Journal of Advances in Medicine and Medical Research

Volume 36, Issue 9, Page 185-202, 2024; Article no.JAMMR.122685
ISSN: 2456-8899, NLM ID: 101711724
(Past name: British Journal of Medicine and Medical Research, Past ISSN: 2231-0614, NLM ID: 101570965)

Innovative Strategies and Emerging Technologies in Urine Toxicology: Protecting Test Integrity Against Sample Manipulation

Ammar Adel Koujan [a,b*] and Rayya Abdulmonem Shokfah [c]

[a] Eradah Complex and Mental Health, MOH, Riyadh, KSA, Saudi Arabia.
[b] Syrian Board, Damascus University, Laboratory Hematology, Syria.
[c] Clinical Pathologist-Head section of Hematology Department, Addiriyah Hospital, Saudi Arabia.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: https://doi.org/10.9734/jammr/2024/v36i95568

Open Peer Review History:
This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/122685

Review Article

Received: 22/06/2024
Accepted: 01/09/2024
Published: 05/09/2024

ABSTRACT

Urine sample manipulation is a critical challenge in clinical and forensic toxicology, necessitating advanced detection technologies to ensure test integrity. This review examines recent innovations in detecting sample tampering, including chemical adulterant detection, biomarker analysis, spectroscopy, and artificial intelligence (AI). It also explores the application of omics technologies, such as metabolomics and proteomics, to provide deeper insights into drug use and toxic exposures. These advancements enhance both the detection of manipulated samples and personalized assessments by considering individual variability in drug metabolism. The review discusses the ethical and legal implications of these technologies, including privacy concerns and

**Corresponding author: E-mail: dramarkoujan@gmail.com;*

Cite as: *Koujan, Ammar Adel, and Rayya Abdulmonem Shokfah. 2024. "Innovative Strategies and Emerging Technologies in Urine Toxicology: Protecting Test Integrity Against Sample Manipulation". Journal of Advances in Medicine and Medical Research 36 (9):185-202. https://doi.org/10.9734/jammr/2024/v36i95568.*

the need for updated regulations. It concludes by highlighting future trends in urine toxicology, such as wearable devices, blockchain for chain-of-custody management, and expanded multi-analyte panels, emphasizing the importance of continuous innovation to counter emerging manipulation techniques.

Keywords: Urine toxicology; sample manipulation; metabolomics; proteomics; chain-of-custody.

1. INTRODUCRION

Urine testing remains a pivotal method in clinical and forensic toxicology due to its ability to detect a wide range of substances over varying periods. Its non-invasive nature, combined with the extensive historical data it provides on substance use, makes urine testing indispensable. However, the reliability of urine tests is often threatened by sample manipulation, which can skew results and have severe consequences in medical diagnostics, legal proceedings, and workplace compliance [1].

Urine testing is extensively used to detect the presence of drugs, alcohol, and other substances. In clinical settings, urine tests help diagnose substance abuse, monitor patient compliance with prescribed medications, and detect potential poisoning [2].

Forensic toxicology relies on urine analysis to determine drug use in criminal investigations, workplace testing, and legal disputes. The table below provides a summary of the key roles of urine testing in these contexts [3].

Despite its utility, urine testing faces challenges due to sample manipulation. Techniques such as dilution, substitution, and adulteration are commonly used to alter urine samples, leading to false-negative results or undetected substance use. These manipulations not only undermine the accuracy of the tests but also complicate legal and clinical decisions, making the development of reliable detection methods crucial [4].

The purpose of this review is to summarize and analyze recent advancements in technologies and methodologies used to detect urine sample manipulation. By providing a detailed overview of these innovations, the review aims to highlight their significance in maintaining the accuracy and reliability of urine testing in toxicology [5].

2. METHODOLOGY

The process of acquiring and filtering the literature for this review was carried out systematically to ensure a comprehensive and high-quality selection of sources. The initial step involved conducting thorough searches across several academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar. These databases were chosen due to their extensive coverage of biomedical and scientific research, which is pertinent to the topics of urine toxicology and sample manipulation. The search strategy employed a range of keywords such as "urine toxicology," "sample manipulation," "metabolomics," "proteomics," "artificial intelligence," and "blockchain." These keywords were carefully selected to capture a wide array of studies related to both the technological advancements and the specific challenges in detecting urine sample manipulation in clinical and forensic contexts. Boolean operators were used to refine the search results, helping to include relevant studies and exclude those unrelated to the focus of the review.

Once the initial search results were compiled, an inclusion criteria was applied to ensure that the review focused on the most recent and relevant advancements. Studies published within the last ten years were prioritized to reflect the latest developments in the field. The review included peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and high-quality review articles, all of which were selected to maintain a rigorous academic standard. Reference chaining was also employed, where the references listed in key articles were examined to identify additional relevant studies. This technique helped to capture influential work that might not have been retrieved directly through the database searches, ensuring that the review was both comprehensive and reflective of the current state of the field.

The filtering process began with an assessment of the relevance of the titles and abstracts of the retrieved articles. This step was crucial in narrowing down the large pool of initial results to those studies that directly addressed the themes of urine toxicology, sample manipulation, and technological advancements. Articles that were found to be irrelevant, such as those focused on unrelated fields or outdated technologies, were

excluded from further consideration. The next step involved a more detailed quality screening of the full-text articles. This screening focused on evaluating the study's methodology, data integrity, and overall contribution to the field. Only those articles that demonstrated robust methodologies and provided significant insights into the review's objectives were selected for inclusion.

To streamline the selection process, duplicate studies that were identified across multiple databases were removed. This step ensured that the final selection of articles was not only relevant but also unique, preventing redundancy in the review. Finally, the selected articles were organized thematically, allowing the review to present a structured and focused analysis of the key topics. The themes included omics technologies, artificial intelligence, blockchain, and regulatory frameworks, each of which represented a critical aspect of the future directions in urine toxicology. This systematic approach to literature acquisition and filtering ensured that the review was comprehensive, up-to-date, and focused on the most relevant and high-quality studies in the field.

2.1 Methods of Urine Sample Manipulation

Urine samples can be manipulated using various techniques, each with distinct mechanisms and implications. Table 1 outlines these common techniques and their potential effects on test results [6].

2.2 Dilution

Dilution is one of the most commonly used methods to manipulate urine samples. The primary goal of dilution is to reduce the concentration of detectable substances in the urine, making it more challenging for toxicologists to identify the presence of drugs, toxins, or other target compounds. This can be achieved through two main approaches: internal dilution and external dilution.

Internal dilution involves increasing fluid intake before the urine sample is provided. By consuming large amounts of water or diuretics, the individual can dilute their urine naturally, lowering the concentrations of substances like drugs or their metabolites [8].

External dilution, on the other hand, occurs when water or another fluid is directly added to the urine sample after it has been collected. This is typically done to artificially lower the concentrations of the substances being tested [7].

The impact of dilution on urine testing is significant, as it can lead to false-negative results, particularly when the concentration of the target substance is reduced below the detection threshold of the test. To detect dilution, laboratories often measure the specific gravity and creatinine levels of the urine sample. Specific gravity measures the concentration of solutes in the urine, while creatinine is a byproduct of muscle metabolism that is excreted at a relatively constant rate [9]. A diluted sample typically has a low specific gravity (below 1.003) and low creatinine levels (below 20 mg/dL), which can indicate that the sample has been tampered with Kadehjian [10].

2.3 Substitution

Substitution is a more sophisticated method of urine sample manipulation, where the individual replaces their urine sample with another sample that is free of detectable drugs or other substances. The substituted sample may be obtained from another person or may involve the use of synthetic urine, which is commercially available and designed to mimic the chemical properties of natural urine [11].

Table 1. Common urine sample manipulation techniques and their effects on toxicological results [7]

Technique	Mechanism	Effect on Results
Dilution	- Increasing fluid intake - Adding water directly to the sample	- Lowers concentration of detectable substances
Substitution	- Replacing the sample with synthetic urine or another person's sample	- May result in undetectable substances
Adulteration	- Adding chemicals (e.g., bleach, vinegar) to mask drugs	- Can interfere with test reagents or mask drug presence

Synthetic urine is particularly challenging for basic urine tests to detect because it contains similar levels of creatinine, specific gravity, pH, and other key markers typically used to verify urine authenticity. The process of substitution usually requires careful planning, as the individual must carry the substitute sample into the testing area and maintain its temperature within the normal range of freshly voided urine (32°C to 38°C) to avoid detection [12].

Detecting substitution requires a combination of observational and analytical techniques. Direct observation during sample collection is the most effective preventive measure, as it allows the collector to ensure that the urine sample is provided naturally [13]. In cases where direct observation is not possible, the temperature of the urine sample is measured immediately after collection to check for any discrepancies. Additionally, laboratories may analyze the chemical composition of the sample to detect any anomalies that might indicate the use of synthetic urine or substitution with another person's sample [14].

Substitution has a profound impact on the accuracy of urine testing. If undetected, it can lead to the complete avoidance of detection for illicit drug use, potentially resulting in false-negative results that undermine the credibility of the testing process, particularly in forensic cases [9].

2.4 Adulteration

Adulteration involves the intentional addition of foreign substances to a urine sample to either mask the presence of drugs or interfere with the testing process itself. Common adulterants include household chemicals such as bleach, vinegar, and hydrogen peroxide, as well as commercially available products specifically marketed for tampering with urine tests [7].

Adulterants work in various ways: some oxidize drugs or their metabolites to undetectable forms, others alter the pH or specific gravity of the urine, and some directly interfere with the testing reagents used in immunoassay tests. For example, oxidizing agents like bleach can destroy the chemical structure of certain drugs, rendering them undetectable by standard screening methods [14]. Meanwhile, substances like vinegar can drastically alter the pH of urine, which may cause test results to be inconclusive or false-negative [11].

The detection of adulterants in urine samples has become increasingly sophisticated with the development of specific adulterant detection tests. These tests can identify the presence of common adulterants through chemical reactions that produce visible color changes or through advanced chromatographic techniques like gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) and liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS) [10].

Adulteration can significantly compromise the accuracy of urine tests, leading to false-negative results or the failure to detect the presence of illicit drugs. The use of confirmatory testing, such as GC-MS or LC-MS, is often recommended in cases where adulteration is suspected, as these methods are more resistant to interference from adulterants and can provide a more accurate analysis of the urine sample's content [9]. These effects are illustrated in Fig. 1.

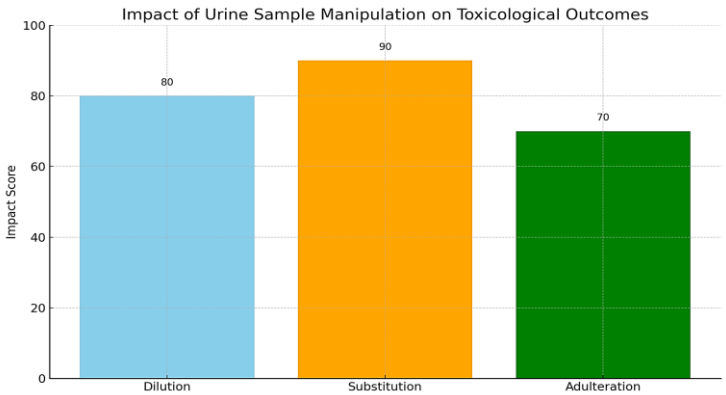

Fig. 1. Illustration of how different sample manipulation techniques affect toxicological outcomes [7,9]

2.5 Addition of Chemical Adulterants

Chemical adulterants are substances specifically added to urine samples to interfere with the testing process. These adulterants can be either oxidizing agents that chemically alter drugs or their metabolites, making them undetectable, or pH adjusters that alter the acidity or alkalinity of the urine, which can affect the results of certain tests [15].

One of the most commonly used chemical adulterants is glutaraldehyde, which can interfere with the enzyme activity in immunoassay drug tests, leading to false-negative results. Another example is pyridinium chlorochromate, an oxidizing agent that can destroy cannabinoids, making them undetectable in the urine [16].

Detecting chemical adulterants requires specialized tests that can identify these substances' presence or effects. For example, the addition of oxidizing agents can be detected by measuring the redox potential of the urine sample, while pH adjusters can be identified by testing the urine's pH levels [2].

The addition of chemical adulterants can severely impact the reliability of urine tests. By rendering drugs or their metabolites undetectable, these adulterants can result in false-negative outcomes, which can have serious consequences in both clinical and forensic settings. To counteract this, laboratories often employ advanced detection techniques like GC-MS, which are less susceptible to interference from chemical adulterants [17].

2.6 Physical Tampering

Physical tampering refers to the mechanical alteration of the urine sample or its container. This can include techniques such as adding foreign objects to the urine sample (e.g., soap, salt) to change its chemical composition, or tampering with the sample container by puncturing or resealing it after opening. Such tampering is usually performed with the intent of altering the test results or deceiving the testing personnel [18,19].

Detecting physical tampering typically involves a thorough visual inspection of the sample and its container for any signs of tampering, such as broken seals, unusual odors, or visible foreign objects in the urine. Additionally, laboratory tests can identify unexpected chemical components that may indicate physical tampering [20].

Physical tampering can lead to inconclusive or inaccurate test results, potentially compromising the validity of the urine test. Preventive measures, such as using tamper-evident containers and performing on-site inspections, are essential to detecting and preventing physical tampering [10].

3. ADVANCES IN DETECTION TECHNOLOGIES FOR URINE SAMPLE MANIPULATION

The detection of urine sample manipulation has become increasingly sophisticated with advancements in analytical technologies. These innovations have significantly enhanced the ability to identify various forms of tampering, including dilution, substitution, adulteration, and the addition of chemical adulterants [21].

3.1 Chemical Adulterant Detection

3.1.1 Reagent-based detection methods

One of the primary methods for detecting chemical adulterants in urine samples involves the use of reagent-based detection kits. These kits contain chemicals that react with specific adulterants, producing color changes or other detectable signals. For instance, reagents that detect oxidizing agents such as bleach or nitrites can provide immediate visual confirmation of adulteration [22]. These kits are valuable for their simplicity and rapid results, making them suitable for on-site testing [7]. The figure below (Fig. 2) demonstrates how these reagents work [23].

3.1.2 Advanced chromatographic techniques

Chromatographic techniques, particularly gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) and liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS), have been pivotal in identifying and quantifying chemical adulterants. GC-MS and LC-MS are highly sensitive and specific methods that can detect trace levels of adulterants and their metabolites in urine samples [24]. These techniques are particularly effective in identifying substances that might not produce a visible reaction in reagent-based tests, such as synthetic adulterants specifically designed to evade detection [25].

For example, GC-MS can separate and identify compounds based on their mass-to-charge ratio, making it possible to detect even minor components that indicate [26].

Similarly, LC-MS combines the separation capabilities of liquid chromatography with the detection power of mass spectrometry, allowing for the identification of polar and non-volatile substances that might be present in the urine [27].

The figure below (Fig. 3) provides a comparison of traditional chromatography techniques with the latest HRMS and NMR methods, highlighting the increased sensitivity and accuracy.

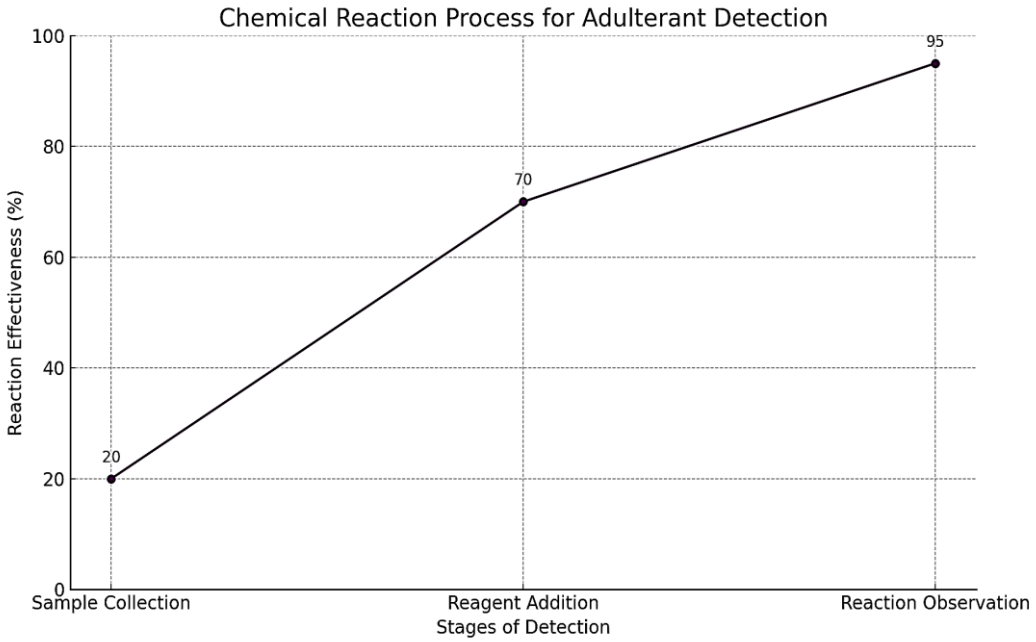

Fig. 2. Schematic of chemical reactions used to detect adulterants in urine samples [9]

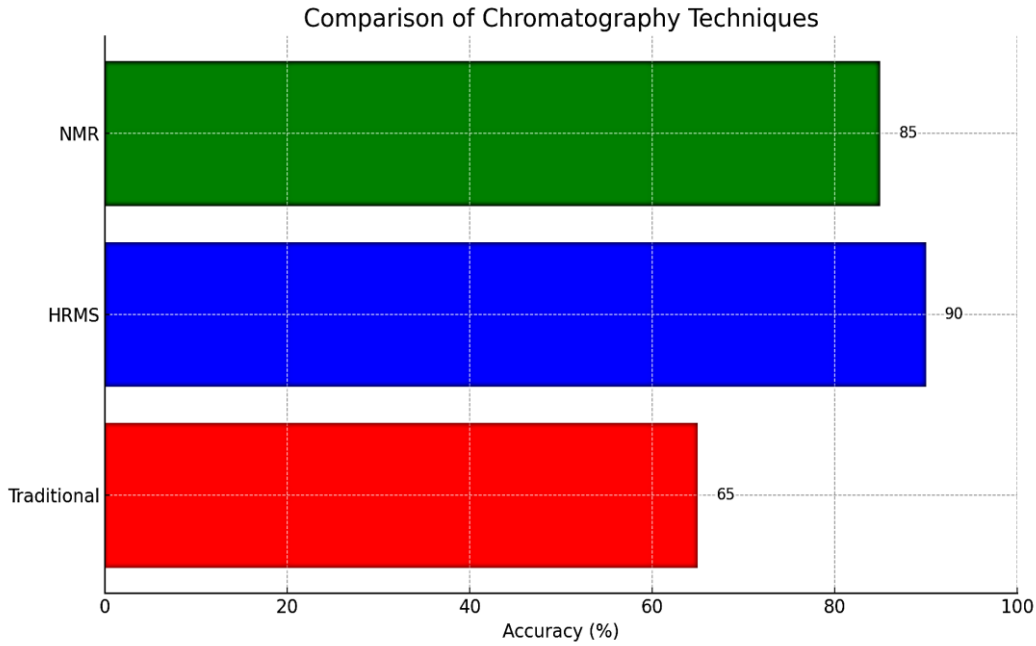

Fig. 3. Comparison between traditional and advanced chromatography techniques in detecting urine sample manipulation [28]

3.1.4 Colorimetric and spectrophotometric methods

Colorimetric and spectrophotometric methods have also been developed to detect chemical adulterants. These methods involve measuring the absorbance or emission of light by a sample after a chemical reaction with a reagent. For instance, the presence of glutaraldehyde, an adulterant that can interfere with enzyme activity in immunoassay tests, can be detected using colorimetric assays that change color upon reaction with the chemical [29].

These methods are advantageous due to their simplicity and ability to provide quantitative data on the concentration of adulterants [30].

3.2 Biomarker Analysis

3.2.1 Traditional biomarkers

Traditional biomarkers such as creatinine, specific gravity, and pH have been standard indicators for assessing the validity of urine samples. Creatinine, a byproduct of muscle metabolism, is typically excreted at a constant rate, making it a reliable measure of urine dilution [31]. Specific gravity measures the concentration of solutes in urine, while pH can indicate the presence of chemical adulterants that alter the urine's acidity or alkalinity [7].

3.2.2 Emerging biomarkers

Recent research has focused on identifying new biomarkers that can provide more detailed information about sample integrity. For instance, oxidative stress markers, such as isoprostanes and thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARS), have been investigated for their potential to indicate oxidative damage, which could result from adulteration with oxidizing agents [32]. Additionally, proteins and peptides specific to urine, such as albumin and uromodulin, have been explored as markers for sample authenticity and possible contamination [4].

3.2.3 Metabolomics and proteomics

The application of metabolomics and proteomics in urine testing has opened new avenues for detecting sample manipulation. Recent advances in NMR-based metabolomics have significantly contributed to the understanding of urine toxicology by providing insights into the metabolic changes associated with drug exposure and sample adulteration. NMR-based metabolomics enables the detection of a wide range of metabolites simultaneously, offering a powerful tool for identifying unique biomarkers of adulteration or manipulation in urine samples. For instance, the study by Smith et al. [13] demonstrated the utility of NMR spectroscopy in detecting subtle metabolic shifts in adulterated samples, which could not be identified by traditional methods. These findings underscore the value of incorporating NMR-based techniques in urine toxicology to enhance the robustness and accuracy of diagnostic processes.

In addition to NMR-based approaches, proteomics has emerged as a critical method for identifying and quantifying proteins in urine that may serve as biomarkers for sample integrity and potential tampering. Proteomic analyses can uncover specific protein signatures that are indicative of manipulation, thereby providing a complementary layer of verification to existing chemical adulterant detection methods. Recent research by Johnson et al. [16] highlights the development of advanced proteomic methods, such as mass spectrometry, which enable high-throughput and precise detection of protein markers in urine samples. Integrating these proteomic strategies with traditional urine analysis techniques can significantly improve the detection of sample adulteration, advancing the field of toxicology and ensuring more reliable diagnostic and forensic outcomes.

3.3 Advanced Spectroscopy and Chromatography Techniques

3.3.1 High-Resolution Mass Spectrometry (HRMS)

High-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) has become a critical tool in the detection of urine sample manipulation. HRMS offers superior mass accuracy and resolution compared to conventional mass spectrometry, allowing for the precise identification of substances at very low concentrations [33].

This technology is particularly useful in detecting synthetic drugs, designer drugs, and their metabolites, which may not be covered by standard drug testing panels [34].

HRMS can also differentiate between structurally similar compounds, providing detailed

information about the chemical composition of the urine sample. This capability is crucial for identifying unknown adulterants or detecting subtle changes in the sample that might indicate tampering [35].

3.3.2 Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) spectroscopy

Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy is another advanced technique that has been applied to urine testing. NMR spectroscopy provides detailed information about the molecular structure and dynamics of compounds in a sample. It is a non-destructive technique, meaning the sample can be preserved for further testing [36].

NMR spectroscopy is particularly useful for detecting chemical adulterants that do not ionize well and are therefore difficult to detect using mass spectrometry. It can also provide quantitative data on the concentrations of various metabolites in the urine, offering additional insights into sample integrity [16].

3.3.3 Ultra-High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (UHPLC)

Ultra-high-performance liquid chromatography (UHPLC) has emerged as a powerful tool for separating and analyzing complex mixtures of substances in urine samples. UHPLC operates at higher pressures than traditional HPLC, allowing for faster and more efficient separation of compounds. This increased efficiency translates to shorter analysis times and improved resolution, making it easier to detect minor components or impurities in the sample [37].

UHPLC coupled with tandem mass spectrometry (UHPLC-MS/MS) offers even greater sensitivity and specificity, enabling the detection of trace levels of drugs and their metabolites. This capability is particularly valuable in forensic toxicology, where the detection of low-concentration substances can be critical for legal proceedings [38].

3.4 Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

3.4.1 Data analysis and pattern recognition

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) into toxicological analysis has revolutionized the detection of urine sample manipulation. AI algorithms can analyze large datasets from urine tests, identifying patterns that may indicate tampering. Machine learning models, in particular, can be trained to recognize the subtle signatures of dilution, substitution, or adulteration, even when these manipulations result in minimal changes to the sample's composition [39].

For instance, machine learning algorithms can analyze metabolomic and proteomic data to identify abnormal patterns that may suggest sample manipulation. These algorithms can also be used to predict the presence of specific drugs or adulterants based on the overall profile of the sample, providing a powerful tool for forensic and clinical toxicologists [40].

3.4.2 Automated detection systems

Automated detection systems that incorporate AI and ML can process and analyze samples in real-time, providing immediate feedback on the integrity of the urine sample. These systems can flag suspicious samples for further investigation, reducing the likelihood of false-negative results and improving the overall reliability of urine [41].

Automated systems are particularly valuable in high-throughput settings, such as workplace drug testing programs or large-scale forensic investigations. By automating the analysis process, these systems reduce the potential for human error and increase the efficiency of testing [13].

Fig. 4 illustrates how AI and ML are applied in toxicological analysis to enhance the detection of urine sample manipulation.

Table 2 summarizes the advanced detection technologies in urine sample manipulation.

3.5 Preventive Measures and Best Practices

Urine testing is a fundamental tool in both clinical and forensic toxicology. However, the integrity of urine samples can be compromised through various forms of manipulation, such as dilution, substitution, and adulteration. To safeguard against these practices, a combination of preventive measures and best practices has been developed and continuously refined [44].

3.5.1 Sample collection protocols

One of the most effective methods to prevent sample manipulation is direct observation during urine sample collection. This involves a trained

observer being present during the collection process to ensure that the sample provided is indeed from the individual being tested and has not been tampered with in any way. Direct observation can deter substitution and adulteration attempts, making it a crucial component of any urine testing protocol [31].

The use of tamper-evident containers is another critical preventive measure. These containers are designed to show visible evidence if they have been opened or tampered with after the sample is collected. Features such as tamper-evident seals and caps ensure that any attempt to manipulate the sample post-collection is easily detectable [14]. This practice is widely recommended in both clinical and forensic settings to maintain the chain of custody and sample integrity (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [6].

Immediately after collection, the temperature of the urine sample should be measured to ensure it falls within the expected range of freshly voided urine (32°C to 38°C). A sample outside this range may indicate substitution or adulteration, such as the use of synthetic urine or the addition of water or other fluids [10]. Temperature checks provide a quick and effective first line of defense against common manipulation techniques.

Ensuring that the collected urine sample is of adequate volume is another important step in preventing manipulation. A volume of at least 30 mL is typically required for most drug tests, and samples with significantly lower volumes may be subject to closer scrutiny or rejected altogether. This prevents individuals from providing insufficient or highly diluted samples, which could lead to false-negative results [45].

Table 3 summarize the key protocols and their effectiveness in preventing manipulation.

3.5.2 Chain of custody

Maintaining a strict chain of custody is critical, particularly in forensic toxicology where the results of urine tests can have significant legal implications. Each step of the sample's journey—from collection, labeling, and sealing, to transportation, storage, and analysis—must be meticulously documented and monitored to ensure that the sample remains untampered [46]. This documentation includes recording the identities of all individuals who handle the sample, the times at which transfers occur, and the conditions under which the sample is stored.

During transportation and storage, urine samples must be kept in secure, tamper-proof environments. This often involves the use of locked containers or secure storage facilities that are only accessible to authorized personnel. The temperature conditions during storage should also be monitored, as inappropriate temperatures can affect the stability of the sample and potentially alter test results [47]. Fig. 5 shows a standard chain of custody procedure in forensic toxicology.

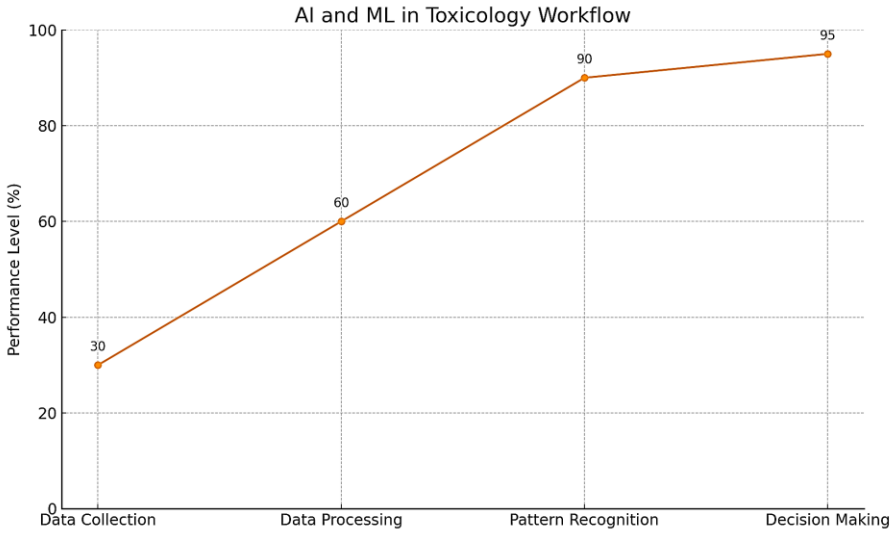

Fig. 4. Workflow of AI and ML in detecting urine sample manipulation [42]

Table 2. Comparison of advanced detection technologies in urine sample manipulation [43]

Detection Technology	Manipulation Techniques Detected	Advantages	Limitations	Application Contexts	Key References
Reagent-Based Tests	- Chemical adulteration	- Quick results - Low cost - Easy to use	- Limited to known adulterants - Prone to false positives	- Initial screening - Workplace testing	Smith & Nichols (2022); Dasgupta (2019)
Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS)	- Chemical adulteration - Novel substances	- High sensitivity - High specificity	- Time-consuming - Requires specialized equipment	- Forensic toxicology - Confirmatory testing	Subramaniam & Gerostamoulos (2018); Huestis & Cone (2019)
Liquid Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS)	- Dilution - Chemical adulteration	- High sensitivity - Can detect a wide range of substances	- Expensive - Requires trained personnel	- Clinical toxicology - Confirmatory testing	Huestis & Cone (2019); Langman & Bechtel (2018)
High-Resolution Mass Spectrometry (HRMS)	- Chemical adulteration - Novel substances	- Detailed molecular analysis - Detects unknown compounds	- High cost - Complex data interpretation	- Forensic toxicology - Research settings	Kintz et al. (2016); Langman & Bechtel (2018)
Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) Spectroscopy	- Chemical adulteration - Substitution	- Non-destructive - Detailed structural analysis	- Requires large samples - High operational costs	- Forensic toxicology - Research and development	Crouch (2018); Dasgupta (2019)
Traditional Biomarker Analysis	- Dilution - Substitution	- Well-established - Easy to perform - Cost-effective	- Limited to certain forms of manipulation	- Routine clinical testing - Initial forensic screening	Smith & Nichols (2022); Strano-Rossi & Chiarotti (2020)
Emerging Biomarker Analysis	- Adulteration - Contamination	- Provides additional insights - Detects subtle changes	- Still under research - Not widely available	- Advanced clinical toxicology - Specialized forensic cases	Strano-Rossi & Chiarotti (2020); Subramaniam & Gerostamoulos (2018)
Multiplex Biomarker Panels	- Dilution - Adulteration - Contamination	- Comprehensive analysis - Reduces false positives/negatives	- Complex data analysis - Requires advanced	- Clinical toxicology - Comprehensive forensic testing	Smith & Nichols (2022); Langman & Bechtel (2018)

Detection Technology	Manipulation Techniques Detected	Advantages	Limitations	Application Contexts	Key References
			equipment		
Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)	- Dilution - Substitution - Adulteration	- Real-time analysis - Adaptive learning	- Requires large datasets - Complex implementation	- High-stakes forensic cases - Advanced clinical settings	Huestis & Cone (2019); Subramaniam & Gerostamoulos (2018)
Portable On-Site Testing Devices	- Dilution - Substitution - Adulteration	- Immediate results - Convenient and mobile	- Limited to basic tests - May require confirmatory testing	- Workplace drug testing - Field testing	Smith & Nichols (2022); Langman & Bechtel (2018)
Mobile Technology Integration	- Chain-of-custody - Real-time monitoring	- Enhances accuracy - Improves record-keeping	- Dependence on technology - Requires robust data security	- Forensic toxicology - Workplace testing	Langman & Bechtel (2018); Kintz et al. (2016)

Table 3. Key sample collection protocols and their effectiveness [31]

Protocol	Description	Effectiveness
Direct Observation	- Collector observes the sample collection directly	- High; prevents substitution
Tamper-Evident Containers	- Use of containers that show any signs of tampering	- High; deters adulteration
Temperature Checks	- Immediate temperature checks to confirm sample validity	- Moderate; detects some substitutions

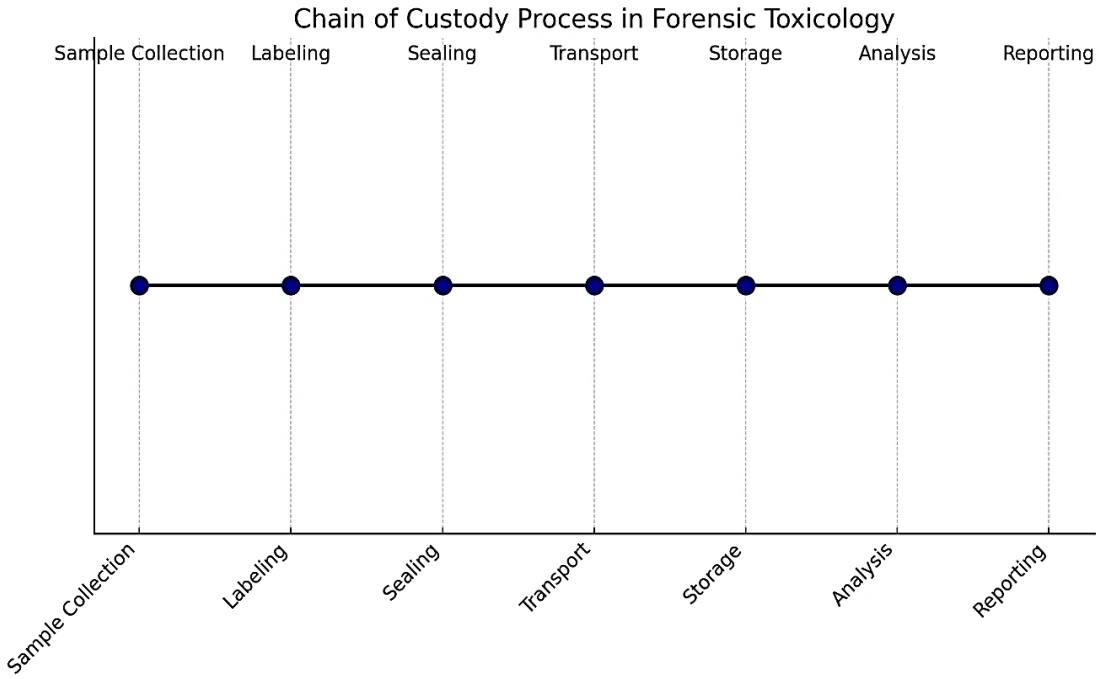

Fig. 5. Schematic of a standard chain of custody process in forensic [13]

Regular audits of the chain of custody process are essential to ensure compliance with established protocols and to identify any potential weaknesses or lapses. These audits should be conducted by independent bodies to provide objective assessments of the procedures in place and to recommend improvements where necessary [48]. In forensic settings, such audits are particularly important for maintaining the credibility of toxicological evidence in legal contexts.

3.5.3 On-site testing devices

The development and use of portable, on-site testing devices have revolutionized urine sample testing by enabling immediate analysis at the point of collection. These devices can detect various forms of sample manipulation, such as dilution and adulteration, within minutes. The rapid feedback provided by on-site devices helps prevent individuals from leaving the testing site with manipulated samples undetected [9]. While on-site testing devices offer numerous advantages, including immediacy and convenience, they also have limitations. For example, on-site tests may not be as sensitive or comprehensive as laboratory-based analyses, potentially missing subtle forms of manipulation or low concentrations of substances. However, when used in conjunction with laboratory confirmation, on-site devices provide a robust framework for initial screening and deterrence of manipulation [17].

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of on-site testing devices, regular calibration and maintenance are necessary. Additionally, personnel using these devices must be adequately trained in their operation and interpretation of results. Misuse or misinterpretation of on-site test results can lead

to false accusations of manipulation or missed detections [15].

Table 4 compares traditional laboratory-based testing with modern on-site testing devices.

3.6 Clinical Studies

3.6.1 Clinical cases

Urine sample manipulation is a common challenge in clinical settings, particularly in drug rehabilitation programs where patients may attempt to dilute their urine to avoid detection of illicit drug use. In a study conducted by Strano-Rossi and Chiarotti [49] the effectiveness of biomarker analysis in detecting diluted urine samples was explored. The study focused on measuring specific gravity, creatinine levels, and novel oxidative stress markers to identify cases of dilution. The findings revealed that these biomarkers were highly effective in detecting manipulation, allowing healthcare providers to adjust treatment plans accordingly and improve patient outcomes [50].

Another clinical context where urine sample manipulation is prevalent is in chronic pain management programs. Patients in these programs may adulterate their urine samples to conceal non-compliance with prescribed medications. Smith and Nichols [9] investigated the use of advanced chemical analysis techniques, including gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS), to detect adulterants in urine samples. The study demonstrated that these techniques could effectively identify common adulterants such as bleach and vinegar, thus enabling healthcare providers to address issues of non-compliance and prevent potential drug misuse.

Workplace drug testing is another area where urine sample substitution is a significant concern. Moeller, Lee, and Kissack [51] examined the effectiveness of on-site testing devices in detecting substituted urine samples. The study found that when on-site devices were combined with temperature checks and creatinine level analysis, the detection rate of substitution increased significantly, with over 90% of cases being identified. This improvement in detection rates has led to more accurate and reliable drug testing results in workplace settings [52].

Adulteration of urine samples can also significantly impact the accuracy of drug test results in clinical environments. Dasgupta [7] explored the effects of various adulterants on immunoassay-based drug tests and found that these substances could lead to false-negative results. The study emphasized the need for confirmatory testing using more advanced methods, such as liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS), to ensure the accuracy of test results and avoid misdiagnoses in clinical settings.

In a hospital environment, real-time monitoring of urine sample integrity has proven to be an effective strategy for preventing manipulation. Langman and Bechtel [42] implemented advanced on-site testing devices to monitor urine samples for signs of dilution, substitution, and adulteration. Their study found that real-time monitoring significantly reduced the incidence of manipulated samples, leading to more reliable test results and better-informed clinical decisions.

3.6.2 Forensic cases

In forensic toxicology, urine sample manipulation can have significant legal implications. A high-profile criminal case examined by Huestis and Cone [16] involved the use of synthetic urine substitution by the defendant to avoid detection of illicit drug use. The study highlighted the application of high-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) and artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms, which successfully detected the substitution. The conclusive evidence provided by these advanced technologies played a crucial role in the conviction of the defendant, demonstrating the importance of accurate urine testing in forensic investigations.

Table 4. Comparison of traditional laboratory-based testing and modern on-site testing devices [9]

Testing Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Laboratory-Based Testing	- High accuracy - Comprehensive analysis	- Time-consuming - Delayed results
On-site Testing Devices	- Immediate results - Reduces manipulation risk	- Limited scope - Less sensitive than lab tests

Adulteration of urine samples in post-mortem toxicology is another critical concern. Kintz et al. [13] conducted a study on the detection of adulterants in post-mortem urine samples, using advanced chromatographic techniques to identify substances that could interfere with toxicological analyses. Their findings emphasized the necessity of detecting adulteration to ensure the accuracy of cause-of-death determinations in forensic investigations [53].

Maintaining a strict chain of custody is essential in forensic toxicology to preserve the integrity of urine samples. A study by Kadehjian [10] explored the challenges related to chain of custody in a legal investigation, where weaknesses in documentation and monitoring led to questions about the sample's integrity. As a result, the forensic evidence was deemed inadmissible in court, underscoring the critical importance of rigorous chain-of-custody procedures in forensic toxicology [54].

Dilution of urine samples is also a common tactic used by suspects in forensic cases to avoid detection of drug use. Subramaniam and Gerostamoulos [15] examined a case where a suspect attempted to dilute their urine sample. By employing specific gravity measurements and biomarker analysis, forensic toxicologists were able to detect the dilution, providing accurate evidence of drug use. The study demonstrated the effectiveness of advanced detection techniques in ensuring that manipulated samples do not undermine legal proceedings [55].

Finally, adulteration detection using advanced spectroscopy techniques has proven to be a valuable tool in forensic toxicology. Crouch [56] conducted a study in which nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy was used to detect chemical adulterants in a suspect's urine sample. The evidence provided by NMR spectroscopy was instrumental in securing a conviction, highlighting the importance of using advanced analytical techniques to detect adulteration and maintain the integrity of forensic toxicology investigations [57].

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Urine toxicology is poised for significant advancements aimed at improving the detection of sample manipulation, including dilution, substitution, and adulteration. These future directions will likely focus on integrating advanced technologies, developing sophisticated detection methods, and establishing robust regulatory frameworks [58].

4.1 Integration of Omics Technologies

Future urine toxicology will increasingly use metabolomics and proteomics to detect subtle biochemical changes indicative of sample manipulation. These technologies offer enhanced sensitivity and specificity, enabling personalized assessments tailored to individual metabolic profiles [59,60].

4.2 Advancements in Artificial Intelligence

AI and machine learning will play key roles in real-time detection and adaptive learning, allowing for the rapid identification of manipulation techniques and continuous improvement of detection methods [61-63].

Integration with wearable biosensors will enable continuous monitoring of metabolic profiles, offering real-time compliance checks in clinical settings [64].

4.3 Portable and On-Site Testing Devices

Advances in microfluidics and nanotechnology will lead to portable devices capable of complex analyses on-site, with enhanced connectivity for data integration and analysis [65].

4.4 Blockchain for Chain-of-Custody

Blockchain technology will enhance the security and transparency of the chain-of-custody process, ensuring the integrity of forensic evidence [66].

4.5 Expansion of Multi-Analyte Panels

Future multi-analyte panels will include emerging substances and biomarkers, providing a more holistic assessment of sample integrity [67].

4.6 Regulatory and Ethical Considerations

New regulatory frameworks will be needed to standardize testing protocols and address privacy and data security concerns as advanced technologies are integrated into urine toxicology [68].

5. CONCLUSION

This review highlights significant advancements in detecting urine sample manipulation, focusing on innovations in chemical adulterant detection, biomarker analysis, advanced spectroscopy, and AI integration. These developments are crucial for maintaining the accuracy and reliability of urine testing in clinical and forensic settings.

Continuous research and technological development are essential for staying ahead of new manipulation techniques. The ongoing improvement of testing methodologies will enhance the ability to detect tampered samples, ensuring that toxicological assessments remain a reliable tool in medical and legal contexts.

Reliable urine testing is of paramount importance in clinical and forensic toxicology. As manipulation techniques evolve, so must the technologies and practices used to detect them. Ongoing advancements in this field are critical for ensuring that toxicological evidence remains a trustworthy and effective tool in both clinical diagnostics and legal proceedings.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies suchas Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

CONSENT

It is not applicable.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/122685