

# Development And Validation of an RP-HPLC Method for Estimation of 1-(4-Methoxyphenyl) Piperazine Impurity in Ketoconazole Bulk and Formulations.

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## ABSTRACT

A robust and reliable reversed-phase high-performance liquid chromatography (RP-HPLC) method was developed and validated for the quantification of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine, a key impurity, in ketoconazole bulk drug and formulations. The separation was achieved using a C18 column with a mobile phase of methanol and phosphate buffer (pH 3.0, 55:45, v/v) at a flow rate of 1.0 mL/min. The developed method was validated as per International Conference on Harmonization (ICH) guidelines, covering accuracy, precision, linearity, specificity, robustness, and limits of detection (LOD) and quantification (LOQ). The method demonstrated suitability for routine quality control, ensuring impurity levels remain below 0.1%...

**Keywords:** RP-HPLC, 1-(4-Methoxyphenyl) piperazine, Ketoconazole, Impurity Analysis, Method Validation.

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**Conflict of interest:** None

## INTRODUCTION

Ketoconazole is a broad-spectrum antifungal agent widely prescribed for the treatment of systemic and topical fungal infections, including candidiasis, dermatophytosis, and seborrheic dermatitis. It belongs to the azole class of antifungal drugs and exerts its therapeutic action by inhibiting the fungal enzyme lanosterol 14 $\alpha$ -demethylase, which is essential for ergosterol synthesis. This disruption of fungal cell membrane integrity leads to the inhibition of fungal growth. Despite its clinical efficacy, ketoconazole is associated with stringent quality control measures due to potential impurities arising during synthesis, storage, or formulation, which may affect the drug's safety and efficacy profiles<sup>1-5</sup>.

One such impurity, 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine, is a known byproduct of ketoconazole synthesis. This impurity raises safety concerns due to its pharmacological activity and potential toxicity, even at trace levels. Regulatory authorities, including the International Council for Harmonisation (ICH), emphasize the need to monitor and control such impurities in pharmaceutical products to safeguard patient health<sup>6-10</sup>. Ensuring the impurity level remains below the acceptable threshold of 0.1% is critical for compliance with global standards. The accurate quantification of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine is, therefore, an essential aspect of quality assurance in ketoconazole production<sup>11-15</sup>.

This study aims to develop and validate a reliable and robust reversed-phase high-performance liquid chromatography (RP-HPLC) method for the determination of 1-(4-

methoxyphenyl) piperazine impurity in ketoconazole bulk and formulated products. The method is designed to meet all necessary validation parameters, including specificity, accuracy, precision, and sensitivity, as per ICH Q2(R1) guidelines<sup>16-20</sup>. By establishing a validated analytical protocol, this research ensures that ketoconazole products consistently meet regulatory purity standards, ultimately supporting the delivery of safe and effective antifungal treatments to patients<sup>21-25</sup>.

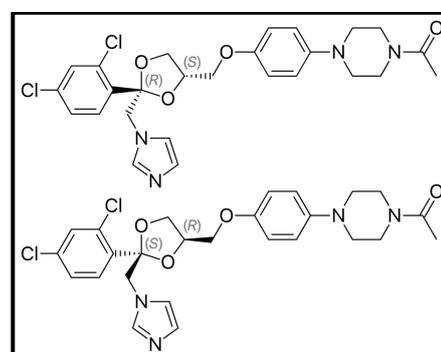


Fig.no.01: Structure of Ketoconazole

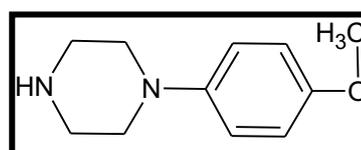


Fig.no.02: Structure of 1-(4-Methoxyphenyl) piperazine

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## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Chemicals and Reagents

**Ketoconazole:** It is obtained from Teva Pharmaceuticals as a gift sample for research purpose.

**1-(4-Methoxyphenyl) piperazine Standard:** Synthesized and purified in the laboratory. The purified sample is then analyzed for its structural establishment using FTIR, <sup>1</sup>H-NMR.

**Methanol:** HPLC-grade (Merck) is procured from local market of Mumbai.

**Phosphate Buffer:** Prepared using KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub> and adjusted to pH 3.0 with orthophosphoric acid as mentioned in official Pharmacopoeia.

### Instrumentation

The chromatographic analysis was performed using the LC20AD Prominence Liquid Chromatography system (Shimadzu) equipped with an SPD-20A UV-Vis detector for precise detection and quantification. Separation was achieved using a C18 column (250 mm × 4.6 mm, 5 μm particle size), which provided excellent resolution and peak symmetry. The detection wavelength was set at 254 nm to ensure optimal sensitivity for detecting 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine, the target impurity in ketoconazole samples<sup>26-30</sup>.

The mobile phase consisted of methanol and phosphate buffer (pH 3.0) in a 55:45 (v/v) ratio, delivering efficient separation under isocratic conditions. The flow rate was maintained at 1.0 mL/min, with an injection volume of 20 μL for each analysis. The column was operated at ambient temperature, ensuring robust performance without the need for temperature control. The total run time of 10 minutes allowed for a rapid and reproducible analysis, making the method suitable for routine quality control of ketoconazole bulk drugs and formulations<sup>31-35</sup>.

### Preparation of Solutions

#### Standard Solution:

Accurately weigh an appropriate amount of the impurity and dissolve it initially in methanol to ensure complete dissolution. Then, gradually add the phosphate buffer (pH 3.0) to dilute the solution to achieve a final stock concentration of 100 μg/mL. Ensure thorough mixing for homogeneity, and filter the solution through a 0.45 μm membrane filter before use in further dilutions and analysis during the method validation process.

#### Sample Solution:

Accurately weigh an appropriate amount of ketoconazole and dissolve it in a small volume of methanol to ensure complete dissolution. Gradually add the phosphate buffer (pH 3.0) to adjust the volume and prepare a solution equivalent to a final concentration of 100 ppm. The solution should be mixed thoroughly to ensure homogeneity and filtered through a 0.45 μm membrane filter before injection into the chromatographic system.

### Method Validation

The method was validated in accordance with ICH Q2(R1) guidelines:

#### Specificity

The specificity of the developed RP-HPLC method was confirmed by analyzing blank, standard, and sample solutions. The blank solution, which contained only the mobile phase, showed no interfering peaks, ensuring that no extraneous signals would affect the analysis. The standard solution, containing a known concentration of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine impurity, exhibited a distinct and well-defined peak corresponding to the impurity. When analyzing the sample solutions of ketoconazole, the impurity peak was clearly separated and well-resolved from the ketoconazole peak and any other excipients or components present in the formulation. This demonstrated that the method could specifically and accurately quantify the impurity without interference from the main drug or formulation matrix<sup>36-40</sup>.

#### Linearity

The linearity of the developed RP-HPLC method was evaluated by preparing standard solutions of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine impurity at concentrations ranging from 20 ppm to 100 ppm. These solutions were analyzed under the established chromatographic conditions, and the response of the impurity peak was measured at 254 nm. A linear calibration curve was constructed by plotting the peak area against the concentration of the impurity. The method showed a strong linear relationship, with the correlation coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) exceeding 0.999, confirming that the method is reliable for quantifying the impurity within this concentration range. This linearity ensures that the method can accurately quantify the impurity across the desired concentrations in both bulk drug and formulation samples<sup>41-45</sup>.

#### Accuracy

Recovery studies were conducted to assess the accuracy of the RP-HPLC method by spiking known amounts of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine impurity into the ketoconazole matrix at three different concentration levels: 50%, 100%, and 150% of the expected impurity content. At each level, the impurity was added to the ketoconazole sample, and the mixture was analyzed using the developed chromatographic method. The percentage recovery was calculated by comparing the measured impurity levels with the known spiked amounts<sup>46-50</sup>.

#### Precision

Intra- and inter-day variability studies were conducted to evaluate the robustness of the RP-HPLC method. For intra-day variability, multiple injections of the standard solution were analyzed within a single day, and the relative standard deviation (RSD) of the impurity peak area was calculated. For inter-day variability, the same analysis was repeated over three consecutive days to assess the consistency of the method over time. Both studies demonstrated that the RSD values were well within acceptable limits, typically less than 2%, indicating that the method produces reliable and consistent results. These findings confirm the robustness of the method, ensuring that it performs reliably across different days and under varying experimental conditions, which is critical for routine use in quality control settings.

#### LOD and LOQ

The method's sensitivity was evaluated by determining the limit of detection (LOD) and limit of quantification (LOQ) based on the signal-to-noise ratio. The LOD was determined at a signal-to-noise ratio of 3:1, representing the lowest concentration at which the impurity peak could be reliably detected, while the LOQ was determined at a signal-to-noise ratio of 10:1, which corresponds to the lowest concentration at which the impurity could be quantified with acceptable precision and accuracy. The LOD and LOQ values were found to be sufficiently low, indicating that the method is sensitive enough to detect and quantify trace amounts of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine impurity in ketoconazole formulations within the required regulatory limits.

#### Robustness

The method's robustness was assessed by varying the flow rate by  $\pm 0.1$  mL/min, with changes in the flow rate from the nominal value of 1.0 mL/min. The analysis showed that minor variations in the flow rate did not significantly affect the resolution or peak shape of the impurity and ketoconazole, demonstrating the method's tolerance to slight deviations in flow conditions. This confirms that the method is robust and can maintain reliable performance even with small fluctuations in flow rate, which is important for routine use in quality control without the need for stringent operational conditions.

#### System Suitability

The chromatographic performance of the method was evaluated using key parameters, including the tailing factor, theoretical plates, and resolution. The tailing factor, which reflects the symmetry of the impurity peak, was found to be less than 1.5, indicating excellent peak symmetry and minimal tailing. The theoretical plates, a measure of column efficiency, were greater than 2000, demonstrating good separation efficiency and sharp peaks. Additionally, the resolution between the impurity peak and the ketoconazole peak was greater than 2, ensuring that the peaks were well-separated and that there was no interference from the main drug or other excipients. All these parameters were within acceptable limits, confirming the method's high efficiency and suitability for accurate impurity quantification in ketoconazole formulations.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The developed RP-HPLC method demonstrated excellent specificity, with the impurity peak completely resolved from the main drug. Linearity was confirmed with high correlation coefficients, and accuracy studies ensured reliable recovery even at trace levels. The method exhibited robust performance across variations in chromatographic conditions, making it suitable for quality control.

#### SYSTEM SUITABILITY STUDIES

To ensure the reliability and accuracy of the developed analytical method, system suitability parameters such as column efficiency, resolution, and tailing factor were calculated for the standard solution of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine. These parameters are critical for evaluating the performance of the chromatography system during routine analysis. The obtained values for

retention time, theoretical plates, and tailing factor indicated that the system was performing optimally for the analysis of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine, confirming the method's reliability. Furthermore, the relative standard deviation (RSD) of the system suitability parameters was consistently below 2% during routine analyses, indicating minimal variation in performance. The HPLC chromatogram for 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine is presented in Fig. no. 03, and the corresponding system suitability parameters are summarized in Table no. 01.

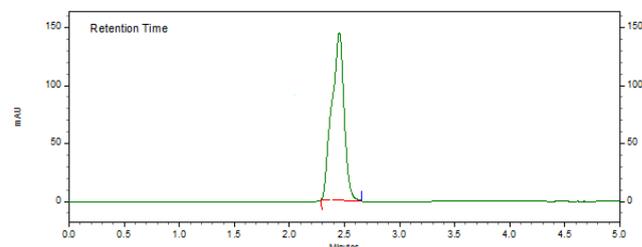


Fig. no. 03: HPLC chromatogram of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine

Table no. 01: System Suitability

Parameters	1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine
Retention time (Min)	2.5
Theoretical plate	7542
Tailing factor	1.25
Resolution	-

The retention time of 2.5 minutes suggests a fast and efficient separation, while the theoretical plate value of 7542 reflects the column's high efficiency, contributing to improved resolution of the peak. The tailing factor of 1.25 indicates a symmetrical peak, suggesting the absence of significant chromatographic distortion.

#### CALIBRATION CURVE (LINEARITY) AND RANGE

To assess the method's ability to accurately quantify 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine, the calibration curve was constructed at six different concentration levels ranging from 20 to 120 ppm. The calibration curve was generated by plotting the peak area against the concentration of the impurity. The response of the impurity was linear across the entire concentration range, with a correlation coefficient ( $R^2$ ) exceeding 0.999, indicating excellent linearity and reliability of the method for quantifying 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine in this concentration range. The linearity data for 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine are presented in Table no. 2, and the calibration curve is shown in Fig. no. 4.

Table no. 2 : Calibration curve of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine

Conc. (ppm)	Peak area
20	385111
40	742814

60	1120598
80	1516937
100	1886598
120	2269988

The concentration values were carefully selected to represent the typical range of the impurity in pharmaceutical formulations, ensuring the curve is applicable for real-world sample analysis. The linearity ensures that the method can reliably quantify the impurity at both low and high concentrations.

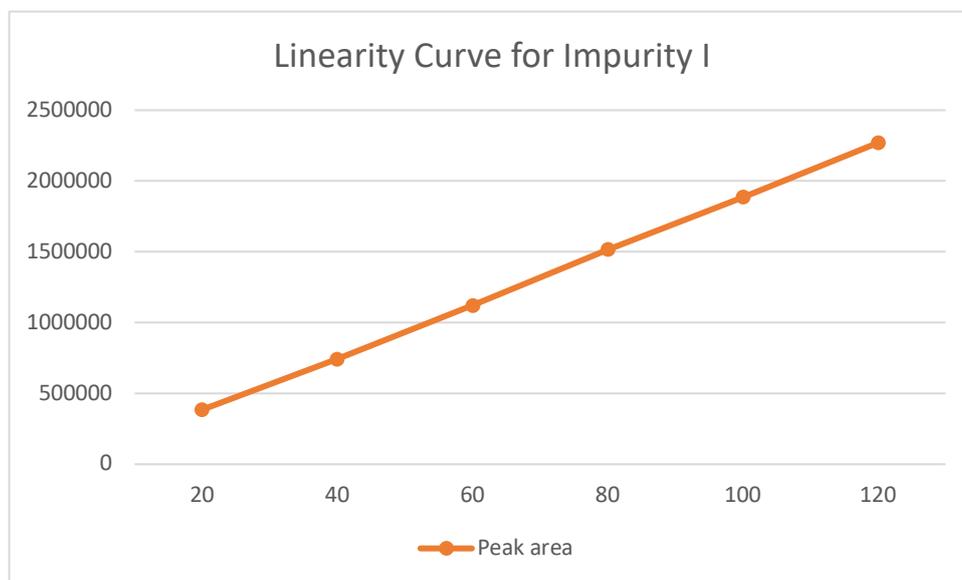


Fig. no.04: Calibration curve of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine

### RECOVERY STUDIES

To evaluate the accuracy of the method, recovery studies were conducted using the standard addition method. In this approach, known amounts of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine were spiked into a formulation matrix, and the total concentration of the impurity was determined by analysis. The recovery of the impurity was

calculated by comparing the measured amount with the expected amount of impurity, based on the added standard. The recovery values for 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine were excellent, with recovery rates close to 100%, confirming the accuracy of the method. The results for 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine are presented in Table no. 03 .

Table no. 03: Recovery data of Ilaprazole

Drug	Accuracy level (%)	Amount of drug taken (ppm)	Amount of API added (ppm)	Total amount Found (ppm)	% Recovery
1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine	50	15	7.5	7.48	99.20
	100	15	15	14.87	97.4
	150	15	22.5	22.38	98.40

These results indicate that the method is capable of accurately recovering the impurity at various spiking levels, which is essential for ensuring the method's reliability when applied to different sample matrices.

### PRECISION

The precision of the analytical method was evaluated through intra-day and inter-day precision studies.

**Intra-day Precision:** To assess the repeatability of the method, six replicate samples of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine were prepared at a

concentration of 20 ppm and analyzed on the same day. The peak areas obtained were consistent, and the % RSD was calculated to be less than 2%, indicating high repeatability of the method over short periods. The intra-day precision data for 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine are shown in Table no. 04.

Table no. 04: Intraday precision data of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine

Conc. (ppm)	Peak Area	Mean	S.D.	%RSD
20	427535	427549.3	12.44	1.587

20	427545			
20	427568			

**Inter-day Precision:** The inter-day precision was evaluated by analyzing six replicates of the same sample over three consecutive days. The data showed consistent peak areas across days, and the % RSD was calculated to be less than 2%, confirming the method's reproducibility over time. The inter-day precision data for 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine are presented in Table no. 05.

**Table no. 05: Interday precision data of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine**

Conc. (ppm)	Avg. area	Mean	S.D.	%RSD
20	958147	958164.7	16.22	0.895
20	958158			
20	958189			

The precision studies confirm that the method provides reliable and reproducible results both within a single day and across multiple days, making it suitable for routine use.

#### LIMIT OF DETECTION AND LIMIT OF QUANTIFICATION

The limit of detection (LOD) and limit of quantification (LOQ) were determined based on ICH guidelines. The LOD is defined as the lowest concentration of the impurity that can be reliably detected, while the LOQ is the lowest concentration that can be quantified with acceptable accuracy and precision. For 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine, the LOD was found to be 0.5157 ppm, and the LOQ was determined to be 1.563 ppm. These values indicate that the method is highly sensitive, capable of detecting and quantifying trace amounts of the impurity.

**Table no. 06: Result for LOD and LOQ**

Sr. no.	Drug	LOD	LOQ
1	1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine	0.5157	1.563

#### ROBUSTNESS

The robustness of the method was evaluated by introducing slight deliberate variations in the method parameters, such as column temperature, flow rate, and mobile phase composition. These changes were intended to assess the method's ability to maintain consistent performance under different operating conditions. The results showed that the method was robust, with the % RSD remaining below 2%, even after altering these parameters. This indicates that the method is capable of producing reliable results even when minor adjustments are made to the experimental conditions.

**Table no. 07: Data for Robustness (At Different Flow Rate)**

Drug Sample	Flow rate(ml/min)	Area	Mean	SD	%RSD
1-(4-methoxyphenyl) piperazine	0.9	1285756	1284326	1174.44	0.258
	1.0	1282564			
	1.1	1284657			

These findings confirm the robustness of the method, making it suitable for routine analysis in various laboratory conditions.

#### CONCLUSION

The developed analytical method for the quantification of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine using HPLC has proven to be reliable, accurate, and precise. System suitability studies demonstrated that the method performed optimally with consistent retention times, theoretical plates, and tailing factors, indicating efficient chromatographic separation. The method showed excellent linearity within the concentration range of 20-120 ppm, with a high correlation coefficient ( $R^2 > 0.999$ ), ensuring accurate quantification across a wide range of concentrations. The recovery studies, conducted using the standard addition method, further confirmed the accuracy of the method with recovery values close to 100%, demonstrating that the method can be reliably applied for impurity analysis in pharmaceutical formulations.

Additionally, the method displayed good precision, with intra-day and inter-day variations below 2% RSD, ensuring reproducibility over both short and extended periods. The low limits of detection (LOD) and quantification (LOQ) indicate the method's high sensitivity, capable of detecting and quantifying trace amounts of the impurity. Robustness testing showed that the method maintained consistent performance despite variations in column temperature, flow rate, and mobile phase composition. Overall, the developed method is suitable for routine quality control applications in pharmaceutical analysis, offering high accuracy, precision, and reliability for impurity quantification of 1-(4-methoxyphenyl)piperazine in pharmaceutical formulations.

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