

AFRRI SR74-5

APRIL 1974

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SCIENTIFIC
REPORT

**TECHNETIUM-99m PYROPHOSPHATE:
COMPARISON OF ED₅₀ FOR TETANY
AND ACIDOSIS WITH ACUTE LD₅₀**

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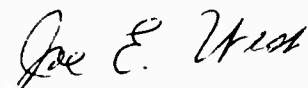
Research was conducted according to the principles enunciated in the
"Guide for Laboratory Animal Facilities and Care," prepared by the
National Academy of Sciences - National Research Council.

TECHNETIUM-99m PYROPHOSPHATE: COMPARISON OF ED₅₀

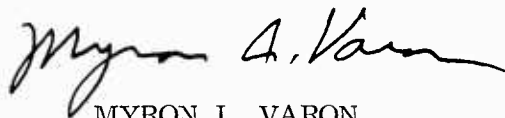
FOR TETANY AND ACIDOSIS WITH ACUTE LD₅₀

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of M. E. Flynn, J. K. Warrenfeltz, and N. L. Fleming for carrying out the Sprague-Dawley rat toxicity sampling study, and W. J. Canterbury for technical assistance in performing calcium determinations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword (Nontechnical summary)	iii
Abstract	iv
I. Introduction	1
II. Materials and Methods	1
III. Results	3
LD50 study	3
Acidity measurements	3
Hypocalcemia measurements	4
Controls	10
IV. Discussion	11
V. Summary	13
References	15

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Plot of acute mortality of Sprague-Dawley rats receiving intravenous injections of polyphosphate and of pyrophosphate . . .	5
Figure 2. Arterial blood PCO_2 levels in rats 5 minutes following intravenous injection of pyrophosphate	6
Figure 3. Arterial blood pH 5 minutes following intravenous injection of pyrophosphate	7
Figure 4. Representative electrocardiograms from male Sprague-Dawley rats receiving pyrophosphate	8
Figure 5. Serum-bound calcium concentrations 5 minutes following intravenous injection of pyrophosphate	9
Figure 6. Serum ionized calcium levels 5 minutes following intravenous injection of pyrophosphate	9
Figure 7. Percent ionized calcium values	10

LIST OF TABLES

Table I. Dose-Mortality Data	4
Table II. Average Serum Calcium and Protein Levels in Control and Anesthetized Rats	11

FOREWORD
(Nontechnical summary)

Tetany and metabolic acidosis occur acutely after toxic doses of technetium-99m Sn-pyrophosphate. To quantify the dose effect relations of these phenomena, measurements of serum calcium and PCO_2 were made following the administration of technetium-99m Sn-pyrophosphate intravenously, as a single bolus, on a milligram per kilogram body weight basis.

The $\text{LD}_{50/5 \text{ minutes}}$ for pyrophosphate was found to be 41.0 mg/kg with 95 percent confidence limits of 39.4 to 42.7 mg/kg body weight. The $\text{LD}_{50/5 \text{ minutes}}$ for polyphosphate was also determined and was found to be 29.4 mg/kg with 95 percent confidence limits of 27.4 to 31.5 mg/kg body weight. Plots evaluating the slopes of the two compounds showed no significant statistical difference. Polyphosphate was 1.4 times as toxic as the pyrophosphate agent on an $\text{LD}_{50/5 \text{ minutes}}$ basis.

Acidity measurements revealed that the plasma serum PCO_2 remained between 30 and 40 torr until doses of pyrophosphate exceeded 35 mg/kg body weight, after which it fell sharply. Serum calcium levels were measured by atomic absorption spectroscopy and electrocardiography. Both techniques revealed a significant drop in the values of ionized and bound calcium at a dosage of 20 mg/kg or greater. The clinical symptomatology consistent with tetany did not occur, however, until the dosage of 22 mg/kg body weight of the pyrophosphate compound was reached. It is therefore concluded that determination of toxic effects of phosphate agents should not be based on the LD_{50} alone, but on dosages which produce hypocalcemia and metabolic acidosis.

ABSTRACT

Following the administration of toxic doses of technetium-99m Sn-pyrophosphate in rats, clinical manifestations are consistent with tetany and metabolic acidosis. To evaluate these phenomena, the acute LD_{50/5 minutes} was determined and serum calcium and arterial plasma PCO₂ were recorded and compared to the acute LD_{50/5 minutes}. The LD_{50/5 minutes} for polyphosphate was found to be 29.4 ± 2.0 mg/kg body weight. The LD_{50/5 minutes} for pyrophosphate was found to be 41.0 ± 1.6 mg/kg body weight (2 S. D.). There was no significant difference between the slopes of the two compounds. When acute LD_{50's} were compared, polyphosphate was 1.4 times as toxic as pyrophosphate. Arterial blood PCO₂ remained between 30 and 40 torr until dosages of pyrophosphate exceeded 35 mg/kg body weight, after which it fell sharply. Serum calcium was monitored by atomic absorption spectroscopy and electrocardiography. There was a significant drop in the ionized and bound calcium beginning at concentrations of an administered dose of 20 mg/kg body weight. However, tetany was not apparent until 22 mg/kg body weight of pyrophosphate were given. Therefore, evaluation of the toxic effects of phosphate agents should not be limited to determination of LD₅₀ alone, but should include appropriate biochemical measurements in blood.

I. INTRODUCTION

^{99m}Tc phosphate agents are now considered to be the radiopharmaceuticals of choice for bone scanning. In a recent report on ^{99m}Tc labeled pyrophosphate for skeletal imaging, it was shown that by systematically varying the parameters of ^{99m}Tc Sn-pyrophosphate preparations the best method of preparation was obtained by adding 1.75 ml of 0.1 M sodium pyrophosphate (pH 10) to 0.25 ml of 1 mg/ml stannous chloride followed by 1.50 ml $^{99m}\text{TcO}_4^-$.⁴ In vivo organ distribution analysis in rabbits indicated the importance of using doses on a milligram per kilogram basis for comparative animal studies. The authors concluded that if a proper dose, on a milligram per kilogram basis, of ^{99m}Tc Sn-pyrophosphate is used high quality bone images in both animals and humans can be obtained.

This report deals with the evaluation of acute tetany and metabolic acidosis which were found in Sprague-Dawley rats after toxic doses of ^{99m}Tc Sn-pyrophosphate were administered intravenously as a single bolus on an increasing milligram per kilogram dosage up to and exceeding the LD_{50} level.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The chemical nature and method of compounding ^{99m}Tc Sn-pyrophosphate and ^{99m}Tc Sn-polyphosphate radiopharmaceuticals used in this study have previously been summarized.^{2,4} The pyrophosphate dose is given in milligrams of $\text{Na}_4\text{P}_2\text{O}_7 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (mw = 446) per kilogram body weight. Determination of the acute LD_{50} for each agent was made using Sprague-Dawley rats with a body weight range of 171-246 grams. Each rat was mildly anesthetized with 25 mg sodium phenobarbital administered

intraperitoneally. Each compound was administered intravenously as a single bolus on an increasing milligram per kilogram dose level by injections into the femoral vein following a surgical cutdown.

Total serum calcium levels were measured by atomic absorption spectroscopy¹⁰ using the Jarrell-Ash Model 280 Atomsorb.* Total serum protein levels were determined by the biuret reaction adapted to the AutoAnalyzer† by Sobocinski et al.¹² Ionized serum calcium levels were evaluated by two methods. The first method incorporated serial electrocardiographic monitoring on the Sprague-Dawley rats prior to and following administration of the pyrophosphate compound. Each electrocardiogram was obtained from standard limb leads using cutaneously implanted electrodes and a two-channel direct electric writing rectilinear paper recorder from the Sanborn recording system. The second method involved calculation of the Ca^{++} content from the relationship between calcium and protein using the following formula based on the original McLean and Hastings equation:⁸

$$\text{mg Ca}^{++}/100 \text{ ml} = \frac{6 \text{ Ca} - (\text{P}/3)}{\text{P} + 6}$$

where Ca equals milligrams of total Ca/100 ml, and P equals grams of protein/100 mg.

Metabolic acidosis was evaluated by measuring arterial PCO_2 levels. Blood samples were drawn from the abdominal aorta 5 minutes after intravenous injection of the pyrophosphate compound. Each sample was analyzed using the blood microsystem in conjunction with the BMS 3 MK 2 Acid/Base Analyzer (Radiometer-Copenhagen).

* Jarrell-Ash Division, Fisher Scientific Company, Waltham, Massachusetts

† Technicon Corporation, Tarrytown, New York

Control animals received an equal volume of the vehicle and anesthesia. The effect of anesthesia on the blood constituents was evaluated separately.

The experimental results were evaluated by the Student's "t" test with the Behrens-Fisher modification.¹ If the chance occurrence was 5 percent or less, the data were considered significant.

III. RESULTS

LD₅₀ study. Bioassays were carried out on Sprague-Dawley rats to examine the toxicity of polyphosphate and pyrophosphate. Five dose levels of polyphosphate were selected, and the results are shown in Table I. The LD_{50/5 minutes} was found to be 29.4 mg/kg with 95 percent confidence limits of 27.4 to 31.5 mg/kg body weight. The dose mortality curve and its confidence interval are plotted in Figure 1. Pyrophosphate was also administered at five dosage levels (Table I) and the LD_{50/5 minutes} was found to be 41.0 mg/kg with 95 percent confidence limits of 39.4 to 42.7 mg/kg body weight. The dose response curve is also presented in Figure 1 for comparison. The LD₅₀ calculations were performed using the probit analysis method described by Finney.⁵ The slopes of the two curves were compared and found not to differ significantly. Polyphosphate was 1.4 times as toxic as the pyrophosphate over the dosage range examined.

Acidity measurements. Measurements of serum PCO₂ and pH were made 5 minutes after intravenous injections of pyrophosphate using the Acid/Base Analyzer. Figure 2 shows that the PCO₂ levels for the most part remain between 30 and 40 torr until dosages exceeding 35 mg/kg of body weight after which they fell sharply. The pH (Figure 3) remained between 7.3 and 7.5 but increased sharply with pyrophosphate

levels in excess of 35 mg/kg body weight. These observations are consistent with the LD_{50} value of 41 mg/kg body weight since later changes in serum acidity are associated with rapid death.

Hypocalcemia measurements. Another factor contributing to the acute toxicity of pyrophosphate, previously observed by Gosselin et al.,⁷ is reduction in the plasma level of ionized calcium by the binding of Ca^{++} by pyrophosphate. This type of hypocalcemia is difficult to detect by chemical procedures so an additional biological index was added to study this phenomenon. The electrocardiogram is one of the more

Table I. Dose-Mortality Data

Dose mg/kg body weight	Number tested	Number dead	Percent mortality
Polyphosphate			
26	14	2	14
28	12	6	50
30	11	7	64
32	11	6	55
34	<u>9</u>	8	89
	57		
$LD_{50/5 \text{ min}} = 29.4 \text{ mg/kg body weight}$			
Pyrophosphate			
36	8	0	0
38	7	1	14
40	10	4	40
42	9	6	67
44	<u>10</u>	8	80
	44		
$LD_{50/5 \text{ min}} = 41.0 \text{ mg/kg body weight}$			

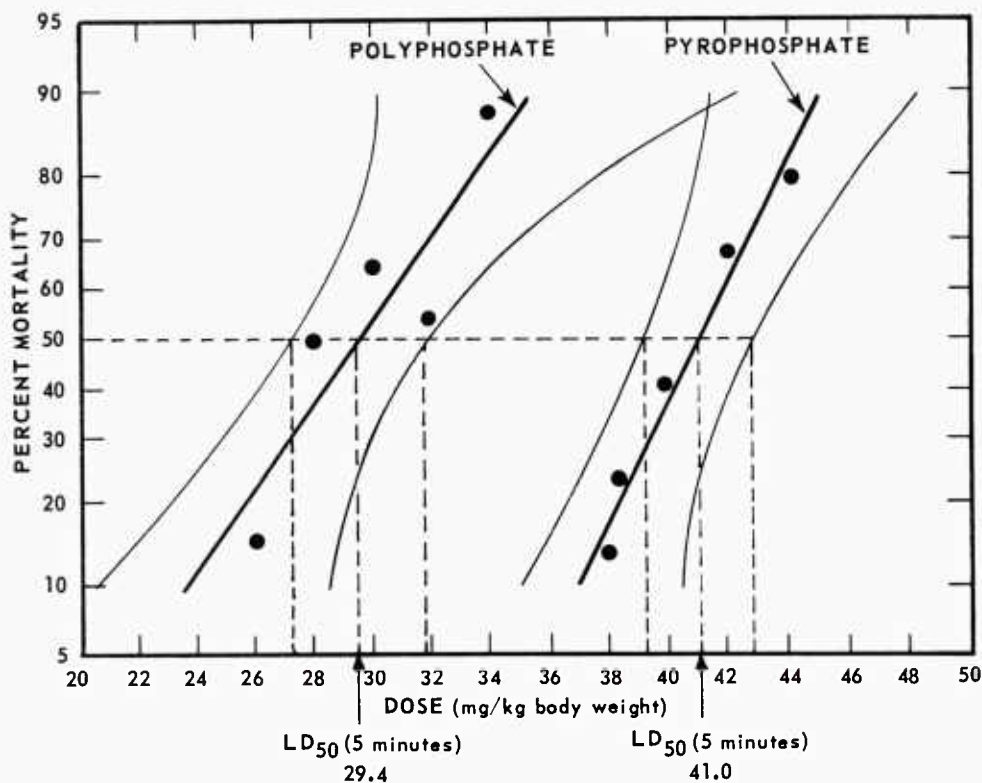


Figure 1. Plot of acute mortality (5 minutes) of Sprague-Dawley rats receiving intravenous injections of polyphosphate and of pyrophosphate. Time of death is within 5 minutes after injection. Each point represents the percent mortality of 7 to 14 animals.

sensitive devices for evaluating the presence of hypocalcemia. The electrocardiographic change consistent with the development of hypocalcemia is prolongation of the Q-T interval.¹¹ It is important to emphasize that the prolonged Q-T interval of hypocalcemia is a result of lengthening of electrical systole. It is mainly the prolongation of the S-T segment rather than widening of the T wave.⁷ The T wave is generally normal in hypocalcemia. This often results in partial fusion of the T wave with the subsequent P wave. As seen in Figure 4, as the dose of pyrophosphate on a milligram

per kilogram basis was increased, the Q-T interval lengthened. Other electrocardiogram abnormalities which were noted included pre-ventricular contractions, tachycardia, ventricular fibrillation, and finally cardiac standstill. The electrocardiographic hypocalcemic effects were not present until the dosage was 12 mg/kg or greater. Tetany, however, did not manifest itself until the dosage was 22 mg/kg or greater.

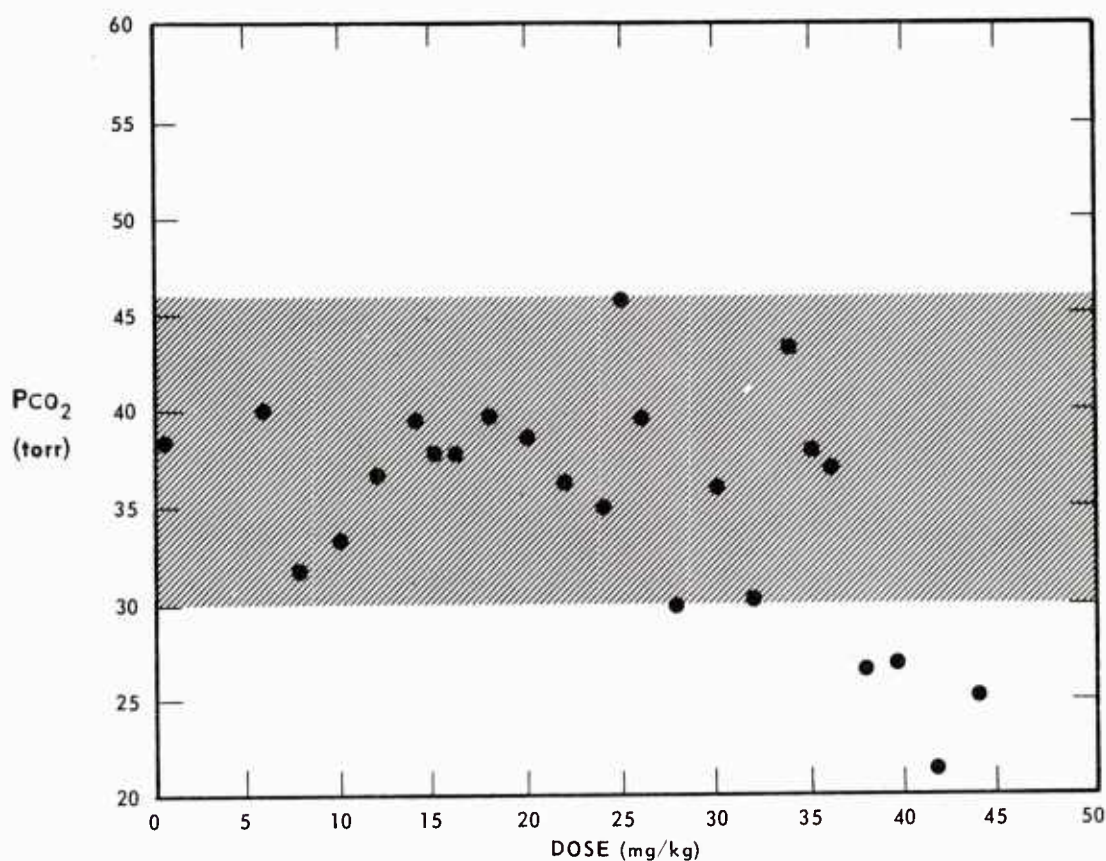


Figure 2. Arterial blood PCO₂ levels in rats 5 minutes following intravenous injection of pyrophosphate. Each point represents the mean of 2 to 10 animals. Hatched area represents normal range ($\bar{x} \pm 2$ S.D.) of control rats.

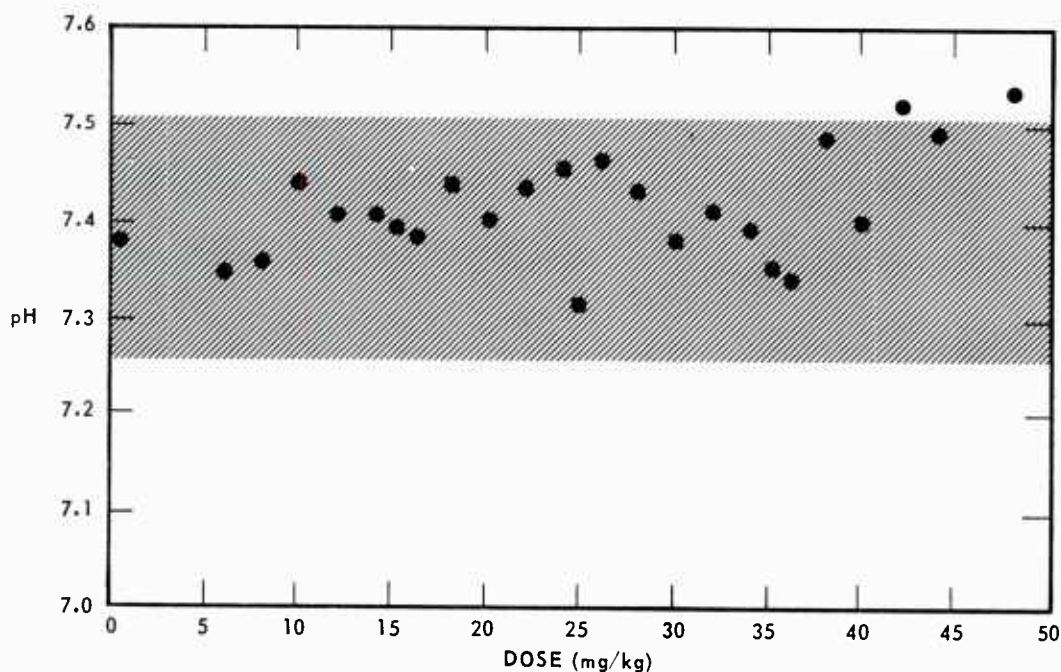


Figure 3. Arterial blood pH 5 minutes following intravenous injection of pyrophosphate. Each point represents the mean of 2 to 10 animals. Hatched area represents normal range ($\bar{x} \pm 2$ S.D.) of control rats.

Evaluation of the serum levels of total calcium, ionized calcium and protein revealed a significant drop in the serum bound and ionized calcium levels, beginning at a dosage of approximately 20 mg/kg (Figures 5 and 6). Both total and ionized calcium levels followed a similar pattern with respect to dosages. The values for percent ionized calcium throughout the dose ranges tested remained around 38 to 42 percent which would be expected when both the total calcium and ionized calcium levels decreased similarly (Figure 7). When CaCl_2 was administered intravenously, the hypocalcemic effect could be reversed, and the lengthened Q-T interval could be returned promptly to its normal duration (Figure 4). This could only be accomplished

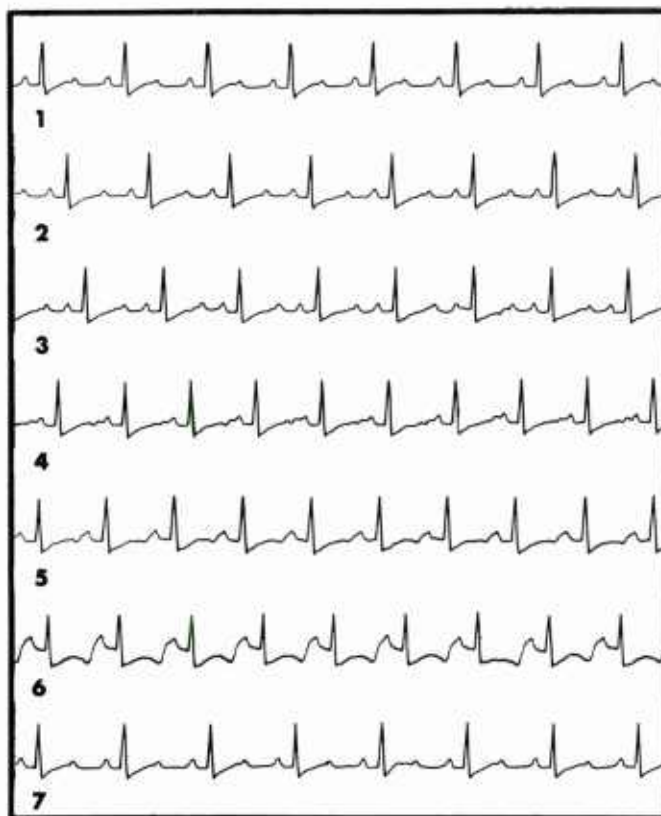


Figure 4. Representative electrocardiograms from male Sprague-Dawley rats receiving 10 mg/kg (1), 14 mg/kg (2), 16 mg/kg (3), 18 mg/kg (4), 20 mg/kg (5), 41 mg/kg (6) (body weight) pyrophosphate intravenously as a single bolus. Following intravenous administration of CaCl_2 the electrocardiogram (6) returned to a normal pattern (7).

if the CaCl_2 was administered before the appearance of any severe cardiac arrhythmia. Because the Q-T interval is also recognized to be a function of the cycle length⁷ and since the precise relationship between the two is unknown for the Sprague-Dawley rat, the Q-T changes, shown in Figure 4, include only those while the heart rate remains approximately 15 percent of the preinjection rate. The appearance of cardiac

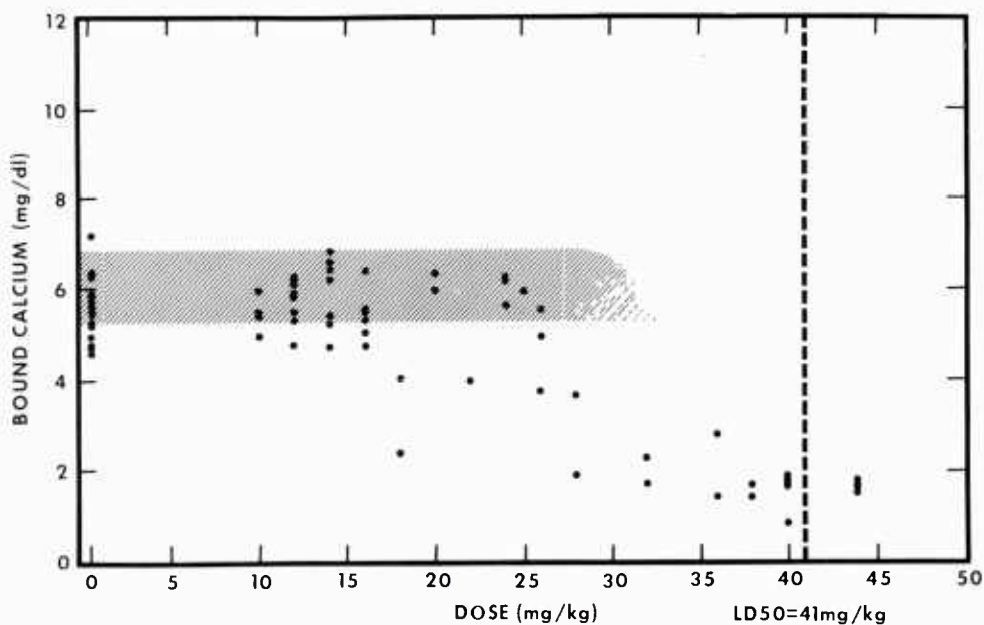


Figure 5. Serum-bound calcium concentrations 5 minutes following intravenous injection of pyrophosphate. Each point represents the mean of 2 to 10 animals. Hatched area represents normal range ($\bar{x} \pm 2$ S.D.) of control rats.

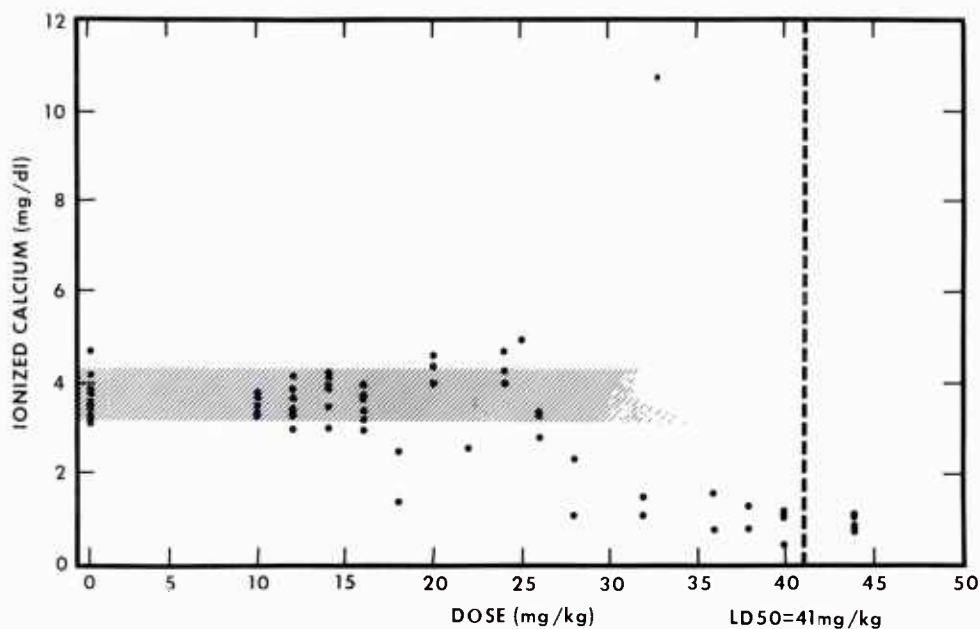


Figure 6. Serum ionized calcium levels 5 minutes following intravenous injection of pyrophosphate. Each point represents the mean of 2 to 10 animals. Hatched area represents normal range ($\bar{x} \pm 2$ S.D.) of control rats.

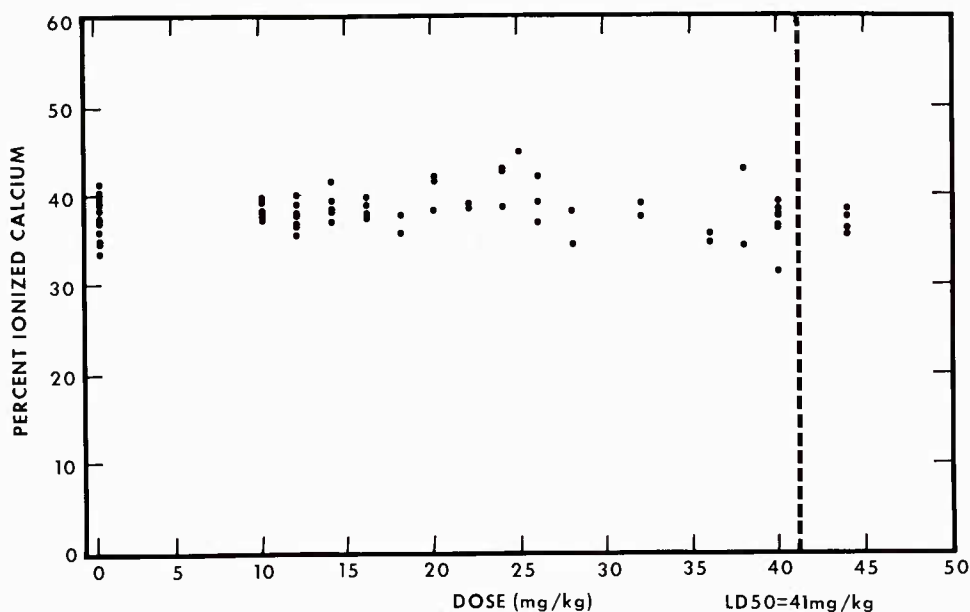


Figure 7. Percent ionized calcium values. Each point represents the mean of 2 to 10 animals.

arrhythmia invariably hindered the analysis, and always occurred at a time when the Q-T interval occupied approximately 60 percent of the cardiac cycle, as has previously been observed.⁷ Cardiac arrest occurred shortly thereafter.

Controls. Comparisons of serum calcium and protein levels were made between 10 control (without anesthesia) and 10 anesthetized Sprague-Dawley rats, weighing 400 to 450 grams. The blood was drawn 15 minutes after the anesthetized animals had received 25 mg of sodium pentobarbital intraperitoneally. The serum calcium and protein levels were obtained using the same techniques as previously described. The results are shown in Table II. The only significant difference observed between anesthetized and unanesthetized animals was the significantly higher level of total protein in the unanesthetized animals, as has previously been observed.⁹ Use of saline

Table II. Average Serum Calcium and Protein Levels
in Control and Anesthetized Rats

	Controls without anesthesia* $\pm$ SD	With anesthesia* $\pm$ SD	Significance
Total calcium (mg/dl)	9.19 $\pm$ 1.36	9.52 $\pm$.34	NS ⁺
Bound calcium (mg/dl)	5.53 $\pm$.85	5.97 $\pm$.29	NS
Ionized calcium (mg/dl)	3.65 $\pm$.52	3.55 $\pm$.23	NS
Protein (g/dl)	9.53 $\pm$.35	8.31 $\pm$.37	(P < .001)

* Number = 10

⁺ NS = not significant

in conjunction with anesthesia produced no additional effect upon the calcium or protein values.

Since the formula for calculating the ionized calcium levels uses the total protein values, the reported absolute values reflect the effect of anesthesia noted in this study.

IV. DISCUSSION

The acute clinical manifestations encountered when a toxic dose of technetium-99m Sn-pyrophosphate is administered as a single intravenous bolus appear to be centered around two severe biochemical disturbances. They are (1) reduction of the plasma concentration of both ionized and total calcium and (2) a metabolic acidosis. The changes in the electrocardiogram and chemical analysis consistent with hypocalcemia were found to exist at a dose level, based on body weight, lower than that for the acute LD₅₀. It seems, therefore, that the use of the LD₅₀ as the primary end-point toxicologic analysis of the pyrophosphate compounds is not as meaningful as the evaluation

of the associated hypocalcemia. Systemic metabolic acidosis developed sharply at a dosage similar to that found for the acute LD₅₀. Gosselin et al. have drawn attention to the fact that the method of the development of the systemic metabolic acidosis by polymeric phosphates is secondary to the enzymatic hydrolysis of these compounds in vivo.⁷ This enzymatic hydrolysis releases unneutralized orthophosphoric acid residues. Except for pyrophosphate,⁷ metabolic acidosis is the most important toxic response from phosphate agents administered intraperitoneally. However, hypocalcemia is the main toxic effect of technetium-99m Sn-pyrophosphate when administered as a single intravenous bolus. For doses in excess of the LD₅₀ level, however, the PCO₂ level shows a significant drop signifying that at these doses metabolic acidosis plays more of a primary role in the toxicology of pyrophosphate.

Toxicity of tin and tin colloids has previously been evaluated by Fischer.⁶ He has demonstrated that as much as 350 mg/kg of body weight of tin do not produce any histopathological damage in rabbits. The relatively minute amount of tin used in the preparation of ^{99m}Tc Sn-pyrophosphate is so small that no toxic effects from the tin content of this agent should be encountered. Administration of the saline vehicle in quantities used for each dosage tested produced no abnormal effects.

It was interesting to note that polyphosphate was 1.4 times as toxic as pyrophosphate on an LD₅₀ basis but again evaluation of the hypocalcemic and acidosis potential of ^{99m}Tc Sn-polyphosphate must be made for a true comparison. If both the polyphosphate and pyrophosphate agents are serially diluted in normal saline and administered slowly or by intravenous drip infusion or conjointly with CaCl₂, the LD₅₀ level and clinical manifestations as previously described could be raised. It was found, however,

that slow administration or dilution of the pyrophosphate agent in normal saline yields poor bone images and, therefore, it is not felt that the method of administration should be changed. A pilot LD₅₀ study using pyrophosphate and polyphosphate in 30 dogs, 12 pigs, 15 rabbits, and 200 Sprague-Dawley rats revealed an LD₅₀ range of 40 mg/kg to 70 mg/kg upon rapid intravenous injections, and from 70 mg/kg to 100 mg/kg using a slower injection rate of 2 ml per minute.³ It appears, therefore, that the method of administration of these phosphate compounds plays a significant role in their toxic capabilities.

V. SUMMARY

Two severe biochemical disturbances appear to explain the acute clinical manifestations of toxic doses of ^{99m}Tc pyrophosphate when administered as a single intravenous bolus. These are (1) reduction in the serum concentration of both total and ionized calcium and (2) metabolic acidosis. The electrocardiogram and chemical analysis revealed that the hypocalcemic effect occurs at a much lower dosage than for the LD₅₀. Polyphosphate was found to be more toxic by the LD₅₀ analysis than pyrophosphate. It is emphasized that the hypocalcemic toxic effects should be the determining factor in deciding what dose of ^{99m}Tc Sn-pyrophosphate should be administered for bone scanning. At the dose level we employ (.32 mg/kg) we have a safety factor of 40 to 1 with regard to the first signs of hypocalcemia by electrocardiographic measurements (i.e., 2 mg/kg). On this basis we recommend an injection of no more than 1 mg/kg to maintain a safety factor of around 10 to 1.

Systemic metabolic acidosis plays a less significant role in the toxic manifestations of this agent at the dose levels usually administered to patients (i.e., around

0.3 mg/kg). We therefore feel that this agent is a safe radiopharmaceutical for bone scanning but emphasize that knowledge of the causes of its toxic clinical manifestations, and the safe dose levels which can be administered are necessary before one uses ^{99m}Tc Sn-pyrophosphate as a bone scanning radiopharmaceutical.

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UNCLASSIFIED

Security Classification

DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA - R & D

(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall report is classified)

1. ORIGINATING ACTIVITY (Corporate author) Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute Defense Nuclear Agency Bethesda, Maryland 20014		2a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
		2b. GROUP N/A	
3. REPORT TITLE TECHNETIUM-99m PYROPHOSPHATE: COMPARISON OF ED ₅₀ FOR TETANY AND ACIDOSIS WITH ACUTE LD ₅₀			
4. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (Type of report and inclusive dates)			
5. AUTHOR(S) (First name, middle initial, last name) J. S. Stevenson, W. C. Eckelman, P. Z. Sobocinski, E. L. Barron, S. G. Levin and R. C. Reba			
6. REPORT DATE April 1974		7a. TOTAL NO. OF PAGES 20	7b. NO. OF REFS 12
8a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NO.		9a. ORIGINATOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) AFRRI SR74-5	
b. PROJECT NO. NWED QAXM			
c. Task and Subtask C 906		9b. OTHER REPORT NO(S) (Any other numbers that may be assigned this report)	
d. Work Unit 06			
10. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited			
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		12. SPONSORING MILITARY ACTIVITY Director Defense Nuclear Agency Washington, D. C. 20305	
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