

## Reviewer's report

**Title:** Cocaine in surface waters: a new evidence-based tool to monitor community drug abuse

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 27 May 2005

**Reviewer:** Nick Voulvoulis

### Reviewer's report:

General

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

The study is not without precedent, it was discussed for example in:

“Illicit Drugs in Municipal Sewage: Proposed New Non-Intrusive Tool to Heighten Public Awareness of Societal Use of Illicit/Abused Drugs and Their Potential for Ecological Consequences” by Christian G. Daughton

but brief examination of the literature suggests that the concept has not been well explored and that this study is more thorough than has been reported previously. It is an interesting subject and an unusual use of the technology in the relatively new field of drugs (both legal and illegal) in the environment.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

Investigators may require a little more detail of the method in order to repeat the study.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

No apparent concerns about the data.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Discussion is brief. There could be more on the limitations of the study. Possibly some mention of the environmental half-life of cocaine and BE. Could be a comparison of the predicted and measured environmental concentrations and prescription numbers of legal drugs – authors' own work is cited but perhaps they could also look elsewhere for further evidence of the efficacy of the method.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

yes

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** Accept after discretionary revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No conflict of interested to declare.