TROUBLESHOOTING DETERIORATING PEAK SHAPE
Grace van der Gugten
St Paul’s Hospital

PROBLEM
The SST samples at the beginning of the run look good. The start of the run – all peaks look good. Partway through the run, the peak shape has deteriorated.

METHOD INFORMATION
- Serum samples extracted with MtBE using Supported Liquid Extract
- Shimadzu LC/AB Sciex MSMS with MPX-2 stream LC multiplexing, problem only on one stream
- MPA: 2mM Amm Acetate in H$_2$O
- MPB: 2mM Amm Acetate in MeOH
- 100 x 3 mm, 2.6µm C18 column, with guard cartridge
- Column oven 55 °C
- 50µL injection volume
- Lots of other assays run on this system!

TROUBLESHOOTING STEPS TAKEN
First, let’s think about it:
1) Sample Prep, LC, or Mass Spec?
   - Clearly it’s an LC problem!
2) Why would peak shape deteriorate?
   - column problem like a void in the column or particulate stuck on frit?
   - could it be the guard cartridge?

Now, let’s try to fix it!
- Tested the column on another LC to confirm the problem is the column
- Backflushed column with 95:5 Acetonitrile:Water for approximately 30 minutes
- Reconnect column to original LC and inject SST samples

OUTCOME
The chromatograms are back to normal, backflushing the column fixed the problem!