

DOCTORAL THESIS

Pollution characteristics of polyaromatic organic contaminants in PM_{2.5} from typical regions of China

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ABSTRACT

Air pollution has become a serious environmental issue around the world. Among the multiple pollutants like NO_x and O_3 , the atmospheric particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter less than $2.5 \mu\text{m}$ ($\text{PM}_{2.5}$) has been the most serious problem lately. The daily life and health of general public are greatly affected by $\text{PM}_{2.5}$. For instance, the extended exposure to $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ was reported to have association with increased prevalence of heart and lung diseases.

China has suffered from serious $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ pollution for many years. The vast territory, abundant anthropogenic activities and various geographical features make the formation mechanisms and possible health effects of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ become diverse and complicated. Because of that, regional study is necessary to control $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ pollution and reduce the associated health risks. Taiyuan and Guangzhou are two typical megacities with strong regional characteristics in North and South China, both of which are subjected to $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ pollution for long time. Through the analysis of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ samples collected from Taiyuan and Guangzhou, it will benefit the investigations of sources and toxicities of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ in Northern and Southern regions in China.

Due to the complexity, research on components of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ is important. Polyaromatic organic contaminants are an important $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ composition because of their relatively high concentration and obvious toxicity. In this study, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), nitro-PAHs (NPAHs), hydroxy-PAHs (OHPAHs) in $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ samples from Taiyuan and Guangzhou were determined. A novel atmospheric pressure gas chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry

(APGC-MS/MS) method with higher sensitivity was developed. 19 PAHs, 18 NPAHs and 12 OHPAHs in PM_{2.5} were analyzed with the method detection limits of 0.021 (PAHs), 0.001 (NPAHs) and 0.005 (OHPAHs) pg m⁻³, respectively. The developed APGC-MS/MS method provided acceptable recoveries (70 – 120%) and precision (RSD < 15%).

PM_{2.5} samples collected from Taiyuan and Guangzhou from May, 2017 to April, 2018 were analyzed for 19 PAHs, 18 NPAHs and 12 OHPAHs. The pollution characteristics, including contamination levels, sources and possible influences on human health, were investigated and compared between the two sampling sites. Compared to Guangzhou, Taiyuan had higher contamination levels for most of the determined PAHs, NPAHs and OHPAHs in PM_{2.5}. Except for NPAHs, whose major source was the OH• radical-initiated secondary formation, the predominant pollution sources of PAHs and OHPAHs in PM_{2.5} were different in these two cities. The mixed primary source of coal combustion and traffic emission was predominant for both PAHs and OHPAHs in PM_{2.5} from Taiyuan. But in Guangzhou, single primary traffic emission was major source. Higher carcinogenic health risks of PM_{2.5} were found in Taiyuan for adults, children and infants compared to Guangzhou based on the determined concentrations of PAHs and NPAHs. Obvious temporal and spatial variations among Taiyuan and Guangzhou were seen, which indicated that the pollution status of PAHs, NPAHs and OHPAHs in PM_{2.5} in Taiyuan was serious. The pollution levels of PM_{2.5}-bound PAHs and NPAHs in Guangzhou also became higher in recent years.

Besides PAHs and their derivatives, 14 emerging polycyclic aromatic sulfur heterocycles (PASHs) were detected in PM_{2.5} collected from Taiyuan and

Guangzhou. They were assessed by accurate quantification, investigation of contamination levels and pollution sources, and the preliminary studies of pollutant-induced toxic effects. A novel APGC-MS/MS method was developed for the determination of the PASHs in PM_{2.5} with superior sensitivity of 0.052 – 1.673 pg m⁻³. Higher contamination levels in atmosphere were found in Taiyuan at ng m⁻³. Coal combustion/secondary formation and traffic emission/secondary formation were found as pollution sources of the PASHs in PM_{2.5} from Taiyuan and Guangzhou, respectively. Dithiothreitol (DTT) and cell viability assays were performed for the preliminary assessment of PASH-induced reactive oxygen species (ROS) production and cell toxicity based on the exposure dosage for human. The results indicated that PASHs in PM_{2.5} collected from Taiyuan could lead to oxidative stress and human bronchial epithelial cells' death. The toxicity results suggest that more efforts are necessary to control the local primary sources and secondary formation of PASHs in PM_{2.5}.

In summary, a novel analytical method using APGC-MS/MS was developed and successfully applied for determination of different polyaromatic organic contaminants in PM_{2.5}. 19 PAHs, 18 NPAHs, 12 OHPAHs and 14 PASHs in PM_{2.5} collected from Taiyuan and Guangzhou, the typical regions in North and South China, were determined. The pollution characteristics, including contamination levels, sources, health risks and temporal/spatial distributions were investigated and compared. Significantly different pollution characteristics of PAHs, NPAHs and OHPAHs in PM_{2.5} showed a close connection between pollution features with local economic structures. For the 14 emerging PASHs, their pollution status, sources and implication for human health in these two sites were studied.

Compared to Guangzhou, Taiyuan had relatively higher exposure levels and health risks of PASHs in PM_{2.5} for local people. The study of pollution characteristics of the polyaromatic organic contaminants in PM_{2.5} from representative areas could provide a useful guidance for PM_{2.5} pollution control and general public health protection in China.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
Table of Contents.....	viii
List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures.....	xvi
List of Abbreviations	xx
List of Compounds' Structures	xxiv
Chapter 1 General introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of PM _{2.5}	1
1.1.1 What is “PM _{2.5} ”?.....	1
1.1.2 Complexity and health risks of PM _{2.5}	2
1.2 PM _{2.5} in China.....	4
1.3 Polyaromatic organic contaminants in PM _{2.5}	8
1.3.1 Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), nitro-PAHs (NPAHs) and hydroxy-PAHs (OHPAHs) in PM _{2.5}	8
1.3.2 Polycyclic aromatic sulfur heterocycles (PASHs) in PM _{2.5}	11
1.3.3 Analysis of PAHs, NPAHs, OHPAHs and PASHs in PM _{2.5}	13
1.3.4 Health risks of PAHs, NPAHs, OHPAHs and PASHs in PM _{2.5}	16
1.4 Research objectives.....	18

Chapter 2 Atmospheric pressure gas chromatography- tandem mass spectrometry analysis of PAHs, NPAHs, OHPAHs and emerging PASHs in PM_{2.5}	21
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Experiments	24
2.2.1 Chemicals and standard solutions.....	24
2.2.2 PM _{2.5} sample collection and pre-treatment	26
2.2.3 Instrumental analysis	28
2.3 Results and discussions.....	34
2.3.1 Method development for analysis of PAHs, NPAHs and OHPAHs in PM _{2.5} by APGC-MS/MS.....	34
2.3.1.1 Optimization of APGC-MS/MS conditions.....	34
2.3.1.2 Sample pre-treatment optimization.....	41
2.3.1.3 Method validations.....	49
2.3.1.4 Comparison of analytical performance between APGC-MS/MS method and previous approaches	61
2.3.2 Method development for determination of emerging PASHs in PM _{2.5} by APGC-MS/MS.....	64
2.3.2.1 Optimization of sample pre-treatment method	64
2.3.2.2 Optimization of APGC-MS/MS conditions.....	69
2.3.2.3 Method validations.....	75
2.3.3 Application of developed APGC-MS/MS method to determine PAHs, NPAHs, OHPAHs and emerging PASHs in real PM _{2.5} samples	78

2.4 Chapter summary	84
Chapter 3 Contamination levels, sources and health risk assessments of PAHs, NPAHs and OHPAHs in PM_{2.5} from Taiyuan and Guangzhou in China	85
3.1 Introduction	85
3.2 Experiments	88
3.2.1 Chemicals and materials	88
3.2.2 Description of selected typical PM _{2.5} sampling regions in China	88
3.2.3 PM _{2.5} sample collection	90
3.2.4 Sample pre-treatment	90
3.2.5 Instrumental analysis	90
3.2.6 Data analysis	91
3.3 Results and discussions	91
3.3.1 Contamination levels of PAHs, NPAHs and OHPAHs in PM _{2.5} from Taiyuan and Guangzhou	91
3.3.1.1 PAHs	91
3.3.1.2 NPAHs	96
3.3.1.3 OHPAHs	101
3.3.2 Source identifications of PAHs, NPAHs and OHPAHs in PM _{2.5} from Taiyuan and Guangzhou	104
3.3.2.1 PAHs	104
3.3.2.2 NPAHs	109
3.3.2.3 OHPAHs	112

3.3.3 Health risk assessments of PM _{2.5} for adults, children and infants in Taiyuan and Guangzhou using determined PAHs and NPAHs....	120
3.3.4 Temporal and spatial variations of PAHs, NPAHs and OHPAHs in PM _{2.5} from Taiyuan and Guangzhou	124
3.3.4.1 Temporal trends of PAHs and NPAHs in PM _{2.5} from Taiyuan and Guangzhou	124
3.3.4.2 Spatial variations of PAHs, NPAHs and OHPAHs in PM _{2.5} among Taiyuan, Guangzhou and other cities in China and other countries	131
3.4 Chapter summary	134

Chapter 4 Contamination profiles and preliminary toxicity studies of emerging polycyclic aromatic sulfur heterocycles (PASHs) in PM_{2.5} from typical regions of China 135

4.1. Introduction.....	135
4.2 Experiments	137
4.2.1 Chemicals and materials	137
4.2.2 Description of selected typical sampling regions in China and PM _{2.5} sample collection	137
4.2.3 Sample pre-treatment	138
4.2.4 Instrumental analysis	138
4.2.5 DTT/ Cell viability assay	138
4.3 Results and discussions.....	141
4.3.1 Contamination levels of PASHs in PM _{2.5} from Taiyuan and Guangzhou	141

4.3.2 Sources of PASHs in PM _{2.5} from Taiyuan and Guangzhou.....	146
4.3.2.1 Define quantities of pollution source by PCA analysis	146
4.3.2.2 Identify pollution sources by Spearman correlation analysis.....	149
4.3.3 Preliminary toxicity studies for human exposure to PASHs in PM _{2.5}	156
4.3.3.1 Oxidative stress induced by PASHs in PM _{2.5}	156
4.3.3.2 Cell toxicity caused by PASHs in PM _{2.5}	161
Chapter 5 Conclusion and perspective studies	166
REFERENCES.....	169
Publication List	219
CURRICULUM VITAE	221