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NMR diffusometry and micellar solubilization using biological surfactants

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The micellar extraction method uses the property of micelles and vesicles of surfactants, formed at concentrations above the critical micelle concentration, to solubilize organic compounds, aliphatic, aromatic and polycyclic hydrocarbons, metals and other pollutants. However, the use of synthetic surfactants in itself has a negative impact on the environment due to their toxicity and low biodegradability. Bio-surfactants produced by living microorganisms are used for environmental restoration, bioremediation and soil washing, biodegradation of hydrophobic organic compounds, in food production, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and are a promising "green" alternative to synthetic surfactants.

An effective method for studying micellar solubilization is the NMR diffusometry method. Selective measurements of the self-diffusion coefficients (SDC) of all components in an aqueous solution of surfactant + solubilize make it possible to find the distribution of the solubilize between the bound (in micelles) and free (in water) states within the two-state model. Solubilization of hydrocarbon molecules by surfactant micelles is manifested, and its efficiency can be calculated from changes in the SDC of hydrocarbon molecules with a change in the concentration of surfactant in the solution. In the absence of solubilization, the SDC values of hydrocarbon molecules should not depend on the presence of micelles in the solution, and a possible decrease in the SDC can only be associated with changes in the dynamic viscosity of the solution with an increase in the concentration of rhamnolipid. In the presence of solubilization, one should expect a decrease in the SDC values of hydrocarbon molecules and their convergence with the SDC values of the surfactant with an increase in its concentration in the solution, and, finally, equality of the SDC values of hydrocarbons and rhamnolipid with complete solubilization.

The work summarizes and analyzes the results of studies [1-3] of micellar solubilization from aqueous solutions of substances of the BTEX group (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene), phenol, and naphthalene, carried out by the NMR diffusometry method using rhamnolipid as a bio-surfactant.

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