1	1.1	0.1	-	2.9	-
45	-	0.6	-	0.1	-	-	0.3	0.8	-	0.5	0.4	-	-	2.8	-
60	-	0.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.3	-
100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* [M+Na]⁺