

## Review Article

# Review article: Spectroscopic, Chromatographic and Electrochemical Analysis of Azithromycin in Different Matrices

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- Azithromycin
- Degradation products
- Biological samples

**Abstract**

In this literature review, we are introducing most of up-to-date reported methods that have been developed for determination of an important antibiotic which is azithromycin in its pure form, combined form with other drugs, combined form with degradation products, and in biological samples.

**INTRODUCTION**

Antibiotics are specific chemical substances, originally produced by living organisms. Their structural analogs can be obtained through synthetic routes and are able to inhibit, even at low concentrations, vital processes of one or more species of bacteria. Nowadays, the main classes of commercially available antibiotics are penicillins, macrolides, cephalosporines ( $\beta$ -lactam antibiotics), tetracyclines, and aminoglycosides [1].

Azithromycin (AZM), chemically known as 9-deoxy-9a-aza-9a-methyl-9a-homoerythromycin is an antibiotic discovered by a Croatian group of researchers, initially named XZ-450. It was developed by PLIVA, in the USA, and had its approval for clinical use in 1991 [2]. AZM is an acid stable orally administered macrolide antimicrobial drug, structurally related to erythromycin, with a similar spectrum of antimicrobial activity [3].

The drug is noted for its activity against some Gram-negative organisms associated with respiratory tract infections, particularly *Haemophilus influenzae*. AZM has similar activity to other macrolides against *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Moraxella catarrhalis*, and is active against atypical pathogens such as *Legionella pneumophila*, *Chlamydia pneumoniae* and *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* [4].

Due to the current importance of this drug in treatment of pandemic COVID-19, this literature focuses on its mode of action and different analytical methods that have been developed for determination of this drug in different pharmaceutical and biological samples.

**Pharmacological action**

AZM is a macrolide antibiotic which inhibits bacterial protein synthesis and reduces the formation of biofilm. Accumulating effectively in cells, particularly phagocytes, it is delivered in high concentrations to sites of infection, as reflected in rapid plasma clearance and extensive tissue distribution. AZM is indicated for respiratory, urogenital, dermal and other bacterial infections, and exerts immune-modulatory effects in chronic inflammatory disorders, including diffuse panbronchiolitis, post-transplant bronchiolitis and rosacea [5].

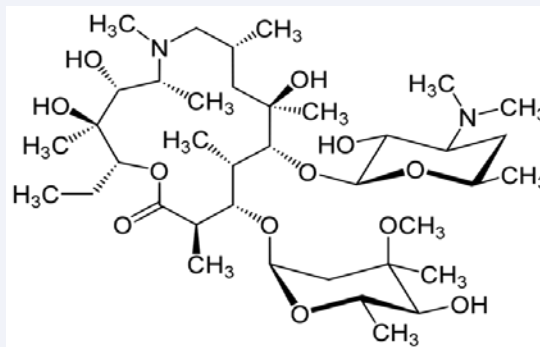


Figure 1 Chemical structure of AZM.

<b>1. Spectroscopic methods:</b>							
<b>1.1 Spectrophotometric methods:</b>							
Drugs	Matrix	Method or reagent	$\lambda_{max}$ (nm)	Linearity range	LOD	Ref.	
AZM	Tablets	Potassium Permanganate	547	2 - 20 $\mu$	-----	[6]	
AZM	Tablets	Ion pair complex with (Mo(V)-thiocyanate)	469	$10^{-6}$ M - $10^{-5}$ M	$2.54 \times 10^{-7}$ M	[7]	
AZM	Tablets	UV spectrophotometry	275	1 - 4 m	0.6490 m	[8]	
AZM & Clarithromycin	Tablets and Human Plasma	Charge transfer reaction with p-chloranilic acid	530	5 - 50 $\mu^{-1}$	1.2 $\mu$	[9]	
AZM		UV spectrophotometry	208	10 - 50 $\mu$	1.6 $\mu$	[10]	
AZM		Charge transfer reaction with Quinalizarin	564	4 - 20 m	0.35 mg/L	[11]	
AZM & Cefixime	Tablets	UV spectrophotometry	235	10 - 50 $\mu$	1.67 $\mu$	[12]	
AZM & Cefpodoxime	Tablets	UV Simultaneous equation	218 & 232	10-50 $\mu$	0.52 & 2.20 $\mu$	[13]	
AZM	Tablets	Protonation reaction with sulfuric acid	482	7.5 - 52.5 $\mu$	-----	[14]	
AZM	Niosomes	Protonation reaction with 75 % sulfuric acid	482	15 - 45 $\mu$	-----	[15]	
AZM	Tablets	Charge transfer complex with 2,4-Dinitrophenol	364	5 - 30 $\mu$	-----	[16]	
AZM & Roxithromycin	Tablets	Copper in acidic medium & N-bromosuccinimide	250 & 264	1 - 100 $\mu$ 2 - 140 $\mu$	0.76 & 0.69 $\mu$	[17]	
AZM	Injections	Protonation reaction with 85 % sulfuric acid	482	20 - 70 m	-----	[18]	
AZM	Tablets	Ion pair complex with bromocresol green (BCG), bromocresol purple (BCB), bromophenol blue (BPB), bromothymol blue (BTB)	418 & 409 & 415 & 414	2 - 20 & 2 - 18 & 2 - 12 & 2 - 14 $\mu$	0.15 & 0.16 & 0.23 & 0.14 $\mu$	[19]	
AZM	Tablet	Charge transfer with Alizarin Red	538	10 - 60 $\mu$	-----	[20]	
AZM	Crystals	Protonation reaction with sulfuric acid	483	18 - 72 $\mu$	-----	[21]	
AZM	Dispersible tablets	Protonation reaction with 75 % sulfuric acid	482	20 - 80 $\mu$	-----	[22]	
AZM & Erythromycin		Charge transfer complex with 1,2-naphthoquinone-4-sulphonate	452	1.5 - 33 $\mu$	0.026 $\mu$	[23]	
<b>1.2. Spectrofluorimetric methods:</b>							
Drugs	Matrix	Fluorogenic Reagent (Method )	$\lambda_{ex}$ (nm)	$\lambda_{em}$ (nm)	Linearity Range	LOD	Ref.
AZM, erythromycin, clarithromycin & roxithromycin	Tablets, capsules and suspension	Cerium in the presence of sulphuric acid	255	348	47.7- 477 n	11.62 n	[24]
AZM	Tablets	9.0 mol L <sup>-1</sup> HCl	482	515	1 - 8 mg/L	0.23 mg/L	[25]
AZM, erythromycin, clarithromycin & roxithromycin	Tablets, capsules, granules & suspension	Ion pair formation with eosin-G	480	550	0.04 - 2 $\mu$	0.0114 $\mu$	[26]
AZM, erythromycin, clarithromycin & roxithromycin	Tablets, capsules, granules, suspension,	10% (w/v) malonic acid + acetic anhydride	390	448	3 - 40 n	n	[27]
AZM	Tablets & live cells	N,S-CQDs	476	528	2.5-32.3 $\mu$ M & 37.2-110 $\mu$ M	0.76 $\mu$ M	[28]
<b>2. Chromatographic methods:</b>							
<b>2.1. HPLC methods:</b>							
Drugs	Matrix	Column	Mobile Phase	Detector	Linearity Range	LOD	Ref.
AZM	Tablets	Xterra C <sub>18</sub> column (150× 4.6 mm; 5 $\mu$ )	Acetonitrile and phosphate buffer (50:50 v/v)	UV at 215 nm	300 - 700 $\mu$	-----	[29]
AZM	Pharmaceutical dosage forms	C <sub>18</sub> column (5 $\mu$ m, 250 mm× 4.6 mm)	Isocratic methanol/buffer (90:10 v/v)	UV at 210 nm	1 - 80 $\mu$	0.3 $\mu$	[30]
AZM and Its Related Compounds	Pharmaceutical dosage forms	reversed-phase C <sub>18</sub> column	Isocratic elution of phosphate buffer-methanol (20:80)	UV at 210 nm	0.3 - 2.0 m	0.0005 m	[31]

AZM	Pharmaceutical dosage forms	column ODS-3 (250 mm× 4.6 mm x 5 µm)	Methanol: Phosphate buffer (9:1 v/v)	PDA at 210 nm	0.5 - 1.5 m	28.7 µ	[32]
AZM	Tablets	C <sub>18</sub> column	Mixture of buffer, acetonitrile and methanol (60:20:20)	Amperometric electrochemical detector with dual glass carbon electrodes + UV at 215 nm	0.6 - 3.0 m	-----	[33]
AZM	Oral suspension	Hypersil BDS-C <sub>18</sub> column (250 mm × 4.6 mm )	Methanol, acetonitrile and phosphate buffer	PDA at 212 nm	1.0 - 50.0 µ	14.40 n	[34]
AZM	Injections, capsules and tablets	G1316 A column 250 mm × 4.6 mm, i.d., 5 µm)	Ammonium acetate (0.05 M, pH=8.0) and acetonitrile (60:40, v/v)	Evaporative light scattering detector (ELSD)	50.93 - 509.30 µ	6.75 µ	[35]
AZM	Tablet	C <sub>8</sub> column (250 mm X 4.6 mm, 5µ)	Phosphate buffer and methanol in the ratio of (20:80 v/v).	UV at 210 nm	10 - 80 ppm	52.246 µ	[36]
AZM	Tablets and Suspensions	XTerra column (250 mm × 4.6 mm i.d., 5 µm particle size)	acetonitrile- KH <sub>2</sub> PO <sub>4</sub> - tetrabutyl ammonium hydroxide -water (25:15:1:59 v/v/v/v)	UV at 215 nm	50% - 150%	0.02% (20 µg)	[37]
AZM, erythromycin & clarithromycin	fish muscles	Shodex A sahipak column	Acetonitrile and phosphate buffer in the ratio of 60:40 (v/v)	diode array detection at 210 nm	1.2 - 2.8 µ	-----	[38]
AZM, fluconazole & ornidazole	Pharmaceutical dosage forms	C <sub>18</sub> column (4.6 x 250 mm, 5µ)	mixture of acetonitrile and phosphate buffer (50:50 % v/v)	UV at 210 nm	500 - 1000 µ	5.810 µ	[39]
AZM & Ambroxol Hydrochloride	Tablets	250 mm × 4.6 mm, 5 µm particle size, C <sub>18</sub> (ODS) column	Methanol: acetonitrile: phosphate buffer in ratio of (50:20:30)	electrochemical, fluorescence, mass spectrometry and UV at 260 nm	25 - 125 µ	-----	[40]
AZM & Dexamethasone	EYE DROPS	GRACE ODS C <sub>18</sub> ( 250 x 4.6 mm, 5 µm)	Methanol and 0.0335M Phosphate Buffer (pH 7.5) in the ratio of (80:20 v/v)	UV at 230 nm	0.1 - 12 µ	1.60 µ	[41]
AZM	Raw matrial (Analyte)	Quasar C <sub>18</sub> (150 x 4.6 mm, 5 µm)	MeOH:Buffer (80:20), (Phosphate, pH 7.5, 0.03 M)	Amperometric electrochemical detection + UV at 210 nm	-----	-----	[42]
AZM	Pharmaceutical dosage forms	C <sub>18</sub> column, (5µm,250mm× 4.6mm)	Methanol/buffer mobile phase at the ratio of (90:10)	UV at 215nm	1 - 80 µ	-----	[43]
AZM & Artemether	Suppositories	Luna C <sub>8</sub> EC 5mm, 150mm, 4.6 mm	80% methanol and 20% phosphate buffer 15 mM at pH 9.	UV at 210 nm	-----	0.015 g/L	[44]
AZM & Erythromycin	Human Urine	ODB RP <sub>18</sub> column (250 ×4.6 nm, 5µm)	Acetonitrile -2-methyl-2-propanol- hydrogenphosphate buffer, pH 6.5, with 1.5% triethylamine (33:7: up to 100, v/v/v)	UV at 210 nm	0.25-15 µg/ mL	0.12	[45]
AZM & Cefixime	Tablets	Hypersil C <sub>18</sub> column (250 mm, 4.6mm, 5µm)	Methanol: Buffer in ratio of (85:15)	PDA at 275 nm	20-80 µ	0.25 µ	[46]
AZM & Levofloxacin	Tablets	Waters symmetry shield Rp <sub>18</sub> column, (250x4.6x5µ)	Di Potassium Hydrogen Phosphate (60%) and methanol (40%)	UV at 285 nm	50%- 150%	20.50 ppm	[47]
AZM & Cefpodoxime Proxetil	Pharmaceutical dosage forms	C <sub>18</sub> (150×4.6 mm, 5 µm) column	Acetonitrile: Methanol: Phosphate buffer (40:40:20 v/v)	UV at 235 nm	10-50 µ	2.121 µ	[48]
AZM and Levofloxacin	Pharmaceutical dosage forms	Symmetry C <sub>18</sub> 4.6×150mm, 5.0 µm	Ammonium acetate buffer pH 6 ±0.02 pH and methanol (30:70 %v/v)	UV at 262 nm	20 - 100µg	0.01 µg	[49]

AZM	Human plasma and urine	Shimpack CLC-C <sub>18</sub> (250 4.6 mm, 5 mm)	0.01 M KH <sub>2</sub> PO <sub>4</sub> -ACN (58:42, v/v, final pH 7.5)	UV at 210 nm	0.1-15 m	0.03 m	[50]
AZM & Benzoyl Peroxide	Combined dosage form	Eclipse C <sub>18</sub> column (Waters XTerra®, 4.6X250 mm, 5µ)	Potassium dihydrogen phosphate and acetonitrile (50:50)	UV-Visible detector and a photodiode array detector	1-5 µ	0.009 µ	[51]
AZM & Cefixime	Pharmaceutical dosage forms	An Agilent Zorbax C <sub>8</sub> , 5 µ column having 150 x 4.6mm	Dipotassium Hydrogen Phosphate Buffer: methanol (60:40%v/v)	UV at 230 nm	250-750 µ	-----	[52]
AZM & Spiramycin	Tablets	reversed phase C <sub>18</sub> ODB column (250×4.6 nm)	Acetonitrile -2-methyl-2-propanol-hydrogenphosphate buffer, pH 6.2, with 1.8% triethylamine (32:8: up to 100, v/v/v)	UV at 210 nm	0.004-4.8 mg/ mL	0.03%	[53]
AZM and its related compounds.	Capsules and suspension	Xterra RP C <sub>18</sub> column	disodium hydrogen phosphate-methanol-acetonitrile-tetrahydrofuran (40.0 + 30.0 + 30.0 + 0.1, v/v/v/v).	UV at 215 nm	2-1800 µ	-----	[54]
AZM and Levofloxacin	Tablets	C <sub>18</sub> column (250 mm x 4.6 mm, 5 µm)	Methanol: potassium dihydrogen phosphate buffer (60:40, v/v)	PDA at 279.6 nm	500-1500 µ	2.68 µ	[55]
AZM and Its Related Compounds	Tablets	Shim pack XR ODS, 75×3.0mm, 2.2 µm column	Mobile phase -A consisting 0.01 M dibasic sodium phosphate buffer and mobile phase -B consisting 750:250 (v/v) of acetonitrile and methanol	UV at 210 nm	-----	-----	[56]
AZM	Human Plasma	Shimadzu Shim-pack VP-ODS C <sub>18</sub> (5 µm, 150 mm × 2.0 mm) column	acetonitrile-water (65:35) (0.5% triethylamine, pH was adjusted to 6.2 with acetic acid)	MS-MS/ESI	5 - 2000 n	2 n	[57]
AZM	-	reversible phase C <sub>8</sub> column (250 × 4.6 mm, 5µ)	Dipotassium hydrogen Phosphate and acetonitrile in the ratio of 65:35	UV at 200 nm	-----	-----	[58]
AZM & cefixime	Pharmaceutical dosage form	Supleco C <sub>18</sub> (25cm×4.6 mm, 5 µm) column	Na <sub>2</sub> HPO <sub>4</sub> : Methanol with pH adjusted to 8	U.V at 273 nm	50-150 µ	3 µg/mL	[59]
AZM & Ambroxol Hydrochloride	Combined dosage form	C <sub>18</sub> phenomenex Gemini (5m, 250cm x 4.6mm)	Acetonitrile and mono basic potassium phosphate buffer of pH 8.5 in the ratio of 65:35 v/v	PDA at 220 nm	96-145 m	31.91 m	[60]
AZM & related compounds	Capsule and suspension	Xterra RP C <sub>18</sub> column	Disodium hydrogen phosphate (pH 10.5) : methanol : acetonitrile tetrahydrofuran (40: 30.:30 :0.1, v/v/v/v).	UV at 215 nm.	2-1800 µg/mL	0.49 µg/mL	[61]
AZM & Cefpodoxime	Tablets	Hypurity C <sub>18</sub> column	methanol: Toluene: potassium dihydrogen phosphate buffer (60:30:10, v/v/v)	UV at 218 nm	1-6 µg/mL	0.250 µ	[62]

## 2.2. HPTLC methods:

Drugs	Matrix	Stationary phase	Mobile phase	Detector	Linearity range	LOD	Ref.
AZM	Pharmaceutical dosage form	Silica gel F254	chloroform-ethanol-ammonia 6:14:0.2 (v/v)	fluorescence indicator at 483nm	0.08 - 1.2 µg/ zone	40 ng/ zone	[63]
AZM & cefixime	Pure compound	silica gel 60F254	mixture of ethyl acetate-methanol-acetone-toluene-ammonia (1:5:7:0.5:0.5, v/v)	UV at 235 nm	50- 250 ng/ band	3.25 ng/ band	[64]
AZM ,Chloroquine, & Paracetamol	Pharmaceutical dosage form	60 F silica gel plate	Mixture of methanol-25% ammonia (100:1.5, v/v)	UV at 254 nm	0.1 - 10 m	-----	[65]

3. Electrochemical methods:					
Drugs	Matrix	Electrode	Linearity range	LOD	Ref.
AZM	Tablets & capsules	Glassy carbon	1-15 $\mu$	0.7 $\mu$	[66]
AZM	Capsules	carbon paste	1.57–6.28 ppb 1.57–4.71 ppb 0.785–4.71 ppb 0.471–7.07 ppb	1.544 ppb 0.955 ppb 0.716 ppb 0.463 ppb	[67]
AZM	Capsules & Suspension	Glassy Carbon	1 – 10 $\mu$ g/mL 0.25 – 2 $\mu$ g/mL	0.29 $\mu$ g/mL 0.11 $\mu$ g/mL	[68]
AZM	Capsules & Urine sample	multi wall carbon nanotubes	0.25–4.0 $\mu$ g/mL 4.0–10.0 $\mu$ g/mL	0.07 $\mu$ g/mL	[69]
AZM	Tablets	Modified carbon paste	$1.0 \times 10^{-7}$ mol/L _ $2.0 \times 10^{-6}$ mol/L $2.0 \times 10^{-6}$ mol/L _ $2.0 \times 10^{-5}$ mol/L	$1.1 \times 10^{-8}$ mol/L	[70]
AZM	Tablets	graphene and ionic liquid composite film	0.49–28.57 $\mu$ g/mL	0.19 $\mu$ g/mL	[71]
AZM, Clarithromycin, Roxithromycin	Capsules, Tablets & Urine	renewable silver-Amalgam film	4.81–23.3 $\mu$ g/mL 1.96–28.6 $\mu$ g/mL 1.48–25.9 $\mu$ g/mL	1.544 $\mu$ g/mL	[72]
AZM	Tablets	glassy carbon	1.0–10.0 mg/L	0.76 mg/L	[73]
AZM & Hydroxychloroquine	Plasma, Tablets & capsules	diamond	$0.28 - 30 \times 10^{-8}$ M- $0.84 - 22.5 \times 10^{-8}$ M	$0.091 \times 10^{-8}$ M $0.277 \times 10^{-8}$ M	[74]
AZM	Tablets	multilayer film-modified	0.0038 - 62.5 $\mu$ M	1.27 nM	[75]
AZM	Blood serum	A gold nano urchins/ graphene oxide modified glassy carbon	0.3 - 920.0 nM	0.1 nM	[76]
AZM	Capsules	gold	-----	$3.002 \times 10^{-9}$ mol/L	[77]
AZM	Urine, Plasma & Tears	Glassy carbon	$13.33 \times 10^{-3} - 66.66 \times 10^{-3}$ $\mu$ g/mL	$0.85 \times 10^{-3}$ $\mu$ g/ mL	[78]
AZM	Capsules & Urine	Glassy carbon	0.1 - 10 $\mu$ M	0.07 - $\mu$ M	[79]
AZM	Urine & plasma	Modified carbon paste	$1.0 \times 10^{-10} - 4.0 \times 10^{-7}$ mol/L	$2.3 \times 10^{-11}$ mol/L	[80]
AZM	Pharmaceutical dosage form	Glassy carbon	$3.0 \times 10^{-7} - 2.5 \times 10^{-5}$ mol/L	$1.0 \times 10^{-7}$ mol/L	[81]
AZM, Erythromycin ethylsuccinate, Clarithromycin & Roxithromycin	Capsules & Tablets	Modified carbon paste	0.000471 – 0.00707 $\mu$ g/mL	0.000463 $\mu$ g/mL	[82]
AZM	Pharmaceutical dosage form	Screen printed carbon	0.5 - 10.0 $\mu$ M	0.08 $\mu$ M	[83]
AZM	Raw material	Glassy carbon	0.075 – 0.675 mg/cm <sup>3</sup>	0.044 mg/cm <sup>3</sup>	[84]
AZM	Plasma	Glassy carbon	0.5-3.5 $\mu$ g/mL	0.2 $\mu$ g/mL	[85]
AZM	Wastewater	Surface of screen-printed carbon	-----	0.08 $\mu$ M	[86]
AZM	Tablets & Capsules	Coated graphite	$1 \times 10^{-2} - 5 \times 10^{-7}$ M $1 \times 10^{-2} - 5 \times 10^{-6}$ M $1 \times 10^{-2} - 6 \times 10^{-7}$ M $1 \times 10^{-2} - 2 \times 10^{-6}$ M	$2 \times 10^{-7}$ M $2 \times 10^{-6}$ M $5 \times 10^{-7}$ M $7 \times 10^{-7}$ M	[87]
AZM, Ciprofloxacin & 5-aminosalicylic acid	Tablets & Capsules	Paraffin impregnated graphite	-----	-----	[88]
AZM, Tetracycline, levomycitin & Streptomycin	Tablets, Capsules, Eye drops, Injectable solution, Urine, Tissue & Blood	Glassy carbon	$3.4 \times 10^{-10} - 1.0 \times 10^{-5}$ mol/L	-----	[89]
AZM	Raw material	Calomel /Copper /Platinum	-----	-----	[90]
AZM	Pharmaceutical dosage form	Mercury film/ Glassy carbon	0.01_0.5 $\times 10^{-6}$ mole/L	-----	[91]
AZM	Tablets	Glassy carbon	0.235 - 0.588 mg/cm <sup>3</sup>	-----	[92]
AZM	Raw material	Glassy carbon	1 - 5 mM	-----	[93]

## Review of analytical methods

Various techniques were used for the analysis of AZM in pure forms, in their pharmaceutical formulations and in biological fluids. The available reported methods in the literature can be summarized as follows:

## CONCLUSION

This literature review represents an up to date survey about all reported methods that have been developed for determination of Azithromycin in its pure form, combined form with other drugs, combined form with degradation products, and in biological samples such as liquid chromatography, spectrophotometry, spectrofluorimetry, electrochemistry, etc.

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