Preliminary Pharmacokinetics of Diclazuril and Toltrazuril in the Horse

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This pilot study suggests that diclazuril and toltrazuril are absorbed after oral administration and have longer (40–55 h) plasma half-lives. These kinetic characteristics suggest readily maintained steady-state plasma concentrations. These are useful characteristics for therapeutic agents; however, therapeutic specifics for these agents in the horse remain to be determined. Authors’ address: Maxwell H. Gluck Equine Research Center and Dept. of Veterinary Science, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506. © 1997 AAEP.

1. Introduction
Didlazuril and toltrazuril are triazine-based coccidiocidal agents that are effective against coccidia in birds and mammals. In unpublished preliminary in vitro research from our lab, toltrazuril was active against Sarcocystis neurona. Similarly, there is limited preliminary evidence that may suggest that diclazuril has the potential to be active against S. neurona.1 This report describes analytical detection methods and preliminary pharmacokinetics for toltrazuril and diclazuril in the horse.

2. Materials and Methods
A. Experimental Approach
Five horses were dosed orally with 10 mg/kg of toltrazuril and four horses were dosed with 5 mg/kg of diclazuril. In a second experiment, two horses were dosed intravenously with 1.0 g of toltrazuril. Samples were taken for up to 7 days in both experiments and all samples were stored at −20 °C prior to analysis.

B. Pharmacokinetic Analysis
Pharmacokinetic analysis was determined by using a nonlinear regression program, RSTRIP.5 The area under the curve was measured by linear trapezoidal approximations with extrapolation to infinity, and the slope of the log of the terminal half-life was determined by the method of least-squares regression.

C. Diclazuril–Toltrazuril Extraction and Detection
Toltrazuril (Baycox®) was provided in both its pure form and as an oral formulation. Diclazuril (Clinacox® 0.5%) was obtained in its pure and oral forms.

Toltrazuril (Baycox®) was recovered on a Varian Bond Elut column and eluted with 4 ml of methylene chloride. The solvent was evaporated under a stream of nitrogen gas at 40°C, and the residue was reconstituted in 150 µl of ethyl acetate for mass spectral analysis by using a Hewlett-Packard 3890 GSMS. A GC/MS analysis of toltrazuril yielded sharp peaks and provided good linearity in the 10–5000 ng/ml standard range.

NOTES

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Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the AAEP 1997
Diclazuril and a methylated diclazuril internal standard were recovered from plasma samples by using solid phase extraction. The samples were washed and eluted with 95% methanol:5% HCl. A high-performance liquid chromatography analysis of diclazuril and its internal standard using a Beckman C18 column and 280-nm UV detection produced a linear standard curve from 5 to 400 ng/ml.

3. Results
The oral administration of single doses of toltrazuril 10 mg/kg yielded a mean peak plasma concentration of 4.5 µg/ml with no signs of toxicity. The apparent plasma half-life of toltrazuril was approximately 55 h. The oral administration of a single dose of diclazuril 5 mg/kg yielded a peak plasma concentration of 1 µg/ml after 24 h and declined with an apparent plasma half-life of ~50 h.

A preliminary pharmacokinetic analysis suggests that these agents are well absorbed after oral administration. Daily dosings of toltrazuril 10 mg/kg and diclazuril 5 mg/kg are projected to yield steady-state plasma concentrations of 30 and 5 µg/ml, respectively, with up to 10 days required to attain a steady-state plasma concentration.

4. Discussion
Both diclazuril and toltrazuril are selectively toxic for apicomplexans, and this activity appears to include S. neurona. Toltrazuril and diclazuril appear to be absorbed after oral administration and to have long plasma half-lives. The pharmacokinetics described in this report are consistent with a potential for therapeutic efficacy of members of the benzene acetonitrile group in certain selected circumstances. However, further critical studies on the therapeutic window, potential for therapeutic efficacy, and potential for adverse reactions in this group of agents are clearly required.

This research was supported by grants from the United States Trotting Association, Claiborne Farms, American Live Stock Insurance, Three Chimneys Syndicates, Juddmonte Farms, the Kentucky Thoroughbred Farm Manager’s Club, Castleton Farm, the Deputy Minister Syndicate, the Forest Wildcat Syndicate, Roed & Riddle Equine Hospital, Hagyard-Davidson-McGee Veterinary Practice, Walnut Hill Limited, W. Bruce Lunsford, Mrs. Adele B. Dilischneider, Darley Stud Management Inc., Ogden Mills Phipps, Ogden Phipps, Edward A. Cox, and Cherry Valley Farm.

References and Footnotes

*Bayer Pharmaceuticals, Leverkusen, Germany.
†Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Beerse, Belgium.
‡Micromath Scientific Software, Salt Lake City, UT 84121.