# **PHARMACOKINETICS OF KETOROLAC PENTYL ESTER, A NOVEL ESTER DERIVATIVE OF KETOROLAC, IN RABBITS**

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Ketorolac is a potent nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug. Recently, a novel ester of ketorolac, ketorolac pentyl ester, was synthesized. When prepared in injectable oil, the new agent demonstrated a long duration of action. Ketorolac pentyl ester was synthesized using a prodrug design by esterification of ketorolac, and appeared to be a prodrug of ketorolac *in vivo*, which needed to be confirmed. The aim of the present study was to establish the prodrug's pharmacokinetics *in vivo,* and to confirm whether or not ketorolac pentyl ester was a prodrug of ketorolac. Pharmacokinetic profiles of intravenous ketorolac and its pentyl ester on an equal-molar basis in six rabbits were evaluated. A high-performance liquid chromatographic method was used to determine the plasma concentrations of ketorolac and its pentyl ester. We found that the plasma concentrations of ketorolac pentyl ester declined rapidly after injection and so did the conversion of ketorolac pentyl ester to ketorolac. Also, the conversion of ketorolac was proved complete when compared with intravenous ketorolac under an equi-molar basis. In conclusion, this *in vivo* pharmacokinetic study confirmed that keterolac pentyl ester was a prodrug of keterolac.

> **Key Words:** ketorolac, ketorolac pentyl ester, pharmacokinetic, prodrug (*Kaohsiung J Med Sci* 2005;21:365–70)

Most patients who experience moderate to severe pain (e.g. postoperative pain, post-traumatic pain and burn pain) often require analgesics in the first 3 days after injury [1–6]. An analgesic with a long-lasting effect of 2–3 days may be particularly valuable for these patients. Currently, opioids and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are commonly used analgesics in these cases. To date, several long-acting opioids have been developed and/or clinically available (such as transdermal fentanyl or buprenorphine patch, long-acting ester derivatives of nalbuphine or buprenorphine) [1,2,7–9]. However, no long-acting NSAID has been developed or has been clinically available.

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analgesic efficacies to those of morphine 6–12 mg and pethidine 50–100 mg IM [3–6,10–12]. Although ketorolac has a potent analgesic effect, its duration of action is relatively short (4–6 hours following 10–30 mg IM). Prolonging the duration of action would make ketorolac more clinically valuable for treating long-lasting pain. Recently, an ester of ketorolac, ketorolac pentyl ester (Figure 1), was synthesized and evaluated [13,14]. When prepared in an injectable oil as a depot formulation and injected IM in rats, ketorolac pentyl ester was found to have

Among the NSAIDs, ketorolac is the most potent [3–6], with an analgesic potency comparable to some opioids and is an attractive alternative to opioids for the management of moderate to severe pain. Ketorolac is commonly used in the postoperative setting, in both hospital inpatients and outpatients, and in patients in various pain states [3–6]. Ketorolac 10–30 mg intramuscular (IM) injection has similar

a long-lasting analgesic effect that was 7.8-fold longer than the traditional saline dosage form of ketorolac,

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**Figure 1.** *Chemical structure of ketorolac and its pentyl ester.*



Ketorolac Ketorolac pentyl ester

estimated to be 2–3 days following IM injection in humans [14]. This promising result was deemed worth subsequent evaluation.

In the depot formulation, ketorolac pentyl ester was synthesized through a prodrug design with an esterification method, and was suspected to be a prodrug of ketorolac *in vivo*. This status had yet to be tested, and the aim of our study was to carry out an *in vivo* pharmacokinetic analysis, in order to test whether ketorolac pentyl ester was a prodrug of ketorolac or not.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Six male New Zealand white rabbits weighing between 2.6 and 3.1 kg were used. They were housed individually for at least 1 week in a climate-controlled room, and maintained at 21°C with approximately 50% relative humidity. Lighting was on a 12-hour light/dark cycle (light on at 6:00 a.m.), with food and water available *ad libitum*, except during the time of testing. The protocol was approved by the animal investigation committee of Chi-Mei Medical Center.

Ketorolac (tromethamine salt) was purchased from Sigma (St Louis, MO, USA). Ketorolac pentyl ester (Figure 1) was synthesized by using the method reported previously [13]. In brief, it was obtained by inducing ketorolac to react with the pentyl alcohol (Kanto Chemical, Tokyo, Japan), in the presence of 4-dimethylaminopyridine (Sigma, St Louis, MO, USA). Purity (> 99%) of the final product was assured by elemental analysis, nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy, and gas chromatography with mass spectrum detector.

The pharmacokinetic profiles of ketorolac and its pentyl ester in six rabbits were evaluated, using two studies. In study 1, the pharmacokinetic profile of ketorolac following intravenous (IV) injection of ketorolac 10 mg/kg (26.57 µmol/kg) was evaluated. In study 2, the pharmacokinetic profiles of ketorolac and its pentyl ester following IV injection of ketorolac pentyl ester 26.57 µmol/kg (8.65 mg/kg) were

evaluated. A cross-over design in six rabbits was used. All six rabbits received one of the treatments (study 1 or 2), randomly at week 1, and another at week 2. Following IV medication, a 5-mL blood sample was obtained from the artery of each rabbit's ear at time zero and 1 mL at times 2, 3, 5, 10, 15, 30 minutes and 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 hours.

In order to determine the plasma concentrations of ketorolac and its pentyl ester, a method of high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) was used. The HPLC system consisted of a pump (Series 200 LC Pump, Perkin-Elmer, CT, USA), an automatic sampler (Series 200 Autosampler, Perkin-Elmer, CT, USA), a programmable ultraviolet detector (at 314 nm, Series 200, Perkin-Elmer, CT, USA), and an integrator (Chromatography Data Station, Turbochrom Workstation, Perkin-Elmer, CT, USA). A reverse-phase column (Nucleosil C18, No. 720014.46, 250 × 4.6 mm, 5 µm particle size, Macherey-Nagel GmbH, Düren, Germany) was also used. The mobile phase of the HPLC system was 50 mM sodium acetate buffer ( $pH = 6$ ) in acetonitrile (25:75,  $v/v$ ). The flow-rate of the pumping system was set to be 1 mL/min at 25°C, which yielded a back-pressure of about 2,500 psi. In the HPLC method, the calibration curves were linear with correlation coefficients of around 0.999 for both ketorolac and its pentyl ester. The extraction recoveries of ketorolac and its pentyl ester were around 92–95%. The low quantitation limits of ketorolac and its pentyl ester were 10.0 and 15.0 ng/mL, respectively.

In order to prevent the enzymatic hydrolysis of ketorolac pentyl ester in the blood, the blood sample (1 mL) obtained from rabbits was added immediately to a 10-mL capacity polypropylene (PP) tube, which contained 4 mL of chilled ethyl acetate for quenching the hydrolysis reaction. Ethyl acetate was also used as an extraction solvent. After a 10 second shaking, the analytes were then put on a rotary shaker for 30 minutes at 100 rpm for extraction. After centrifugation at 1,880 gm (centrifugal force) for 20 minutes, the PP tubes were put into a freezer (–20°C) for 1 hour. After the lower layer (blood) was frozen, the organic layer was poured into another 5-mL PP tube and evaporated to dryness under a

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stream of filtered dry air. The samples were then reconstituted by 250 µL of the mobile phase of the HPLC system. Aliquots of 200 µL were injected into the HPLC system.

The plasma concentration-time profiles of ketorolac and its pentyl ester were fitted by using the computer program PCNONLIN (version 3.0, Statistical consultants) [15]. Akaike information criteria, weighted residual sum of squares, and residual plots were used to judge the goodness-of-fit of the model to data [16]. A CSTRIP computer program was used to obtain the initial parameter estimations, which were required for nonlinear regression analysis by the computer program PCNONLIN [15]. Pharmacokinetic parameters were calculated by standard formulae [15,16]. We compared the area under curve (AUC) of ketorolac that converted from ketorolac pentyl ester with that obtained from direct IV injection of ketorolac. The bioequivalence of these two AUCs was tested by using two one-sided *t* tests. A *p* value of less than 0.05 was considered significant.

#### **RESULTS**

The pharmacokinetic profiles of ketorolac and its pentyl ester following IV administration of either ketorolac or its pentyl ester are demonstrated in Figure 2 and the Table. Following IV administration of ketorolac, the plasma concentrations of ketorolac were successfully fitted to a two-compartment



Time (min)

model with one distribution phase and one elimination phase (Figure 2 and the Table). Following IV administration of ketorolac pentyl ester, the plasma concentrations of ketorolac pentyl ester declined rapidly and were successfully fitted to a two-compartment model with one distribution phase and one elimination phase. Meanwhile, the conversion of ketorolac pentyl ester to ketorolac occurred rapidly, following the administration of its pentyl ester and the plasma concentrations of ketorolac, which were also fitted to a two-compartment absorption model (Figure 2 and the Table). After comparing the AUC data of ketorolac following IV ketorolac with those following IV ketorolac pentyl ester, we found that there was no significant difference between these two AUC data (Table). This meant that, following IV administration, ketorolac pentyl ester, which was totally converted to ketorolac, was a prodrug of ketorolac.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Depot formulation with prodrug design is one of the methods used to increase the duration of a drug's action [17–19]. For example, several prodrugs such as haloperidol decanoate, fluphenazine enanthate, estradiol cypionate, and testosterone undecanoate, are synthesized from their active drugs, namely haloperidol, fluphenazine, estradiol, and testosterone, by esterification [19,20]. Esterification of drugs with various fatty acids results in an increase in their

> **Figure 2.** *Plasma concentrationtime profiles of ketorolac and its pentyl ester, following intravenous ketorolac or its pentyl ester in 6 rabbits. Data were mean* <sup>±</sup> *SE and were fitted by a computer program of PCNONLIN.*



Equation for ketorolac-direct and its pentyl ester: plasma concentration (C<sub>p</sub>) =  $Ae^{-\alpha t}$  +  $Be^{-\beta t}$ ; equation for ketorolac-converted: plasma concentration  $(C_p) = Ae^{-\alpha t} + Be^{-\beta t} - Ce^{-\kappa t}$ ; A, B, C = intercepts;  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  are the first-order rate constants for central and tissue compartments, whereas ka is the absorption rate constant; T<sub>1/2</sub> = half-life of the first-order rate constant; AUC<sub>0-∞</sub> = area under the time-concentration graph to time infinity;  $Cl_t =$  total plasma clearance.

Ketorolac-direct: ketorolac which was obtained by direct intravenous injection.

Ketorolac-converted: ketorolac which was converted from ketorolac pentyl ester.

There was no significant difference in AUC data between ketorolac-direct and ketorolac-converted by using two one-sided *t* tests.

lipophilicity [17–19]. When these prodrug-type esters are dissolved in injectable oils and given IM, long durations of actions will be obtained due to a slow-release characteristic of these esters from the oily vehicles [19]. Once released from the vehicles within the muscle, esters will be hydrolyzed by esterases and become the active drugs [17– 21]. Esterases exist in many tissues and organs, such as in the blood, brain, liver, lung, etc.

In a previous study, ketorolac pentyl ester was synthesized and formulated into the injectable sesame oil as the oil solution. Following IM injection in rats, a long-acting analgesic effect was found [14]. Since long-acting analgesic is particularly valuable for patients with long-lasting pain, the development of a long-acting NSAID is worth pursuing. In this novel depot, ketorolac pentyl ester was synthesized through a prodrug design with an esterification method [14]. It was expected to be a prodrug of ketorolac *in vivo*. However, this was not tested before.

Following IV administration, the plasma concentrations of ketorolac pentyl ester were successfully fitted to a twocompartment open model with one distribution phase and one elimination phase. The distribution and elimination half-lives were  $1.08 \pm 0.13$  and  $13.2 \pm 1.2$  minutes, respectively (Table). The very short elimination half-life indicated that ketorolac pentyl ester was eliminated quickly from the plasma following IV administration. We also found that the formation of ketorolac from ketorolac pentyl

ester occurred rapidly. A high plasma concentration of ketorolac could be detected even at 2 minutes following the administration of ketorolac pentyl ester (Figure 2). The plasma concentrations of ketorolac-converted were successfully fitted to a two-compartment absorption model with an absorption half-life of  $0.487 \pm 0.002$  minutes (Table). The extremely short half-life further indicated that ketorolac pentyl ester was rapidly converted to ketorolac following IV administration. Under an equi-molar basis of drug administration, we further found that the AUC of ketorolacconverted was equal to that of ketorolac by direct IV administration. This meant that ketorolac pentyl ester, which was totally converted to ketorolac, was a prodrug of ketorolac.

In conclusion, an *in vivo* pharmacokinetic study of ketorolac and its pentyl ester in rabbits was carried out. Following IV administration, ketorolac pentyl ester, which was rapidly and totally converted to ketorolac, was a prodrug of ketorolac.

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# Ketorolac酯化衍生物Ketorolac Pentyl Ester 在白兔之藥物動力學

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Ketorolac是一個強效非固醇類抗發炎劑,最近有一個ketorolac的酯化物-戊酯 ketorolac (ketorolac pentyl ester)被合成,並且當戊酯ketorolac製成注射型油劑 時可有長效的作用。戊酯ketorolac是以前驅藥的設計方式且以酯化方法合成,其被 預測在活體使用時應是ketorolac的前驅藥,但這點尚未被證實。本研究的目的為 進行一活體動物之藥物動力學實驗來探討戊酯ketorolac是否是ketorolac的前驅藥。 本實驗以六隻白兔分別接受靜脈注射各一次等莫耳數的ketorolac及戊酯ketorolac, 並偵測其藥物動力學參數。血中之ketorolac及戊酯ketorolac濃度是以高效能液相層 析法來偵測。靜脈注射後,戊酯ketorolac的血漿中濃度快速下降而ketorolac被快速 生成,並且戊酯ketorolac會完全轉換成ketorolac。本實驗證實在活體狀態下戊酯 ketorolac是ketorolac的前驅藥。本實驗之結論如下:在白兔活體藥物動力學實驗 中,戊酯ketorolac被證實是ketorolac的前驅藥。

> 關鍵詞: ketorolac, 戊酯ketorolac, 藥物動力學, 前驅藥 (高雄醫誌 2005:21:365-70)

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