

Analytical Methods

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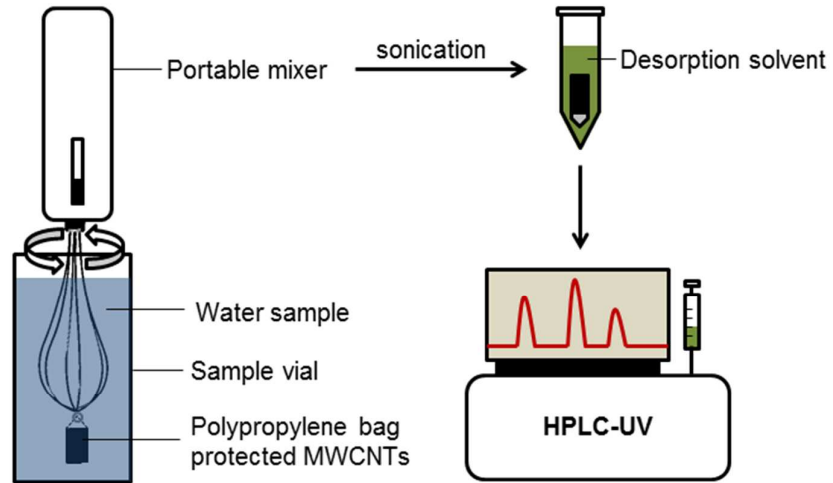
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Graphical Abstract:



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3 1 PORTABLE MICRO-SOLID PHASE EXTRACTION FOR THE DETERMINATION
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5 2 OF POLYCYCLIC AROMATIC HYDROCARBONS IN WATER SAMPLES
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34 15 **Abstract**

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36 16 This work describes for the first time the application of portable micro-solid phase extraction
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38 17 (μ -SPE) for the determination of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). In this
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40 18 technique, a battery-operated electric whisk stirrer combined with μ -SPE device was
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42 19 employed to provide agitation of the sample solution and facilitate the pre-concentration of
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44 20 the target analytes. The μ -SPE device consisted of multi-walled carbon nanotubes
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46 21 (MWCNTs) packed in polypropylene (PP) membrane. The performance of the μ -SPE
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48 22 sampling coupled with high performance liquid chromatography-ultraviolet detection
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50 23 (HPLC-UV) was evaluated for the analysis of five target PAHs (fluorene, anthracene,
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52 24 fluoranthene, pyrene, benzo[*a*]pyrene) in water. Important μ -SPE parameters were studied
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54 25 and the optimal extraction conditions were 30 min of extraction time, 10 min of desorption
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3 26 time, isopropanol as the conditioning and desorption solvent and no addition of salt. The
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5 27 developed portable μ -SPE method provided good linearity in the concentration range of 0.1 -
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7 28 100 $\mu\text{g/L}$ for fluorene, anthracene, fluoranthene, pyrene and 1 - 100 $\mu\text{g/L}$ for benzo[*a*]pyrene
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9 29 with good coefficients of determination (r^2) (0.9975 - 0.9989), low limits of detection (0.01 -
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11 30 0.59 $\mu\text{g/L}$), acceptable intra-day precisions (3.5 - 6.2% for on-site analysis) and acceptable
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13 31 relative recoveries (77.3 - 107.2%). The portable- μ -SPE combined with HPLC-UV was
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15 32 successfully applied to the determination of targeted PAHs in selected water samples. The
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17 33 proposed sample preparation technique proved to be simple, cost effective, easy-to-operate
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19 34 and feasible for both off-site and on-site analyses.
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36 *Keywords:* Portable micro-solid phase extraction; On-site analysis; Polycyclic aromatic
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1 Introduction

For years, analysis of chemical contaminations in the environment has been a great concern. The overall analytical scheme is crucial as some of the pollutants are very toxic for living organisms even in very low doses [1]. However, two-thirds of the total analysis time largely involve sampling and sample pretreatment processes and this has prompted scientists to develop methods that can facilitate the whole analytical procedures [2, 3]. On-site sample preparation has been a key factor in the pursuit of this objective. It may reduce errors, and eliminates the probability of sample change and time delays associated with both sample storage and transport, resulting in more accurate and more precise analytical data.

Performing on-site sample preparation is a good practice since it has been demonstrated that analytes are more stable in the extraction phase compared to the natural matrix [3]. Solid phase microextraction (SPME) and stir-bar sorptive extraction (SBSE) are the most commonly used sample preparation methods based on solid phase extraction. However, there are some limitations associated with both methods. Firstly, the use of large size magnetic stirrer that requires alternating current power supply in conventional laboratory process is inconvenient to carry for on-site purposes. Secondly, commercially available SBSE are incompatible with sampler jaws (such as electric drill jaws) [4, 5]. These two limitations can largely be resolved by extending the applications to the on-site analysis. Sigma-Aldrich Supelco has launched a commercial SPME portable field sampler (Supelco TM) with 100 μm polydimethyl-siloxane (PDMS) fiber. In order to be more cost-effective, different approaches using home-made SPME and SBSE field samplers have been developed [4, 6, 7]. Both methods employed similar extraction device in which the solid phase was usually held by the drill bit of the electric drill. However, these methods apparently are unable to remove matrix interferences and provide sample pre-concentration simultaneously. As the matrix refers to all components in the sample apart from the analyte(s) of interest, the matrix can have a

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3 64 consequential effect on the quality of the results obtained [8, 9]. In order to address the issue,
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5 65 membrane protected sorbent techniques have been introduced. Both micro-solid phase
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7 66 extraction (μ -SPE) and solid phase membrane tip extraction (SPMTE) utilize sorbents held in
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9 67 polypropylene (PP) membrane envelope as the extraction medium. The membrane works
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11 68 effectively for filtration of the matrix components due to the small pore size of the membrane
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13 69 that act as extraction barrier between adsorbent and sample matrices [10]. Compared to
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15 70 conventional SPE, these approaches require much less organic solvent and smaller amounts
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17 71 of sorbent such as MWCNTs [11, 12].
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21 72 Carbon nanotubes have tremendous applications in various fields of chemical
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23 73 analysis. The increasing number of works involving MWCNTs is due to its extraordinary
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25 74 large surface area which also makes them potentially useful as sorbent materials [13, 14].
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27 75 Current literature review clearly shows that MWCNTs present an adequate sorption capacity
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29 76 for the extraction of various organic compounds (pesticides, drugs, phthalate esters, aromatic
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31 77 compounds etc.) [15-18]. However, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no report on
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33 78 on-site application of μ -SPE.
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37 79 In this work, a hand-held battery-operated portable stirrer was developed for the
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39 80 extension of a μ -SPE technique in field sampling. The device comprised a miniature PP bag
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41 81 containing MWCNTs and the bag was attached to the bottom of the stirrer using a fine
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43 82 stainless steel wire. The μ -SPE technique eliminates the need of sample filtration and
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45 83 pertinent sorbents can be utilized according to the target analytes while agitation of sample
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47 84 solutions was provided by the whisk mixer itself. The feasibility of the designed portable μ -
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49 85 SPE sampling approach combined with HPLC-UV was evaluated for the determination of
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51 86 five PAHs as model compounds.
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56 88 **2 Experimental**

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3 89 *2.1 Reagents and materials*
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5 90 The PAH standards, fluorene (FLU), anthracene (ANT), fluoranthene (FLT), pyrene
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7 91 (PYR) and benzo[*a*]pyrene (BaP) were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO,
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9 92 USA). Stock solutions (1000 mg/L of each analytes) were prepared separately by dissolving
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11 93 the compounds in acetonitrile (ANT, PYR and BaP) and methanol (FLU and FLT) and stored
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13 94 at 4°C in the dark. Working solutions of standard mixture were prepared by dilution in
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15 95 methanol. Analytical grade sodium chloride was purchased from Bendosen (Selangor,
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17 96 Malaysia). HPLC-grade tetrahydrofuran (THF), isopropyl alcohol (IPA), methanol (MeOH),
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19 97 and acetonitrile (ACN) were purchased from Merck (Darmstadt, Germany). Milli-Q water
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21 98 (resistance ≥ 18.2 M Ω) was produced by Milli-Q system (Millipore, Bedford, MA, USA).
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23 99 Q3/2 Accurel 2E HF (R/P) PP backbone PTFE sheet (157 μm thickness, 0.2 μm pore size)
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25 100 was purchased from Membrana (Wuppertal, Germany). MWCNTs (purity > 95%, outside
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27 101 diameter 8-15 nm, average length 50 μm) were obtained from Sun Nanotech (Jiangxi, China).
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29 102 A Daiso battery-operated electric mixer (Johor, Malaysia) with a replaceable rotating whisk
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31 103 was purchased from a local store and used as a portable stirrer.
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43 105 *2.2 HPLC-UV analysis*
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46 107 The PAHs were identified and quantified using a Agilent Technologies G4288C
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48 108 HPLC system with ultraviolet detection (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, California,
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50 109 USA). Chromatographic separations of PAHs were carried out on a Zorbax SB-C18 column
51
52 110 (2.1 \times 100 mm, 3.5 μm) (Agilent, USA). The separations were performed using isocratic
53
54 111 mobile phase acetonitrile-water (80:20) (v/v) at a flow rate of 0.2 mL/min. Detection
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56 112 wavelength and injection volume was fixed at 254 nm and 2 μL , respectively.
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58 113 Chromatographic data were processed using Agilent Chemstation software.
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115 *2.3 Preparation of portable μ -SPE device*

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117 The portable μ -SPE sampling equipment consisted of two main parts, namely a
118 battery operated electromotor mixer and a μ -SPE device containing MWCNTs enclosed in a
119 miniature home-made PP membrane bag. A stainless steel whisk (10 cm \times 2 cm) was fixed
120 onto the hand-carry electric stirrer. Maximum stirring speed of up to 1080 rpm was achieved
121 using this mixer. The speed was kept constant throughout the run and was determined by a
122 portable Omnitech DT2234C⁺ intelligent digital photo tachometer (Kuching, Malaysia). The
123 mini-electromotor was powered by two AA NiMH 1.25 V rechargeable batteries (Energizer
124 Recharge Universal).

125 The PP membrane miniature bag was prepared according to Basheer *et al.* [2] with
126 slight modification. Briefly, a piece of PP membrane was cut into a shape of a home-base
127 (2.0 cm \times 0.7 cm for the bottom square with a 0.5 cm high triangle on top). The flat edge of
128 the membrane was equally folded to form a smaller house-shaped membrane bag. Portable
129 impulse heat sealer was used to heat-seal the edge of the longest flap. MWCNTs (4 mg) were
130 introduced into the house-shaped membrane bag through the remaining open end, using a
131 micropipette tip and a glass pestle tip, which was then heat-sealed to secure the sorbent.

132 Prior to use, each μ -SPE device was cleaned by ultrasonication in acetone for 5 min
133 and stored in the selected conditioning solvent until use. For extraction, the prepared house-
134 shaped bag containing sorbent was hung at the bottom of the stirrer using stainless steel wire.
135 The portable μ -SPE device was exposed to the samples solution during the extraction (Fig. 1)
136 and it was operated by the electromotor instead of using the conventional magnetic stirrer to
137 accomplish the agitation of the solution. The device was used for both laboratory off-site μ -
138 SPE analysis as well as on-site field sampling.

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5 140 2.4 *Environmental water samples*

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7 141 On-site sample preparation of environmental water samples source were carried out at
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10 142 different locations in the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Johor Bahru campus involving three
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12 143 different types of water samples, namely lake water, river water and farm water at the UTM
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14 144 Educational and Research Agriculture farm. The in-laboratory extractions were carried out on
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16 145 the above-mentioned water samples. All samples were used without any pre-treatment or
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18 146 filtration.

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23 148 2.5 *Micro-Solid Phase Extraction*24
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27 150 2.5.1 *Off-site sampling/ Laboratory sampling*

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29 151 Off-site water samples were collected in Teflon bottles pre-cleaned with acetone and
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31 152 covered with aluminium foil. The samples were stored in the dark at 4°C for 3 days until
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33 153 analysis. Spiked ultrapure water samples were prepared in the laboratory. MWCNTs (4 mg)
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35 154 were packed in the house-shaped membrane. The miniature PP bag was conditioned with
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37 155 isopropanol prior to the extraction. During extraction of the targeted PAHs, the hand-held
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39 156 stirrer was clamped to a retort stand with the stirrer blades and the μ -SPE device completely
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41 157 immersed in the sample solution (30 mL). The solution was continuously agitated at 1080
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43 158 rpm for 30 min. After extraction, the PP bag was removed, rinsed in high purity water and
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45 159 dabbed dry with lint-free tissue. The bag was then placed inside a 500 μ L safe-lock tube.
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47 160 Isopropanol (IPA) (200 μ L) was added to the tube and desorption of analytes was via
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49 161 conventional ultrasonication using a Bransonic 3510E-DTH ultrasonic cleaner (Branson
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51 162 Ultrasonics, Danbury, USA) for 10 min. After desorption, 2 μ L of the extract was injected
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53 163 into HPLC-UV for analysis.

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165 2.5.2 *On-site sampling*

166 For on-site extraction, 30 mL of lake water was processed as described in off-site
167 sampling (pH and salinity of sample solution were not adjusted). After extraction, the PP bag
168 was placed inside a safe-lock tube and then placed in an ice-chilled box before transported to
169 the laboratory for desorption process and HPLC-UV determination. The procedure was
170 carried out in triplicates. At the end of each extraction, the used whisk was washed with
171 acetone to avoid contamination.

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173 2.6 *Validation of method*

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175 For validation of the portable μ -SPE method, calibration curves were constructed for
176 the off-site analysis of sample solution containing a mixture of five PAHs at concentrations
177 of 0.1–100 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (FLU, ANT, FLT and PYR) and 1 - 100 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (BaP). The quantifications
178 were carried out based on the peak area of each PAH. The method was evaluated for its
179 linearity, limit of detection (LOD) and limit of quantification (LOQ), extraction recovery, and
180 precision. The analytical results for on-site extraction and off-site extraction were compared
181 to validate the feasibility of the on-site sampling.

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183 **3 Results and discussion**

184 3.1 *Optimization of portable μ -SPE*

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186 In order to evaluate the performance of the portable μ -SPE device, optimization
187 procedures were performed on spiked water sample at concentrations of 10 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (FLU, ANT,

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3 188 FLT and PYR) and 50 µg/L (BaP). All the parameters for optimization were studied in the
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5 189 laboratory (off-site analysis).
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10 191 *3.1.1 Optimization of sample volume and organic solvent conditioning*
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12 Sample volume is important in determining the loading capacity of MWCNTs. The
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14 193 effect of sample volumes in the range of 10 – 35 mL was investigated. It was found that
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16 194 lower sample volumes gave poorer extraction efficiencies (Fig. 2(A)). It was noted that
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18 195 solutions of < 20 mL experienced reduced surface contact between analytes and adsorbent
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20 196 due to vortex flow created by the whisk rotation, thus decreasing the adsorption of analytes.
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22 197 The results also indicated that sample volume of 30 mL gave the highest extraction efficiency
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24 198 for most of the PAHs studied. This volume is adequate to allow the adsorbent to extract the
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26 199 analytes effectively. No significant increase was observed with further increase in sample
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28 200 volume which suggested that the adsorption sites of the adsorbent have reached saturation.
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30 201 Sample volume of 30 mL was therefore chosen as the optimum sample volume and applied in
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32 202 the subsequent experiments.
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36 203 As PP membrane and MWCNTs are hydrophobic in nature, different types of organic
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38 204 solvents were evaluated for conditioning and enhancing the wettability of the µ-SPE device.
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40 205 Organic solvents with various polarities and water-miscible properties (methanol,
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42 206 acetonitrile, tetrahydrofuran and isopropanol) were used. The µ-SPE device was immersed in
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44 207 corresponding solvents for 2 min and then rinsed with high-purity water. The results (Fig.
45
46 208 2B) showed that isopropanol gave highest extraction efficiencies for three of the analytes
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48 209 (FLT, PYR and BaP) compared to the other conditioning solvents investigated. This result
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50 210 suggested that wetting of the PP bag with slightly non-polar organic solvent improved the
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52 211 interactions between the hydrophobic membrane and MWCNTs with samples solution. The
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54 212 impact of the membrane material as a sorbent itself was not investigated since it has been
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3 213 reported previously that PP membrane does not have significant influence on analytes
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5 214 adsorption [12].
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10 216 *3.1.2 Optimization of desorption solvents and desorption time*
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12 217 Four different organic solvents namely methanol, acetonitrile, tetrahydrofuran and
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14 218 isopropanol were investigated for use in the desorption of PAHs from the MWCNTs. The
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16 219 best desorption efficiencies were obtained when isopropanol and tetrahydrofuran were used
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18 220 as desorption solvent in comparison with other solvents (Fig. 2(C)). Due to the strong
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20 221 adsorption of hydrophobic PAHs on MWCNTs, only non-polar solvent can disrupt the
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22 222 interactions and desorb the PAHs from the MWCNTs [19]. Tetrahydrofuran and isopropanol
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24 223 are more hydrophobic compared to methanol and acetonitrile as they have lower polarity
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26 224 index and dielectric constant. This goes according to “like dissolves like” aphorism, which
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28 225 stated that substances will dissolve best in solvent with similar chemical characteristics
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30 226 [20]. Isopropanol was chosen as the desorption solvent since it displayed a greater capacity to
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32 227 enhance BaP (which is listed as priority pollutant of unsubstituted PAHs according to the US-
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34 228 EPA) solubility compared to tetrahydrofuran [21].
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38 229 Analytes were desorbed from MWCNTs using ultrasonication of the extraction device
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40 230 in organic solvent as sonication can break the interactions between PAHs and MWCNTs.
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42 231 Desorption times in the range of 5 to 20 min were studied. It was observed that 10 min of
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44 232 sonication was required for the analytes to be completely desorbed from the MWCNTs
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46 233 except for BaP (data not shown). This might be due to the higher affinity of BaP towards
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48 234 MWCNTs compared to the other analytes. No significant increase in peak area of PAHs was
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50 235 observed when desorption times of > 10 min were used. Therefore, 10 min of desorption time
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52 236 with ultrasonication was adopted as the optimum desorption conditions.
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3 238 *3.1.3 Optimization of salt addition*
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5 239 Salting-out effect is often associated with the ionic strength of the aqueous phase.
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7 240 Increasing ionic strength may increase the transfer of analytes from sample solution to the
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9 241 adsorbent phase since the purpose of salt addition is to reduce the solubility of analytes in the
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11 242 aqueous sample. The salting-out effect on extraction efficiency was determined by the
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13 243 addition of sodium chloride in the range of 0 to 15% (w/v) to the sample solution. It was
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15 244 found that there was a negative effect on the peak areas of analytes with the addition of
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17 245 sodium chloride (data not shown). The addition of NaCl did not contribute in extraction of
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19 246 PAHs from aqueous solution since PAHs are non-polar and have low solubility in water. In a
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21 247 similar previous work, Hou and Lee reported that no change in extraction efficiency was
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23 248 observed when NaCl was added to the sample solution [22]. High salt concentration also
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25 249 increased the viscosity of sample solution which decreased the diffusion rate of analytes [23].
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27 250 Therefore, no addition of salt was adopted in this study.
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34 252 *3.1.4 Optimization of extraction time*
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36 253 The effect of extraction time was studied since mass transfer is a time-dependent
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38 254 process. A period of time is needed for the system to achieve equilibrium. Extraction time
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40 255 profiles in the range of 10 to 50 min were examined to determine the equilibrium time
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42 256 required for PAHs adsorption from the sample solution to the MWCNTs. It was found that
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44 257 the extraction efficiencies of PAHs reached a plateau at 30 min and no significant increase in
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46 258 the peak areas was observed when the extraction time exceed 30 min (Fig. 2D). Instead, a
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48 259 slight decrease was observed for some analytes beyond 30 min. Hence, 30 min was selected
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50 260 as the optimum extraction time
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56 262 *3.2 Method validation of the proposed method*
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3 263 In order to validate the analytical performance of the portable μ -SPE, analyses were
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5 264 carried out to obtain the calibration curves and determine the limits of detection (LOD) and
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7 265 limits of quantification (LOQ) for the analytes using spiked deionized water as shown in
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9
10 266 Table 1. Calibration curves were constructed by plotting peak area versus concentration
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12 267 based on six concentration levels in the range of 0.1 - 100 $\mu\text{g/L}$ for FLU, ANT, FLT and PYR
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14 268 and 1 - 100 $\mu\text{g/L}$ for BaP. Triplicate analyses were performed for each concentration. Good
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16 269 linearities were obtained with coefficients of determination (r^2) in the range of 0.9975 to
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18 270 0.9989 and relative standard deviations (% RSD) of 4.8% to 7.1%. The LODs and LOQs of
19
20 271 the method were calculated based on a signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) of 3 and 10, respectively.
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22
23 272 The LODs obtained for the analytes were in the range of 0.01 to 0.59 $\mu\text{g/L}$ while the LOQs
24
25 273 were in the range of 0.05 – 1.96 $\mu\text{g/L}$.

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275 3.3 *Real water samples analysis*

276 In order to assess the feasibility of the portable μ -SPE approach, three environmental
277 water samples were extracted on-site using extraction conditions identical to the off-site
278 analysis. The concentration of targeted PAHs detected in the water samples were summarized
279 as in Table 2. The river water samples in with no PAHs detected were spiked with the target
280 analytes to give final concentrations of 10 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (FLU, ANT, FLT and PYR) and 50 $\mu\text{g/L}$
281 (BaP). The average relative recoveries (ratios of peak areas of analytes from spiked river
282 water and spiked ultrapure water extraction, for off-site and on-site analysis) were in the
283 range of 77.3 to 104.1 % with RSDs of < 10.0% (intra-day, $n = 3$). This clearly indicates that
284 the results are reproducible and the matrix effects were reduced as this method provides a
285 membrane works effectively for pre-filtration of the matrix components along with pre-
286 concentration simultaneously. A statistical t -test was also performed to verify the equivalence
287 of the two sampling modes as described in Table 3. The p -values in independent t -test for

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3 288 comparison of on-site and off-site μ -SPE were more than 0.05 for most cases (FLU, FLT,
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5 289 PYR and BaP) confirmed that these two modes of extraction were comparable. Fig. 3 shows
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7 290 chromatograms of extracted spiked and non-spiked river water sample under identical
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9 291 extraction conditions.
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13 293 3.4 Comparison with other published method

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15 294 A comparison between the portable μ -SPE method and other reported methods based
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17 295 on sample pre-treatment techniques of PAHs in environmental water samples are given in
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19 296 Table 4. In general, comparable recoveries and LODs were demonstrated by the portable μ -
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21 297 SPE and previously published methods [24-27]. Although the agarose film liquid phase
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23 298 microextraction (AF-LPME) and SPE showed lower LODs, these methods required longer
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25 299 extraction times [25] and involved tedious multi-step analysis), respectively [26]. As for
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27 300 headspace solvent drop microextraction-HPLC- fluorescence detection (HS-SDME-HPLC-
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29 301 FLD), its main disadvantage is the instability of the droplet which may result in dissolution
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31 302 and of the drop [27]. Thus, the proposed portable μ -SPE method implies a great advantage
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33 303 over other sample pre-treatment approaches, which could be employed for on-site sampling.
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36 305 4 Conclusions

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40 307 In the present study, a new portable battery-operated electric whisk stirrer combined
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42 308 with μ -SPE approach for both off-site and on-site analysis has been developed. For the first
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44 309 time, μ -SPE was successfully applied for on-site environmental water sample preparation.
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46 310 The on-site technique showed good linearity, high relative recoveries, acceptable relative
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48 311 standard deviation and comparable limits of detection with other reported methods. Home-
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50 312 made μ -SPE device demonstrated to be simple, cost-effective, and easy-to-operate. The
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3 313 whisk on the stirrer provided sample agitation during extraction while the PP membrane and
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5 314 the protected MWCNTs acted as sample pre-filtration and pre-concentration device
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7 315 simultaneously, which together created a unique merit for field analysis. In addition, the
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10 316 approach only required a small amount of sorbents and low consumption of organic solvents.
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12 317 After extraction, only the membrane bag was brought to the laboratory for further analysis,
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14 318 thus, eliminating the need of large volumes water samples for laboratory analysis and discard
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16 319 the usage of AC power supply during extraction. Being an alternative technique for
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18 320 conventional laboratory solid phase extraction, the portable μ -SPE proved to be feasible for
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20 321 both off site and on-site analysis.
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33 327 Nabilah Zainal Abidin.
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369 **Tables**

370

371 **Table 1:** Quantitative data of portable μ -SPE for the determination of five selected PAHs

| | Linearity ($\mu\text{g/L}$) | Coefficient of Determination (r^2) | % RSD ($n = 3$) | LOD ($\mu\text{g/L}$) | LOQ ($\mu\text{g/L}$) |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Fluorene | 0.1 - 100 | 0.9975 | 7.1 | 0.06 | 0.20 |
| Anthracene | 0.1 - 100 | 0.9988 | 4.8 | 0.01 | 0.05 |
| Fluoranthene | 0.1 - 100 | 0.9982 | 5.6 | 0.05 | 0.18 |
| Pyrene | 0.1 - 100 | 0.9989 | 5.4 | 0.05 | 0.16 |
| Benzo[<i>a</i>]pyrene | 1.0 - 100 | 0.9988 | 6.3 | 0.59 | 1.96 |

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376 **Table 2:** Determination of PAHs in environmental water samples by on-site μ -SPE

| | Residue level ($\mu\text{g/L}$) (% RSD, $n = 3$) | | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------|------------|
| | Farm water | River water | Lake water |
| Fluorene | Detected ^a | nd ^b | nd |
| Anthracene | 0.11 (7.3) | nd | 0.19 (6.9) |
| Fluoranthene | Detected | nd | Detected |
| Pyrene | 0.16 (5.5) | nd | nd |
| Benzo[<i>a</i>]pyrene | nd | nd | nd |

377 ^a Detected = $\text{LOD} \leq \text{result} < \text{LOQ}$.378 ^b nd, non-detected or less than detection limit.

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384 **Table 3:** Relative recovery (%) and method precisions (RSD %, $n = 3$) of off-site and on-site
 385 μ -SPE ($n = 3$)

| | Average relative recovery (%) ^a , (% RSD, $n = 3$) | | t -test |
|-------------------------|--|------------------|---------------|
| | Off-site analysis | On-site analysis | (p -value) |
| Fluorene | 98.6 (6.1) | 99.7 (4.3) | 0.50 |
| Anthracene | 99.7 (2.7) | 107.2 (3.5) | 0.03 |
| Fluoranthene | 77.3 (5.6) | 80.9 (6.2) | 0.15 |
| Pyrene | 98.3 (6.4) | 89.2 (4.2) | 0.06 |
| Benzo[<i>a</i>]pyrene | 90.1 (7.2) | 88.4 (4.5) | 0.46 |

386 ^a Percentage of peak area of analyte from extracts of spiked river water samples versus spiked
 387 ultrapure water, with both samples spiked at 10 μ g/L for fluorene, anthracene, fluoranthene
 388 and pyrene and 50 μ g/L for benzo[*a*]pyrene.

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393 **Table 4:** Comparison of LODs obtained by different reported analytical approaches in the
 394 determination of PAHs in water samples

| Analysis method* | Dynamic linear range (µg/L) | LOD (µg/L) | References |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|------------|
| | 0.2 – 100 | | |
| TiO ₂ -µ-SPE-HPLC-UV | and | 0.026 – 0.82 | [24] |
| | 1.0 – 100 | | |
| AF-LPME-GC-MS | 0.1 – 200 | 0.01 – 0.04 | [25] |
| SPE-HPLC-UV | 0.04 – 100 | 0.005 – 0.058 | [26] |
| HS-SDME-HPLC-FD | 0.01 – 50 | 0.004 – 0.247 | [27] |
| | 0.1 – 100 | | |
| Off/On-site µ-SPE-HPLC-UV | and | 0.014 – 0.588 | This work |
| | 1 – 100 | | |

395 * Abbreviations = TiO₂-µ-SPE: titanate-micro solid phase extraction; AF-LPME: agarose
 396 film-liquid phase microextraction; HS: headspace; SDME: solvent drop microextraction;
 397 HPLC: high performance liquid chromatography; UV: ultraviolet; FD: fluorescence
 398 detection; GC: gas chromatography; MS: mass spectrometry.

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5 402 **Figure captions**6
7 4038
9 404 **Fig. 1.** Schematic of portable μ -SPE system10
11 40512
13 406 **Fig. 2.** Optimization of off-site μ -SPE; (A) effect of sample volume, (B) effect of μ -SPE bag14
15 407 conditioning solvent, (C) effect of desorption solvent type, (D) effect of extraction16
17 408 time. Extraction conditions are as described in the text. Error bars represent standard18
19 409 deviation, $n = 3$.20
21 41022
23 411 **Fig. 3.** HPLC chromatograms for (a) on-site μ -SPE extract of unspiked water sample, and (b)24
25 412 μ -SPE extract of spiked water sample at 10 $\mu\text{g/L}$ except for BaP (50 $\mu\text{g/L}$). μ -SPE26
27 413 conditions: 4 mg of MWCNTs; conditioning solvent: isopropanol; sample volume: 3028
29 414 mL; extraction time: 30 min; desorption solvent: 200 μL of isopropanol; desorption30
31 415 time: 10 min; no salt addition. Peak identifications: (1) fluorene, (2) anthracene, (3)32
33 416 fluoranthene, (4) pyrene and (5) benzo[*a*]pyrene.34
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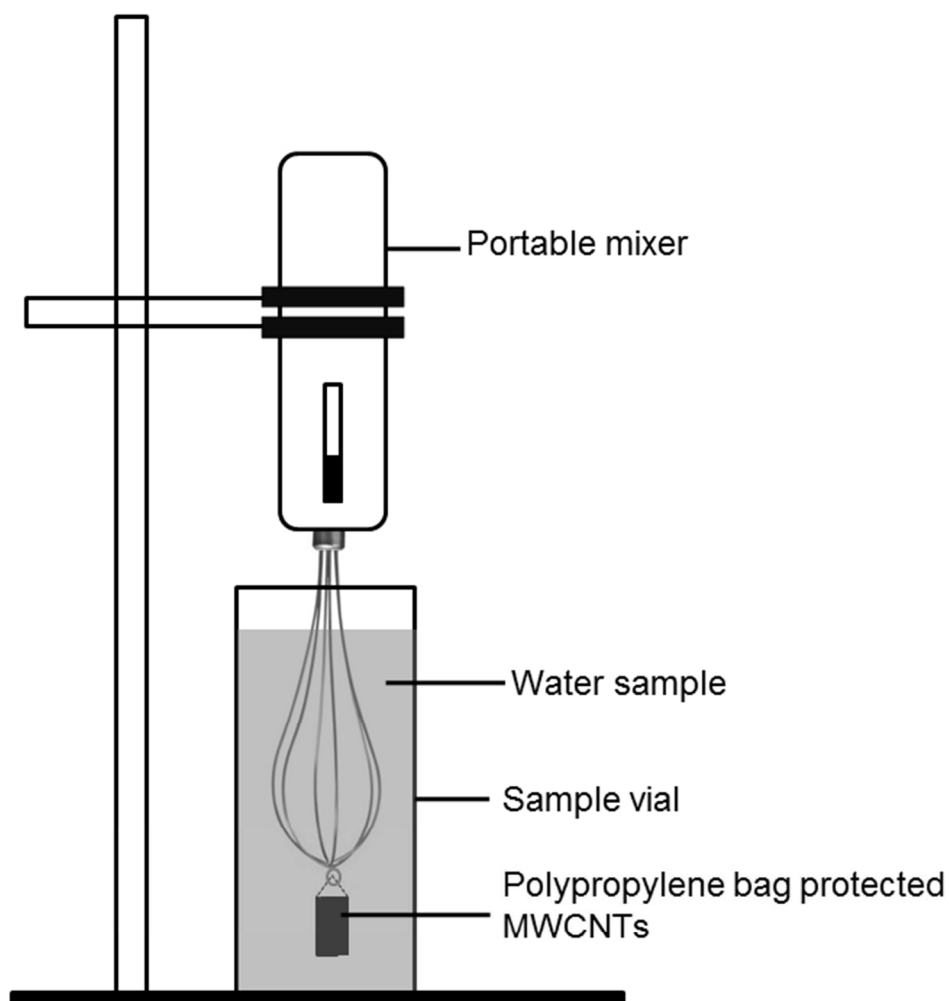


Fig. 1. Schematic of portable μ -SPE system
182x190mm (96 x 96 DPI)

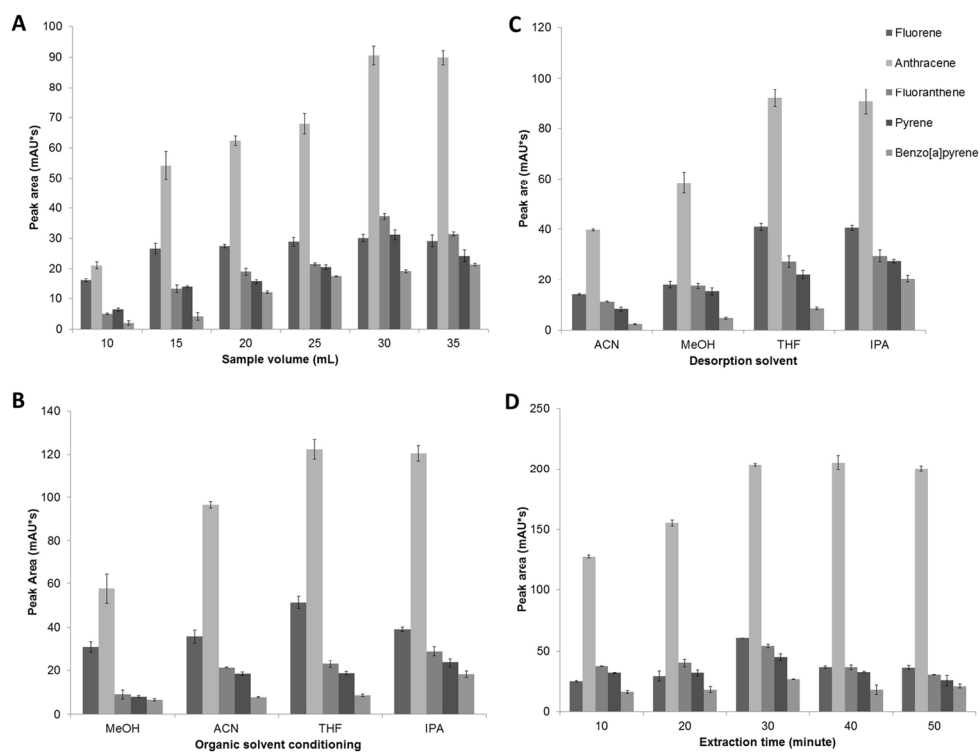


Fig. 2. Optimization of off-site μ -SPE; (A) effect of sample volume, (B) effect of μ -SPE bag conditioning solvent, (C) effect of desorption solvent type, (D) effect of extraction time. Extraction conditions are as described in the text. Error bars represent standard deviation, $n = 3$.
138x105mm (300 x 300 DPI)

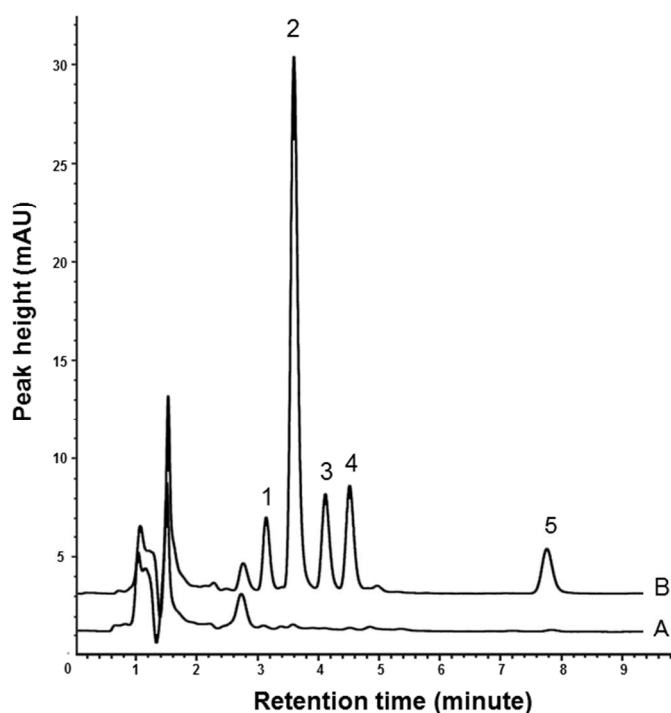


Fig. 3. HPLC chromatograms for (a) on-site μ -SPE extract of unspiked water sample, and (b) μ -SPE extract of spiked water sample at 10 $\mu\text{g/L}$ except for BaP (50 $\mu\text{g/L}$). μ -SPE conditions: 4 mg of MWCNTs; conditioning solvent: isopropanol; sample volume: 30 mL; extraction time: 30 min; desorption solvent: 200 μL of isopropanol; desorption time: 10 min; no salt addition. Peak identifications: (1) fluorene, (2) anthracene, (3) fluoranthene, (4) pyrene and (5) benzo[a]pyrene.
254x190mm (96 x 96 DPI)