

臨床 小堀 正雄 / 149

I. 輸液の基本的考え方	151
1. 生理的体液 / 153	
2. 術中水分補給 / 154	
3. 術中ストレスホルモンの変動 / 156	
4. 術中輸液管理 / 157	
II. 代用血漿剤の臨床応用	163
1. 絶対的循環血液量不足（出血性ショック）の是正 / 165	
2. 自己血輸血への応用 / 173	
3. 単純血液希釈（増量血液希釈：hypervolemic hemodilution） / 179	
4. 相対的循環血液量不足の是正 / 179	
5. 末梢循環改善として / 181	
6. 膠質浸透圧（COP）の利用 / 184	
7. その他の使用方法 / 185	
III. 代用血漿剤の問題点	193
1. アレルギー / 195	
2. 腎機能障害 / 198	
3. 出血傾向 / 200	
4. 許容量 / 201	
IV. 血液希釈	209
1. 代用血漿剤による血液希釈状態 / 211	
2. 血液希釈の安全限界 / 227	
3. 血液希釈状態での術中管理 / 232	
4. 血液希釈と低血圧麻酔の併用 / 234	
5. 血液希釈と創傷治療 / 237	
V. わが国の代用血漿剤の若干の問題	247
1. 血漿量維持効果より / 249	
2. 合併症より / 249	
3. 血管透過性より / 249	
4. 分散度より / 250	
5. 溶媒より / 250	
6. 血液希釈液より / 251	
7. Dx と HES の選択より / 251	

Approach to Clinical Trial Considering Medical Ethics and Efficacy for HbV, Liposome Encapsulated Hemoglobin Vesicle

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Abstract: Since around 1985, a liposome encapsulated hemoglobin vesicle (HbV) has been developed in Waseda University as an artificial red cell. Subsequently, in 1995, Terumo Co. produced a prototype of HbV for clinical trial, the so-called Neo Red Cell. We tested this in preclinical study and believed firmly that infusion of the HbV could substitute for ordinary blood transfusion [1]. Subsequently, further improvement was done on the HbV by investigators of Waseda and Keio University supported by a grant of Health & Welfare Ministry, Japan, and recent physicochemical properties of the HbV are evaluated, mostly applicable for clinical trial [2,3].

SAFETY AND EFFICACY OF ARTIFICIAL BLOOD

If a new product will be recognized and accepted as artificial blood, two requirements should be satisfied. One is proper physicochemical activity and another is its clinical efficacy.

Physicochemical activity required for HbV is listed in Table 1. Oxygen transporting function is the most crucial thing, which depends on an amount of hemoglobin (Hb) contained in vesicle and oxygen dissociation curve of the Hb. Secondly, conversion rate of Hb to metHb in vitro (during storage) and in vivo (after infusion) should be minimized. In the third, dispersibility of vesicle in the solution and blood should be kept constant and homogenous. In the fourth, size of the vesicle is required to be 0.1–0.2 microns of diameter. In the fifth, adequate viscosity of the solution is also important. In the sixth, homogeneity & stability of the vesicles should be maintained. Finally, adequate pH of the solution is necessary.

On the other hand, clinical efficacy should be assessed by items shown in Table 2. Satisfactory oxygen supply to tissues depends on good

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Table 1. Physicochemical activity for efficacy

Oxygen Transport Function	Amount of Hb in the Vesicle Oxygen Dissociation Curve (P50)
Conversion Rate from Hb to MetHb	
Dispersibility of Vesicle in Medium	
Size of Vesicle	
Viscosity of HbV Solution	
Homogeneity & Stability of the Vesicles in the Solution & Blood	
pH of the Solution	

pulmonary oxygenation of artificial red cell, sufficient oxygen release at the tissues, less conversion to Hb to metHb in the blood, and maintenance of normal cardiac output, which may be supported accompanied with the normal circulating blood volume. Finally, good clinical efficacy of artificial red cell depends on adequate retention of the vesicles in the circulating blood.

In addition, any adverse effects should never occur in subjects in whom the HbV will be infused. Concerning drug safety, particularly for artificial blood, several criteria have been issued [4-7]. Recently, certain check points, listed in Table 3, were proposed, particularly for the HbV. On the other hand, criterion concerned with the efficacy of artificial blood is scanty.

PHYSICOCHEMICAL PROPERTIES FOR SAFETY

In the process for encapsulation of Hb into liposome vesicle, it is required to once convert Hb to carbon-monoxide-Hb. Therefore it must be confirmed whether or not there will be some residual carbon-monoxide-Hb and carbon-monoxide in the solution. Likewise it must be checked if some excess phospholipid of liposome and polyethylene glycol remained

Table 2. Clinical efficacy

Oxygen Supply to Tissue
Pulmonary Oxygenation (at FIO ₂ 0.2-0.4)
Oxygen Release at Tissues
Conversion Rate from Hb to MetHb
Normal Cardiac Output
Maintenance of the Circulating Blood Volume
Retention Rate of HbV in the Circulation

Table 3. Safety of HbV solution

Clinical assessment	
Psychological Function & Behavior	Nervous Function
Tendon & Muscle Function	Heart & Circulatory Function
Respiratory & Gas Exchange Function	Hepatic Function
Body Fluid Buffering Capacity	Serum Electrolyte Compositions
Renal Function	Digestive Function
Hemostatic & Fibrinolytic Function	Hematopoietic Function
Endocrine Functions	Defensive & Immune System
Reproductive Function	Teratogenicity
Tumorigenicity	Interaction with Drugs Commonly Used

in the solution. Obviously, retention of free Hb and contamination of endotoxin cannot be allowed. And also its sterility must be kept absolute.

CLINICAL SAFETY OF THE HBV

It must be proved that the HbV do not cause any adverse effect on our vital functions, as shown in Table 3. Therefore those items must be examined in preclinical studies using animals. For example, on the heart and circulatory function, the research groups of Waseda and Keio University have obtained a definite evidence that normal circulation is maintained after replacement with the HbV for severe blood loss. Most of those vital functions have been tested in small animal experiments and no adverse effect has been observed. It is very hard to make a good proof, however, that the HbV will never affect psychological or behavior function. In addition, it must be confirmed that neither teratogenicity nor tumorigenicity (not only in the animal in which the HbV is infused but also will be found, in his offspring) at least within three generations.

Preclinical study for recently developed HbV, however, has not been done in middle-sized and large animals as yet, since we could not obtain a sufficient amount of the HbV for those experiments due to its producing

Table 4. Consideration on medical ethics for clinical trial

Clinical trials should be done as treatment or therapy for patients
The treatment or therapy in clinical trials should be equivalent or superior to conventional treatment or therapy
Clinical trials must be performed with certain and proper informed consent

capacity. Fortunately, a few pharmaceutical companies, such as Terumo Co., are going to associate for mass production of HbV. Therefore, pre-clinical studies, including in middle-or large-sized animals, will be achieved in the near future.

The Society of Blood Substitutes, Japan provided a guideline for clinical trial with new artificial blood six years ago. The project team of Ministry Health & Welfare, Japan, decided to make some protocols for clinical trial of HbV in accordance with accumulation of data from preclinical studies.

DESIGN OF CLINICAL TRIAL

For planning the clinical trial, two important things are that the trial should fully satisfy ethical requirements and also draw definite evidence from its results.

To satisfy the medical ethics, we have to keep in mind three points, as listed in Table 4. First of all, any clinical trial should be done as treatment or therapy for patients. Secondly, the treatment or therapy performed in clinical trials should be equivalent or superior to conventional treatment or therapy. Thirdly, clinical trials must be done holding authorized and proper, informed consent.

Considering medical ethics, two main requirements for selection of subject are considered. One of them is a definite reason that this artificial blood (HbV) is beneficial for treatment or therapy of the subject. In another, certain time will be obtained to receive an informed consent from the subject before action of clinical trial, as shown in Table 5.

For assessment of clinical efficacy of the HbV as a substitute of blood, two crucial items are focused on, namely stabilized circulatory dynamics and sufficient oxygen supply to tissues:

Table 5. Selection of subjects for the clinical trial regarding reception of informed consent

Sufficient Reason for Use of Artificial Blood

- (1) without Adverse associated with Ordinary Blood Transfusion
- (2) with Oxygen Carrying Property not for Plasma Substitutes
- (3) Sufficient Interval between Finding Subject and Operation for Explain & Understanding Protocol and Receiving Consent

Indication for Alternative Transfusion with HbV: Acute Anemia which the HbV could be used for matched to its optimum properties

Table 6. First selection for clinical trial

Replacement for Surgical Blood Loss with 15–20 ml/kg Hemodilutional Autologous Transfusion Substitute for Blood Transfusion for Emergent Surgery without Proper Blood prepared Substitute for Blood Transfusion for Unexpected Bleeding during Operation Transfusion for Patient with Uncommon Blood Type or with Refusal of Blood Transfusion Limited for Blood Loss of 15–20 ml/kg during the Clinical Trial but not for Clinical Use in the Future

For achievement of definite and satisfactory results, four items should be considered, as follows.

1. Setting for proper control for procedure (treatment or therapy);
2. Complete achievement of initial determination (control) of physiological parameters;
3. Application of routine laboratory test and simple technique for measurement;
4. Selection of subjects who do not suffer severe illness or are not placed in unstable or complicated pathological conditions.

With those understandings, first clinical trial should be recommended to be done for replacement of surgical blood loss of 16–20 ml/kg, listed in Table 6. Namely, it will be done for hemodilutional autologous blood transfusion, blood transfusion for emergent surgery or unexpected bleeding during surgery in which proper blood for transfusion is not provided, and blood transfusion for patients with an uncommon blood type whose surgery should be done relatively urgently.

Some other applications as shown in Table 7 that might be proposed for the clinical trial. In our opinion, however, it should be better to avoid those, since those pathological conditions or illness and situations *per se* influence parameters measured. The data obtained from those patients in those situations will mislead and hinder us from making an accurate evaluation on the HbV as artificial blood and the decision to progress further to practical application for the HbV.

The physiological parameters measured in the first clinical trial should be limited in routine laboratory tests if possible and technique should be simple and easy. Those physiological parameters measured are listed in Table 8. Insertion of CVP catheter is possibly acceptable for cases whose surgical bleeding is anticipated to exceed over 12 ml/kg, but Swan Ganz catheter is not always acceptable. If the tip of the CVP catheter is placed in front of the tricuspidal valve, we can judge blood

Table 7. No program projected in clinical trials for new artificial blood

Post-traumatic Hypovolemia
Hemorrhagic Shock
Myocardial & Cerebral Ischemia due to Stenosis
Supplemental Treatment for Idiopathic Anemia
Priming for Extracorporeal Circuit
Superoxygenation for Malignant Neoplasma
Liquid Ventilation
Organ Perfusion & Preservation for Transplantation

sampled there as the mixed venous blood. [8]. Then we can determine its oxygen partial pressure, which could estimate mean oxygen partial pressure of whole body tissue. Blood lactate level can be used as an indicator for tissue hypoxia.

Incidentally, an actual protocol for the trial with hemodilutional autologous blood transfusion is illustrated in Figure 1. Namely, after receiving patient's written informed consent, the patient will be anesthetized and an arterial and central venous catheter will be inserted. All physiological parameters listed in Table 8 will be measured. Then his autologous blood of 8 ml/kg will be collected and simultaneously the HbV plus colloid solution, such as hydroxyethyl starch solution, or colloid solution alone, will be infused. Selection of the HbV or the colloid solution alone should have been done randomly before the anesthesia. Second physiological measurements as same as the first are performed immediately after the replacement. Second collection of autologous blood and infusion are carried out in the same manner. Again, third physiological measurements will be performed. Then surgery will be commenced and bleeding associated with surgery will be replaced with the autologous blood collected. If total blood loss will not exceed over 20 ml/kg, no additional blood transfusion or any

Table 8. Physiological parameters measured in the clinical trial

Arterial Blood Pressure	Arterial O ₂ Partial Pressure
Right Atrial Mean Pressure	Arterial CO ₂ Partial Pressure
Pulmonary Artery Blood Pressure*	Arterial pH
Heart Rate	Arterial Lactate Level
Cardiac Output*	Arterial Blood Hb, Hct & HbVerit
ECG	Mixed Venous O ₂ Partial Pressure
Urine Volume	Mixed Venous O ₂ Saturation
Routine Urine Analysis	AV O ₂ Content Difference (calculation)
Routine Blood Chemical Analysis	O ₂ Consumption (calculation)*

*If Swan Ganz Catheter could be allowed to be used.

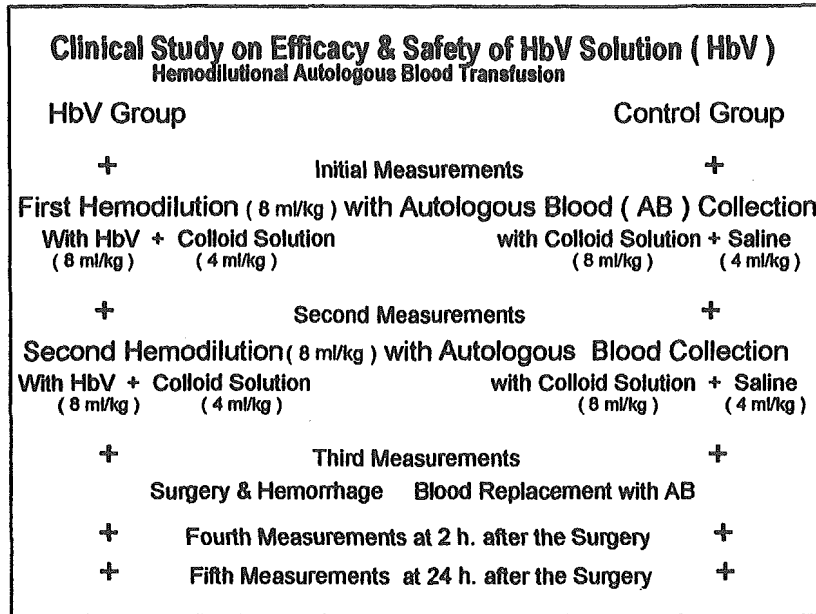


Figure 1

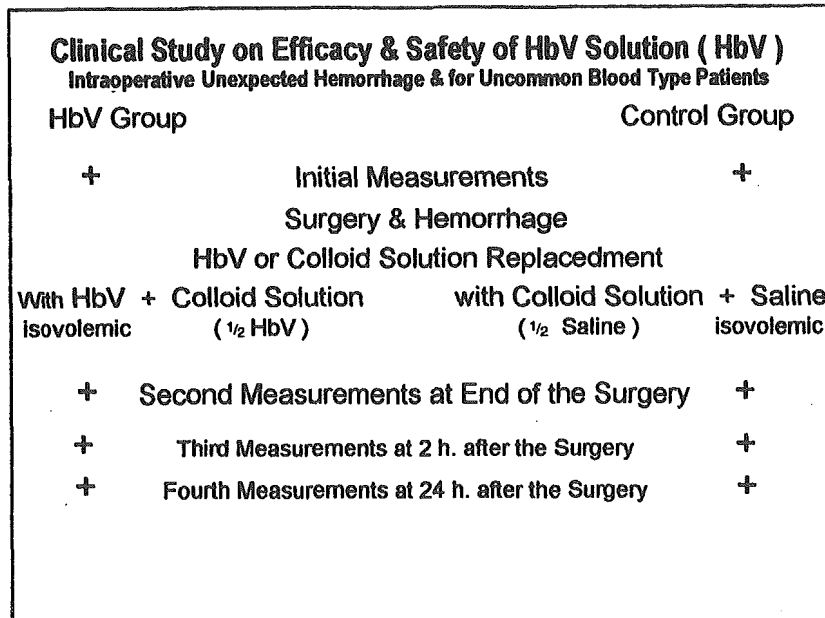


Figure 2

Table 9. Social needs for artificial blood

Disaster Use	Long-term Shelf Storage
Emergent Use	Before Arrival of Matched or O(-) Blood
Shortage of Blood for Transfusion	
Recycle Use of Hemoglobin from Donated Blood	
Application as Universal Blood	
Evasion from Transfusion Complications & Human Error	
Transfusion for Patients with Uncommon Blood Type or with Refusal of Donated Blood	

other treatment may be required. Fourth and fifth measurements will be performed at two hours after the surgery and 24 hours after, respectively. However, if the bleeding will exceed over 20 ml/kg and hemodynamic condition will become unstable, necessitating some drugs or additional homologous blood transfusion, data obtained above will be excluded from the study.

Similar, as shown in Figure 2, study of treatment of unexpected bleeding during surgery, and of transfusion for patients with uncommon blood types, is planned for clinical trial using HbV. First measurements before commencement of surgery will be performed and subsequent blood loss during the surgery will be treated with the HbV plus the colloid solution or the colloid solution alone. Second, third, and fourth measurements will be performed at the end of surgery, two hours and 24 hours after surgery, respectively. In those trials, it can be understood easily that the amount of the HbV used should be equal to that of blood lost. On the other hand, it is hard to decide which amount of colloid solution should be infused, namely to be equal or one-half of volume of blood lost. It will be a concern that excess volume loading will be induced immediately after the infusion when the equal amount will be chosen and that hypovolemia will be caused at 2-3 hours after the infusion, when one-half volume will be used. Nevertheless, Hiippala's report [9] may lead us to use the one-half volume in the first clinical trial.

CONCLUSION

We have to achieve whole preclinical studies associated with mass production of the HbV. And we hope that the clinical trials mentioned in this paper will be carried out as soon as possible. Artificial blood, such as the HbV, is expected to be applied in many clinical practices, as shown in Table 9, in the future. We hope, at least in our country, that the HbV could supplement sufficiently the coming shortage in blood for transfusion.

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Metabolism of hemoglobin-vesicles (artificial oxygen carriers) and their influence on organ functions in a rat model

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Abstract

Phospholipid vesicles encapsulating Hb (Hb-vesicles: HbV) have been developed for use as artificial O₂ carriers (250 nm ϕ). As one of the safety evaluations, we analyzed the influence of HbV on the organ functions by laboratory tests of plasma on a total of 29 analytes. The HbV suspension ([Hb] = 10 g/dl) was intravenously infused into male Wistar rats (20 ml/kg; whole blood = 56 ml/kg). The blood was withdrawn at 8 h, and 1, 2, 3, and 7 days after infusion, and the plasma was ultracentrifuged to remove HbV in order to avoid its interference effect on the analytes. Enzyme concentrations, AST, ALT, ALP, and LAP showed significant, but minor changes, and did not show a sign of a deteriorative damage to the liver that was one of the main organs for the HbV entrapment and the succeeding metabolism. The amylase and lipase activities showed reversible changes, however, there was no morphological changes in pancreas. Plasma bilirubin and iron did not increase in spite of the fact that a large amount of Hb was metabolized in the macrophages. Cholesterols, phospholipids, and β -lipoprotein transiently increased showing the maximum at 1 or 2 days, and returned to the control level at 7 days. They should be derived from the membrane components of HbV that are liberated from macrophages entrapping HbV. Together with the previous report of the prompt metabolism of HbV in the reticuloendothelial system by histopathological examination, it can be concluded that HbV infusion transiently modified the values of the analytes without any irreversible damage to the corresponding organs at the bolus infusion rate of 20 ml/kg.

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1. Introduction

Liposomes or phospholipid vesicles have been extensively studied for the application of drug delivery system, and some are now approved for a clinical use as antifungal or anticancer therapies [1]. Another promising application is to use vesicles for encapsulating a concentrated human Hb. The resulting Hb-vesicle (HbV) can serve as an O₂ carrier with ability comparable to red blood cells (RBC) [2–4]. The advantages of the Hb-based O₂ carriers (HBOCs) are the absence of blood-type antigens and transmission of known and

unknown blood-borne disease, the possibility to improve the rheological properties of blood flow according to the needs of patients, and stability for long-term storage. These characteristics will make it possible to use the HBOCs both in elective and emergency situations [5,6]. In this sense, the infusion of HBOCs becomes superior to the conventional blood transfusion that still has the potential of mismatching, infection such as HIV and hepatitis virus, and the problems of only 2–3 week preservation period. The acellular Hb modifications including polymerized Hb and polymer-conjugated Hb are now undergoing the final stages of clinical trials [7,8]. However, the cellular structure of HbV (particle diameter, ca. 250 nm) most closely mimics the characteristics of natural RBC such as the cell membrane function of physically preventing direct contact of Hb

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with the components of blood and vasculature during circulation [9]. In comparison with some acellular Hb modifications, the Hb encapsulation in vesicles suppresses hypertension induced by vasoconstriction, a theory that is suggested to be due to the high affinity of Hb with nitric oxide and carbon monoxide as vasorelaxation factors [10,11]. Moreover, the surface modification of HbV with polyethylene glycol (PEG) chains not only prolongs the circulation half-life [12] but also prevents the intervesicular aggregation and guarantees the homogeneous dispersion in the plasma phase that provides a prompt blood flow in the microcirculation and the resulting sufficient tissue oxygenation [13,14].

According to the clinical conditions HbVs are supposed to be applied for, the organism is faced with the metabolism of a large amount of both Hb and lipids, because the dose rate of HbV is significantly large. The HbV particles, as well as phospholipid vesicles, infused in the blood stream are finally captured by phagocytes in the reticuloendothelial system (RES, or mononuclear phagocytic system, MPS) [4,15]. In a previous report, we clarified by the histopathological studies of rats receiving 20 ml/kg of HbV infusion that the HbV particles were captured and metabolized within 7 days in RES mainly in the spleen and liver [16]. Transmission electron microscopy provided a clear image of the HbV particles in the phagosomes 1 day after infusion, but they disappeared within 7 days. Staining with the anti-human Hb antibody, Berlin blue, and hematoxylin/eosin showed prompt metabolism of Hb molecules with no morphological changes in the liver and spleen. The phagocytic activity decreased and then transiently increased, but tended to return to the original level. From these studies, we did not see any irreversible damage to the organs.

Serum laboratory tests are the most common diagnostic tools to monitor organ functions clinically. However, both the PEG-modified HbV particles and the chemically modified Hb solutions remained in the plasma even after usual centrifugation to remove RBC, showing significant interference effects due to the light absorption by Hb and light scattering by the particles. These interference effects hindered the accurate evaluation of plasma laboratory tests and have been regarded as a serious issue for the development of HBOCs [17,18]. However, quite recently we have clarified by an *in vitro* experiment that the simple removal of PEG-modified HbV as a precipitate by ultracentrifugation (50,000 *g*, 20 min) or by conventional centrifugation in the presence of a high-molecular-weight dextran diminished most of the interference effects [19]. Using this simple procedure, we aimed to evaluate the safety of HbV by the laboratory tests of plasma after bolus intravenous infusion of HbV at a rate of 20 ml/kg, the same experimental model as in the previous study [16].

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Preparation of PEG-modified HbV

The PEG-modified HbV was prepared in a sterile condition as previously reported in the literature [10, 20–22]. Hb was purified from outdated donated blood provided by the Hokkaido Red Cross Blood Center (Sapporo, Japan) and the Society of Red Cross, Japan (Tokyo, Japan). The encapsulated purified Hb (38 g/dl) contained 14.7 mM of pyridoxal 5'-phosphate (PLP, Sigma) as an allosteric effector at a molar ratio of PLP/Hb = 2.5. The lipid bilayer was composed of a mixture of 1,2-dipalmitoyl-*sn*-glycero-3-phosphatidylcholine, cholesterol, and 1,5-bis-*O*-hexadecyl-*N*-succinyl-L-glutamate at a molar ratio of 5/5/1 (Nippon Fine Chem. Co., Osaka, Japan), and 1,2-distearoyl-*sn*-glycero-3-phosphatidylethanolamine-*N*-poly(ethylene glycol) (NOF Co., Tokyo, Japan, 0.3 mol% of the total lipid). The HbCO solution and the lipid powder were mixed and stirred for 12 h at 4°C. The resulting multilamellar vesicles were extruded through membrane filters with a final filter pore size of 0.22 µm. Thus prepared PEG-modified HbV was suspended in saline at the Hb concentration of 10 g/dl, and filtrated (pore size: 0.45 µm). The physicochemical parameters of the HbV are as follows: particle diameter, 251 ± 80 nm; [Hb], 10 g/dl; [metHb], <3%; [HbCO], <2%; phospholipids, 4.0 g/dl; cholesterol, 1.7 g/dl; and oxygen affinity (P_{50}), 30 Torr. The endotoxin content was precisely measured by modified *Limulus* Amebocyte lysate gel-clotting analysis that has been developed by our group recently, and confirmed that the endotoxin content was less than 0.1 endotoxin unit/ml [23].

2.2. HbV infusion and procedure for the plasma laboratory tests

All animal studies were approved by the Animal Subject Committee of Keio University School of Medicine and performed according to NIH guidelines for the care and use of laboratory animals (NIH publication #85-23 Rev. 1985). The experiments were carried out using 40 male Wistar rats (200–210 g, Saitama Experimental Animals, Kawagoe, Japan). They were anesthetized with diethylether inhalation, and the HbV suspension was infused into the tail vein at a dose rate of 20 ml/kg ($n = 5$ for every time point). Ten rats were used to obtain the control values. All the rats were housed in cages and provided with food and water *ad libitum* in a temperature controlled room on a 12 h dark/light cycle.

After 8 h, and 1, 2, 3, and 7 days, the rats were anesthetized with 1.5% sevoflurane inhalation (Maruishi Pharm. Co., Osaka, Japan) using a vaporizer (Model

TK-4 Biomachinery, Kimura Med., Tokyo). Polyethylene tubes (PE-50, Natsume Co., Tokyo) were implanted in the carotid artery for withdrawing blood into heparinized syringes for the Hct, HbV concentration, and plasma laboratory tests. The animals were finally laparotomized and sacrificed with acute bleeding from the abdominal aorta and the liver and spleen were obtained for weight measurements. The control rats received the same procedure for the measurements.

A part of the withdrawn blood (6 ml) was centrifuged to obtain plasma which was turbid and red/brown colored due to the presence of PEG-modified HbV particles especially in the samples taken at 8 h, 1 and 2 days after infusion. The plasma was ultracentrifuged (50,000 *g*, 20 min) to remove the HbV particles. The obtained transparent plasma specimens were stored at -80°C until the laboratory tests at BML, Inc. (Kawagoe, Japan). The selected analytes were total protein, albumin, total bilirubin, aspartate aminotransferase (AST), alanine aminotransferase (ALT), lactate dehydrogenase (LDH), γ -glutamyltransferase (γ -GTP) alkaline phosphatase (ALP), cholinesterase (ChE), leucine amino peptidase (LAP), creatine phosphokinase (CPK), amylase, lipase, total cholesterol (Total-Chol.), cholesteryl ester (Chol.Ester), free cholesterol (Free-Chol.), HDL-cholesterol (HDL-Chol.), β -lipoprotein, triglyceride (TG), free fatty acid (FFA), phospholipids, total lipids, uric acid (UA), blood urea nitrogen (BUN), creatinine (CRE), K^{+} , Ca^{2+} , inorganic phosphate (IP), and Fe^{3+} . In our previous study, it was confirmed that the concentrations of the plasma components in terms of the above analytes did not change after the ultracentrifugation at 50,000 *g* for 20 min [19]. Since rat albumin is slightly insensitive to the bromocresol green method, the values were corrected according to Takano et al. [24].

2.3. Histopathological examination of pancreas

After sacrificing the animals by acute bleeding from the abdominal aorta, the pancreas was resected for a histopathological study. The organs were fixed in a 10% formalin neutral buffer solution (Wako Chem. Co., Tokyo) immediately after the resection, and the paraffin sections were stained with hematoxylin/eosin.

2.4. Data analysis

Differences between the control and a treatment group were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA followed by Fisher's protected least-significant difference (PLSD) test. The changes were considered statistically significant if $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

All the rats receiving the bolus infusion of HbV at a dose rate of 20 ml/kg tolerated the infusion and survived until intentional sacrifice. There was no noticeable change in appearance such as piloerection.

3.1. Hct and circulation persistence of HbV

The control Hct was $42 \pm 1\%$, and it decreased slightly to $40 \pm 1\%$ at 1 day after HbV infusion. The estimated Hb concentration of HbV in plasma just after infusion was about 6 g/dl, and it gradually decreased to 4.4 ± 0.3 g/dl at 8 h, 1.9 ± 0.2 g/dl at 1 day, 1.3 ± 0.1 g/dl at 2 days, and 0.8 ± 0.01 g/dl at 3 days (Fig. 1). At 7 days, HbV was not detected at all in the plasma phase.

3.2. Spleen and liver weights

The changes in the spleen and liver weights were expressed as percents of the body weight (Fig. 1). The liver weight ratio (control, $4.81 \pm 0.17\%$) showed a significant increase 1 day after the infusion ($5.29 \pm 0.27\%$, $p < 0.01$), and then it returned to the original level at 2 days. Spleen weight ratio significantly increased from $0.32 \pm 0.05\%$ to $0.66 \pm 0.06\%$ 3 days after the infusion ($p < 0.01$), however, it was reduced to $0.41 \pm 0.02\%$ at 7 days.

3.3. Plasma laboratory tests

The plasma fraction after centrifugation of the blood sample for 3 days after the HbV infusion was turbid due to the presence of PEG-modified HbV. However, ultracentrifugation of the plasma produced transparent and light-yellow plasma phase and PEG-modified HbV was precipitated at the bottom in a tube. There was no sign of the presence of Hb in the supernatant, indicating that there was no hemolysis of both RBC and HbV.

As for the analytes that reflect the liver function, the total protein (control, 5.2 ± 0.1 g/dl) and albumin (2.46 ± 0.06 g/dl) slightly decreased to, e.g., 4.9 ± 0.2 and 2.11 ± 0.10 g/dl, respectively, with statistically significant differences ($p < 0.01$) for 3 days after the HbV infusion (Fig. 2). They tended to return to its original level at 7 days ($p < 0.05$). AST (control, 60 ± 7 U/l) decreased to 46 ± 3 U/l ($p < 0.05$) and returned to the original level at 7 days. ALT (control, 32 ± 5 U/l) only slightly increased to 40 ± 8 U/l 1 day after the HbV infusion ($p < 0.01$), but it returned to its original level 2 days after the infusion. LDH (control, 150 ± 60 U/l) did not change significantly. ALP (control, 1265 ± 231 U/l) decreased at 2 days (812 ± 149 U/l) and 3 days (872 ± 98 U/l) ($p < 0.01$), but it returned to the control level at 7 days. γ -GPT (control, 1.6 U/l) and LAP (31 ± 1 U/l) showed significant but minimal reductions

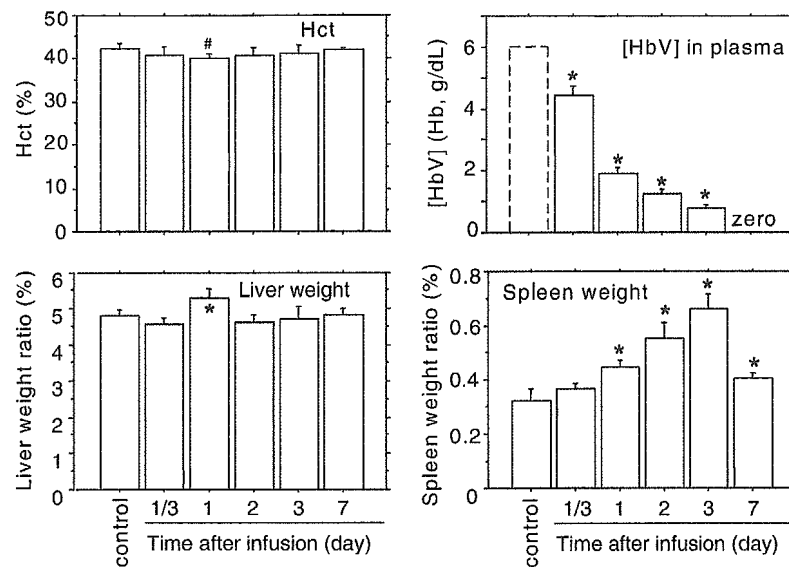


Fig. 1. Changes in hematocrit, concentration of HbV in plasma, and spleen and liver weights after infusion of HbV (20 ml/kg). The values are mean \pm SD. * $p < 0.01$; # $p < 0.05$ vs. control values. The control value of [HbV] is the estimated concentration of HbV immediately after the infusion and expressed as with a dashed line. The spleen and liver weights are expressed as the ratio to the body weight (%).

($p < 0.05$). ChE (control, 76 ± 18 U/l) did not show a noticeable change. Plasma total bilirubin (≤ 0.1 mg/dl) and Fe^{3+} showed some reductions but were maintained at a low level for 7 days in spite of the metabolism of a large amount of Hb.

CRE (control, 0.3 mg/dl) was maintained at a low level for 7 days. BUN (control, 16 ± 3 mg/dl) showed a slight increase at 7 days (21 ± 3 mg/dl) (Fig. 3). UA (control, 0.47 ± 0.19 mg/dl) increased to 0.70 ± 0.16 mg/dl at 3 days, however, it returned to a non significant level at 7 days. Amylase (control, 1613 ± 74 U/l) significantly decreased for 3 days after the infusion ($p < 0.01$), but returned to its original level at 7 days. Lipase (control, 9 ± 1 U/l) showed significant increases ($p < 0.01$) after the HbV infusion, and it tended to decrease after 3 days, and was reduced to a non-significant level at 7 days. CPK (control, 304 ± 116 U/l) decreased at 7 days ($p < 0.05$), but did not show a noticeable increase during the experiment. As for the electrolyte concentrations, K^+ , Ca^{2+} , and IP did not show any significant changes.

The most consistent changes were seen in the lipid components (Fig. 4). Total-Chol. (control, 73 ± 7 mg/dl), Free-Chol. (18 ± 2 mg/dl), Chol.Ester (59 ± 8 mg/dl), and HDL-Chol. (32 ± 4 mg/dl) showed significant increases and maximum values at 2 days ($p < 0.01$). Free-Chol. increased to 39 ± 4 mg/dl, about twice the control value. However, it tended to decrease at 3 days, and returned to its control level at 7 days. β -Lipoprotein (control, 110 ± 42 mg/dl) slightly increased at 1 day (160 ± 33 mg/dl), but returned to its original level at 3 days. TG (control, 64.4 mg/dl) significantly decreased to 12.4 mg/dl at 2 days ($p < 0.01$), but tended to increase to its

original level at 7 days. Phospholipid (control, 132 ± 8 mg/dl) significantly increased to 150 ± 9 mg/dl at 1 day ($p < 0.01$), and then returned to the original level at 3 days.

3.4. Histopathological examination of pancreas

The histology of pancreatic tissue 2 days after the infusion of HbV is shown in Fig. 5. There was no significant morphological change in spite of the increment of the pancreatic lipase activity.

4. Discussion

The clinical indications for the use of the HbV suspension as an artificial O_2 carrying fluid are estimated to be mainly preoperative or perioperative hemodilution, or resuscitation from hemorrhagic shock in emergency situations [25], both of which result in exchanging more than 20% of the original blood with the HbV suspension. Thus, the dose amount is extremely greater than that of stealth liposomes for drug delivery systems. HbV particles in the blood stream are finally captured by RES in the same manner as the conventional phospholipid vesicles [15]. In a previous study, we confirmed by the histopathological examination in a rat model that HbV particles were captured in the phagosomes of liver Kupffer cells and spleen macrophages without tissue damage, and they had completely disappeared within 7 days [16]. The transient splenomegaly and hepatomegaly in Fig. 1 seemed associated with the entrapment of HbV. The total weight change of

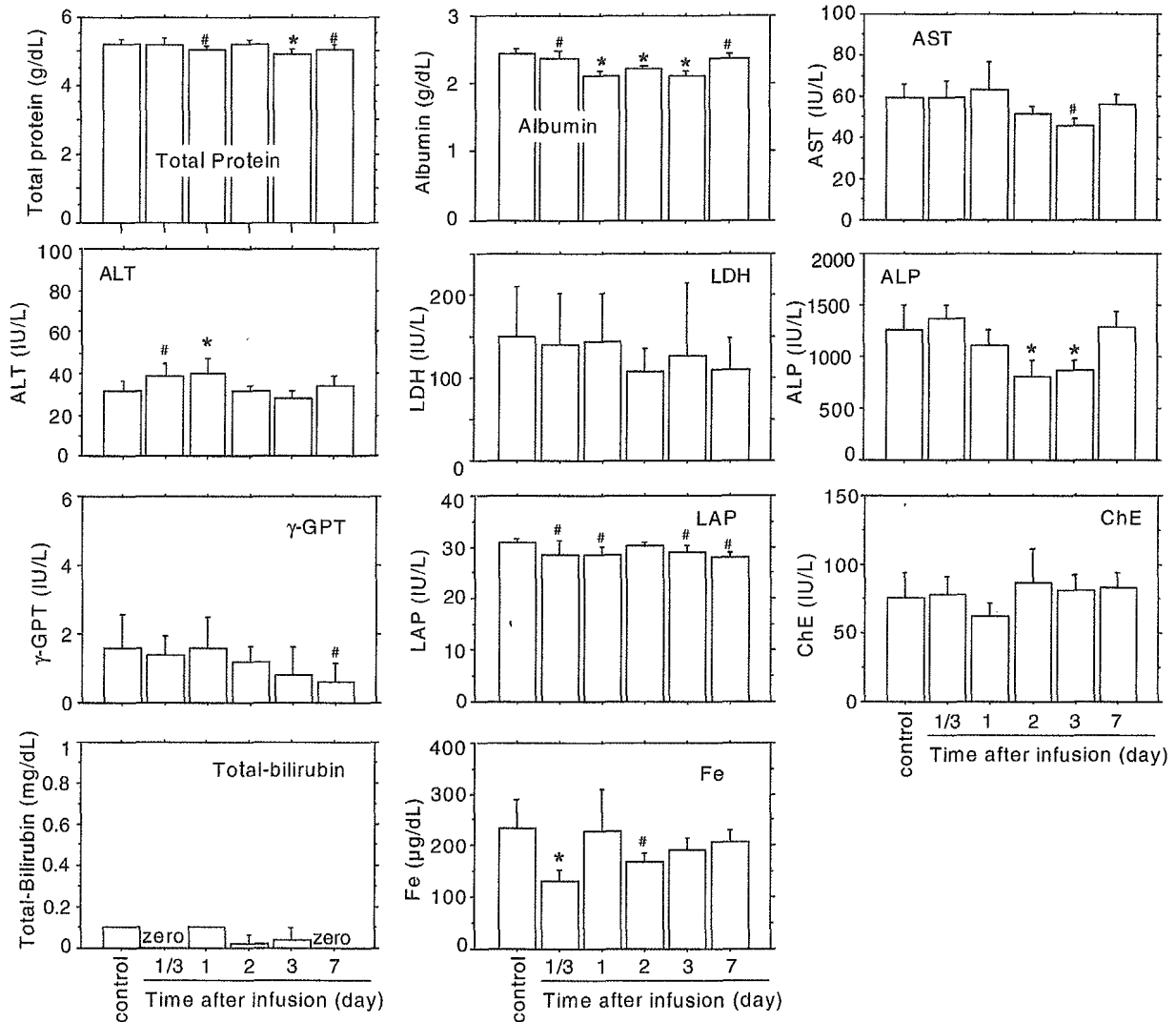


Fig. 2. Plasma laboratory tests representing the liver function and metabolism of Hb after infusion of HbV (20 ml/kg). The values are mean \pm SD. * p <0.01; # p <0.05 vs. control values. Abbreviations: aspartate aminotransferase (AST), alanine aminotransferase (ALT), lactate dehydrogenase (LDH), γ -glutamyltransferase (γ -GTP) alkaline phosphatase (ALP), leucin amino peptidase (LAP), cholinesterase (ChE).

these organs is 0.8% of the body weight (1600 mg for 200 g body weight), which should correspond to not only the accumulated HbV (635 mg for 20 ml/kg) but also to the increased amount of phagocytic or parenchymal cells and/or RBC. The organ weight ratios tended to return to their original levels as HbV disappeared from the blood stream, and there was no deteriorative sign of morphological change in the main organs such as the liver, spleen, lung, kidney, and heart. To confirm the safety more in detail, we analyzed for the first time, the plasma laboratory tests on 29 analytes without any interference effect of the PEG-modified HbV simply by removing it from plasma by ultracentrifugation [19].

Our results indicated no irreversible sign of organ damage after the bolus infusion of HbV at a dose rate of 20 ml/kg (cf. whole blood = 56 ml/kg). Especially, liver is

one of the main organs of the trapping and metabolism of HbV. However, we did not see an increase in the physiological meaning of the parameters representing the liver function. As for the parameters representing the renal function, there were slight changes in CRE, BUN, and UA without any physiological meanings. CPK did not significantly change, indicating that the intactness of the cardiac function and skeletal muscular function should be preserved.

Amylase and lipase that represent pancreatic function showed slight changes. The amylase activity slightly decreased while the lipase activity significantly increased from 9 ± 1 IU/l at control to 30 ± 9 IU/l at 2 days. The lipase activity was measured by an enzymatic method that was specific for pancreatic lipase. Therefore, the increment should not be attributed to the hepatic or

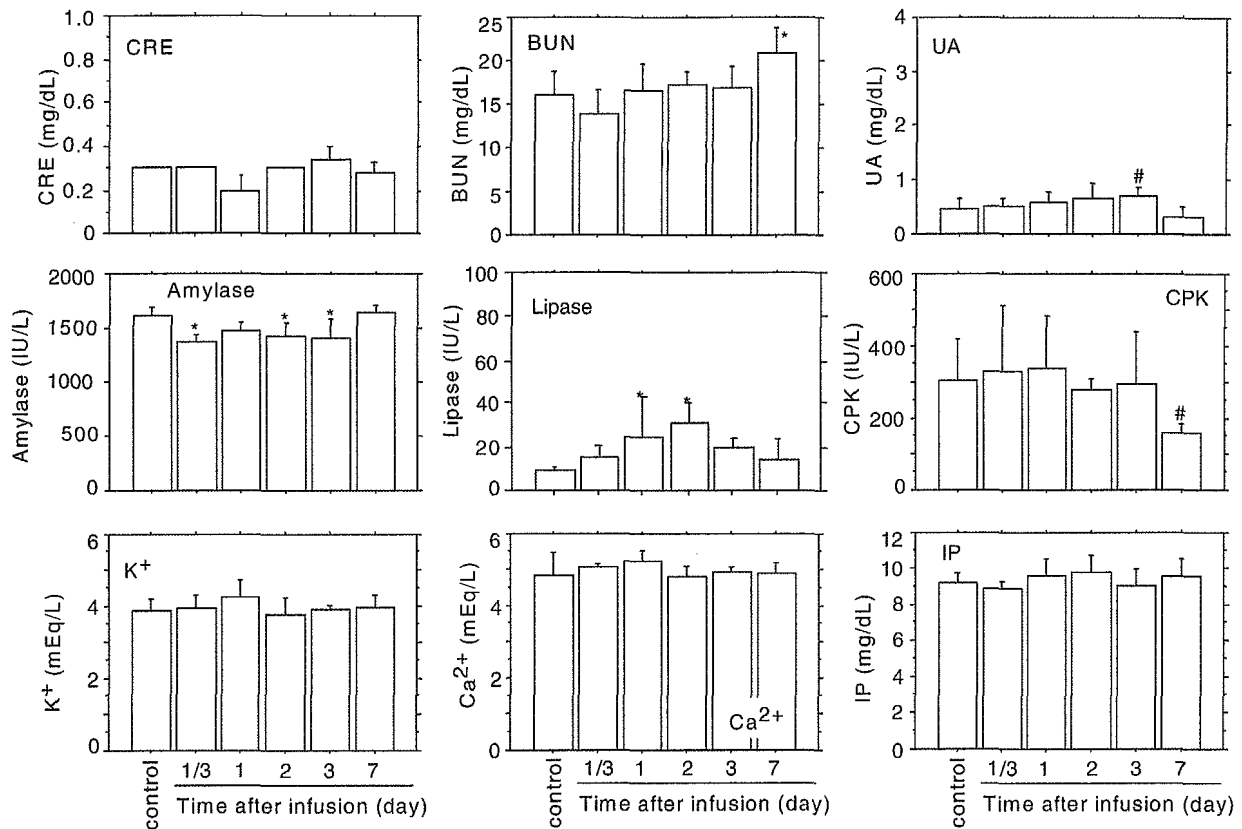


Fig. 3. Plasma laboratory tests representing renal, pancreatic and myocardial function, and electrolytes after infusion of HbV (20 ml/kg). The values are mean \pm SD. * p < 0.01; # p < 0.05 vs. control values. Abbreviations: creatinine (CRE), blood urea nitrogen (BUN), uric acid (UA), creatine phosphokinase (CPK), inorganic phosphate (IP).

lipoprotein lipase. However, this level of increment was significantly smaller than the reported value for the Wistar rats of pancreatitis. Hofbauer et al. [26] reported that acute necrotising pancreatitis increased lipase activity from 10 to 475–5430 IU/l. It was reported that the injection of liposome amphotericin B raised the serum lipase activity, and one possible reason was speculated to be the enzyme induction in the pancreas by the presence of a large amount of lipids from the liposomes [27], because pancreatic lipase hydrolyze not only TG but also phosphatidylcholine [28]. This speculation was also supported by our results that the profiles of the transient increases in the lipid components coincided with that of lipase, but not with amylase. The cause of this modification is not clear at the present time. Histopathological analysis showed no significant pathological change in the pancreas. However, the pancreatic function should carefully be monitored in the ongoing safety studies.

Significant and consistent increases were seen in the lipid components with maximum at 1 or 2 days. They should be derived from the HbV particles because they contain a large amount of cholesterol (ca. 1200 mg/dl) and DPPC (1840 mg/dl) in the infused suspension

([Hb] = 10 g/dl). The gradual increases in cholesterol by 2 days after infusion and no Hb release from HbV in the plasma indicate that they should be liberated from RES after HbV are captured by RES and destroyed in the phagosomes. This is also supported by the fact that the maximum concentrations were seen at 2 days when the HbV in the plasma had mostly disappeared from the blood. It has been reported that the infused lipid components of the phospholipid vesicles are trapped in the Kupffer cells, and diacylphosphatidylcholine is metabolized and reused as a component of the cell membrane, or excreted in the bile and in the exhaled air [29–31]. Cholesterol is finally catabolized as bile acids in the parenchymal hepatocytes. There should be no direct contact of HbV and the hepatocytes because HbV is so large that it cannot diffuse across the fenestrated endothelium into the space of Disse [11]. Cholesterol from HbV should reappear in the blood mainly as lipoprotein cholesterol after entrapment in the Kupffer cells [32], and then excreted in the bile after entrapment of the corresponding lipoprotein by the hepatocytes [33]. We speculate that the main components of the lipid bilayer membrane of HbV, the phospholipids and cholesterol, would gradually be redistributed

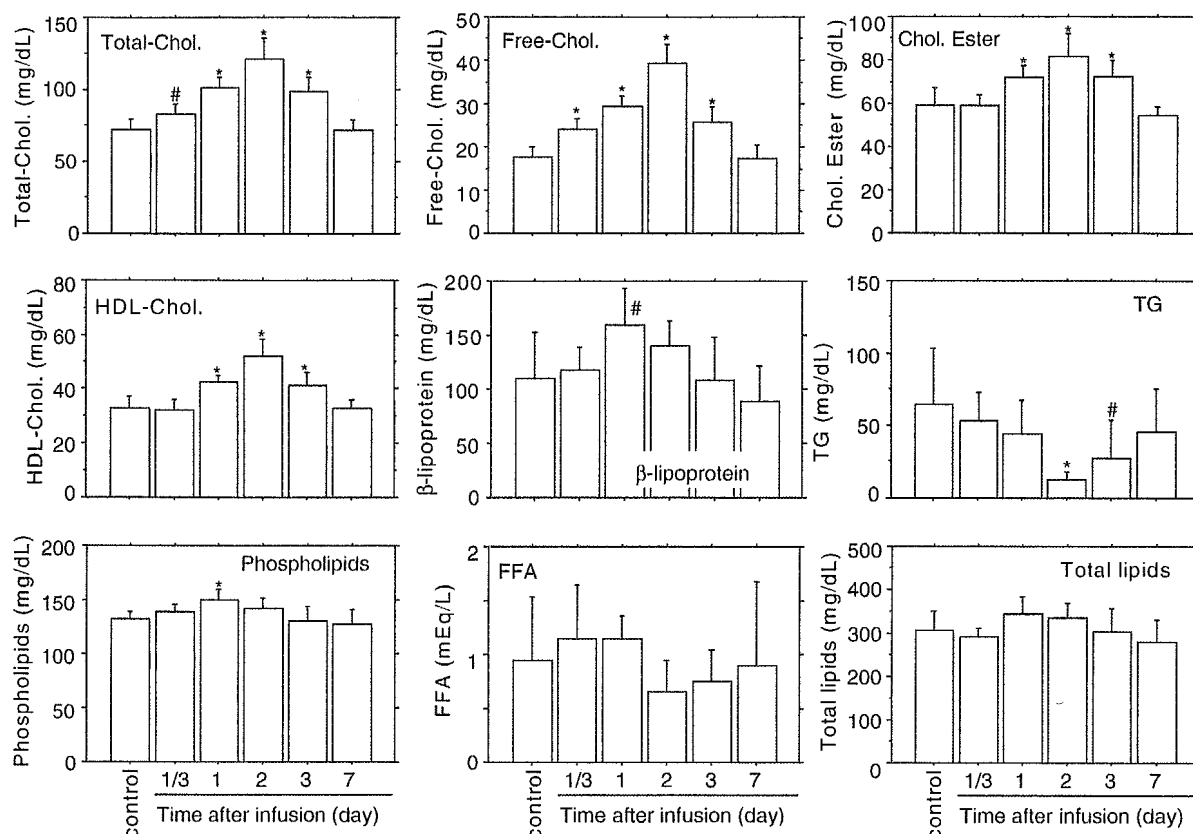


Fig. 4. Plasma laboratory tests representing lipid metabolism after infusion of HbV (20 ml/kg). The values are mean \pm SD. * p < 0.01; # p < 0.05 vs. control values. Abbreviations: total cholesterol (Total-Chol.), free cholesterol (Free-Chol.), cholesteryl ester (Chol.Ester), HDL-cholesterol (HDL-Chol.), triglyceride (TG), free fatty acid (FFA).

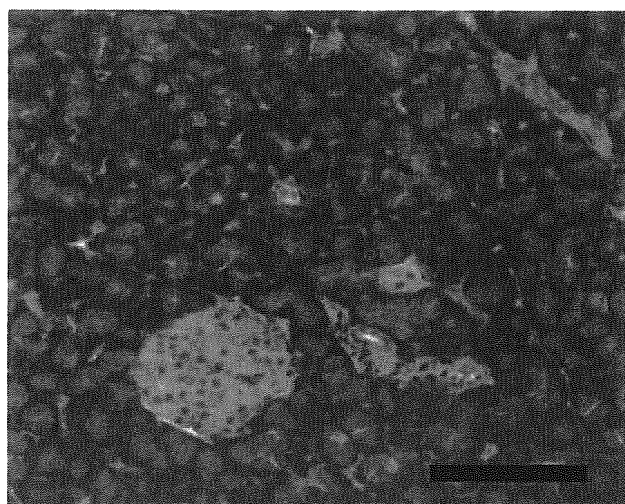


Fig. 5. Histology of pancreas 2 days after the infusion of HbV (20 ml/kg). Bar indicates 100 μ m (HE stain).

or metabolized in the same manner. However, a precise pharmacokinetic study is necessary using radiolabeled materials to demonstrate the metabolic and excretory

routes of the lipids. Transient, but significant increases in the lipid components raise the necessity of a further study to clarify the influence of a large dose of HbV especially on a lipemic model.

During the metabolism of Hb, there should be a release of bilirubin and iron. However, they did not increase for 7 days. In a previous study, the anti-human Hb antibody staining was effective for detecting the special and temporal distribution of human Hb of HbV both in the spleen and liver [16], and we made it clear that human Hb disappeared within 7 days. The released heme from Hb in HbV may probably be metabolized by the inducible form of heme oxygenase-1 in the Kupffer cells in the liver and in the spleen [11,34]. Bilirubin should be excreted in the bile as a normal pathway, and there should be no obstruction or stasis of bile in the biliary tree. Berlin blue staining revealed the presence of hemosiderin 3 and 7 days after HbV infusion, and it disappeared after 14 days [16]. A similar observation was reported for a polymerized Hb that was captured by the Kupffer cells while showing subsequent hemosiderin formation [35]. Normally, iron from a heme is stored in the ferritin molecule [36]. Ferritin in the lysosomal membrane may form paracrystalline structures and

eventually aggregate in mass with an iron content as high as 50%. These are hemosiderins composed of degraded protein and coalesced iron. Both ferritin and hemosiderin release iron molecules, and they are anticipated to induce hydroxyl radical production and succeeding lipid peroxidation [37,38]. However, iron release from hemosiderin is substantially less than that from ferritin, thus iron molecules in hemosiderin are relatively inert [39]. Plasma iron, mostly bound to transferrin, remained constant after HbV infusion. The iron concentration should be coordinately regulated through the “iron regulatory proteins” that sense the levels of iron for hematopoiesis and metabolic needs [40], and the excess amount of iron should be stored in an insoluble and less toxic form as hemosiderin. Together with the time course of the histopathological changes, the results of the plasma laboratory tests indicate that the metabolism of heme and the recycling or excretion of iron molecule is within the physiological capacity and suggested to be on the physiological pathway that has been well characterized for the metabolism of senescent RBC [41].

5. Conclusion

In this study, the plasma laboratory tests after the infusion of HbV (20 ml/kg) did not demonstrate an irreversible sign for a deteriorative damage to the organs. Plasma bilirubin and iron, which were considered to be released during the metabolism of the Hb molecule, did not increase during the observation period. This may be due to the moderate rate of Hb metabolism in RES after the entrapment of HbV with a moderate length of circulation time. The lipid components significantly increased at 2 or 3 days after infusion. These may be derived from the membrane component of HbV entrapped in RES. The complete normalization of the lipid components indicates that they are metabolized in a normal metabolic and/or recycling pathway. The precise biodistribution and fate of the components should be confirmed by a radioisotope technique. Our results have demonstrated the safety of HbV using only healthy rats, while rats in hemorrhagic shock, septic shock, or lipemia have to be tested in the ongoing safety studies. It should also be emphasized that the data cannot be extrapolated to large animals or humans, which may react differently to such a large dose of HbV.

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Reduction of Methemoglobin via Electron Transfer from Photoreduced Flavin: Restoration of O₂-Binding of Concentrated Hemoglobin Solution Coencapsulated in Phospholipid Vesicles

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Ferric methemoglobin is reduced to its ferrous form by photoirradiation either by direct photoexcitation of the heme portion to induce electron transfer from the surrounding media (Sakai et al. (2000) *Biochemistry* 39, 14595–14602) or by an indirect electron transfer from a photochemically reduced electron mediator such as flavin. In this research, we studied the mechanism and optimal condition that facilitates photoreduction of flavin mononucleotide (FMN) to FMNH₂ by irradiation of visible light, and the succeeding reduction of concentrated metHb in phospholipid vesicles to restore its O₂ binding ability. Visible light irradiation (435 nm) of a metHb solution containing FMN and an electron donor such as EDTA showed a significantly fast reduction to ferrous Hb with a quantum yield (Φ) of 0.17, that is higher than the method of direct photoexcitation of heme ($\Phi = 0.006$). Electron transfer from a donor molecule to metHb via FMN was completed within 30 ns. Native-PAGE and IEF electrophoresis indicated no chemical modification of the surface of the reduced Hb. Coencapsulation of concentrated Hb solution (35 g/dL) and the FMN/EDTA system in vesicles covered with a phospholipid bilayer membrane (Hb-vesicles, HbV, diameter: 250 nm) facilitated the metHb photoreduction even under aerobic conditions, and the reduced HbV restored the reversible O₂ binding property. A concentrated HbV suspension ([Hb] = 8 g/dL) was sandwiched with two glass plates to form a liquid layer with the thickness of about 10 μ m (close to capillary diameter in tissue, 5 μ m), and visible light irradiation (221 mW/cm²) completed 100% metHb photoreduction within 20 s. The photoreduced FMNH₂ reacted with O₂ to produce H₂O₂, which was detected by the fluorescence measurement of the reaction of H₂O₂ and *p*-nitrophenylacetic acid. However, the amount of H₂O₂ generated during the photoreduction of HbV was significantly reduced in comparison with the homogeneous Hb solution, indicating that the photoreduced FMNH₂ was effectively consumed during the metHb reduction in a highly concentrated condition inside the HbV nanoparticles.

INTRODUCTION

Photoinduced electron transfer is an essential reaction in biological systems especially during photosynthesis by the chlorophyll–protein complex (1). Hemoproteins such as hemoglobin (Hb) and myoglobin (Mb) are originally not related to the photoreaction in a biological system; however, photoexcitation and the resulting electron transfer reactions have been extensively studied (2–6). In our previous report, we clarified the mechanism of reduction of ferric methemoglobin (metHb) to its ferrous form by the direct excitation of the porphyrin N band in the UVA region (7). The reduction proceeds by charge transfer from the porphyrin ring to the central ferric iron to form the porphyrin π cation radical and ferrous iron by the N band excitation, and the contribution of the amino acid residues in the globin chain as an electron donor or an electron pathway. Another photochemical process to reduce metHb is an electron transfer from photochemically reduced flavin derivatives. The precise photoreduction mechanism of a flavin derivative to its reduced form has been extensively studied (8–10), and this has contributed to the understanding of the mechanism of the electron transfer of flavoproteins (11–17) and their function in the biological systems such as bacterial photosynthesis (18) and visual organs (19).

Irrespective of the flavoproteins, the photoreduction of metMb and metHb by the externally added photoreduced form of the flavin mononucleotide (FMN) was first reported by Brwon and Synder (20) and Yubisui et al. (21, 22), respectively.

We have paid special attention to the reduction of hemoproteins that will be applicable to Hb-based artificial red cells (23). We focus on the liposome-encapsulated Hb; a concentrated Hb solution is encapsulated in phospholipid vesicles to form Hb-vesicles (HbV)¹ with a particle size of about 250 nm (24, 25). Ferrous state Hb binds oxygen to form HbO₂; however, it gradually converts to ferric metHb and superoxide anion and loses its oxygen binding property both in vivo and in vitro (26). A series of thiols was studied as a reductant for metHb,

¹ Abbreviations: HbV, Hb-vesicles; FMN, flavin mononucleotide; SOD, superoxide dismutase; EDTA, ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid; DTPA, diethylenetriamine pentaacetic acid; IEF, isoelectric focusing; Native-PAGE, Native-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis; PEG, poly(ethylene glycol); DPPC, 1,2-dipalmitoyl-*sn*-glycero-3-phosphatidylcholine; DHSG, 1,5-*O*-dihexadecyl-*N*-succinyl-L-glutamate; PEG-DSPE, 1,2-distearoyl-*sn*-glycero-3-phosphatidylethanolamine-*N*-PEG₅₀₀₀; HbCO, carbonylhemoglobin; [FMN]_{in}, concentration of FMN in HbV; [EDTA]_{in}, concentration of EDTA in HbV; [heme]_{in}, concentration of heme in HbV; PHA, *p*-hydroxyphenylacetic acid; DBDA, 6,6'-dihydroxy-(1,1'-biphenyl)-3,3'-diacetic acid, FMN*, triplet FMN; FMNH₂, reduced form of FMN;

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