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Stability indicating HPLC method development and validation for quantification of salicylic acid impurity in acetaminophen aspirin caffeine oral solid dosage forms

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ABSTRACT: The present study discusses the development of simple isocratic reversed-phase HPLC method was developed and validated for the quantification of Salicylic acid, itwas amajor impurity of Aspirin, degradant Acetaminophen Aspirin Caffeine Tablet dosage formulations. The analytes were separated on a C18 Zodiac column (100mm x 4.60 mm i.d., 5 µm particle size). A mobile phase, water, MeOH, Glacial acetic acid in the ratio of (690:280:30) (v/v/v) were used. The column temperature 45°C and flow rate 2.0ml/mint.The UV detection was made at 302 nm for Salicylic Acid. The HPLC method was obtained highly specific with linearity between 0.373concentration ranging $112.079 \mu g/mL$ of salicylic Acid, and the correlation coefficient was found to be >0.999 The method showed high accuracy more than 97%. The limit of detection(LOD) for Salicylic acid respectively. was0.41µg/ml, The limit of quantification (LOQ) for salicylic acid was 1.25µg/ml, respectively. Validation acceptance criteria were met in all cases. The developed method was validated as per international ICH guidelines with respect to specificity, linearity, precision, accuracy and robustness. In stress studies the Acetaminophen Aspirin and caffeine tablets were found to be sensitive in Acid, Base stress conditions and Oxidation stress condition.

Theproposed method was established to be precise and stability indicating as no interfering peaks of degrades and excipients were observed. The proposed method is suitable for purpose in quality control laboratories forquantitative analysis of salicylic acid in Acetaminophen Aspirin and caffeine tablet, as it is simple and rapid with tremendous precision and accuracy.

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KEYWORDS: Acetaminophen Aspirin Caffeine, Salicylic Acid, HPLC, method development, Validation

I. INTRODUCTION

The FDA recognized the combination of Acetaminophen (250 mg), Aspirin(250mg) and Caffeine (65 mg) as safe and effective in treating acute headaches, especially migraine, and was also considered effective by the American Headache Society. This combination is well-tolerated in episodic tension-type headaches and considered superior to acetaminophen; all components in this combination medication are considered safe during breastfeeding and can be taken orally for acute migraine attacks. The mechanism of action of this combination is from the accumulation of the components' effects; each component has a different mechanism of action. This activity reviews the indications, contraindications, activity, adverse events, and other key elements of acetaminophenaspirincaffeine therapy

clinical setting as it relates to the essential points needed by members of an interprofessional team managing the care of patients with migraine headaches and its related conditions and sequelae. The three-drug combination AAC was the first OTC medicationregistered for the treatment of migraine in the United States in 1998and is recommended as first-linemigraine treatment by the US,German, Swiss, and Austrian headache societies [1].

Acetaminophen

Acetaminophen, or paracetamol(Fig. 1), chemically designated as n-(4-hydroxyphenyl) ethanamideis a white crystalline powder which is soluble in boiling water, freely soluble in alcohol. Its chemical formula is C₈H₉NO₂The most used analgesic and antipyretic drug worldwide. The drug may be used without a prescription and is the drug of choice in patients who cannot have treatment non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) as well as those patients with bronchial asthma, peptic ulcer disease, hemophilia, salicylate-sensitized people, children under 12 years of age, and pregnant or breastfeeding women. Acetaminophen is used alone or combined with other medications to treat acute primary headaches; it is combined with aspirin and caffeine for migraine, tension-type headaches, and tramadol for cluster headaches.

Fig. 1 Acetaminophen

Aspirin

Aspirin, or Acetylsalicylic Acid(Fig. 2) chemically designated as 2-acetyloxybenzoic acid, is a white crystalline powder which is soluble in boiling water, freely soluble in alcohol. Its chemical formula is $C_9H_8O_4$. Aspirinis metabolized into salicylic acid (SA) and used at doses of less than or equal to 325 mg per day to reduce the risk of cardiovascular events, whereas it is used at higher doses (500 to 1000 mg as a single dose and 3000 to 4000 mg per day) to reduce pain, fever, and inflammation.

Fig. 2 Aspirin

Caffeine

Caffeine (Fig. 3) chemically designated as 1,3,7-trimethylpurine-2,6-dione is a white crystalline powder which is soluble in water and freely soluble in alcohol.Its chemical formula is $C_8H_{10}N_4O_2$. Caffeineis legal, cheap, and not regulated in almost all parts of the world; it can be found as over the counter (OTC) medication or in other sources such as coffee, tea, sodas, gum, and candy.

Fig.3 Caffeine

Salicylic acid

Salicylic acid (Fig. 4) is chemically 2-hydroxy benzoic acid that has antiseptic, antifungal and keratolytic properties. It is used to treat warts, psoriasis, corns and other skin conditions. It works by softening and loosening dry, scaly, or thickened skin so that it falls off or can be removed easily [2]. Salicylic acid is white or almost white, crystalline powder or white or colorless, acicular crystals, slightly soluble in water, freely soluble in ethanol, sparingly soluble in methylene chloride, Its molecular formula is $C_7H_8O_3$.

Fig.4 Salicylic acid



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The estimation of assay of the drug product is critical to understand the drug product's behavior. The lower assay or purity results could affect bioavailability and safety. Therefore, the estimation of drug products is essential in regulated pharmaceutical industry.

Till date severalanalytical methods, majorly for the estimation of salicylic acid using different analyticaltechniques.(Vincenzo puccialet al., 2004; Dalibor satin sky et al., 2004; Rendon Mi et al.,2010; Sanjay A. Patila et al.,2015; Vichare V. S et al., 2017; Ahmed Mahdi Saeedet al., 2018; Ling liang et al., 2020;). In these methods there are a few HPLC methods available for the quantification of individual salicylic acid. There were no reported analytical methods for simultaneous quantification of Salicylic acid impurity and qualification of Acetaminophen aspirin caffeine in combination dosage forms in presence of their degradation products. Hence an author made an attempt to develop stability indicating specific, sensitive, accurate and precise RP-HPLC method for quantification of salicylic acid impurity with isocratic elution mode.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS Chemicals and reagents

The AR grade Glacial Aceticacid procured from Ankit Raj organochemicals LTD, India. The HPLC grade of Methanol (J.T. beaker) with certified purity of 99.9% was purchased from Avantor performance materials, Hyderabad, Telangana. High quality In-House purity water was used for the experiments (TOC <500ppb, pH about 7.0, Conductivity < 1.0 μ s/cm, finally exposed to UV radiation and followed filtered through 0.2 μ m filter). Salicylic acid was procured from Sigma-Aldrichpharma chemprivate limited, Ahmadabad, India.

Instruments and software

Waters HPLC system Alliance e2695 separation module with auto injector, temperature controller for sample storage and column was used for current analysis. The signal output was observed through Empower 3. The LC column is Zodiac packC18,100 mm_4.6mm,5.0 μ m, is manufactured by waters. Analytical balance model AX205 (make: Mettler Toledo), sonicator (make: ENERTECH), Rotary shaker (make: REMI; model: RS – 24BL) were employed in this work.

Preparation of diluent

Mixed Methanol and Formic acid in the ratio of (990:10) (v/v).

Preparation of standard solution

Accurately weigh and transfer about 50 mg of Salicylic Acid standard into a 50-mLvolumetric flask. Add diluent about 60% volume of the flask, sonicate to dissolve, dilute to volume with diluent. The concentration is about 1000 μgmL^{-1} , dilute to volume with diluent, Pipet 2.0 mL of Salicylic Acid stock solution into a 100-mL volumetric flask, dilute to the volume with diluent and mix well. The finalconcentration of Salicylic Acid is about 20 μgmL^{-1} . Preparation of Sample

Accurately weigh and transfer 20tablets offine powder of Acetaminophen Aspirin and Caffeineequivalent to 500mg of Aspirin into a 200-mL volumetric flask. Add 150mlof diluent flask, keep on rotary shaker for30minutes with intermittent shaking. Dilute to volume with diluent, mix well and label as SampleSolution. The concentration is about 2500µgmL⁻¹ of Aspirin.

Method Development and optimization

The main aim of the current method was to separation of Acetaminophen having impurities Acetaminophen related compoundi.e. Acetaminophen related compound C, Acetaminophen related compound-D, Acetaminophen related compound Aminophenol and Aspirin having impurity salicylic acid as main degradant impurity and Caffeine having impurity theobromine, and placebo in Acetaminophen Aspirin and Caffeine tablets. A systematic study of various factors was undertaken by varying one parameter at a time and keeping all other conditions constant for development of the analytical method. Both Salicylic acid and Aspirin were soluble in polar solvents; therefore, RP-HPLC was chosen. The selection of stationary phase has been done based on back pressure, resolution, peak shape, theoretical plates and day to day reproducibility in retention time resolution between Aspirin and Salicylic acid peaks. After evaluating all these factors, Enable Zodiac pack C18column $(100 \times 4.6 \text{ mm } 5\mu)$ was chosen for the analysis. The selection of bufferwas based on the chemical structure of selected drug molecules

Using mixed water,methanol and glacial acetic acid in the ratio of (690:280:30) (v/v/v) as mobile phase.HenceKnown impurities were separated and resolution between aspirin and



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salicylic acid were well satisfied. See **Table 1** for Method development experiments.

A series of aqueous and organic modifiers used as a diluent, finally decided to methanol and glacial acetic acid in the ratio of 990:10(v/v) as a diluent, in this diluent aspirin was stable. All

impurities of Acetaminophen, Aspirin, & Caffeine are separated from Aspirin & Salicylic acid.Blank and placebo interference was not observed at retention time of any impurity of AcetaminophenAspirinCaffeine. So,a methodwas found specific for estimation of salicylic acid.

Table :1 Optimized Method development experiments

Table :1 Optimized Method development experiments									
Mobile phase	Column	Flow rate(ml/min), elution mode, column temp and injection volume	Observation	Inference					
0.02M Ammonium dihydrogen phosphate pH 3.5 as buffer and methanol in the ratio of (60:40) (v/v) as mobile phase	Zodiac C18, 100mm_ 4.6 mm, 5μm	1.0ml/mint isocratic 30°C,10µL	All peaks were not separated and coeluted with same retention time	Rejected					
0.02M potassium dihydrogen phosphate and add adjust pH 2.5 and methanol in the ratio of 70:30 as mobile phase.	Zodiac C18, 100mm_ 4.6 mm, 5μm	1.0ml/mint isocratic 30°C,10μL	All peaks were not showing any separation and coeluted with same retention time	Rejected					
Transferred 800ml of water and 200ml methanol in the ratio of (80:20) (v/v) as mobile phase	Zodiac C18, 100mm_ 4.6 mm, 5μm	1.5ml/mint Isocratic 45°C,10µL	all peaks were not separated from salicylic acid peak, and resolution between the aspirin and salicylic acid were not satisfied	Rejected					
Transferred 700ml of water and 300ml methanol in the ratio of (70:30) (v/v) as mobile phase	Zodiac C18, 100mm_ 4.6 mm, 5μm	2ml/mint Isocratic 45°C,10μL	All peaks were separated from salicylic acid and aspirin, but the resolution was not satisfied between the aspirin and salicylic acid.	Rejected					
Transferred 690ml of water add 280ml of methanol and 30ml of glacial acetic acid and	Zodiac C18, 100mm_ 4.6 mm, 5μm.	2ml/mint Isocratic, sample cooler 5°C, 45°C,10μL	Salic acid and aspirin and placebo peaks were well separated and all impurities detected	Approved					

Chromatographic conditions

The chromatographic separation was achieved using mixed water, methanol and glacial acetic acid in the ratio of (690:280:30) (v/v/v) as the mobile phase. The flow rate was 2.0mL min⁻¹. Column temperature 45°C and sampler cooler 5°C. The LC column was used Zodiac packC18,100 mm

 $_4.6$ mm,5.0 μ m. The isocratic elution, the injection volume was 10μ L and detection of components were made at 302 nm.

III. METHOD VALIDATION



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The method was validated based on International Conference on Harmonization (ICH) Q2(R1)

Guidelines (ICH 2005). (Sreenivas, P. et al., 2022, Pippala et al., 2023,). Validation parameters included linearity, precision, accuracy, specificity and forced degradation (Jyothsna et al., 2024a,2024b, Teja Kami Reddy et al., 2024).

System suitability

System suitability parameters (tailing factor, number of theoretical plates) were assessed by injecting a blank diluent followed by salicylic acid solution (20 μ gmL⁻¹).

Specificity

Prepared blank, known impurities spec level and placebo as per the optimized testprocedure and verified the interference of peaks at retention time of active peak (Vaishnavi 2024).

Linearity

To prove the linearity of the optimized method, A sequence of concentrations was made for salicylicacid (0.373 μ g mL⁻¹ to 112.019 μ g mL⁻¹) from the concentration range (0.5% to 150%) by using suitable amounts of the mixture of stock solutions. A curve was created by mapping the peak response and concentration.

Sensitivity

The limit of detection (LOD) and Limit of quantification (LOQ) values for salicylic acid was established by calibration curve method. The LOD and LOQ results were shown in Table 3 and calculated using the formulas

Precision

Precision provides a degree of agreement between the individual test results by applying the procedure or method to the homogeneous sample (Sreenivas et al. 2024a and Sreenivas et al. 2024b, Prasannakumar Lankalapalli et al. 2024). Typically, it is expressed as variance, SD. In normal conditions, it is a measure of the degree of repeatability or reproducibility.

Six individual samples were taken from a homogenous mixture of samples and were spiked with them at the 100% level to check the reproducibility. The precision of the analysis was calculated on the RSD values of the six impurity- spiked samples results. To check the ruggedness (intermediate precision) of the method, the analysis was repeated on different days. The precisions for the analysis of each individual impurity at 100% concentrationlevel. The sample and standard solutions stable up to 24 hours on Benchtop.

Accuracy

They prove the accuracy of optimized method prepared three levels (LOQ,50, 100 & 150%). Preparedeach sample in triplicate preparation range from 50% level and 150% level and concentrations 37.438 µgmL⁻¹,112.314 µgmL⁻¹, and six sample preparation ranges from LOQ and 100% level and concentration3.530 µg mL⁻¹ and 74.876 µg mL⁻¹ of Salicylic acid. The recovery was calculated in terms of the amount added against the amount estimated.

Robustness

The robustness of the proposed RP-HPLC method was carried out by altering the experimental conditions such as analytical column, column temperature, flow rate, and mobile phase composition. The method was established by introducing small changes in experimental conditions like wavelength ± 1 nm.

Degradation studies

Degradation studies were conducted to determine specificity and stability-indicating properties of the suggested method. That these stress conditions were performed under the following acidic, alkaline, oxidative, and Water conditions. Weighed 20 tablets of AcetaminophenAspirinCaffeineand calculated the average weight. Transferred into mortar vessel and crushed into fine powder.

weighed and transferred equivalent to 500 mg of Aspirininto 200 ml volumetric flask, added 10 mL of 0.5N HCl or 0.5N NaOH , mixed, kept on water bath at 60°C for about 30 min, neutralized with 10 mL of 0.5N NaOH or 0.5 N Hcl , then added about 120 ml of diluent, kept on rotary shaker for 30 minutes, diluted to volume with diluent and mixed well.



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For peroxide sample Weighed and transferred equivalent to 500 mg of Aspirininto 200 ml volumetric flask, added 10 mL of 10% peroxide solution, mixed, kept on water bath at 60°C for about 30 min, then added about 120 ml of diluent, kept on rotary shaker for 30 minutes, diluted to volume with diluent and mixed well. For water sample Weighed and transferred equivalent to 500 mg of Aspirininto 200 ml volumetric flask, added 10 mL of water solution, mixed, kept on water bath at 60°C for about 30 min, then added about 120 ml of diluent, kept on rotary shaker for 30 minutes, diluted to volume with diluent and mixed well.

Centrifuged above all degradation solutions at 3500 rpm for 10 minutes. Supernatant solution was injected into HPLC system.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS System suitability

In system suitability study the peak showed good tailing factor (1.05) and sufficient plate count (5352). The retention time was 4.522minutes, thearea of % RSD below 5%. The results were shown in table 2.

Table 2systemsuitability study

Parameter	Result	Acceptance limit
Retention time of Salicylic acid peak	4.522	NA
Average Area of six standard Injections	152703	NA
USP tailing factor of Salicylic acid	1.05	NMT 2.0
USP Plate count of Salicylic acid	5352	NLT 2500
% RSD of six replicate injections of Salicylic acid peak is	0.17	NMT 5.0

Specificity

The method proved to be specific with no interference of mobile phase or impurities or

excipients. (Fig.5-11). The peak purity for the standard and sample solution was 1.666 and 1.723(Table 3)

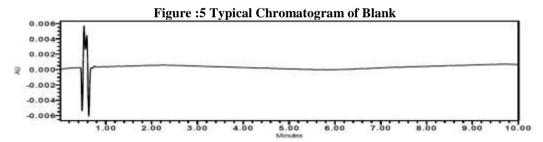
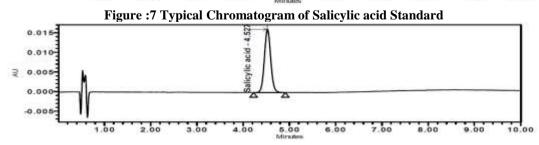
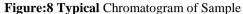


Figure :6 Typical Chromatogram of Aspirin Placebo



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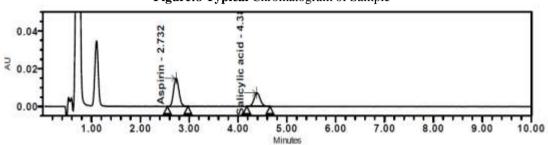


Figure:10Typical Chromatogram of Acetaminophen

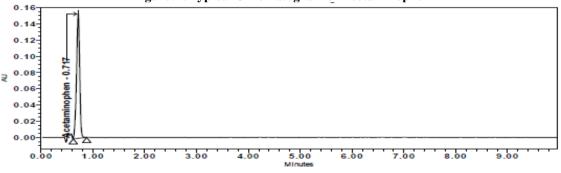
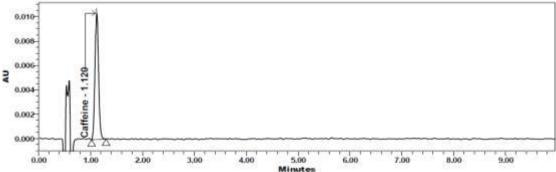


Figure:11Typical Chromatogram of Caffeine



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Table: 3 specificity study

Blank	No interference at RT of Salicylic acid in blank
Standard solution	Peak purity was 1.666
Placebo	No interference at RT of Salicylic acid in placebo
Impurities	No interference at RT of Salicylic acid in impurities
Sample solution	Peak purity was 1.723

Linearity

For linearity range, correlation coefficient was 0.99999.(Table 4).

Table: 4 Linearity results

S.No	Level	Salicylic acid	
5.110	(%)	Conc. (ppm)	Area
1	0.5	0.373	2227
2	2	1.494	10818
3	5	3.734	27706
4	10	7.468	56590
5	50	37.340	279425
6	100	74.679	570197
7	125	93.349	704206
8	150	112.019	845935
Correlation coef	ficient (r)		0.9999
Slope			7567.71728
Intercept			461.6978
Bias			0.08
STEYX (Standard Deviation)			2671.46872

Sensitivity

The limit of detection (LOD) and Limit of quantification (LOQ) values for salicylic acid was established by calibration curve method (Table 5).

Table: 5 sensitivity results

STEYX fro solution	m Linearity	Slope fron solution	1 Linearity	LOQ Conc.(ppm)	LOD Conc.(ppm)
2671.46872		7567.71728		3.53	1.16

Precision

Repeatability and intermediate precision studied showed %RSD 1.6 and 1.4.(Table6)



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Table: 6 precision study repeatability intermediate precision

Samplename	%(w/w) salicylic repeatability	acid	%(w/w) precision	salicylic	acid	intermediate
Sample 1	3.307		3.256			
Sample 2	3.285		3.201			
Sample 3	3.398		3.301			
Sample 4	3.349		3.289			
Sample 5	3.418		3.334			
Sample 6	3.327		3.268			
Average	3.347		3.275			
%RSD	1.6		1.4			

Accuracy The mean recovery should be within the range of 85.0 % -115.0 % and found to be within the range.

Table: 7 Accuracy study

Recovery level	Recovery	Average Recovery	% RSD	
LOQ-1	102.1			
LOQ-2	101.6			
LOQ-3	100.9			
LOQ-4	102.9	102.0	0.8	
LOQ-5	101.7			
LOQ-6	103.1			
50%-1	101.0			
50%-2	101.8	101.9	0.9	
50%-3	102.9			
100%-1	101.4			
100%-2	100.7			
100%-3	102.3	101.5		
100%-4	100.8	101.5	0.8	
100%-5	101.2			
100%-6	102.8			
150%-1	101.7			
150%- 2	100.9	101.3	0.4	
150%-3	101.4			



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Robustness

Making a deliberate changein flow rate, column temperature and wavelength was taken place and RSD found to be less than 5, specify that the method was robust.

Table: 8 Robustness study

		Salicylic Acid					
Parameter	Deviation n=3	USP tailing	USP plate count	RRT salicylic acid w.r.to Aspirin	Average area of standard	%RSD	
Flow	2.2ml	1.09	5511	1.623	144960	1.15	
rate(ml/mint)	1.8ml	1.11	5834	1.627	176514	1.43	
Column	50°C	1.12	5416	1.579	155384	0.78	
temperature (°C)	40°C	1.09	5896	1.671	155977	1.50	
Wavelength(nm)	304nm	1.09	5568	1.62	155245	0.71	
	300nm	1.10	5489	1.63	154729	1.44	

Degradation studies

No purity flag was observed in all stressed conditions. This indicates that there is no interference from degradants in quantifying Aspirin/ Salicylic acidin Acetaminophen/Aspirin/Caffeine tablets and there is no interference at the retention time of

Aspirin/Salicylic acid from stressed placebo. Thus, this method is considered as "Stability Indicating".

2500 ppm of Aspirin and salicylic acid were processed at 302 nm due to maximum absorbance of Salicylic acid, and Aspirin was processed at 275 nm due to maximum absorbance of Aspirin for mass balance(100ppm). The results were shown in table 9.

Table: 9 Forced degradation conditions studies

Nature of	% of	% Assay	Mass	Salicylic acid		Aspirin		
Stress	Salicyli	of Aspirin	Balance	PA	PT	PA	PT	PF
	c acid	stressed						
		Test						
Unstressed	0.04	100.8	NA	5.099	7.053	0.244	0.472	No
Acid	10.75	87.7	97.7	0.069	0.262	0.260	0.487	No
Base	4.02	94.5	97.7	0.098	0.309	0.173	0.363	No
Peroxide	3.37	98.4	100.9	0.180	0.368	0.261	0.421	No
Water	0.79	101.0	100.9	0.413	0.664	0.188	0.429	No

Discussion

The current method was to separation of Acetaminophen having impurities Acetaminophen related compound- B, Acetaminophen related compound C, Acetaminophen related compound-D, Acetaminophen related compound J, p-Aminophenol and Aspirin having impurity salicylic acid as main degradant impurity and Caffeine having impurity theobromine, and placebo(Fig.5-10 and Table 1). The method showed good system suitability with a tailing factor as 1.05, %RSD for peak area less than 5 and theoretical plates more than 5352 (Table 2). Salicylic acid is insoluble in water and freely soluble in organic solvents like alcohol, but aspirin was not stable in only methanol so added 1% of Formic acid. Hence, mixed methanol formic acid in the ratio and

of(990:10)(v/v) was chosen as a diluent for sample preparation. Salicylic acid was adequately extracted in the diluent, and excipients did not cause interference in the analysis. mixed water, methanol and glacial acetic acid in the ratio of (690:280:30) (v/v/v) as the mobile phase. Presence of methanol in the mobile phase ensured no plug formation after injection of sample solution. The analysis was carried out using a UV detector at a wavelength of 302 nm where salicylic acid showed maximum absorbance. High peak purity with no interference from solvent system or excipient or impurities indicated results specific to the salicylic acid(Fig. 5(a-g) and Table 3). The specifications for the column used in this study (zodiac C18 column, 100 mm \times 4.6 mm, 5 μ m) are frequently found in columns used in laboratories and are commonly



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available in the market. Use mobile phase and carefully selected composition of organic solvents ensured early elution of Salicylic acid. The low retention time of 4.52 min ensured quick analysis. With short run time, more samples could be analyzed in the given time, making the process cost-effective. With correlation coefficient of 0.9999, linearity between peak area and analyte concentration. (Table 4). The method was sensitivity the limit of detection (LOD) and Limit of quantification (LOQ) values for salicylic acid was established by calibration curve method. (Table 5), the method was precise with respect to intra-day and inter-day precision (Table 6), the method was found to be accurate with test results close to the true values (Table 7). The method was robust. Change in wavelength, flow rate and column temperature did not affect the analysis significantly (Table 8) this method considered as a In stress stability indicating, studies Acetaminophen Aspirin and caffeine tablets in aspirin was found to be sensitive in Acid, Base conditions and Oxidation condition(Table 9).

V. CONCLUSION

A simple, economical, rapid and stability indicating RP—HPLC method has been effectivelyoptimized for estimation of Salicylic Acidin Acetaminophen Aspirin Caffeine Tablets. The optimized method was further validated for specificity, linearity, selectivity, precision, accuracy, robustness and ruggedness parameters. The method was developed and validated in the quality control lab for stability analysis.

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Author contributions

Prasanna Kumar lankalapalli, Pranitha Sambu, Srinivasulu Kasa and Rama Krishna Myneni conceptualized and collected the necessary data from literature, designed, developed the analytical methodology, performed the validation, wrote the main manuscript draft, Hareesh Divadari, Teja kami Reddy and Vijaykumar chollety, Ashok Morsuperformed the validation studies and wrote the main manuscript draft. All three authors have proofread the whole manuscript and are responsible for the data integrity. The authors declare that they have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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