World Journal of Pharmaceutical and Life Sciences

www.wjpls.org

Impact Factor: 7.409 Coden USA: WJPLA7

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON METHOD DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF ANTI-DIABETIC DRUGS BY HPLC

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How to cite this Article: K. Pravalika[1]*, M. Srikanth Reddy[1], B. Gayatri[1], Arunabha Mallik[2]. (2026) A Comprehensive Review On Method Development and Validation Of Anti-Diabetic Drugs By Hplc. World Journal of Pharmaceutical and Life Science, 12(2), 35–39.

Article Received on 05/01/2026 **Article Revised on 25/01/2026** **Article Published on 01/02/2026**

ABSTRACT

High-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) remains the cornerstone analytical technique for the assay, impurity profiling, stability testing and bioanalysis of anti-diabetic drugs. The expanding therapeutic classes biguanides, sulfonylureas, meglitinides, thiazolidinediones, DPP-4 inhibitors, SGLT2 inhibitors and GLP-1 analogues bring diverse chemical properties that challenge chromatographic separation and detection. This review summarizes method-development strategies and validation requirements for anti-diabetic pharmaceuticals using HPLC. Key topics include analyte physicochemistry and its implications for mobile phase and column selection, sample preparation approaches (including extraction and derivatization), choice of detection (UV, PDA, fluorescence, MS), gradient vs. isocratic strategies, forced-degradation/stability-indicating method development, and implementation of Analytical Quality by Design (AQbD) and green analytical principles. We discuss method validation according to regulatory guidelines (specificity, linearity, accuracy, precision, LOD/LOQ, robustness, system suitability and stability) and practical troubleshooting tips. Representative chromatographic conditions for common anti-diabetic drugs are summarized to aid rapid method transfer. Finally, we identify gaps particularly for new SGLT2 and GLP-1 analogues where more stability-indicating and LC-MS/MS methods are needed and propose future directions such as increased use of UHPLC, hyphenated MS detection for specificity, and adoption of AQbD for robust, scalable methods.

KEYWORDS: HPLC; Anti-Diabetic Drugs; Method Development; Validation; Stability-Indicating; AQbD; Green

1. INTRODUCTION

Diabetes mellitus is a chronic metabolic disorder requiring lifelong pharmacotherapy. Analytical methods for quality control, stability, dissolution and bioanalysis are essential to ensure efficacy and safety of antidiabetic medicines. HPLC is widely used due to its versatility, reproducibility and wide applicability across drug classes. Method development and validation of HPLC assays are regulated by Pharmacopeial and ICH guidance documents and should produce accurate, precise and robust results suitable for the intended purpose (release testing, stability, or bioanalysis).[1]

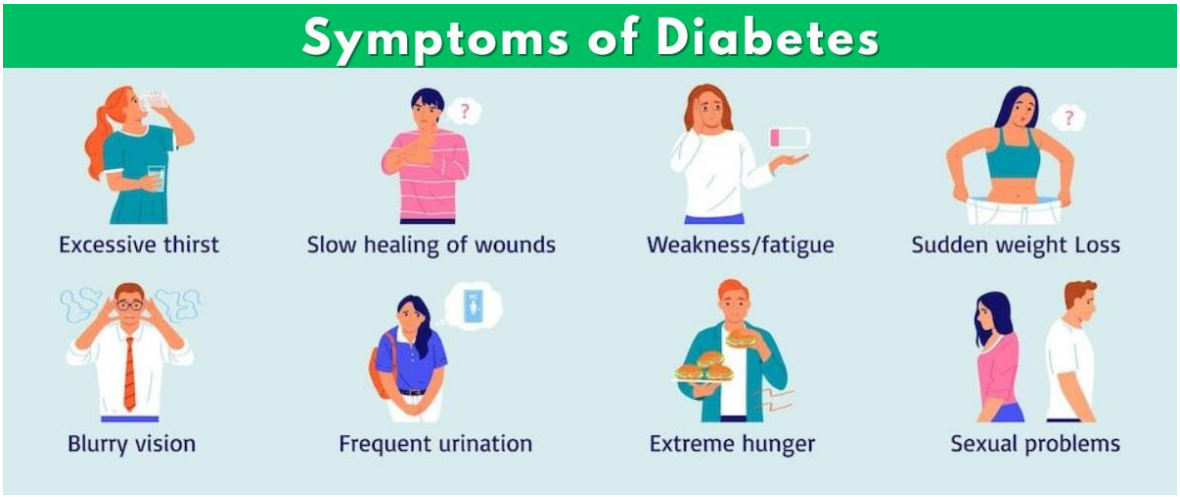

Fig. : Symptoms of Diabetes.

This review focuses on practical and regulatory aspects of HPLC method development and validation for anti-diabetic drugs, providing both conceptual guidance and practical examples to support analysts in pharmaceutical labs.

2. Classification of Anti-Diabetic Drugs and Analytical Challenges

Anti-diabetic drugs vary in polarity, ionizability, and molecular weight factors that determine chromatographic behavior.

Biguanides (e.g., Metformin): Highly polar, basic, often require ion-pairing or HILIC/aqueous-compatible columns for retention.

Sulfonylureas (e.g., Glibenclamide, Glipizide): Moderately lipophilic; retained on reversed-phase columns; UV-active.

Meglitinides (e.g., Repaglinide): Lipophilic, need organic-rich mobile phases.

Thiazolidinediones (e.g., Pioglitazone): Moderate lipophilicity; stability issues (photo degradation) may exist.

DPP-4 inhibitors (e.g., Sitagliptin, Vildagliptin): Often polar to moderately polar; Sitagliptin is UV active but some require MS for low-level impurity detection.

SGLT2 inhibitors (e.g., Canagliflozin, Dapagliflozin): Relatively lipophilic glycosides—good reversed-phase retention but may form degradation products upon hydrolysis.

GLP-1 Analogues (Peptides): High molecular weight, require LC-MS or LC-MS/MS with specialized sample prep and reversed-phase or HILIC; often not amenable to conventional small-molecule HPLC.[2]

Analytical development must account for solubility, pKa, chromophores, and potential degradation pathways (hydrolysis, oxidation, and photolysis).

3. Strategy for HPLC Method Development

A systematic approach increases efficiency and robustness. The major steps:

3.1 Define the Purpose and Requirements

Purpose: assay for release, impurity profiling, dissolution, stability-indicating or bioanalysis.

Sensitivity needs: expected concentration ranges, required LOQ/LOD.

Selectivity needs: ability to separate drug from impurities, excipients, degradation products.
Throughput constraints: number of samples and run time.[3]

3.2 Gather Physicochemical Data

pKa, logP, UV spectra, solubility, stability profile. Use these to guide pH, organic modifier and column selection.

3.3 Column Selection

Reversed-phase C18 (fully/embedded) is the first choice for many anti-diabetics.
Polar end-capped columns, phenyl, C8 for selectivity changes.
HILIC or ion-pair reversed phase for highly polar drugs (e.g., metformin).

Column dimensions: UHPLC (sub-2 µm, short columns) for high throughput; conventional 4.6 × 150 mm, 5 µm for routine QC.[4]

3.4 Mobile Phase Selection

pH control is critical: maintain analyte in a defined ionization state to control retention. Use buffers compatible with detection (e.g., ammonium acetate/formate for MS, phosphate for UV).

Organic modifier: acetonitrile (higher elution strength, lower viscosity) or methanol (different selectivity).

Additives: ion-pairing agents (e.g., heptane sulfonate) for very polar analytes; however, avoid when MS detection or column longevity is a concern.[5]

3.5 Detection

UV/PDA: routine, inexpensive; requires analyte chromophore. PDA allows peak purity assessment.
Fluorescence: higher sensitivity for fluorescent drugs or after derivatization.
Mass spectrometry (LC-MS (/MS)): superior selectivity and sensitivity, essential for impurity identification and bioanalysis.

3.6 Sample Preparation

Simple Solutions for assay by dissolving in suitable solvent.[6]
Protein precipitation, liquid–liquid extraction (LLE), solid-phase extraction (SPE) for biological matrices.
Derivatization for drugs lacking chromophores or to improve detectability (e.g., fluorescent tagging).

3.7 Gradient vs Isocratic

Isocratic for simple matrices and single analyte; easier to transfer.
Gradient for complex matrices or multiple analytes with diverse retention.

3.8 System Suitability

Define parameters: theoretical plates (N), tailing factor (T), resolution (Rs), %RSD of peak area for replicate injections, retention time repeatability.[7,8]

4. Development of Stability-Indicating Methods

Stability testing requires demonstrating the method separates drug from degradation products. Steps:
1. Forced Degradation Studies: Subject API/formulation to acid/base hydrolysis, oxidation, thermal and photolytic stress per ICH Q1A (R2).
2. Assess peak purity (PDA) and ensure baseline separation of degradation products.
3. Optimize conditions (pH, organic %, column chemistry) to resolve closely eluting degradants.[9]
4. Confirm Mass Balance where possible (use LC-MS to identify degradants).

5. Analytical Quality by Design (AQbD) in HPLC

AQbD applies quality risk management and design-of-experiments (DoE) to method development.

Key Elements

Analytical Target Profile (ATP): define performance requirements (e.g., resolution >1.5, LOQ).
Critical Method Attributes (CMAs): e.g., tailing factor, resolution, retention time.[10]
Critical Method Parameters (CMPs): buffer pH, organic %, column temperature, flow rate.
Design Space: multi-factor experiments to map CMPs to CMAs and define robust operating ranges.
Control Strategy: system suitability and monitoring to ensure method stays within design space.

AQbD improves robustness and eases regulatory lifecycle management.

6. Green Analytical Chemistry Considerations

Reduce solvent consumption and use less hazardous reagents:

- Use UHPLC for shorter run times and less solvent.
- Replace acetonitrile with ethanol or methanol where feasible.
- Miniaturize methods (microflow).
- Implement sample-efficient prep (dilute-and-shoot vs extensive extraction when justified).
- Green metrics (e.g., Analytical Eco-Scale, GAPI) can quantify improvements.[11]

7. Validation of HPLC Methods-Parameters and Practical Notes

Validation should follow ICH Q2(R1) and Pharmacopeial requirements.[12] Key parameters:

7.1 Specificity/Selectivity

Demonstrate separation from excipients and degradation products; use forced-degradation and spiked impurity samples. Peak purity (PDA) and MS confirmation enhance confidence.

7.2 Linearity and Range

Typically 5–7 concentration levels across expected range (e.g., 80–120% for assay; wider for impurity methods). Report slope, intercept, correlation coefficient (r) and residuals.

7.3 Accuracy (Recovery)

Spike known amounts into placebo or matrix at multiple levels (e.g., 50%, 100%, and 150%); report percent recovery and bias.[13]

7.4 Precision

Repeatability (intra-day): multiple replicate injections of same sample.
Intermediate precision (inter-day, different analysts/instruments): assess reproducibility. Report %RSD.

7.5 Limit of Detection (LOD) and Limit of Quantitation (LOQ)

Based on signal-to-noise (3:1 for LOD, 10:1 for LOQ) or from standard deviation of response and slope (σ/s).

7.6 Robustness

Small deliberate variations (pH ±0.1, flow ±0.1 mL/min, temperature ±5 °C) to assess effect on CMAs. AQbD can formalize this.[14]

7.7 System Suitability

Before runs: test for plate count, tailing, resolution and %RSD for replicate injections.

7.8 Solution and Mobile Phase Stability

Evaluate standard/sample solution stability (bench, refrigerated) and mobile phase stability over expected run time.

7.9 Ruggedness / Method Transfer

Transfer to another lab or instrument and demonstrate comparable performance.

8. Representative HPLC Conditions for Common Anti-Diabetic Drugs

(The following are generalized, commonly used conditions to guide method setup.[15] Always optimize for your specific formulation/matrix.)

Table 1: Literature Review of Various Antidiabetic Agents.

Drug Class / Example	Column (typical)	Mobile phase (typical)	Flow	Detection	Notes
Metformin	HILIC or C18 with ion-pair	Ammonium acetate buffer (pH 3–4) / ACN (isocratic) or ion-pair phosphate/ACN	0.8–1.0 mL/min	UV (235–240 nm) or MS	Metformin is very polar; may need ion-pairing or HILIC
Glibenclamide (Glyburide)	C18 150×4.6 mm, 5 µm	Phosphate buffer pH 3.0 / ACN (gradient/isocratic)	1.0 mL/min	UV 226–230 nm	Light sensitive; protect from photo degradation
Pioglitazone	C18	Buffer pH 3.0 / ACN (gradient)	1.0 mL/min	UV 269 nm	Monitor possible acidic degradants
Sitagliptin	C18 or phenyl	Ammonium formate pH 3.0 / ACN (gradient)	0.8–1.0 mL/min	UV 267 nm or MS	Basic compound; suitable for MS detection
Dapagliflozin	C18	Buffer pH 3.0 / ACN (gradient)	1.0 mL/min	UV 223–236 nm or MS	Glycoside bond may hydrolyze under strong acid/base
Exenatide (Peptide)	RP C18, 2.1×100 mm, 1.7 µm	Water + 0.1% FA / ACN + 0.1% FA (gradient)	0.3–0.5 mL/min	LC-MS/MS	Requires peptide LC-MS workflows and sample preparation

9. Common Troubleshooting Tips

Poor retention of polar drugs: Try ion-pairing agents, HILIC column, or buffered mobile phase at suitable Ph.[16]

Peak tailing: Check pH relative to pKa, try end-capped or polar-embedded columns, reduce active Silanol interactions, add low concentration of competing base (e.g., triethylamine) if compatible.[15]

Poor peak shape with basic compounds: use column with better silanol shielding or adjust pH; consider using buffers at pH > pKa to neutralize.

Coelution with excipients: change stationary phase chemistry (phenyl, C8), gradient profile, or use MS detection for specificity.

Low sensitivity: Concentrate sample, use larger injection volume (if column can tolerate), or switch to MS or fluorescence detection, or use derivatization.[17]

10. Bioanalysis of Anti-Diabetic Drugs by HPLC

Bioanalysis usually requires LC-MS/MS due to low therapeutic concentrations and matrix complexity.[16] Key points:

Sample Preparation: protein precipitation for high throughput, SPE for cleaner extracts, LC-MS compatible solvents.

Internal standards: Preferably stable isotope labelled.

Cross-validation between laboratories must be performed for multi-center studies.

11. Regulatory Considerations and Documentation[18]

Follow ICH Q2 (R1) (Validation of Analytical Procedures) and Pharmacopeial monographs for assay/impurity methods.

For stability studies, follow **ICH Q1A (R2)** (Stability Testing) and guidance on forced degradation.

Record method development experiments, DoE plans (if used), system suitability criteria, and method validation reports. Maintain traceable raw data for audits.[19]

12. Current Gaps and Future Directions

Peptide therapeutics (GLP-1 analogues): Need more standardized LC-MS/MS workflows and stability studies.

Novel SGLT2 inhibitors and metabolites: In-depth impurity mapping and metabolic profiling using HRMS is desirable.

Increased adoption of AQbD and green metrics in routine QC labs.

Method miniaturization (micro/UHPLC) and automation for high throughput QC.[20]

13. CONCLUSION

HPLC remains essential for the analysis of anti-diabetic drugs. Successful method development integrates knowledge of analyte chemistry with judicious choice of column, mobile phase, and detection and sample preparations. Stability-indicating methods, validated per ICH and Pharmacopeial guidance, ensure drug safety and efficacy throughout shelf life. Emerging trends - AQbD,

UHPLC, and LC-MS/MS and green analytical chemistry-will continue to improve method robustness, sensitivity and environmental footprint.

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