

Cyclotron-Produced Zn-62: Its Possible Use in Prostate and Pancreas Scanning as a Zn-62 Amino Acid Chelate

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Zinc-62 is a positron emitter that localizes in pancreas, prostate, and liver. Cyclotron-produced Zn-62 was separated by column chromatography and evaluated in vivo as the chelate of five amino acids and also as $^{62}\text{ZnCl}_2$. Tissue-distribution studies were done in normal animals from 0.7–23 hr after intravenous administration. Pancreas-to-liver ratios (per gram) of about 1.0 were found at 1.5 hr in studies on rats, dogs, and monkeys. Pancreas was as difficult to separate from liver in Zn-62 (amino acid) images as in [^{75}Se] selenomethionine images. Some studies were done with Zn-65 to determine the effects of carrier zinc and molar ratios of ligand. The highest ratio of pancreas to liver in these studies was 1.44. This uptake ratio decreases with increasing amounts of histidine, but the ratio is increased by adding carrier zinc because there results a decrease in liver uptake and no change in the pancreas uptake. There is sufficient specificity of pancreas and prostate uptake to make feasible emission computed tomography with Zn-62.

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Cyclotron-produced Zn-62, a positron emitter, has potential application to positron reconstruction tomography in the imaging of the pancreas or prostate. The present study compares the uptakes in target organs (prostate, pancreas, and liver) of $^{62}\text{ZnCl}_2$ and various amino acid chelates at high specific activity.

Zinc is known to accumulate in the islet cells of the pancreas and in the prostate, possibly as a metalloenzyme. A number of studies have been done with Zn-65, Zn-69m, and Zn-62 in animals and humans to image the prostate and to determine the in vivo distribution of zinc radionuclides, usually as the chloride (1–9). Previous studies of the distribution of zinc in man include 18 necropsy studies wherein $^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$ ($T_{1/2} = 245$ days) was injected before death, and 36 others in which biopsy samples were analyzed (1,2). The liver had the highest uptake, 0.05% injected dose/g. Pancreas was the next highest with an uptake of about 0.01% dose/g; the prostate absorbed about 0.005% dose/g and

skeletal muscle about 0.002% dose/g. These tissue studies were corroborated by imaging investigations using $^{69m}\text{ZnCl}_2$ (14 hr, 439 keV), wherein the high liver uptake was observed and whole-body loss was found to be low, with less than 5% excretion by feces and urine at 5 days (3,4). The normal or hypertrophied prostate has been shown to have sufficient zinc uptake for imaging (5), but the prostatic uptake is variable, with fluctuations as much as sevenfold as determined by autoradiography.

Most of the studies with zinc isotopes have emphasized the prostate, with little attention to the potential of zinc in imaging the pancreas. Early studies (10) showed a pancreas-to-liver ratio of about 1.0 in the rat using $^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$, but improved ratios of 1.0–3.6 were found using Zn-65 chelated

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to glycine (6). Studies in man (1,2) gave a pancreas-to-liver ratio of 0.2 with ⁶⁵ZnCl₂. Zinc is found mainly in the islets of Langerhans in the cytoplasm of α and β cells, where zinc has an important role in the elaboration of insulin and glucagon (7). The fact that carrier ⁶⁵ZnCl₂ uptake per gram of liver is equal to or greater than that in the pancreas would argue against attempts to image the pancreas. We speculated, however, that the pancreas-to-liver and prostate-to-muscle or blood ratios for zinc uptake might be markedly improved by administration of high-specific-activity zinc and/or chelation of zinc with an amino acid. Our experiments in rats, dogs, and monkeys show that this is not the case, yet Zn-62 does have a potential role with positron-emission tomographic devices for quantitating islet-cell distribution or activity and for some metabolic activities of the prostate.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Zinc-62 (T_{1/2} = 9.3 hr) decays 80% by EC and 20% by β+ emission (660 keV_{max}); the 9.8-min Cu-62 daughter decays 97% by β+ emission (2.91 MeV_{max}) and 2% by EC, yielding stable Ni-62. In addition to the 511-keV annihilation radiation, Zn-62 emits gamma photons at 590 keV (22%) and 42 keV (20%), while the Cu-62 daughter gives photons of 880 keV (0.3%), and 1.19 MeV (5%) in addition to the annihilation photons.

Zinc-62 was produced by irradiating 0.13-mm-thick copper foil with 30-MeV protons at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory (LBL) 88-in. cyclotron. The average beam current was 10–15 μA with an integrated beam of 25 μAh. The production yield was about 1 mCi/μAh at the end of irradiation. The copper target was allowed to “cool” for 4–5 hr to permit the short-lived copper and zinc contaminants to decay before chemical processing was begun.

The copper target foil was brought into solution with a minimum volume of 1:1 HNO₃ with gentle heating. The HNO₃ acid solution was evaporated to near dryness on a hot plate and under a heated nitrogen stream. Concentrated hydrochloric acid was added and the solution was again taken to near dryness. The residue of CuCl₂–⁶²ZnCl₂ was brought into solution with 2.5 M HCl and passed through a 1-cm-diam × 10-cm-high column of AG 1 × 8, 100–200-mesh, anion-exchange resin that had been prewashed with 2.5 M HCl. The resin column was then washed with an additional 50 ml of 2.5 M HCl. The Zn-62 remaining on the resin column was eluted with 50 ml of sterile water, which was collected in 10-ml fractions. Most of the “no carrier” added ⁶²ZnCl₂ activity was found in fractions 2–4. Ten to twenty milligrams of the amino acid of interest were added to the ⁶²ZnCl₂ in a 10-ml H₂O solution. The pH was adjusted to 5.5–6.0 with dilute NaOH or NaHCO₃ and the solution was passed through an 0.22-μm mem-

TABLE 1. UPTAKE OF Zn-62 AMINO ACID AND CHLORIDE IN NORMAL RATS*

	Δt (hr)	Blood	Liver	Kidneys	Spleen	Pancreas	Prostate	Muscle	Pancreas Liver	Prostate Muscle
Alanine	1.5	0.22 (0.17–0.30)	2.74 (1.70–4.39)	2.84 (2.02–3.94)	1.35 (1.11–1.75)	1.51 (1.24–1.90)	0.40 (0.28–0.46)	0.12 (0.08–0.19)	0.55	3.33
	20	0.14 (0.12–0.16)	1.26 (1.05–1.45)	0.91 (0.79–1.10)	1.10 (0.91–1.24)	0.90 (0.50–1.15)	0.93 (0.36–1.24)	0.22 (0.13–0.28)	0.71	4.23
Cysteine	1.5	0.21 (0.18–0.23)	2.20 (2.08–2.35)	2.41 (1.92–2.94)	1.27 (1.14–1.50)	1.59 (1.49–1.69)	0.66 (0.43–0.77)	0.08 (0.07–0.09)	0.72	8.25
	20	0.10 (0.08–0.11)	0.91 (0.79–1.07)	0.74 (0.68–0.86)	0.74 (0.66–0.82)	0.43 (0.27–0.51)	1.05 (0.81–1.47)	0.11 (0.09–0.12)	0.47	9.55
Histidine	1.5	0.30 (0.29–0.32)	2.71 (2.32–2.96)	3.08 (2.74–3.46)	1.45 (1.07–1.91)	2.32 (2.18–2.51)	0.71 (0.54–0.93)	0.19 (0.18–0.20)	0.86	3.74
	20	0.19 (0.16–0.21)	1.40 (1.30–1.48)	1.30 (1.01–1.56)	1.29 (1.15–1.40)	1.07 (0.98–1.26)	1.19 (1.02–1.39)	0.21 (0.19–0.23)	0.76	5.70
Tryptophan	1.5	0.21 (0.19–0.22)	2.11 (2.03–2.15)	2.29 (2.07–2.41)	1.22 (1.07–1.32)	1.58 (1.00–2.14)	0.40 (0.10–0.63)	0.07 (0.02–0.12)	0.75	5.71
	20	0.15 (0.12–0.21)	1.19 (1.00–1.48)	1.23 (0.79–2.02)	1.10 (0.79–1.59)	0.91 (0.62–1.15)	1.06 (1.01–1.11)	0.18 (0.13–0.25)	0.76	5.89
Arginine	1.5	0.19 (0.14–0.25)	2.29 (2.07–2.62)	2.43 (1.86–3.04)	1.52 (1.19–1.81)	2.44 (1.78–3.15)	0.64 (0.38–0.98)	0.14 (0.12–0.16)	1.07	4.57
	20	0.12 (0.12–0.13)	1.03 (0.92–1.16)	0.83 (0.74–0.90)	0.93 (0.89–0.96)	0.66 (0.59–0.77)	0.93 (0.52–1.38)	0.16 (0.15–0.17)	0.64	5.81
Chloride	1.5	0.46 (0.35–0.69)	2.66 (2.42–2.90)	3.44 (3.28–3.52)	1.78 (1.58–1.96)	2.46 (2.16–2.76)	0.57 (0.46–0.68)	0.19 (0.19–0.19)	0.92	3.00
	20	0.15 (0.12–0.17)	1.48 (1.05–1.90)	1.10 (0.81–1.30)	1.13 (0.85–1.44)	0.96 (0.55–1.29)	0.94 (0.78–1.16)	0.20 (0.12–0.26)	0.78	4.70

* %/g Mean of 3–4 (range).

brane filter. More than 95% of the Zn-62 activity was in the filtrate. The amounts of copper and zinc in the preparations were determined by spectrochemical analysis.

Five amino acids were used (as the hydrochloride or the free base) to form the Zn amino acid chelates; these ligands were alanine, arginine, cysteine, histidine, and tryptophan.* The chelates were administered to tumor-bearing mice and to normal rats, dogs, and monkeys. In addition, $^{62}\text{ZnCl}_2$ at pH 2–3 was used in similar studies to compare liver uptake relative to pancreas uptake.

Studies were done with normal male Sprague-Dawley rats (250–350 g) to determine relative uptake at various times (0.7, 1.5, and 19–23 hr) after intravenous administration.

The kinetics of Zn-62 histidine distribution were also determined in male beagle dogs (~12 kg) at 3 and 17 hr after intravenous injection of 200 μCi . One-milliliter blood samples were taken at frequent intervals and counted in a NaI(Tl) well counter. After imaging the prostate of the dog with the Anger positron camera, the relative concentrations in the various organs were determined by killing the dog and counting the organs.

Zinc-62 amino acid uptake in the pancreas of a monkey, at 60 min after injection, was determined first by imaging the pancreas and liver with a scintillation camera equipped with a heavy lead pinhole collimator carrying a $\frac{3}{8}$ -in. platinum insert. The liver was then imaged with Tc-99m sulfur colloid. By computer processing, the liver shadow was subtracted from the first image, thus providing a Zn-62 histidine image of the pancreas alone. For comparison, another difference image of the pancreas was obtained in the same animal using [^{75}Se] selenomethionine and Tc-99m sulfur colloid.

In a second study, Zn-62 arginine was used to image the pancreas of a monkey 1 hr after intravenous administration of 700 μCi of activity. The

pancreas–liver image was obtained, and the pancreas could be seen here without subtraction of the liver shadow. Immediately after the imaging procedure, a laparotomy was performed and the relative positions of the organs were used to check the scintiscans. Biopsy samples of pancreas, liver, and duodenum were obtained for counting.

To determine the effect of carrier zinc and molar ratios of ligand to zinc, $^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$ was administered intravenously at pH 2–3 to 300-g rats using 30 and 213 μg of stable zinc per kg rat. The uptake in the various organs was determined at 1.5 and 23 hr after injection. Similarly Zn-62 histidine uptake at 2:1 and 10:1 molar ratios of ligand to zinc was determined.

RESULTS

Our initial studies with Zn-62 histidine were done because of the relatively high stability constant of the chelate (log K-12.9), and because of the high molar ratio of histidine to other amino acids in the prostate (11). For pancreatic imaging, however, the high liver uptake of histidine—as shown in our study and by autoradiography with a C-14 label (12)—is a disadvantage, and this caused us to look at the Zn-62 chelates of other amino acids, such as arginine. Stability constants (log K) for the amino acids we examined (13,14) are as follows: alanine 9.5, arginine 7.3, cysteine 18.6, histidine 12.9, and tryptophan 9.3.

Table 1 shows the uptakes in pancreas and prostate for the Zn-62 chelates of various amino acids—in normal rats at 1.5 and 20 hr after injection. The pancreas-to-liver concentration ratios were 0.86 for histidine, 1.1 for arginine, and 0.92 for $^{62}\text{ZnCl}_2$. The prostate uptake was greatest for histidine (1.19% dose/g), compared with 1.06%/g for tryptophan and 0.94%/g for zinc chloride, with prostate-to-muscle concentration ratios of 5.7, 5.9, and 4.7 respectively. Nevertheless, Zn-62 cysteine gave the highest prostate-to-muscle ratio (9.6), even though the uptake (1.05%/g) was lower than that for histidine.

The maximum uptake in pancreas was reached at 1.5 hr after injection, whereas the maximum uptake in liver was at 0.7 hr. For the prostate the highest uptake occurred at 20 hr.

Figure 1 shows anterior and lateral scintiscans (with the Anger positron camera) of uptake in the prostate and colon of a beagle dog, 17 hr after intravenous administration of 200 μCi of Zn-62 histidine. Immediately after the imaging the dog was sacrificed and the individual organs were removed and counted under the positron camera. About 30 min elapsed between organ removal and counting; thus the distribution is for Zn-62 as any Cu-62 which

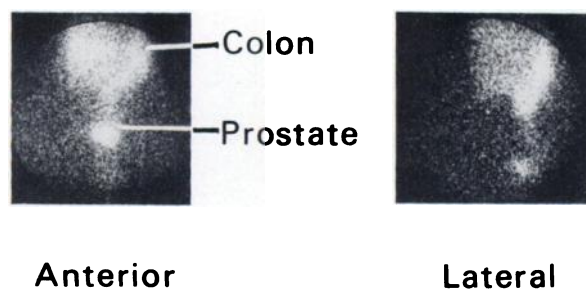


FIG. 1. Uptake of Zn-62 histidine in beagle dog 17 hr after iv administration of 200 μCi . Anger positron-camera image shows uptake in prostate and colon, in anterior and lateral views. Identification of prostate was made at necropsy.

might have been redistributed before animal sacrifice would have decayed. These data, shown in Table 2, confirm the prostate image because the uptake in the field of view was essentially only in the prostate and colon, and their relative positions with respect to each other at necropsy agreed with the positron picture. A second study gave similar results. The prostate-to-gut concentration ratios were 1.0 and 1.9 for the 2- and 17-hr periods, respectively. In dogs the pancreas-to-liver ratio increases nearly twofold with time from 2 hr to 17 hr after intravenous administration, which suggests a slower uptake of Zn-62 histidine in dogs than in rats. This change in uptake may be related more to dietary history and insulin production in the subject than to a species difference.

The dog's clearance curve for whole blood has two components, with half-times of 3.5 and 39 min. About 5% of the injected dose was in whole blood 70 min after intravenous injection.

Two subhuman primate studies (Figs. 2 and 3) show uptake in the pancreas in studies at 1 hr after intravenous injection of 700 μ Ci of Zn-62 histidine and Zn-62 arginine. Prostate studies were done 24 hr after injection and yielded results similar to those

	12.3-kg male beagle after 2 hr		11.8-kg male beagle after 24 hr	
	% activity per organ	% activity per g ($\times 100$)	% activity per organ	% activity per g ($\times 100$)
Pancreas	1.7	4.6	2.7	9.3
Liver	43.1	7.5	32.3	8.7
Prostate	0.2	2.7	0.4	6.2
Kidneys	3.5	3.3	2.2	2.6
Gut	14.7	2.8	16.0	3.5
Colon	0.8	0.4	4.0	4.6
Stomach	17.5	1.2	2.0	1.7
Heart	1.4	0.7	1.6	1.2
Lungs	1.0	0.6	1.2	1.1
Spleen	1.0	2.0	0.9	0.6
Carcass	27.0	0.3	37.0	0.4
Testes	0.07	0.4	—	—
Pancreas/Liver	0.6		1.1	
Prostate/Gut	1.0		1.8	

from the beagles. The pancreas image was enhanced by subtraction processing in which Tc-99m sulfur colloid was used to remove the liver image. This

MONKEY AT 60 MINUTES

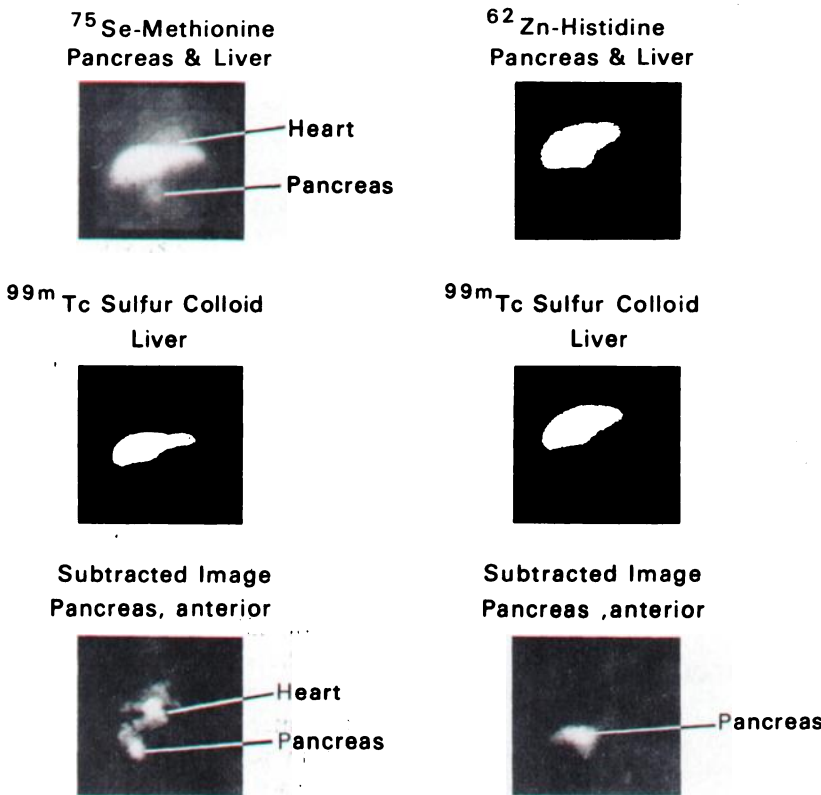


FIG. 2. Scintillation camera images (with pinhole collimator) of pancreas of monkey 1 hr after 700 μ Ci of Zn-62 histidine with Tc-99m sulfur colloid liver uptake subtracted by computer processing. Same technique was used with [⁷⁵Se] selenomethionine as comparison. Uptake in heart is seen in the Se-75 image; abnormal appearance of Zn-62 in pancreas thought to result from islet-cell distribution.

PINHOLE CAMERA ^{62}Zn
(511 keV gammas)



Pancreas : Liver : Duodenum = 1 : 1 : 0.5

FIG. 3. Pancreatic image in a monkey (scintillation camera with pin hole collimator) 1 hr after iv injection of 700 μCi of Zn-62 arginine.

study was compared with a standard [^{75}Se] selenomethionine and Tc-99m sulfur colloid study in the same animal. The uptake of [^{75}Se] selenomethionine in the heart has been observed by us in other studies.

Zinc-62 arginine was administered to a second monkey and the liver-and-pancreas image was obtained as before but without liver subtraction. Figure 3 shows uptake in the pancreas; this was confirmed by counting biopsy samples from pancreas, liver, and duodenum to give 1:1:0.5 ratios, respectively, for counts per gram of tissue.

DISCUSSION

The results of our experiments with high-specific-activity Zn-62 are not in complete agreement with those reported by other researchers (9,10) who used low-specific-activity $^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$. The relative uptakes in liver, pancreas, kidney, and prostate obtained in our study fall between those reported in the earlier work (8-10). The effect of carrier zinc in the $^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$ preparations of those studies could markedly influence the in vivo uptake compared with the low-carrier Zn-62 in our studies. The amount of zinc in our Zn-62 preparations ranged from 1-2 μg Zn/kg rat. The zinc probably was an impurity in the copper-foil target, and there were variable amounts of carrier zinc, depending upon the H_2O fraction used from the recovery of Zn-62 from the anion-exchange resin. The later fractions from our resin column contained significantly smaller amounts of zinc, and were used in our Zn-62 preparations. This amount of carrier is insignificant compared with the amounts of zinc in low-specific-activity Zn-65 studies. Our results for Zn-65 distribution with 30 and 213 μg Zn/kg rat are shown in Table 3. An increase in the amount of carrier zinc by a factor of seven results

in a decrease in the liver uptake of zinc, with no change in the pancreatic uptake. This results in a 60% improvement in pancreas-to-liver ratio at 1.5 hr (Table 3), while the uptake in prostate with the two zinc concentrations was unchanged at 1.5 and 23 hr. Thus, this experiment gives results contradicting the hypothesis that high-carrier preparations of radiozinc give relatively low pancreas-to-liver uptake ratios.

On the other hand, loading with the amino acid histidine appears to increase prostate uptake by as much as 20% (Table 4). The increase in molar ratio of histidine:zinc by a factor of five results in a 20% increase in the prostate:muscle concentration ratio of Zn-65 at 23 hr, with a 22% decrease in pancreatic activity at 1.5 hr.

For the imaging of the rat pancreas, Zn-62 arginine is superior to Zn-62 histidine or $^{62}\text{ZnCl}_2$ because the relative uptake of Zn-arginine is lower in the liver (Table 1). It might be possible to improve pancreas-to-liver concentration ratios by saturating the liver's binding sites with ionic carrier such as ZnCl_2 and then administering the Zn-62 arginine. The pancreas-to-liver concentration ratio can be in-

TABLE 3. $^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$ UPTAKE IN NORMAL RATS*

Organ	% / gm at 1.5 hr		% / gm at 23 hr	
	Prep. A†	Prep. B‡	Prep. A†	Prep. B‡
Blood	0.17 (0.15-0.19)	0.23 (0.22-0.24)	0.09 (0.09-0.10)	0.10 (0.09-0.11)
Heart	0.45 (0.42-0.49)	0.42 (0.40-0.44)	0.41 (0.27-0.50)	0.44 (0.43-0.47)
Lungs	0.59 (0.58-0.60)	0.53 (0.52-0.55)	0.54 (0.50-0.60)	0.52 (0.45-0.56)
Liver	2.50 (2.02-3.10)	1.56 (1.53-1.59)	0.80 (0.78-0.83)	0.87 (0.85-0.91)
Kidneys	2.07 (1.68-2.60)	1.85 (1.66-2.19)	0.71 (0.63-0.78)	0.63 (0.61-0.64)
Spleen	1.13 (1.01-1.30)	0.83 (0.80-0.88)	0.66 (0.65-0.67)	0.66 (0.65-0.67)
Pancreas	2.25 (2.15-2.35)	2.24 (1.99-2.45)	0.54 (0.44-0.67)	0.54 (0.48-0.61)
Prostate	0.53 (0.42-0.71)	0.71 (0.63-0.83)	0.82 (0.69-0.98)	0.80 (0.59-0.90)
Sem. vesic.	0.16 (0.12-0.2)	0.26 (0.17-0.38)	0.25 (0.21-0.27)	0.30 (0.18-0.37)
% / g Pancreas	0.90	1.44	0.68	0.62
% / g Liver				
% / g Prostate	3.12	3.09	9.11	8.00
% / g Blood				

* Mean of three animals.

† Prep. A, 30 μg Zn/kg rat (avg. wt. 300 g).

‡ Prep. B, 213 μg Zn/kg rat (avg. wt. 300 g).

TABLE 4. Zn-65 HISTIDINE UPTAKE IN NORMAL RATS*

Organ	% / gm at 1.5 hr		% / gm at 23 hr	
	Prep. A†	Prep. B‡	Prep. A†	Prep. B‡
Blood	0.23 (0.22-0.24)	0.23 (0.22-0.23)	0.14 (0.12-0.16)	0.14 (0.12-0.15)
Heart	0.58 (0.51-0.62)	0.62 (0.47-0.70)	0.67 (0.59-0.78)	0.66 (0.62-0.70)
Lungs	0.89 (0.81-0.95)	0.85 (0.78-0.90)	0.77 (0.71-0.84)	0.75 (0.67-0.81)
Liver	2.82 (2.69-2.94)	2.87 (2.58-3.38)	1.48 (1.42-1.51)	1.30 (1.11-1.48)
Kidneys	2.83 (2.74-2.89)	2.93 (2.67-3.12)	0.98 (0.89-1.07)	1.01 (0.95-1.05)
Spleen	1.37 (1.22-1.50)	1.40 (1.21-1.56)	0.99 (0.93-1.09)	1.07 (1.02-1.10)
Pancreas	3.20 (3.18-3.23)	2.48 (2.16-2.67)	0.75 (0.57-0.95)	0.90 (0.82-1.02)
Prostate	0.66 (0.58-0.71)	0.76 (0.67-0.87)	1.29 (0.76-1.59)	1.54 (1.21-1.87)
Sem. vesic.	0.45 (0.41-0.50)	0.35 (0.26-0.42)	0.53 (0.42-0.74)	0.46 (0.36-0.55)
% / g Pancreas	1.13	0.86	0.51	0.69
% / g Liver				
% / g Prostate	2.87	3.30	9.21	11.0
% / g Blood				

* Mean of three animals (range).
† Prep. A, 2:1 histidine: Zn.
‡ Prep. B, 10:1 histidine: Zn.

creased by increasing the amounts of carrier zinc and by maintaining a minimal ratio of ligand to zinc, or by using a weakly bound ligand such as arginine. However, prostatic uptake of zinc can be increased by using either high molar ratios or ligands that bind zinc strongly, such as histidine or cysteine.

The difference in the appearance of pancreatic images obtained with [⁷⁵Se] selenomethionine and Zn-62 (amino acid), as in Fig. 2, might be explained by the fact that most of the zinc pool is in the islet cells, which are concentrated in the body and tail of the pancreas.

The radiation dose for Zn-62 has been calculated to be 0.8 rads/mCi whole body, 12 rads/mCi to each of liver, pancreas, and prostate, and 6 rads/mCi to kidneys in agreement with Chisholm et al. (9).

Satisfactory positron camera images of the prostate can be obtained about one day after injecting the 9-hr Zn-62 in rats, dogs, and monkeys. An enhanced prostate uptake of 20% was noted in rats by loading with histidine.

The pancreatic distribution of zinc is different from that of [⁷⁵Se] selenomethionine and this finding

might be used to quantitate the metabolic state of the pancreas using positron tomographic devices. Further studies are needed to determine the best pancreas-to-liver ratio that can be obtained by combining carrier addition with an optimal ligand-to-zinc molar ratio. In transverse section imaging, the pancreas is separated from the liver; thus Zn-62 has potential for emission computed tomography with positron imaging systems.

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FOOTNOTE

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Harold W. Nass

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K. J. van Damme
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