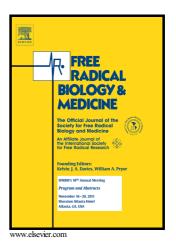
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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Is it worth expending energy to convert biliverdin into bilirubin?

Joon Nam^{a,1}, Yonghyun Lee^{b,1}, Yejin Yang^a, Seongkeun Jeong^a, Wooseong Kim^a, Jin-Wook Yoo^a, Jeon-Ok Moon^a, Changyong Lee^a, Hae Young Chung^a, Min-Soo Kim^a, Sangyong Jon^b, Yunjin Jung^{a,*}

^aCollege of Pharmacy, Pusan National University, Busan 609-735, South Korea

^bKAIST Institute for the BioCentury, Department of Biological Sciences, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), Daejeon, South Korea

*Corresponding author: Yunjin Jung, College of Pharmacy, Pusan National University, Busan 46241, South Korea; Tel: 051-510-2527; Fax: 051-513-6754; E-mail: jungy@pusan.ac.kr

Abstract

Bilirubin (BR) is generated by the reduction of biliverdin (BV), a metabolite that results from the catalytic degradation of heme by the isoforms of heme oxygenase (HO). BV is nontoxic and water-soluble but BR is potentially toxic and lipophilic. Therefore, a further metabolic step is required for BR before excretion is possible. The reductive conversion of BV to BR costs energy and is evolutionarily conserved in human physiology. There must be a compelling reason for this apparently nonsensical evolutionary conservation. In addition to the differences between BR and BV—such as water solubility, antioxidant activity, and participation as a receptor ligand—in the present study, we focused on the chemistry of the two metabolites with regard to an electrophilic functional group called a Michael reaction

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¹ These authors contributed equally to this work

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