Step 1. Mix prewarmed dilutions of the factor VIII reference preparation and of the preparation to be examined with an appropriate volume of the prewarmed coagulation factor reagent or a combination of its separate constituents, and incubate the mixture in plastic tubes or microtitre wells at 37 °C. Allow the activation of factor X to proceed for a suitable time, terminating the reaction (step 2) when the factor Xa concentration has reached approximately 50 per cent of the maximal (plateau) level. Appropriate activation times are usually between 2 min and 5 min.

Step 2. Terminate the activation by addition of a prewarmed reagent containing a chromogenic substrate. Quantify the rate of substrate cleavage, which must be linear with the concentration of factor Xa formed, by measuring the absorbance change at an appropriate wavelength using a spectrophotometer, either monitoring the absorbance continuously, thus allowing the initial rate of substrate cleavage to be calculated, or terminating the hydrolysis reaction after a suitable interval by lowering the pH by addition of a suitable reagent, such as a 50 per cent V/V solution of acetic acid, or a 1 M pH 3 citrate buffer solution. Adjust the hydrolysis time to achieve a linear development of chromophore over time. Appropriate hydrolysis times are usually between 3 min and 15 min, but deviations are permissible if better linearity of the dose-response relationship is thus obtained.

Calculate the potency of the test preparation by the usual statistical methods (for example, 5.3).

2.7.6. ASSAY OF DIPHTHERIA VACCINE (ADSORBED)

The potency of diphtheria vaccine is determined by administration of the vaccine to guinea-pigs followed either by challenge with diphtheria toxin (method A or B) or by determination of the titre of antibodies against diphtheria toxin or toxoid in the serum of guinea-pigs (method C). In both cases, the potency of the vaccine is calculated by comparison with a reference preparation, calibrated in International Units.

The International Unit is the activity contained in a stated amount of the International Standard, which consists of a quantity of freeze-dried heparin sodium from pork intestinal mucosa. The equivalence in International Units of the International Standard is stated by the World Health Organisation.

Heparin sodium BRP is calibrated in International Units by comparison with the International Standard by means of the assay given below.

Carry out the assay using one of the following methods for determining the onset of clotting and using tubes and other equipment appropriate to the chosen method:

a) direct visual inspection, preferably using indirect illumination and viewing against a matt black background;

b) spectrophotometric recording of the change in optical density at a wavelength of approximately 600 nm;

c) visual detection of the change in fluidity on manual tilting of the tubes;

d) mechanical recording of the change in fluidity on stirring, care being taken to cause the minimum disturbance of the solution during the earliest phase of clotting.

ASSAY PROCEDURE

The volumes in the text are given as examples and may be adapted to the apparatus used provided that the ratios between the different volumes are respected.