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Title	Separation of isomeric 2-aminopyridine derivatized N-glycans and N-glycopeptides of human serum immunoglobulin G by using a zwitterionic type of hydrophilic-interaction chromatography
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Citation	Journal of Chromatography A, 1113(1-2), 177-181 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chroma.2006.02.010
Issue Date	2006-04-28
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/10521
Type	journal article
File Information	JCA05-1916R4-REVISED.pdf



1 Separation of isomeric 2-aminopyridine derivatized
2 N-glycans and N-glycopeptides of human serum
3 immunoglobulin G by using a zwitterionic type of
4 hydrophilic-interaction chromatography¹

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15 ¹ Parts of this study were presented at the 18th International Symposium on Glycoconjugates, 2005
16 (Florence, Italy).

17 *Keywords:* Zwitterion-interaction column; hydrophilic-interaction chromatography; oligosaccharides;
18 glycopeptides; mass spectrometry.

1 **Abstract**

2 Isomeric oligosaccharides and isomeric glycopeptides are sometimes difficult to separate on normal-
3 phase (NP) and reversed-phase (RP) columns. A zwitterionic type of hydrophilic-interaction
4 chromatography column with sulfobetaine groups (called ZIC-HILIC column) was first applied to the
5 separation of 2-aminopyridine derivatized (PA) N-glycans and tryptic peptides of human serum
6 immunoglobulin G (IgG). It is shown that the ZIC-HILIC column has high capability for structural
7 recognition of isomeric N-glycans as well as high selectivity for glycopeptides. The former feature
8 (i.e., structural recognition) was proven by sufficient separation of neutral PA N-glycan isomers,
9 which are usually difficult to separate on NP and RP columns. In addition, it is noteworthy that IgG
10 glycopeptides consisting of isomeric N-glycans and the same peptide sequences can be sufficiently
11 separated on a ZIC-HILIC column. The latter feature (i.e., selectivity) was also demonstrated by
12 easily separating two peptide groups with/without N-glycans. Thus, we note that the ZIC-HILIC
13 column is highly promising for a simple analysis of N-glycans and N-glycopeptide samples.

14

15 **1. Introduction**

16 Glycosylation is one of the most common post-translational modifications of proteins. It is related
17 to numerous biological processes [1]. To better understand the roles of glycoproteins, it is important
18 to elucidate oligosaccharide (glycan) structures [2]. However, oligosaccharides make up some of the

1 most complex and challenging samples for chromatography because of the structural diversity of
2 oligosaccharides (composition, sequence, anomeric character, linkage position, and branching
3 pattern) and, as a result, the existence of many isomers. Thus far, several types (reversed-phase (RP),
4 normal-phase (NP), ion exchange, size exclusion) of HPLC have been used extensively in the
5 separation of glycans and glycopeptides [3]. Among these methods, RP-HPLC and NP-HPLC have
6 been used most often for the separation of fluorescent labeled (e.g., 2-aminopyridine (PA) [4,5],
7 2-aminobenzamide (AB) [6-8]), and permethylated glycans [9]. The HPLC methods based on both
8 the RP- and NP-column separations are referred to as the two-dimensional (2D) mapping method
9 [4,5,10]. Recently, several attempts involving the use of new types of columns have been reported for
10 the separation of non-derivatized/derivatized glycans. One is the RP-HPLC method, which uses a
11 porous graphitized carbon (PGC) column [11-16]. The other is hydrophilic-interaction
12 chromatography (HILIC) using silica, amino, amide, cellulose, cyclodextrin [17-24]. In addition, it
13 has been reported that these PGC [15, 25], cellulose [26], and ZIC-HILIC [27] columns can be used
14 for selective purification/enrichment of glycopeptides from a large amount of peptides and also, the
15 HILIC method can separate sialylated glycopeptide isomers from recombinant human interferon- γ
16 [28].

17 In this study, we apply a commercially available ZIC-HILIC column with sulfobetaine groups to
18 the separation of PA N-glycans and tryptic peptides of human serum immunoglobulin G (IgG).

1 Although several types of ZIC columns for HILIC chromatography have been developed, their chief
2 target was simultaneous analysis of small cations, anions, and polar compounds in aqueous solution
3 [29-34], and exceptionally, the separation of large molecules such as proteins and peptides [35]. Here,
4 we report on the two most useful features of the ZIC-HILIC column: (1) high structural recognition
5 capability for N-glycan isomers and (2) high selectivity for glycopeptides. To the best of our
6 knowledge, this is the first report of the ZIC-HILIC separation of PA N-glycans and tryptic
7 glycopeptides of human serum IgG.

9 **2. Experimental**

10 *2.1. Materials*

11 Acetonitrile (HPLC/MS grade), ammonium acetate, and trypsin were purchased from Wako
12 (Osaka, Japan). Water was purified by Milli-Q (Millipore, Milford, MA, USA). IgG from human
13 serum (I4506) was purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO, USA). A ZIC-HILIC (150 mm x
14 2.1 mm I. D., particle size 3.5 μm) column produced by SeQuant (Umeå, Sweden) was purchased
15 from Nomura Chemical (Aichi, Japan).

17 *2.2. Sample preparation*

1 Desialylated PA N-glycans from IgG, shown in Table 1, were prepared following the method
2 previously described [36]. Tryptic peptides of IgG, shown in Table 1, were prepared as follows.
3 Human serum IgG (1 mg) was digested with 20 µg of trypsin at 37°C overnight in 100 µL of 50 mM
4 ammonium bicarbonate buffer (pH 7.8). To terminate the digestion and to release the sialic acids, the
5 digested mixture was heated at 90°C for 1 hour with 0.01 M HCl (pH 2.0). The reaction was then
6 quenched by adding 1.0 M ammonium bicarbonate buffer. After evaporation, the sample was
7 dissolved in 20 µL of water and centrifuged (20 400g, 15 min, 4°C). A part of the supernatant liquid
8 (4 µL) was diluted with acetonitrile (16 µL), and then injected into the ZIC-HILIC/ESI-IT MS
9 system.

10

11 *2.3. ZIC-HILIC/ESI-IT MS analysis*

12 Experiments were performed by using a HPLC/MS system consisting of a Hitachi LaChrom HPLC
13 system with a fluorescence (FL) and ultraviolet detector (UV) and a Hitachi M-8000 3DQ (ion trap:
14 IT) MS with an electrospray ionization (ESI) source. Separations were performed with the SeQuant
15 ZIC-HILIC column in a column oven at 40°C. A gradient elution was applied at a flow rate of 200
16 µL/min using 50% acetonitrile (solvent A), acetonitrile (solvent B), and 100 mM ammonium acetate
17 buffer (solvent C) (A/B/C = 36/59/5 (0 min) →64/31/5 (120 min)). The ESI-MS conditions were:
18 desolvation temperature, 200°C; desolvation gas (nitrogen) pressure, 300 kPa; capillary voltage, +4

1 kV; drift voltage, 30 V; scan range, m/z 200-2000; scan time, 500 ms; and low-mass cutoff m/z , 105.
2 Excitation (Ex) and emission (Em) wavelengths of the FL detector were set at 320 nm and 400 nm,
3 respectively. A value of 220 nm was used for UV detection.

4

5 **3. Results and discussion**

6 *3.1. ZIC-HILIC separation of PA N-glycans of human serum IgG*

7 We first applied the ZIC-HILIC column to the separation of desialylated PA N-glycans of human
8 serum IgG to investigate the structural recognition capability of isomeric N-glycans. Human serum
9 IgG contains two dominant pairs of complex-type N-glycan isomers, Hex₄HexNAc₄Fuc₁ (b and c)
10 and Hex₄HexNAc₅Fuc₁ (f and g) [36,37] (see Table 1). In particular, the latter isomers (f and g) are
11 known to be difficult to separate on both the RP (C18 and C30) and NP (amide) columns (i.e.,
12 difference between their Glucose Units: 0.1(NP), 0.2(RP)) [10,36]. ZIC-HILIC separation was
13 performed using a high concentration of volatile organic solvent (60-80% acetonitrile) and a low
14 concentration of volatile electrolytes (5 mM ammonium acetate), which are compatible with ESI-MS.
15 Figure 1A and 1B show ZIC-HILIC/ESI-MS chromatograms of PA N-glycans of human serum IgG
16 observed by fluorescence (FL) detection and mass chromatograms (MCs) corresponding to the
17 molecular ions $[M+zH]^{z+}$ ($z=1, 2$) of the major N-glycans a-h, respectively. The FL chromatograms
18 in sequential 10 runs are overlaid in Figure 1A. The retention time RSD(%) values of the peaks a-h

1 are 0.37-0.71, which show a good repeatability of this ZIC-HILIC method. It should be noted that
2 both pairs of isomeric PA N-glycans (b/c and f/g) are completely separated in the present method (see
3 Figure 1B). We also note that these isomers derivatized with AB have been partially separated on
4 NP-HPLC [7].

5 From the results shown in Figure 1, it can be seen that the ZIC-HILIC method has superior
6 structural recognition capability of N-glycan isomers. Although the particular detailed retention
7 mechanism of ZIC-HILIC separation of large molecules has not yet been completely elucidated in the
8 stationary phase, the structural recognition capability of N-glycans seems to be primarily based on the
9 hydrophilicity of N-glycans and the electrostatic interaction between N-glycans and the sulfobetaine
10 groups on the surface.

11 12 *3.2. ZIC-HILIC separation of tryptic peptides of human serum IgG*

13 Next, we applied the ZIC-HILIC method to tryptic peptides of human serum IgG. Tryptic peptides
14 of IgG were directly analyzed by ZIC-HILIC/ESI-IT MS. Figure 2A shows the UV chromatogram of
15 tryptic peptides of IgG detected at 220 nm. Figure 2B and 2C show accumulated mass spectra over
16 0-60 min and over 60-100 min, respectively. It is likely that a large number of hydrophobic peptides
17 are observed at the earlier retention time of 0-60 min and that relatively hydrophilic N-glycopeptides
18 are observed at the later retention time of 60-100 min. This result clearly indicates that the

1 ZIC-HILIC method has a high degree of selectivity for the two peptide groups with/without
2 N-glycans. Figure 2D shows MCs of the major N-glycopeptides (see Table 1).

3 Human serum IgG consists of the major two subclasses, IgG-1 and IgG-2. Their tryptic peptide
4 sequences containing N-glycosylation sites are EEQYNSTYR for IgG-1 and EEQFNSTFR for IgG-2.
5 The retention times of the IgG-1 N-glycopeptides (a-1–h-1) are always longer than are those of the
6 IgG-2 N-glycopeptides (a-2–h-2). The reason may be that the IgG-1 glycopeptide containing tyrosine
7 (Y) is more hydrophilic than is the IgG-2 glycopeptide containing phenylalanine (F) because tyrosine
8 has an additional hydroxyl group. In addition, it should be noted that the N-glycopeptide isomers
9 (b-1/c-1, b-2/c-2 and f-2/g-2) were also sufficiently separated from each other. Thus, the results in
10 Figure 2 likely indicate that the ZIC-HILIC separation of N-glycopeptides is primarily based on the
11 hydrophilicity of both the peptide and the neutral N-glycan residues.

12 Finally, we note that this method capable to separate N-glycopeptide isomers is particularly
13 useful for a LC/MS based direct analysis of peptide amino-acid sequence and isomeric N-glycan
14 structures of N-glycopeptides.

15

16 **Conclusion**

17 The HPLC method using a ZIC-HILIC column with sulfobetaine groups showed high structural
18 recognition capability for isomeric neutral PA N-glycans, which are known to be difficult to separate

1 on both normal-phase and reversed-phase columns. In addition, this method demonstrated high
2 selectivity for N-glycopeptides obtained by trypsin digestion of human serum IgG. In particular, it is
3 noteworthy that IgG N-glycopeptides consisting of isomeric N-glycans and the same peptide
4 sequence could be separated sufficiently by the ZIC-HILIC method of separation. Studies are
5 underway to examine its usefulness for other types of glycans, glycopeptides, and glycolipids,
6 according to a recommendation of the anonymous reviewers.

7

8 **Acknowledgments**

9 This work was supported in part by the National Project on Functional Glycoconjugate Research
10 Aimed at Developing New Industry from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and
11 Technology of Japan. This work was also supported in part by SENTAN, JST (Japan Science and
12 Technology Agency). The authors thank for the anonymous reviewers for many pertinent comments
13 and suggestions.

14

15

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1 **CAPTIONS:**

2 **Figure 1.** ZIC-HILIC separation of PA N-glycans of human serum IgG.

3 (A) Fluorescence (FL) chromatograms (Em, 400 nm; Ex, 320 nm) in sequential 10 runs. Retention
4 time RSD(%) values of peaks a-h are 0.37-0.71. (B) Mass chromatograms (MCs) of molecular ions
5 $[M+zH]^{z+}$ ($z=1, 2$; $m/z \pm 1$ (tolerance)) of major eight peaks (a-h). Mass chromatograms of d, e, f, and
6 g are a sum of MCs for their singly- and doubly- protonated ions which are relatively abundant. The
7 inconsistencies between the m/z integer values and those expected from the exact mass values in
8 Table 1 are due to both the rounding error of integer calculations and the mass calibration error in a
9 range of higher m/z values.

10

11 **Figure 2.** ZIC-HILIC separation of tryptic peptides of human serum IgG.

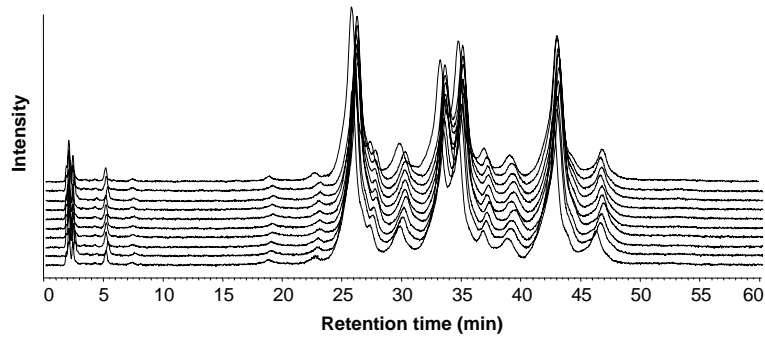
12 (A) UV chromatograms (detection at 220 nm). (B) Accumulated mass spectrum over 0-60 min. (C)
13 Accumulated mass spectrum over 60-100 min. (D) Mass chromatograms of molecular ions $[M+zH]^{n+}$
14 ($z=2$; $m/z \pm 1$ (tolerance)) of major N-glycopeptides of IgG-1 (a-1-h-1) and IgG-2 (a-2-h-2).

15

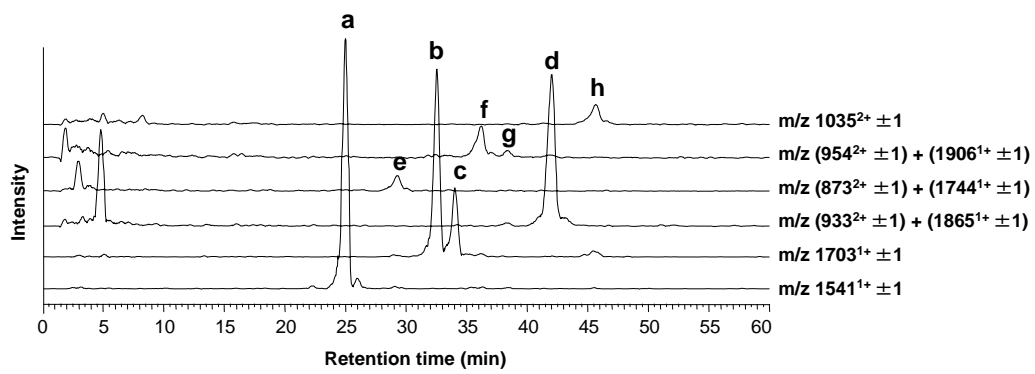
16 **Table 1.** Summary of structures, annotations, exact mass values, and observed integer mass values of
17 PA N-glycans and major N-glycopeptides from human serum IgG in Figures 1 and 2.

18

(A) FL Chromatograms



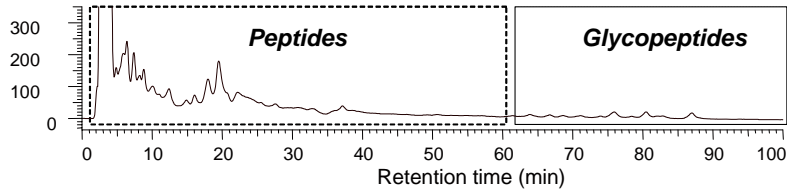
(B) Mass Chromatograms



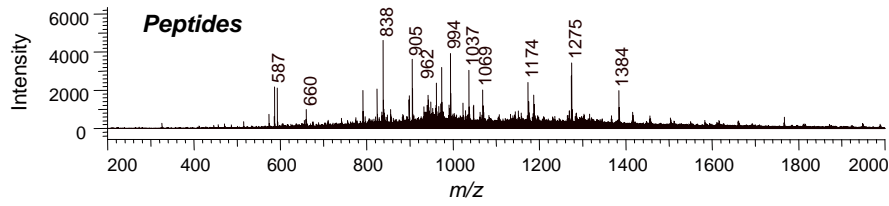
1

2 **Figure 1.**

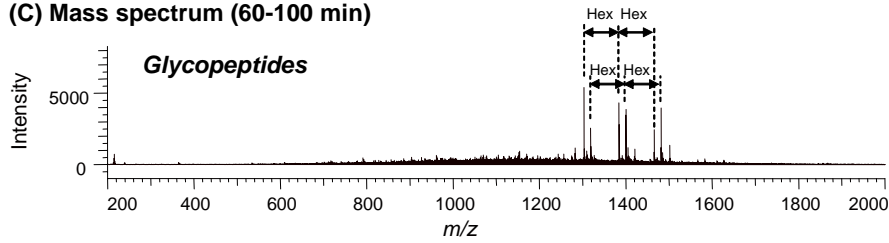
(A) UV chromatogram (220 nm)



(B) Mass spectrum (0-60 min)

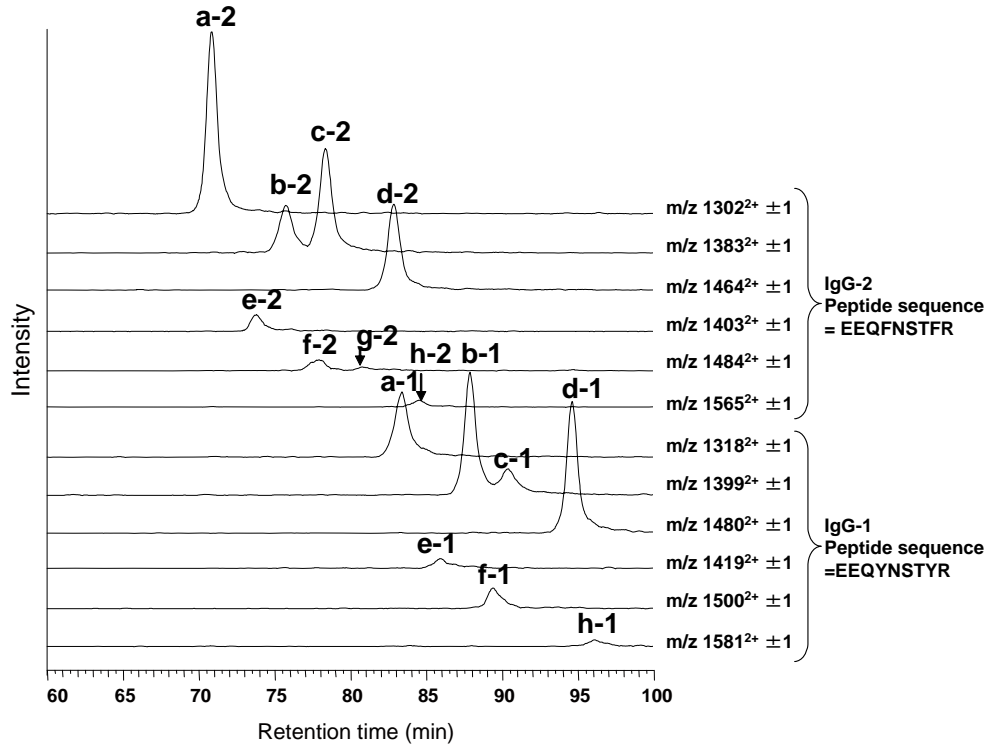


(C) Mass spectrum (60-100 min)



1

(D) Mass chromatograms



2

3 Figure 2.

Structures (n=1-3)	PA N-glycans (R ₁ = PA)	IgG-1 N-glycopeptides (R ₂ = EEQYNSTYR)	IgG-2 N-glycopeptides (R ₃ = EEQFNSTFR)
	a E.m. 1540.6 Obs. 1541(z=1)	a-1 E.m. 2633.0 Obs. 1318(z=2)	a-2 E.m. 2601.1 Obs. 1302(z=2)
	b / c E.m. 1702.7 Obs. 1703(z=1)	b-1 / c-1 E.m. 2795.1 Obs. 1399(z=2)	b-2 / c-2 E.m. 2763.1 Obs. 1383(z=2)
	d E.m. 1864.7 Obs. 933(z=2),1865(z=1)	d-1 E.m. 2957.1 Obs. 1480(z=2)	d-2 E.m. 2925.2 Obs. 1464(z=2)
	e E.m. 1743.7 Obs. 873(z=2),1744(z=1)	e-1 E.m. 2836.1 Obs. 1419(z=2)	e-2 E.m. 2804.1 Obs. 1403(z=2)
	f / g E.m. 1905.7 Obs. 954(z=2),1906(z=1)	f-1 E.m. 2998.2 Obs. 1500(z=2)	f-2 / g-2 E.m. 2966.2 Obs. 1484(z=2)
	h E.m. 2067.8 Obs. 1035(z=2)	h-1 E.m. 3160.2 Obs. 1581(z=2)	h-2 E.m. 3128.2 Obs. 1565(z=2)

○ : mannose (Man)

● : galactose (Gal)

△ : fucose (Fuc)

□ : N-acetyl-glucosamine (GlcNAc)

E.m. : exact mass

PA : 2-aminopyridine

Obs. : Observed mass

z : number of charges

1

2 **Table 1.**