

# Does long term exposure leads to biodegradation of Carbamazepine?

CEFIC-LRI Eco29 "Application of chemostat systems to include adaptation of microbial communities in persistency testing" (CHEMADAPT) (2015-2019)

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## Introduction

Persistence is a key property in assessing the environmental risks of organic chemicals. However, simple screening biodegradability tests are not suited to determining degradation rates under environmentally realistic conditions. The short exposure times do not allow for adaptation of microbial communities to a new chemical, while in the natural environment microorganisms tend to adapt to pollutants upon long term exposure, allowing for the development of efficient and fast degradation over time.

The aim of this project is to study the microbial adaptation to persistent chemicals. This will be achieved by using continuous culture systems, which will allow the development of guidelines for persistency tests in which the role of adaptation is accounted for.

## Biodegradation of Carbamazepine

Our first tested chemical is a pharmaceutical product Carbamazepine (CBZ).

- The inoculum was a secondary sludge microbial community from a wastewater treatment plant (WWTP; Amsterdam West, The Netherlands), cultivated in chemostat and batch culture systems in presence of carbamazepine.
- CBZ concentration is measured with a LC-MS/MS (figure 2).
- Persistency of CBZ has been assessed in batch culture before exposure of the inoculum in chemostat using the biodegradation test OECD 301A (figure 3).

Carbamazepine  
Formula : C<sub>15</sub>H<sub>12</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O  
Molecular mass : 236.3 g/mol

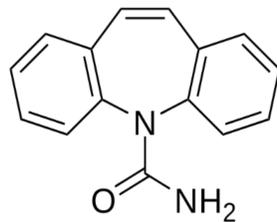


Fig.1 : Chemical structure of Carbamazepine

## Long term exposure to Carbamazepine

- In chemostat, fresh medium enters the bioreactor while spent medium and biomass continuously leave the bioreactor, allowing continuous growth under defined conditions, for in theory, infinite periods of time.
- Chemostat (D:0,04) are used to grow WWTP microbial communities and to expose them for a long term to Carbamazepine (6 µg/l).

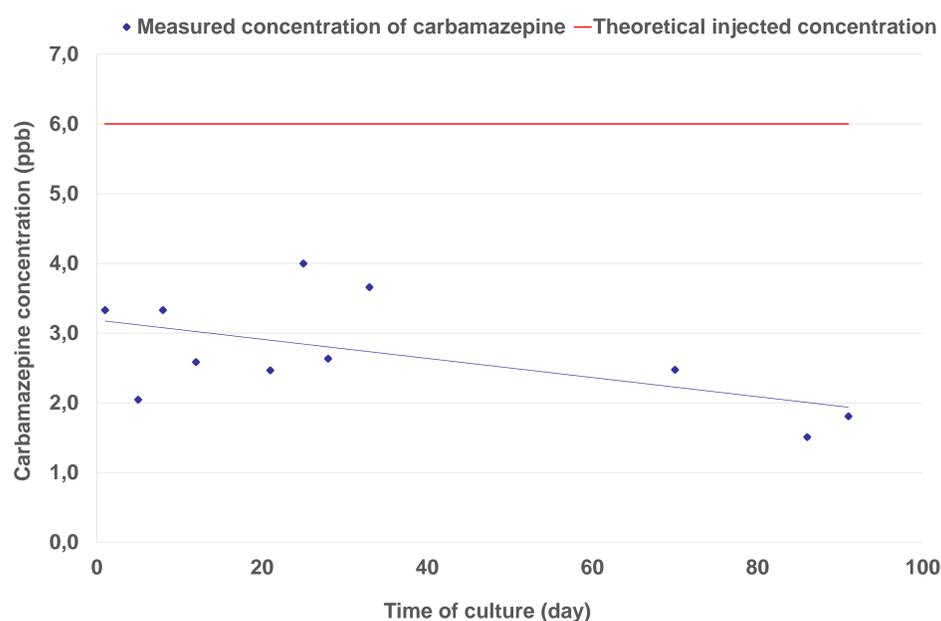


Fig. 2 : Measured (blue) and theoretical (red) concentration of Carbamazepine in chemostat.

## Fate of Carbamazepine in biodegradation testing

Biodegradability of CBZ has been assessed, before exposure in chemostat, using the ready biodegradation test OECD 301A.

- Degradation has been followed by DOC (dissolved organic carbon) analyses of aerobic batch culture over a 28-day period. Sodium benzoate has been used as positive control of biodegradation activity.

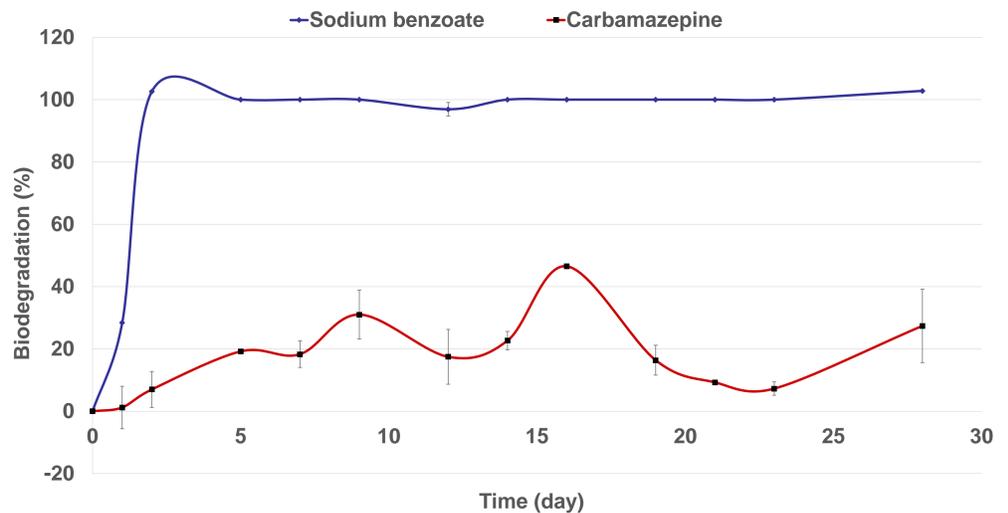


Fig.3 : Biodegradation (% of removal compared to initial concentration) of CBZ (red) and sodium benzoate (blue) in biodegradation testing (OECD 301A).

- Results of the test OECD 301A show that Carbamazepine is not readily biodegradable.
- We can observe a fluctuation of the degradation rate of CBZ over the time due to a variation in the DOC concentration.

## Future prospects

The next steps for this first experiment are:

- Assess the impact of the long term exposure of Carbamazepine on the WWTP microbial community by metagenomic, metatranscriptomic and physiological analysis.
- Measuring the potential degradation product of Carbamazepine by LC-QTOF-MS.
- Perform another ready biodegradation test of Carbamazepine (OECD 301) on the exposed microbial community.

## Conclusion

Results of this project are expected to improve understanding of the role of adaptation in biodegradation of persistent chemicals. This will contribute to the development of protocols allowing microbial adaptation to be included in enhanced screening or simulation tests in order to improve the environmental risk assessment.

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### Selected references

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