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Diagnosis :: UGR researchers design an alternative to blood test to detect drugs in the body

The department of Legal Medicine and Psychiatry has developed a new technique based on the analysis of pericardial fluid, a plasma ultrafiltered which surrounds the heart. Their work has determined for the first time that this fluid, easier to test than blood, presents a narcotic concentration similar to blood.

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The presence of narcotic substances in a person’s body can usually be detected by a blood or urine test.

By means of a simple technique, doctors can say if someone is under the influence of a drug (through blood), if they have taken it within the last week (through urine) or if they usually take it (through the bile test). However, a research group of the department of Legal Medicine and Psychiatry of the University of Granada (Universidad de Granada), coordinated by professor Antonio Hernández Jerez, has developed a new technique to obtain this information by testing the pericardial fluid.

The importance of his research lies in the multiple advantages of this fluid with regard to the others. Pericardial fluid is plasma ultrafiltered from the serous vessel surrounding the heart, a watertight compartment separated from blood. Blood analysis usually presents a problem: matrix interferences, such as red cells, proteins, fats, etc., which complicate this method.

The work, supervised by professor Hernández, has allowed to determine that the pericardial fluid is an alternative to test blood in order to carry out drug tests for forensic purposes, as it offers enough guarantees and presents a similar concentration of narcotic substances. One of the advantages highlighted by the professor of the UGR is that this test is easier than blood test as it shows less interference and takes more time to decompose after the death of the person, which makes it possible to determine if the presence of drugs is connected with the death.

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