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1a. AD-A189 357			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Distribution unlimited - approved for public release	
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command	
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) SGRIJ-UIS	7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Fort Detrick, Frederick, MD 21701-5012	
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
10a. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.
				WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) Stability of T-2, HT-2, and T-2 Tetraol in Biological Fluids				
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Judith G. Pace and Charles F. Matson				
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Progress	13b. TIME COVERED FROM TO	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 1 April 1987	15. PAGE COUNT 12	
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION				
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)				
The stabilities of tritium-labeled T-2, HT-2, and T-2 tetraol were studied in blood and urine at -70°C, 4°, and 23°C for 6 months in the presence of EDTA or NaF. Samples were counted with a radiochromatographic scanner with results indicating the stability of T-2 tetraol > T-2 > HT-2. Toxins were most stable when stored at -70°C, in the presence of NaF, in urine (pH 6), then saline (control pH 7), and blood (pH 8). These results suggest that urine and T-2 tetraol are the biological fluid and metabolite of choice for diagnostic purposes.				
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT [] UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED [X] SAME AS RPT [] DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified	
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL

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Stability of T-2, HT-2, and T-2 tetraol
in Biological Fluids

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Running Title: T-2 stability in biological fluids

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The stabilities of tritium-labeled T-2, HT-2, and T-2 tetraol were studied in blood and urine at -70°, 4°, and 23°C for 6 months in the presence of HDA or NaF. Samples were counted with a radiochromatographic scanner with results indicating the stability of T-2 tetraol > T-2 > HT-2. Toxins were most stable when stored at -70°C, in the presence of NaF, in urine (pH 6), then saline (control, pH 7), and blood (pH 8). These results suggest that urine and T-2 tetraol are the biological fluid and metabolite of choice for diagnostic purposes.

Recently, there has been an increased awareness of possible human exposure to trichothecene mycotoxins (10). These 12,13-epoxides are skin penetrants (2, 9) and pose a danger to crop handlers and livestock (2,3,4). Outbreaks, such as alimentary toxic aleukia (ATA) (7,13) and other incidents of human and animal exposure (3,4,10), required medical researchers to develop methods for analyzing biological fluids for the presence of trichothecene toxins. Under ideal conditions samples are treated with an anti-coagulant (EDTA or NaF) and/or antibacterial agent (thymol and F-) and stored refrigerated or frozen. However, under adverse field conditions these criteria are difficult to meet, and specimens may take weeks to reach the analytical laboratory (10). The stability of these toxins in biological fluids is not known. Therefore, by using radiolabeled trichothecene mycotoxins (8,11), we examined the stability and degradation products of T-2, HT-2, and T-2 tetraol in urine and blood stored over 6 months at -70°, 4°, and 23°C, with and without the addition of NaF. These studies were done to define the sampling and storage requirements of biological fluids used in diagnosis of trichothecene mycotoxin exposure.

Radiolabeled HT-2 and T-2 tetraol were prepared by alkaline hydrolysis of [³H]T-2 (Amersham Corp., Arlington Heights, Ill.) (spec. act. 8.9 Ci/mole of α-T-2, radiochemical purity 95%) (8,11). The purity of radiolabeled toxins was determined by high-pressure liquid chromatography (HPLC) and gas-chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) to be 95% [³H]HT-2, and 99% [³H]T-2 tetraol. The purified toxins were dissolved in methanol and used immediately.

Blood was collected from a 43-year-old, healthy male volunteer by venipuncture in sterile, evacuated tubes containing either EDTA or NaF. Urine (50 ml) from the same volunteer was collected in a sterile specimen cup containing EDTA or 1.25 g of NaF. Radiolabeled T-2, HT-2 or T-2 tetraol (0.01 μCi/g)

added to a 15-ml sample of blood, urine, or saline. Each sample was divided into three aliquots and stored at room temperature (23°), 4°, or -70°C. The frozen samples were divided into eight 0.5 ml aliquots to avoid any freeze-thaw effects. At 0, 1, 3, 7, 14, 28, 60, and 180 days, a 0.5-ml sample was removed, treated with 0.05 ml of 6% trichloroacetic acid (TCA), and centrifuged (5,000 x g, 10 min.) to remove protein. The supernatant (10 µl) was spotted on thin layer chromatography (TLC) plates, developed, and scanned for radioactivity using a Bioscan BID 200 radioisotopic scanner (Washington, D.C.) (5).

Percent of total radiolabeled T-2, HT-2, and T-2 tetraol (TOL) recovered in urine, blood, and saline stored for 28 and 180 days at 23°, 4°, and -70°C in the presence of NaF is shown in Figure 1. Refrigeration (4°C) and freezing (-70°C) prolonged the life of radiolabeled toxins. In the presence of NaF, greater than 93% of the parent toxins added to urine (pH 5) were recovered at all temperatures for up to 180 days (Fig. 1, top). There was no difference in recovery of parent toxin in the presence of EDTA (data not shown). Blood (pH 8) was metabolically active in degrading T-2 and HT-2 at 23° and 4°C in the presence of NaF (Fig. 1, middle). T-2 tetraol was stable in blood under all conditions studied for up to 6 months (Fig. 1, black bar).

Previous studies (6, 12) determined the stability of trichothecenes prepared in tissue culture media and methanol. Our results show degradation products are also found if trichothecenes are diluted and stored in saline. Toxins stored in a neutral aqueous control, saline (pH 7), were less stable at 23° than at 4° and -70°C (Fig. 1, bottom). In the presence of NaF, 84% of T-2, 80% of HT-2, and 97% of T-2 tetraol remained after 6 months storage at -70°C. In the presence of EDTA, 93% of T-2, 85% of HT-2, and 80% of T-2 tetraol remained (data not shown). The major degradation products of T-2 and HT-2 are HT-2 and T-2 triol, respectively.

Trusal (6) has shown that addition of serum to aqueous tissue culture medium increases T-2 toxin breakdown at physiological temperatures. Compared to EDTA, NaF increased the stability of T-2 in blood (Fig. 2, B and D), but had no effect on the long-term storage of HT-2 (data not shown). In the presence of EDTA at 4°C, T-2 toxin degraded to HT-2 and T-2 tetraol, while in the presence of NaF, HT-2 was the only detectable degradation product (Fig.

2).

Sodium Fluoride

The present study defines how biological samples should be collected and stored for the most accurate analysis of T-2 toxin and its metabolites. T-2 toxin was stable in blood and urine if stored in the presence of NaF at -70°C:

(Fig. 2). The degradation products most likely to be detected in blood samples collected and stored under adverse conditions were HT-2 and T-2 tetraol. In vivo, T-2 mycotoxin is rapidly metabolized ($t_{1/2}$ = 6 min) to more polar metabolites (5). T-2 tetraol is a major metabolite found in excreta of animals after exposure to T-2 toxin by parenteral or dermal routes (1,5,14, and Pace et al., The Toxicologist 6:246, 1986). Our data showed T-2 tetraol to be the most stable metabolite (Fig. 1, black bar) and, therefore, the most appropriate metabolite for diagnostic testing.

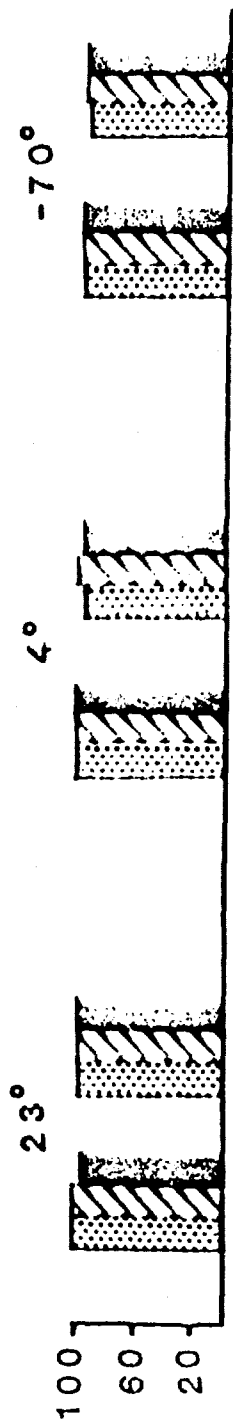
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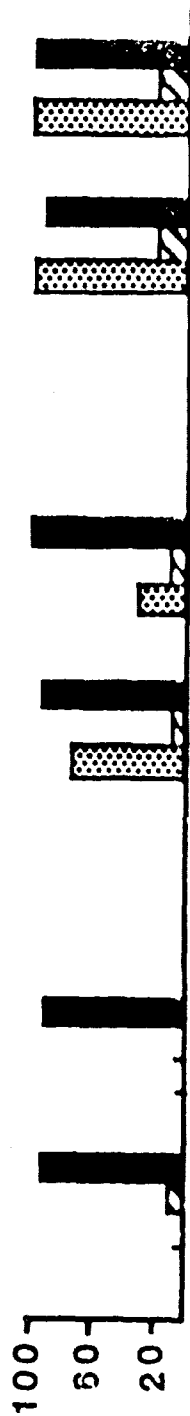
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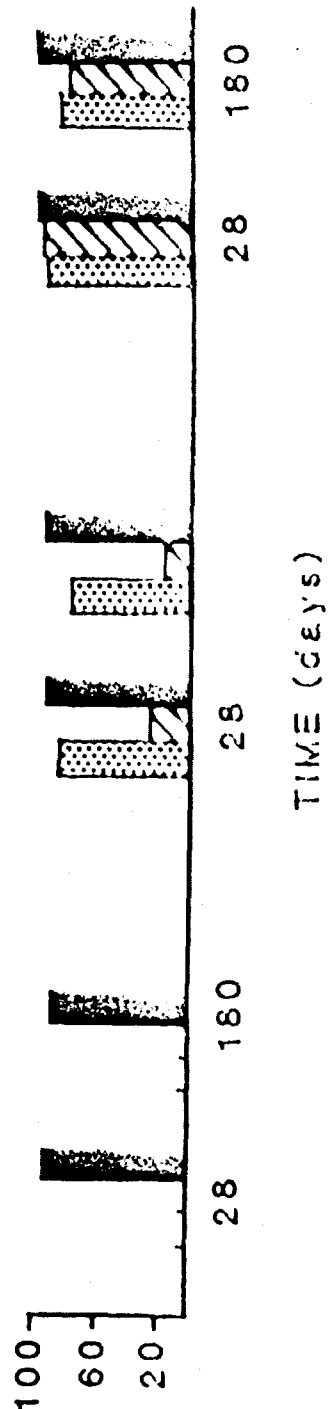


% of Parent Toxin

BLOOD



SALINE



TIME (days)

