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Visualization of biodistribution of Zn complex with antidiabetic activity using semiconductor Compton camera GREI



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ABSTRACT

Various types of zinc (Zn) complexes have been developed as promising antidiabetic agents in recent years. However, the pharmacological action of Zn complex is not elucidated because the biodistribution of the complex in a living organism has not been studied. Nuclear medicine imaging is superior technology for the noninvasive analysis of the temporal distribution of drug candidates in living organisms. Gamma-ray emission imaging (GREI), which was developed by our laboratory as a novel molecular imaging modality, was adopted to visualize various γ -ray-emitting radionuclides that are not detected by conventional imaging techniques such as positron emission tomography and single-photon emission computed tomography. Therefore, we applied GREI to a biodistribution assay of Zn complexes. In the present study, ⁶⁵Zn was produced in the ^{nat}Cu(p,n) reaction in an azimuthal varying field cyclotron for the GREI experiment. The distribution was then noninvasively visualized using GREI after the intravenous administration of a ⁶⁵Zn-labeled di(1-oxy-2-pyridinethiolato)zinc [Zn(opt)₂], ZnCl₂, and di(L-histidinato)zinc. The GREI images were validated using conventional invasive assays. This novel study showed that GREI is a powerful tool for the biodistribution analysis of antidiabetic Zn complexes in a living organism. In addition, accumulation of ⁶⁵Zn in the cardiac blood pool was observed for [Zn(opt)₂], which exhibits potent antidiabetic activity. These results suggest that the slow elimination of Zn from the blood is correlated to the antidiabetic activity of [Zn(opt)₂].

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1. Introduction

Medicinal inorganic chemistry is a discipline in which metal complexes are used in therapeutic and diagnostic medicine [1–3].

Abbreviations: DM, Diabetes mellitus; GREI, Gamma-ray emission imaging; PET, Positron emission tomography; SPECT, Single-photon emission computed tomography; [Zn(opt)₂], Di(1-oxy-2-pyridinethiolato)zinc; [Zn(His)₂], Di(L-histidinato)zinc; DMSO, Dimethyl sulfoxide

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The zinc (Zn) complexes are promising metallodrugs for the treatment of type 2 diabetes mellitus [4–5]. In recent years, several Zn complexes have been discovered that have potent antidiabetic activity in experimental diabetic animals [5–7]. For example, a novel Zn complex showed potent hypoglycemic activity at a dose lower than the clinical dose of zinc acetate used to treat Wilson's disease [7]. It is presumed that the Zn atom is the component of the complex responsible for its hypoglycemic activity since ligands such as low-molecular-weight organic compounds are generally inactive. The complexation of Zn with a ligand improves its gastrointestinal absorption, enabling its efficient delivery to target tissues [7–9]. The coordination mode of the Zn complex also influences its pattern of tissue distribution [9,10]. However, the pharmacological action of Zn complexes is not fully elucidated because their biodistribution *in vivo* has not been extensively studied. Therefore, the development of noninvasive methods for

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analyzing the distribution of Zn complexes *in vivo* will accelerate the discovery of safe and efficacious Zn complexes for treatment of type 2 diabetes.

The nuclear medicine imaging technique is useful in early drug development for analyzing the biokinetics of drug candidates in experimental animals and humans (*i.e.*, clinical microdose studies) [11,12]. Positron emission tomography (PET) and single-photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) are widely used to non-invasively visualize the movements of radionuclide-labeled molecules [13,14]. However, PET is limited to determine 511 keV γ -rays that originate from positron-emitting radionuclide while PET is more sensitive and accurate than other molecular imaging techniques. In SPECT imaging, γ -rays with low energy (< 300 keV) emitted from the radionuclide are detected. Therefore, these conventional apparatuses are not suitable for the measurement and visualization of the *in vivo* behavior of the Zn complex because ^{65}Zn chosen as a radionuclide for the labeling emits γ -ray with high energy of 1116 keV.

On the other hand, the gamma-ray emission imaging (GREI) apparatus developed in our laboratory enables the spectroscopic imaging of wide energy-range γ -rays (200–2000 keV) by using a semiconductor Compton camera system [15]. The *in vivo* imaging of different γ -ray-emitting radionuclides, such as $^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$, $^{85}\text{SrCl}_2$, iodinated (^{131}I) methylnorcholesterol and others, was achieved using GREI [15–17]. Successful demonstrations of the multiple molecular imaging inspired us to apply GREI to the biodistribution analysis of the Zn complex in a living organism. This study was the first to noninvasively investigate the kinetic behaviors of the di(1-oxy-2-pyridinethiolato)zinc complex ($[\text{Zn}(\text{opt})_2]$), which has potent antidiabetic activity, using GREI after an intravenous administration of ^{65}Zn -labeled $[\text{Zn}(\text{opt})_2]$. The distribution was compared to those of ZnCl_2 and the di(L-histidinato)zinc complex ($[\text{Zn}(\text{His})_2]$), which does not exhibit antidiabetic activity.

2. Experimental

2.1. Animals

Ten-week-old male C57BL/6J mice were purchased from CLEA Japan, Inc. All animals were housed under a 12-h light/dark cycle in a temperature-controlled animal room and were allowed free access to food and tap water. All animal experiments were approved by the Ethics Committee on Animal Care and Use of RIKEN and were performed in accordance with the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals.

2.2. Probe preparation

The ^{65}Zn nuclide was produced in the $^{nat}\text{Cu}(p,n)$ reaction (nat : natural isotopic abundance) in a RIKEN azimuthal varying field

cyclotron. A metallic copper foil (chemical purity: 99.99%) 220 mg/cm² thick was irradiated by a 14-MeV proton beam with an intensity of 15 μA . After the irradiation, ^{65}Zn was chemically separated from the Cu target by an anion-exchange method. Radionuclide purity > 99% was determined by the γ -ray spectrometry using a calibrated Ge detector. The specific radioactivity > 0.2 GBq/g was estimated by inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry for a control sample that was treated with the same chemical process as the irradiated Cu target.

$[\text{Zn}(\text{opt})_2]$ and $[\text{Zn}(\text{His})_2]$ were prepared as previously described [8,18], and the complexes were determined by elemental analyses and infrared spectra. Their predicted coordination structures are shown in Fig. 1 [19,20].

Purified ^{65}Zn dissolved in 30 μL of saline (Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd.) and $[\text{Zn}(\text{opt})_2]$ dissolved in 70 μL of dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO; Wako Pure Chemical Industries Ltd.) or $[\text{Zn}(\text{His})_2]$ dissolved in 70 μL of saline were stirred at room temperature overnight to exchange cold Zn and ^{65}Zn [7,9,10]. The $^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$ solution, a mixture of ^{65}Zn dissolved in 30 μL of saline and ZnCl_2 dissolved in 70 μL of DMSO, was prepared immediately prior to administration. The solutions were prepared to contain 10 mg Zn/mL as well as 10 MBq/mL or 2.5 MBq/mL for the GREI experiment or biodistribution analysis, respectively.

2.3. GREI experiment

Eleven-week-old male C57BL/6J mice were intravenously administered a single dose of ^{65}Zn -labeled $[\text{Zn}(\text{opt})_2]$ ($^{65}\text{Zn}(\text{opt})_2$), ^{65}Zn -labeled ZnCl_2 ($^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$), or ^{65}Zn -labeled $[\text{Zn}(\text{His})_2]$ ($^{65}\text{Zn}(\text{His})_2$) via the tail vein at 1.0 mg Zn/kg of body weight. Each mouse was fixed on a board and placed just under the imaging head. Fifteen minutes after the injection, the GREI experiments were carried out under isoflurane anesthesia for 8 h. The acquired data were recorded in list mode with real-, and live-time information. The distribution images were reconstructed from the acquired data by the adoption of the image-reconstruction methods as previously described [15].

2.4. Biodistribution analysis

Eleven-week-old male C57BL/6J mice were divided into $^{65}\text{Zn}(\text{opt})_2$ -, $^{65}\text{ZnCl}_2$ -, and $^{65}\text{Zn}(\text{His})_2$ -treated groups, and the ^{65}Zn -labeled compounds were intravenously administered at a dose of 1.0 mg Zn/kg of body weight. Four hours after the single intravenous administration, the mice were sacrificed under isoflurane anesthesia. Blood was collected, and the organs of interest (heart, pancreas, liver, kidney, stomach) were removed. Their radioactivities due to ^{65}Zn were measured using a calibrated Ge detector.

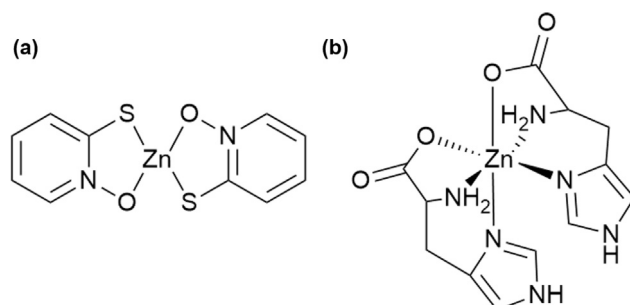


Fig. 1. Proposed coordination structures of the di(1-oxy-2-pyridinethiolato)Zn and di(L-histidinato)Zn complexes. Charges are omitted for simplicity.

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