

# Mechanisms of Bile Formation, Hepatic Uptake, and Biliary Excretion

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**BILIARY** excretion of xenobiotics is a complex process involving uptake into liver cells, intracellular sequestration and/or biotransformation, and transport into bile. A description of liver morphology and the possible mechanisms of bile formation is included to aid in the understanding of how chemical and physiological factors affect bile flow, hepatic uptake, and biliary excretion. Enterohepatic circulation interferes with the biliary elimination of xenobiotics from the body. The considerable volume of information that has accumulated in recent years on the mechanisms of bile formation, hepatic uptake, and

biliary excretion is discussed in this comprehensive review.

### I. Historical Aspects

Liver and bile have been considered to be important in determining temperament and health since the days of the ancient Babylonian and Greek civilizations. In Hippocratic medicine, bile was one of four cardinal humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile from liver, black bile from stomach) which were thought to control the health status of the body. The Greek physician, Galen, main-

tained a humoral view of disease; for example, fevers of long duration were attributed to abnormalities in yellow and black bile. In fact, the word melancholy is derived from the Greek words, melas (black) and chole (bile) since mental depression was thought to arise from an excess of "black bile."

Scientific studies initiated by the seventeenth century anatomist and physiologist, Regnier de Graff, described the collection of bile and pancreatic juice from experimental fistulae. Then Schwann, in 1844, established the use of permanent biliary fistulae in dogs and Blondt, in 1846, was the first to use a cannula (378). Much work in the nineteenth century evaluated the physiological chemistry of bile and its composition. Crude preparations of bile salts were obtained by Thenard in 1807 and Berzelius in 1808, although the structures of the bile acids were not elucidated until the early 1930s (1259). Berzelius, in 1842, showed that bile pigment could exist in two forms, green-colored biliverdin and yellow bilirubin. By the 1890s, bile was considered to be a physiological secretion necessary for digestive processing of consumed fats as well as an excretory product containing cholesterol and bile pigments (378, 1027).

Today the dominant physiological role of bile is its involvement in digestion and the intestinal absorption of fats. However, studies on the excretion of numerous endogenous and exogenous compounds have demonstrated the importance of biliary excretion in the elimination of chemicals from the body. In his manuscript, *Traité de Toxicologie Général* (1813–1815), M. J. B. Orphila, the father of toxicology, noted that many metallic poisons are extracted by the liver and are either excreted into bile or remain in the liver. Later, Claude Bernard observed that copper sulfate, potassium iodide, and turpentine spirits are found in bile soon after intravenous administration. Then in 1866, Chrzonszczewsky developed a method to visualize the biliary tree based on biliary excretion of two dyes, aniline red and indigo carmine (189). These early studies were generally qualitative and the quantitative significance of hepatic extraction and excretion into bile remained obscure.

The demonstration in 1909 by Abel and Rowntree (1) that several phthalein dyes undergo extensive biliary excretion led to the development of diagnostic tests for hepatic and biliary function. The radio-opaque dye, tetraiodophenolphthalein, is excreted into bile and was used to visualize the gallbladder by X-irradiation (413). Meanwhile, Rosenthal and White (1002) introduced sulfobromophthalein (BSP) as a diagnostic test of liver function by measuring the rate of disappearance of the dye from plasma. BSP retention in plasma is an indicator of various forms of hepatic disease (724). Additional studies have been performed to determine mechanisms of hepatic disposition and biliary excretion of BSP and similar prototype chemicals.

The biliary elimination of xenobiotics was studied

little during the first half of the twentieth century as work was directed toward understanding urinary excretion (1265). From 1950, with the wide-scale introduction of myriad synthetic chemicals (drugs, food additives, pesticides), the importance of bile as a channel of xenobiotic excretion was realized. Compounds of complex structure and higher molecular weight have a greater affinity for elimination into bile than chemicals of lower molecular weight. Thus, during the 1950s and 1960s, hepatic extraction of many diverse groups of xenobiotics was studied, including antibiotics, cardiac glycosides, azo dyes, steroids, and phenothiazines; the first review on biliary excretion was prepared by Smith in 1966 (1106).

## II. Morphological Perspectives of Biliary Excretion

The liver receives blood from two different sources. Highly oxygenated blood carried by the hepatic artery and terminal hepatic arterioles and blood loaded with nutrients carried through the portal vein and terminal venules supply all structures in the portal tracts and the parenchyma (fig. 1). These two vascular affluents diverge throughout the liver and are accompanied by branches of nerves, biliary and lymphatic vessels, and fibrous tissue forming a complex known as the portal tract (hepatic triad). A second vascular tree originates with terminal hepatic venules (central vein) that converge to become the hepatic veins. Thus, blood flows from the spigot formed by confluence of the portal and arterial vasculature into the hepatic sinusoidal sink and then drains into the central vein. The space between the two vascular trees is filled with hepatocytes that line the sinusoids, which are arranged tridimensionally and burrow between hepatocytes, branching and anastomosing as they converge upon the terminal hepatic venule. Thus, the liver resembles an organized sponge with holes as the sinusoids and with walls of hepatocytes (117).

Several seemingly conflicting concepts of liver structure are actually complementary. The classic lobule in histological sections is hexagonal with portal spaces at each corner. The lobule can be viewed as a wheel with the central vein as the axle, the sinusoids as spokes, and the portal tracts lying on the circumference. Branches of hepatic artery, portal vein, lymph vessel, and bile ductule

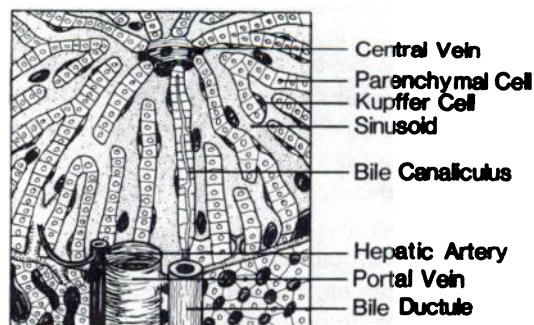


FIG. 1. Blood supply to liver by hepatic artery and portal vein.

are enclosed in a common vestment of connective tissue and course through the portal space. Blood enters the hepatic sinusoid from hepatic artery and portal vein, and flows centripetally through the lobule to exit via the central vein. This concept is somewhat misleading since central veins and portal tracts cross at all angles, but the lobule is seen only when adjoining central and portal veins are parallel and the tissue is sectioned at right angles to the axis of these vessels. However, the simple liver acinus was conceived as a microscopic parenchymal mass of irregular shape and size that is arranged around an axis formed by the portal triad (956, 957). The acini are not limited by any recognizable anatomical landmarks but extend outward to the terminal branches of one or more central veins. Interdigitation of terminal branches from three triangular portal spaces around one central venule creates a vascular pattern which, microscopically, resembles a hexagon. The parenchyma is continuous between adjacent acini and between classic lobules.

The sinusoids that separate the portal triad and central vein are larger than capillaries and more irregular in shape. They are lined primarily by a discontinuous matrix of endothelial cells lacking complete basal lamina and the branching pseudopodial Kupffer cell. These phagocytic cells normally lie on the luminal side but occasionally appear interposed between endothelial cells and form a minor portion of the sinusoidal wall. Intercellular gaps between endothelial cells, fenestrations, and lack of complete basal lamina permit blood plasma containing endogenous and exogenous substances to enter the space of Disse (fig. 2), i.e. between sinusoidal membrane and hepatocytes, and to have direct contact with the microvilli of the parenchymal cell membrane. Red blood cells cannot pass into the space of Disse.

The normal young adult rat has two main cell types, hepatic parenchymal cells and endothelial cells. Parenchymal cells constitute 90% to 95% of total liver weight but only 60% to 65% of total cell population, while reticuloendothelial cells (Kupffer, littoral, or sinusoidal cells) represent 5% to 10% of liver by weight and 35% to 40% of total cellular population (727). Phagocytic Kupffer cells remove and digest organisms and particulate matter that pass through the intestinal wall and enter blood. The hepatocytes (parenchymal or polygonal cells) are responsible for the elaboration of bile (460). The portion of the hepatocyte that abuts the sinusoids possesses microvilli that are bathed with extracellular fluid or plasma in the space of Disse. This structural arrangement facilitates contact between plasma protein-bound ligands and carriers on the surface of the hepatocyte membrane.

Whether using the classic lobule or the liver acinus concept, hepatocytes can be separated based upon distance from the vessels supplying blood (fig. 3). Cells in zone 1, or periportal region, are near the portal tracts

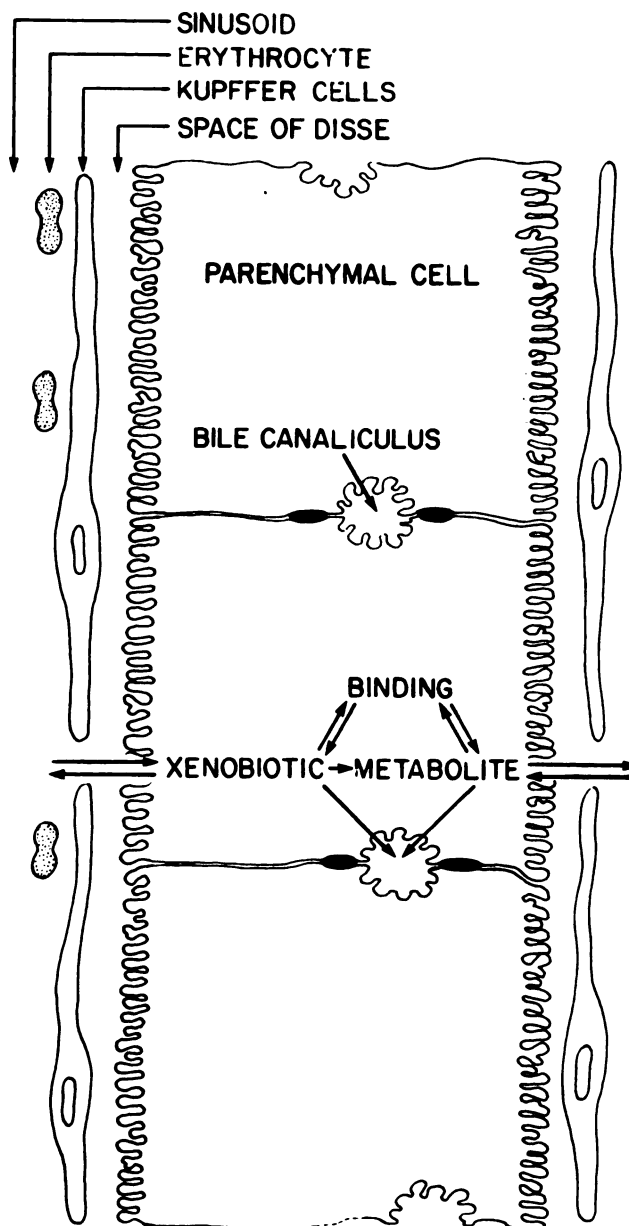


FIG. 2. Blood plasma enters space of Disse by intercellular gaps between endothelial cells, fenestrations, and lack of complete basal lamina.

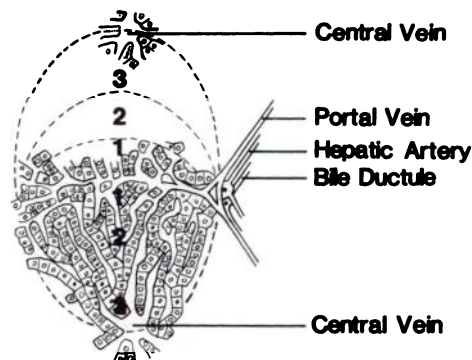


FIG. 3. Separation of hepatocytes based upon distance from vessels supplying blood.

and are bathed by blood closer in composition to arterial than to portal venous blood. Cells in zone 3, or centrilobular region, are in a zone in which no arteriole enters and are situated at the microcirculatory periphery around the central vein. Zone 2, or midzonal region, is a dividing layer of tissue between zones 1 and 3. Heterogeneity between centrilobular and periportal cells has been shown by histochemical studies (572, 859, 1223). Hepatocytes may be fractionated by centrifugation on Ficoll density gradients (166) into two classes: 1) light hepatocytes (mean density 1.10) are predominantly centrilobular and contain abundant smooth endoplasmic reticulum, numerous small mitochondria, and few glycogen granules; and 2) heavy hepatocytes (mean density 1.14) are primarily periportal and are characterized by large, compact glycogen granules and prominent rough endoplasmic reticulum (266, 441, 442, 1231). Centrilobular cells contain larger amounts of lysosomes and smooth endoplasmic reticulum than periportal hepatocytes (565, 754). In addition, bile canaliculi are larger in zone 1 than in zone 3 while those in zone 3 dilate more in response to bile acid-induced choleresis than canaliculi in zone 1 (719). Within the acinus, differences exist in oxygen tension, in rates of enzymes mediating protein synthesis, oxidation, hydrolysis and conjugation, and in concentration of glutathione (444, 1156). However, this functional heterogeneity does not result from differential expression of genetic properties inherent in hepatocytes but rather reflects quantitative differences in functional requirements.

There is a lobular gradient in the sinusoids as cells on the periphery of the lobule (zone 1 or periportal) are perfused first with blood containing higher concentrations of solutes while cells near the terminal hepatic veins (central vein, zone 3) are perfused last and exposed to blood with less solute. However, flow is not unidirectional because of the nonuniformity of resistances within the hepatocyte syncytium and the intermittent anastomoses of hepatic arterioles into zones 2 and 3. Compounds that diffuse through membranes will be concentrated in periportal cells, while solutes requiring a carrier will behave differently depending on the availability of transport systems. This lobular gradient of nonuniform exposure of liver cells to solutes has been illustrated for galactose (402), fluorescent dyes (445), and a bile acid derivative (563).

In addition to the labyrinthine sinusoids, the biliary system branches throughout the liver. Bile canaliculi are extracellular spaces as minute as 1 to 2  $\mu\text{m}$  which are limited by, and located between, two or more abutting hepatocytes. The integrity of the biliary space is maintained by tight junctions that are stabilized by desmosomes and microfilaments (104, 375, 500, 862). Generally, a single canaliculus courses between adjacent cells and forms a tridimensional network of channels that conveys bile into larger ductules and eventually into bile ducts

(ducts of Hering, or cholangioles) lined with cuboidal epithelium. The functional properties of bile ductules and ducts in bile secretion have not been determined (566). The apparent volume of the biliary tree in dogs is 2.5  $\mu\text{l/g}$  of liver (75) and in rats, 2.3 (65, 452). The main duct from each lobe intersects forming the hepatic duct which anastomoses with the pancreatic duct to form the common bile duct which empties into the duodenum. Some species (rat, whale, and deer) do not have a gallbladder that branches off the hepatic duct.

### III. Bile Composition

Composition of bile varies among species and upon the physiological and nutritional status of the animal at the time of bile collection. Table 1 indicates concentrations of biliary constituents in several species. Bile and plasma have similar electrolyte compositions; sodium is the dominant cation, while bile acids, chloride, and bicarbonate all contribute to total anion content. In addition, bile contains significant amounts of bile pigments, cholesterol, phospholipids, and protein. Relative concentrations of organic solutes and inorganic electrolytes may fluctuate but the osmolarity of bile is generally equivalent to that of plasma even when plasma osmolarity is artificially increased or decreased (1245). Average water content of bile is approximately 97%. Almost half of the 3% solid material is bile acids. In gallbladder bile, water content is lower (87%) which results from concentration of hepatic bile by the gallbladder.

Marked species differences occur in the relative amounts of the bile acid derivatives found in bile, the identity of the primary bile acid, and the nature of the conjugating group. These variations correlate roughly with diet; herbivores, except bovids, have primarily dihydroxy or monohydroxymonoketo bile acids conjugated with glycine, whereas carnivores have taurine conjugates of trihydroxy bile acids. Omnivores and bovids have significant amounts of all types (470). The rabbit and domestic pig excrete bile acids conjugated with glycine while humans eliminate both glycine and taurine conjugates of dihydroxy and trihydroxy bile acids. This dietary classification has exceptions such as the high proportion of taurocholate in rat bile (207, 469, 1244). Marked species variations occur also in phospholipid and cholesterol concentrations.

### IV. Bile Formation

Production of bile by hepatocytes is a major, but poorly understood function of the liver. Bile formed at the canaliculi is modified in the ductules and ducts by processes of reabsorption or secretion of electrolytes and water. The study of hepatic bile formation is difficult because the primary secretion elaborated by hepatocytes is discharged into minute channels and cannot be sampled directly with current micropuncture techniques. Transmembrane ion fluxes and electrical potentials cannot be measured. Despite these anatomical limitations,

TABLE 1  
Comparison of bile in different species.

Component	Rat*	Rabbit*	Dog*	Cat†	Guinea Pig†	Human‡
Na <sup>+</sup> (mEq/l)	162	170	166	163	156	146-155
K <sup>+</sup> (mEq/l)	6	4.2	5.5	4.2	4.4	2.7-4.9
Cl <sup>-</sup> (mEq/l)	96	94	59	109	64	88-115
HCO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> (mEq/l)	25	45	42	24	72	27-55
Bile acid (mM)	38	35	20	26		3-45
Phospholipids (μg/ml)	412	58	1620			100-575
Cholesterol (μg/ml)	223	15	250			120
Protein (mg/ml)	6	2.1	11			0.3-3.0
Bile flow (μl/min/kg)§	65	82	5.6	13	160	3.6
Osmolarity (mOsmol/l)	332	312	293			

\* Klaassen (632).

† Pugh and Stone (951).

‡ Thureborn (1178).

§ Cornelius (216).

|| Russell et al. (1015).

much research has been conducted in recent years. Comprehensive reviews pertaining to mechanisms of bile formation are available and may be consulted for details of earlier work (124, 305-307, 309, 354, 556, 566, 570, 887, 970).

#### A. Osmotic Ultrafiltration

The central problem to understanding canalicular bile formation is comprehension of the mechanisms generating bulk movement of water into bile canaliculi. Possibilities include filtration, vesicular transport, and active transport of certain solutes leading to passive water flow.

In contrast to the kidney, the architecture of the liver does not provide an efficient arrangement for hydrostatic filtration. Bile is secreted against a pressure gradient that exceeds perfusion pressure in the isolated perfused rat liver (135). In addition, bile flow is independent of perfusion pressure and blood flow once a critical opening pressure is obtained and the oxygen supply to the tissue is not limited (136, 137). These results rule out hydrostatic pressure as an important determinant for bile production.

Another mechanism that may be operative in bile formation is the extrusion of materials by exocytosis. Horseradish peroxidase (978), lysosomal proteins (710, 711), immunoglobulin A (725), and insulin (228) are thought to be secreted into bile by a pathway involving the Golgi, associated lysosomes, and smooth endoplasmic reticulum (566). Although vesicular transport is demonstrated by the above examples, infrequent visualization of exocytic vacuoles suggests this excretory step does not contribute significantly to the formation of hepatocellular bile (354).

Present concepts of bile formation evolved from the initial hypothesis of Sperber (1114) that any osmotically active compound transported into bile can create an osmotic gradient from the hepatocyte into the canalicular lumen leading to passive movement of fluid from cells and/or intercellular spaces into the lumen. Bile will

continue to flow if solute is transported into the canaliculi, providing that resistance to flow in the biliary tree does not exceed the osmotic pressure created by transported solute(s).

Canalicular bile formation is estimated indirectly by measuring the biliary clearance of inert solutes, whose elimination is not significantly modified by processes in bile ductules and ducts, that enter the bile at the canaliculi by simple, nonrestricted diffusion. The solutes, erythritol and mannitol, have been thought to meet these requirements. Hepatocytes are remarkably permeable to erythritol and mannitol (353, 392, 897), and their excretion depends on the permeability of the epithelium and the rate of bile flow at a specified locus (350, 351, 353, 356, 1245). Clearances of erythritol and mannitol correlate with changes in bile flow during bile acid-induced canalicular choleresis. However, recent studies in dogs and rhesus monkeys suggest that secretin, which induces ductular bile production, also stimulates erythritol and mannitol clearance (61, 74, 737). The transfer of erythritol, sucrose, and inulin from plasma to bile across isolated perfused duct segments from rats is proportional to molecular size (1105). Accurate determination of the magnitude of canalicular bile formation may also be affected if back diffusion of solutes occurs. Although the validity of erythritol as a measurement of canalicular bile production has been questioned (256, 737, 1105), its clearance provides the only quantitative estimate of canalicular bile production presently available.

#### B. Bile Acid-dependent Flow

In 1890, Schiff demonstrated that feeding bile to dogs with biliary fistulas produced a choleresis. In fact, a direct relationship between bile acid excretion and biliary flow has been observed in all species examined, including humans, over a wide range of bile acid excretion rates (125, 127, 630, 938, 1148). Bile acids are among the most effective choleric agents (1246) and bile formed by their active secretion is known as bile acid-dependent flow. Studies in the dog (940, 1253), guinea pig (1080), and

pony (37) indicate that bile flow rate is directly proportional to the rate of sodium taurocholate excretion after intravenous infusion over a wide concentration range.

Normally, bile acids are present in bile as mixed micelles (161), and their osmotic activity in bile is generally less than that of nonassociated molecules. Dehydrocholic acid does not form micelles and produces choleresis at a lower concentration than does micelle-forming cholic acid (1116). Although a single micelle has a similar osmotic activity as 1 molecule of free bile acid, its effective osmotic pressure is greatly reduced by formation of large polyanionic aggregates with a molecular weight of about 27,000 (556). Each micelle contains around 500 bile acid molecules.

However, canalicular bile is not produced completely by the osmotic properties of bile acids. Interruption of the enterohepatic circulation markedly decreases bile acid excretion but has little effect on bile flow (623). Conflicting data for dehydrocholate-induced choleresis indicate that the increase in bile flow precedes the excretion of dehydrocholate by more than can be accounted for by the biliary tree dead space (1109). Bile flow associated with secretion of micelle-forming cholates may actually exceed that associated with non-micelle-forming taurodehydrocholate (875). Attempts to correlate choleric properties with micelle-forming capacities of bile acids *in vitro* have failed (37, 630, 876, 1067). The bile acid-dependent fraction has also been proposed to result from osmotic activity of inorganic cations that accompany anionic bile acids to maintain electrical neutrality. The osmotic activity of a solute depends on the relative permeability of the membrane to solute as compared to solvent, or its reflection coefficient (566). Reflection coefficients of the biliary tree for different solutes are unknown due to the technological inability to sample bile at the canaliculus. Bile acid-dependent flow may also originate from some modulatory effect of bile acids on transport systems for other osmotically active solutes such as sodium ion (632, 928, 1230).

### C. Bile Acid-independent Flow

Although hepatocellular bile formation was originally believed to be due to the osmotic activity of bile acids, linear extrapolation of the regression line for bile flow versus bile acid excretion to the ordinate indicates canalicular secretion in the absence of bile acid excretion (fig. 4) (1254). This bile is termed the bile acid-independent fraction and has been observed repeatedly in many species including dogs, rats, rabbits, and humans (102, 125, 251, 311, 938, 958, 1148, 1254). In contrast, chickens produce only small amounts of bile that are independent of bile acid secretion (157). However, representation of the bile flow versus bile acid excretion relationship by a single regression line may not be valid since infusion of bile acids into bile acid-depleted rats or rhesus monkeys results in a family of regression lines which progressively diminish in slope as the biliary bile

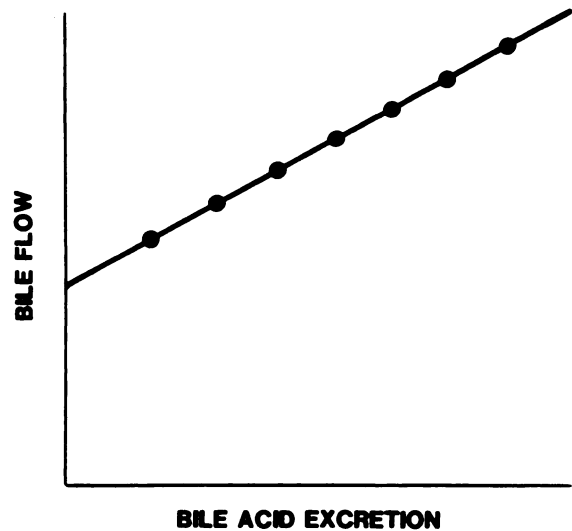


FIG. 4. Linear extrapolation of bile flow versus bile acid excretion.

acid concentration increases (52, 58). At low bile acid concentrations ( $< 10$  mM), the slope of the regression line is approximately 10 times that found at higher levels (35 to 45 mM). Thus, the osmotic activity of bile acids is relatively greater at lower concentrations, and calculation of the bile acid-independent fraction of bile flow by linear extrapolation of bile flow versus bile acid secretion at concentrations above 10 mM might overestimate this fraction.

The bile acid-independent fraction of canalicular bile secretion varies among species (309) and comprises 40% of spontaneous basal bile secretion in humans (742) and about 60% in lagomorphs and rodents (311, 623, 1080). In addition, pretreatment with phenobarbital for 4 days increases bile formation by 50% in the rat but does not stimulate bile acid excretion (102, 622, 623). Other studies in the isolated perfused rat liver demonstrate definite secretory pressures even with negligible bile acid secretion (127).

**1. Sodium Ion Secretion.** The mechanism for formation of the bile acid-independent fraction is not known but may be due to sodium, chloride, or bicarbonate ion excretion. Sodium ion secretion has been implicated by two separate lines of evidence. First, cyclic 3',5'-adenosine monophosphate (cAMP) increases sodium ion transport out of the hepatocytes and stimulates bile flow in the dog by increasing bile acid-independent flow (885). Glucagon and theophylline, which increase intracellular cAMP levels, also stimulate this fraction of bile flow in dogs (70, 567). In addition, theophylline increases bile acid-independent flow in rats but does not increase net bile flow because the bile acid-dependent fraction is decreased (674). In the rat, glucagon and dibutyryl-cAMP do not stimulate bile flow (51). In fact, Poupon et al. (933) examined the effects of dibutyryl-cAMP, aminophylline, and glucagon on bile acid-independent flow in the dog and rat and found no relationship between 1) the accumulation of cAMP or 2) the magnitude of the

rise in cAMP, and the increase in bile flow. They concluded cAMP does not have a physiological role in bile formation. Whether other cyclic nucleotides, such as cyclic guanosine monophosphate, are cellular mediators of secretion is unknown, but reductions in extracellular calcium ion markedly inhibit bile production in isolated rat liver (889). Thus, an interrelationship between cyclic nucleotides, calcium fluxes and bile secretion cannot be excluded.

Second, modulation of sodium ion excretion by controlling Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-adenosine triphosphatase (ATPase) activity is thought to influence the formation of this fraction of bile flow. Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase was implicated when inhibitors such as amiloride, ethacrynic acid, and ouabain diminished the bile acid-independent fraction in rabbits (310, 311). In contrast, later studies indicated ethacrynic acid produces choleresis in rabbits and rats (178, 658, 1078), and ouabain increases bile flow in rats (410, 1017). Graf and Peterlik (412) suggested that the choleric effect of ouabain in the isolated perfused rat liver results from inhibition of sinusoidal Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase. The consequential rise in intracellular Na<sup>+</sup> concentration would stimulate the canalicular ATPase to extrude more sodium ion thereby increasing canalicular bile flow. However, unaltered ouabain (1017) and the glutathione conjugate of ethacrynic acid (178, 658) are readily concentrated in bile, and choleresis is attributable to an osmotic effect of the drugs themselves. Recent evidence suggests both mechanisms may be important in that canalicular excretion of the glutathione conjugate is rate-limiting but is accompanied by enhanced extrusion of Na<sup>+</sup> into the canalicular lumen (908). Others indicate that vasoconstrictive actions of cardiac glycosides might account for the reduction in bile acid-independent flow (812, 1162, 1177).

The affect of numerous compounds on bile formation [rose bengal (704), ethinylestradiol (968), phenobarbital (968, 1091), taurocholate (1230), thyroid hormones (717), ethanol (762), and cycloheximide (747)] has been attributed to influences on Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase supposedly present at the canaliculi. However, recent evidence demonstrates that Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase is located on the sinusoidal and lateral surfaces of the hepatocytes (113, 715, 934). Alterations in bile acid-independent flow and Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase activity do not always change in parallel (595, 796). Thus, generation of this fraction of bile flow may not depend on Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase activity; instead the major ATP-hydrolyzing enzyme at the biliary pole of the hepatocyte has been suggested to be Mg<sup>++</sup>-ATPase (317, 478, 509).

Alterations in liver plasma membrane fluidity directly affects Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase activity. Fluidity has been increased in rats pretreated with propylene glycol, thyroid hormone, and cortisone, decreased by ethinylestradiol, and unaffected by phenobarbital (595). The role of membrane fluidity in bile formation needs further study.

Recently, a method for isolating canalicular-enriched plasma membranes has been reported (1033). The membranes exist as vesicles and are highly enriched in alkaline phosphatase, Mg<sup>++</sup>-ATPase and 5'-nucleotidase. Physiological concentrations of micelle-forming bile acids reversibly inhibit both Mg<sup>++</sup>- and Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPases and reversibly increase the fluidity of liver plasma membranes in vitro (1034). Although there are many data on the enzymatic and transport properties of the ATPase (994), more information is needed before their role in bile formation is understood (308).

Recent studies in isolated perfused rat liver where sodium ion is completely replaced by lithium ion indicate that much of the basal bile acid-independent bile formation is probably attributable to an ion pump other than Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase (1202). Although Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase activity is depressed, bile acid-independent flow is not influenced by complete replacement of sodium ion, thus suggesting that other mechanisms mediate elaboration of this fraction of bile.

2. *Chloride and Bicarbonate Ion Secretion.* Transport of anions other than bile acids may influence formation of the bile acid-independent fraction. Replacement of chloride ion in the perfusate of the isolated rat liver with nitrate ion decreases bile flow by 20% (411). After readmission of chloride ion, bile flow returns to normal thus indicating that transport of chloride ion may be a minor determinant of secretion. Since bile is alkaline with respect to plasma by virtue of its bicarbonate ion content, transport of this ion may be more important. Hardison and Wood (465) observed a reduction in bile flow and sodium ion excretion when bicarbonate ion was removed from the perfusate while bile acid elimination was unaffected. Bile flow rates were restored to control values upon addition of bicarbonate or dimethylloxazolidine-2,4-dione, a weak, membrane-permeable acid capable of transporting protons (465). Thus, bicarbonate transport in the liver may involve a sodium-hydrogen exchange system where CO<sub>2</sub> diffuses across the membrane, hydrates, and ionizes to H<sup>+</sup> + HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>. A proton is supplied for Na<sup>+</sup>-H<sup>+</sup> exchange diffusion and bicarbonate ion is apparently transported into bile. Similar carrier systems have been well characterized in the renal tubule (388, 846), pancreas (1046, 1155), and small intestine (1192). Choleresis induced by SC-2644 in the dog is due to stimulation of canalicular bicarbonate secretion (72, 387). The peptide hormone secretin produces choleresis in the dog which is associated with an increase alkalinity of bile and total excretion of HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> (568, 940). Erythritol clearance measurements suggest the secretin-induced choleresis is of ductular rather than canalicular origin. However, secretin has no effect on bile flow or composition in the rat (309), yet Hardison and Wood (465) demonstrated a role of bicarbonate ion in bile formation in that species. Whether bicarbonate transport contributes to bile flow of canalicular or ductular origin remains



uncertain. Recent studies in cultured hepatocytes indicate that sodium-coupled chloride transport may be important in the production of bile acid-independent flow (1037). However, no definitive evidence was presented to suggest that chloride transport accounts for a major portion of basal bile flow.

**3. Paracellular Fluid Flow.** Bile may also be formed via the paracellular pathway where water and inorganic solutes gain entrance into bile through the intercellular spaces and associated junctional complexes (126, 297, 720). Considerable electrophysiological evidence demonstrates certain epithelia with low electrical resistance (i.e., the jejunal epithelium) are "leaky" and their tight junctions permit passage of fluid (370). Hepatocyte junctions have been classified as intermediate between tight and leaky based on the number of associated microfilaments (365, 782). However, these structures appear to be heterogeneous which may be important in the regulation of functional permeability (702). Layden et al. (720) demonstrated that dehydrocholate infusion increased 1) bile flow, 2) biliary clearance of [<sup>14</sup>C]sucrose, an index of membrane permeability, and 3) incidence of invaginations of the intercellular surface membranes adjacent to the junctional complexes of hepatocytes. Similar morphological changes were observed after chronic taurocholate infusion (844). Metz and Bressler (803) noted that the morphological changes in tight junctions induced by bile duct ligation were reversible following reestablishment of the enterohepatic circulation. These data suggest that hepatocyte tight junctions are not static structures but may respond to alterations in bile flow. Additional evidence indicates that phalloidin treatment increases the permeability of the junctional complex which controls the barriers to paracellular fluid flow (297).

Paracellular ion equilibration could occur at two sites: between hepatocytes and/or in bile duct epithelia. Since the surface/volume ratio of the biliary tree decreases abruptly at the canaliculi-portal ductule junction, osmotic equilibration in ductules or ducts is unlikely (354). Bile osmolarity is similar to that of red blood cell-free perfusates (150 to 450 mOsmol/l) in isolated perfused rat liver thereby indicating that bile must attain osmotic equilibrium at the hepatocyte (124) because bile ducts are functionally inactive and do not permit exchange of <sup>24</sup>Na or <sup>36</sup>Cl (411). The permeability barrier to ion entry depends on ion species. The sequence for cations is lithium > sodium > potassium > Tris > choline, and for anions is nitrate > chloride > acetate > sulfate. Graf and Peterlik (411) concluded these ions enter bile by crossing the junctional complex from blood to bile.

Selective permeability of the biliary canalicular membrane has been evaluated by measuring the clearance of charged and uncharged weight-matched solute pairs ([carboxyl-<sup>14</sup>C]inulin and [methoxy-<sup>3</sup>H]inulin, and [<sup>14</sup>C]ferrocyanide and [<sup>3</sup>H]sucrose) (130). Since the molecular dimensions and diffusion abilities are similar, the lower

biliary clearance for the negatively charged species suggests there is an electrical barrier to anion movement. Solute pair clearance ratios were constant over changing bile acid excretion rates thus implying that bile acids did not generate a significant negative potential in the canalicular lumen. Clearance of methoxyinulin and the much smaller molecule sucrose were similar, suggesting identical channels for both solutes which are much larger than the pores that admit water and smaller solutes such as erythritol. Bradley and Herz (130) estimated these channels represent 10% of the surface area available for water movement.

**4. Microfilaments and Microtubules.** Microfilaments associated with actin are found in hepatocytes (363) at the cytoplasmic face of the plasma membrane, particularly around canaliculi where a thin network extends into the microvilli (375, 862). Microfilaments derive from the globular protein actin and are responsible for the contractile functions of many cells. Phalloidin causes irreversible polymerization of actin into microfilaments thus producing hyperplasia of actin filaments in hepatocytes and a decreased bile flow (268, 297, 374, 408, 1189). Cytochalasin B specifically inhibits the contractile function of microfilaments and produces a thickening of microfilaments within the pericanalicular ectoplasm, a loss of microvilli from bile canaliculi, and a decreased bile flow in the perfused rat liver (919).

Microtubules consist almost exclusively of polymeric tubulin. Colchicine, an inhibitor of tubulin polymerization, causes an almost complete disappearance of microtubules and decreases bile acid secretion (269). Colchicine also inhibits secretion of lipoproteins and proteins into the serum (269, 1130). Combined administration of phalloidin and colchicine synergistically increases the pericanalicular microfilamentous network and the disappearance of microtubules and decreases basal bile flow (269). Agents that decrease microtubular function, such as vinblastine, vincristine, and colchicine, also cause hepatic accumulation of small secretory vesicles containing proteins and triacylglycerol which are normally excreted into bile (232, 942; 960). Two benzimidazole carbamates, nocadazole and parabendazole, with antimicrotubular activity block the biliary secretion of albumin and triacylglycerol by isolated hepatocytes (108); this indicates involvement of microtubules in biliary protein excretion.

Microtubules and microfilaments also play a role in bile acid uptake by isolated hepatocytes (965) and in biliary lipid secretion (419). In fact, rat hepatocytes in primary culture show dynamic contractions of bile canaliculi by actin-containing microfilaments which may influence bile production (920).

#### *D. Ductular Modification of Canalicular Bile*

The ductular-ductal system can alter electrolyte composition and volume of canalicular bile by reabsorption and/or secretion of water. Secretion of water depends on

active bicarbonate excretion (177, 350, 1148) and possibly an electroneutral sodium chloride pumping mechanism (105). The quantitative contribution of ductular secretion to total bile flow is highly species-dependent. Intermittent feeders, such as dogs and humans, have an important ductular component, while continuous eaters, such as most rodents, have a negligible contribution of the collecting system to bile flow (354). The concentration ratios of erythritol in bile to plasma are as follows: dog, 2.3; rabbit, 1.2; rat, 0.9; and guinea pigs, 0.7 (311, 350, 356, 623, 632, 1254). These data indicate considerable ductular reabsorption in dogs, some in rabbits, no reabsorption in rat, and some ductular secretion in guinea pigs. The ratio in humans is between 0.27 and 0.43, indicating pronounced ductular secretion (125, 743, 938). Rodents have high rates of spontaneous bile flow (50 to 90  $\mu\text{l}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$ ) and large bile acid-independent fractions.

Many gastrointestinal hormones, which exert physiological control of gastric acid secretion, intestinal motility, and gallbladder contraction, can also influence bile composition and volume during eating and digestion and hence affect the choleric properties of these hormones and the enterohepatic cycle of bile acids. Studies of controlled interruption of the enterohepatic circulation (261) and comparison of fed versus fasted state on bile production in primates (1150) emphasize the importance of eating on variations in ductular secretion.

The best evidence for ductal modification of canalicular bile is that the pancreatic peptide secretin stimulates bile formation in isolated bile ducts of dogs (832) thus producing an abrupt negativity in the luminal membrane potential indicative of active anion transport, possibly  $\text{HCO}_3^-$ . In addition, analysis of excretory transients after selective arterial injections of secretin support a ductular site of action (1251). Bile becomes slightly hypertonic during secretin choleresis (940) which probably results from increased excretion of chloride and bicarbonate ions (463).

Reabsorption and secretion of water and electrolytes can be performed by ductular epithelium, especially after cholinergic blockade in dogs (1254) and resection of the antrum and small bowel in monkeys (1148); both procedures suppress hormone-mediated secretion. A constant amount of water is reabsorbed during taurocholate-induced choleresis (74), suggesting that fluid reabsorption occurs independently of bile flow. In dogs, the concentrative capacity of the common bile duct increases after cholecystectomy (1253). After surgery and an overnight fast, extrahepatic ducts are enlarged and contain several milliliters of bile similar in composition to gallbladder bile. Ductal reabsorption appears to be independent of canalicular bile production in dogs and monkeys and is almost non-existent in rats and rabbits (354, 367, 632, 970). The reason for this species difference is unknown. Additional evidence indicates the ducts in rats and hu-

mans may actively reabsorb glucose (447, 872, 873) and slowly reabsorb urea (911). Retrograde intrabiliary injection experiments indicate extensive absorption of water, morphine, and BSP. The latter two undergo subsequent conjugation and biliary excretion (371, 534, 872, 873, 911–913). Whether secretion or reabsorption predominates under normal physiological conditions, however, is unknown.

#### *E. Neurohumoral Control of Bile Formation*

There are numerous factors that influence bile flow but whose sites of action are unknown (306, 307, 309, 354, 570, 970). These factors include neural influences, vascular pressure, and hormones.

Nerve fibers are abundant within the portal tract blood vessels, bile ductules, and ducts (359, 1152). Whether these nerves influence bile flow directly has not been determined. However, alterations in hepatocellular perfusion induced by nerve stimulation could influence bile formation by affecting the counterflow arrangement (1135). A direct effect of vagal tone on bile flow has been suggested since truncal vagotomy decreases spontaneous bicarbonate secretion and reduces insulin-induced choleresis (407, 579). Apparently, considerable species differences exist as stimulation of the vagus influences bile flow in man (60) and dogs (367, 383, 579, 924, 1161) but has no effect in rabbits and cats (1161). Although choleresis is observed after dopamine administration (468), adrenergic control mechanisms are even less understood than are vagal effects. It is also difficult to discern whether these effects result directly from neurotransmitters or from indirect neural influences mediated by alterations in perfusion, released hormones, and/or metabolic changes.

Bile flow is largely unaffected by variations in hepatic blood flow rate once a critical opening pressure is attained (136, 137). In contrast, released hormones can produce marked changes in bile flow (354, 570, 970). For example, gastrin (1294) and histamine (582) stimulate production of bile with high bicarbonate and chloride ion concentrations, respectively. Gastrointestinal hormones that stimulate flow are listed in decreasing order of potency: cholecystokinin, caerulein, pentagastrin, and gastrin II (569, 578, 580). Sulfated gastrin II, but not gastrin I, is choleric only at pharmacological—not physiological—doses (578). Feeding also increases bile flow (568).

Hydrocortisone increases flow of hepatocellular bile with a high chloride ion concentration in dogs (759). Like insulin, glucagon also stimulates bile flow in man (282, 730) and dogs (581), but not in guinea pigs and rabbits (1079), by apparently increasing cAMP levels. Whether glucagon stimulates canalicular or ductular bile flow has not been determined. Thyroidectomy and hypophysectomy decrease bile flow (623, 717). Thus, numerous hormones have profound actions on the elaboration of bile and biliary flow by mechanisms yet to be elucidated.

Bile flow, biliary concentrations, and excretion rates of bile acid, cholesterol, and phospholipid follow a circadian rhythm in rats with a peak at midnight and a nadir at noon (57, 59, 267, 491, 1214). Bile acid-independent flow is maximal during the night and early morning (57, 59). Biliary transport maximum for dibromophthalein disulfonate (DBSP) was 25% higher at night than at noon (1214, 1217). In addition, food intake stimulates bile flow and appears to be a major factor in the circadian rhythm of bile secretion (801).

## V. Alteration of Bile Formation

Many endogenous compounds and xenobiotics increase or decrease bile flow and are referred to as choleric and cholestatic agents, respectively. Bile flow rate may be expressed relative to body weight or liver weight (usual methods) or hepatic DNA content (811).

### A. Choleresis

A chemical can increase bile flow by stimulating the manufacture and secretion of biliary constituents and by biliary excretion of the chemical and/or its metabolites.

1. *Bile Acids.* The acute effect of bile acids on bile production has been extensively examined. Presumably, choleresis results from the osmotic gradient created by excretion of bile acids into the canalicular lumen. Recent studies in rats indicate the following choleric potencies in decreasing order: dehydrocholic acid > chenodeoxycholic acid  $\geq$  cholic acid > taurocholic acid > deoxycholic acid > glycocholic acid (337, 877). Similar results have been observed in dogs (624, 630). The volume of water excreted per micromole of bile acid (estimated by calculating the slope of the relation between bile flow and bile acid excretion; fig. 4) depends on species and bile acid. For taurocholic acid it is 8  $\mu$ l in dogs (940, 1254), 13  $\mu$ l in rhesus monkeys (261), 15  $\mu$ l in rats (102, 1080), 30  $\mu$ l in rabbits (310), and 26  $\mu$ l in guinea pigs (1080). In the rat and rabbit, bile acids can produce a two- to threefold increase in bile flow while in the dog they increase bile flow six- to sevenfold (624). These differences are largely due to the much lower basal bile flow in dogs. Dehydrocholate produces a higher bile flow which is thought to be related to its lower tendency to form micelles (243, 1080, 1114) since the osmotic potency of micelle-forming bile acids is lower than that of non-micelle-forming bile acids (461). More recent studies suggest that the choleric potency of bile acids is not inversely related to their ability to form micelles (337, 630, 875, 1067).

The bile flow during bile acid choleresis often exceeds that which would be theoretically accounted for by simple osmotic activity of the bile acid in bile. This extra bile may be formed either by effects on an electrolyte pump or by decreased reabsorption of fluid from the biliary tract. Wheeler et al. (1254) showed that bile flow would increase by only 1 to 2  $\mu$ l/min/kg if fluid reabsorption were inhibited. Thus, the most likely explanation is that

bile acid-independent flow may also be stimulated by bile acids (635).

Another factor important in determining differences in bile acid-induced increases in bile flow is the permeability (conductivity) of the canalicular epithelium to water and inorganic ions. This factor is thought to be the most important determinant of interspecies variations in bile flow (1246, 1247), but probably does not represent a major mechanism for bile acid choleresis (875). A recent study has shown that 7-ketolithocholate and ursodeoxycholate stimulate bile flow of canalicular origin which is rich in bicarbonate (277). Since bile flow exceeded the theoretical value for an osmotic choleresis and since bicarbonate excretion was elevated, these two bile acids apparently stimulate bile flow by at least two mechanisms.

2. *Other Organic Compounds.* Numerous xenobiotics including organic anions, cations, and neutral compounds are capable of producing a choleresis in one or several species of animals. Basal bile flow rate varies widely from 5  $\mu$ l/min/kg in dogs to 60 in rats and rabbits, and 160 in guinea pigs (428, 624, 951), and the choleric effect of a xenobiotic partly depends on the species and its basal flow. For example, bile flow is increased two-fold in rats and rabbits and six-fold in dogs by cholic, taurocholic, and dehydrocholic acids (624). In general, BSP, eosine, fluorescein, ioglycamide, phenol red, and phlorizin are choleric and increase bile production by the osmotic activity of the chemical in bile (309). However, the effect of these compounds on bile flow is dose-dependent. For example, low doses of BSP produce choleresis in dogs (493), but higher doses in rats (948) and mice (428) are cholestatic.

Several xenobiotics such as probenecid (314), ethacrynic acid (178, 658), diethyl maleate (73), iodipamide (342), iodoxamate (96, 329), ioglycamide (750), 1-chloro-2,4-dinitrobenzene-5-glutathione (1225), BSP-glutathione (71, 340), dihydroxydibutyl ether (215), valproic acid (252, 253, 1234, 1236), naltrexone (995), 6,7-dimethylsculetin (1158), and genipin and patrinolide (1159) stimulate bile flow in rats or dogs. Choleresis induced by these compounds occurs immediately after acute administration and is predominantly due to the osmotic activity of the compound and/or its metabolites. However, the volume excreted per microequivalent of chemical exceeds the theoretical maximal increment in bile flow (7  $\mu$ l/ $\mu$ mol) anticipated for most of the above xenobiotics (diethyl maleate, 13  $\mu$ l in rat and 17  $\mu$ l in dog; iodipamide, iodoxamate, and ioglycamide, 22  $\mu$ l; valproic acid, 16  $\mu$ l). Values for BSP-glutathione and taurocholate are 16 and 7 to 14  $\mu$ l/ $\mu$ mol, respectively (71, 493, 1080). Apparently, other determinants of canalicular secretion are also stimulated.

Other substances that induce choleresis by stimulating bile acid-independent flow include theophylline and cAMP (70), hydrocortisone (276, 759), thyroxine (717),

glucagon (70), and possibly vasopressin (941). The hypolipidemic drug, nafenopin, increases liver weight (382) and promotes a profound choleresis in rats (732) although the mechanism for choleresis is not completely understood. In addition, dihydroxydibutyl ether increases canalicular bile flow without affecting bile acid excretion (215). Administration of non-toxic doses of perhexiline maleate stimulates bile flow and bile acid excretion but inhibits BSP transport maximum ( $T_m$ ) and its choleric effect (494). Tienilic acid is choleric when administered intravenously and does not undergo enterohepatic circulation (736). Bucolome, a non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drug, produces a pronounced choleresis without increasing bile acid excretion (617, 618). Although 27  $\mu$ l of bile are excreted per micromole of bucolome, the choleresis may not be due to the osmotic properties of the drug as only small amounts are excreted into bile.

**3. Microsomal Enzyme Inducers.** Phenobarbital and some other barbiturates enhance bile flow and the biliary clearance of drugs and endogenous metabolites (159, 620, 621, 663, 992). The time course of bile flow enhancement does not correlate with increased liver weight or microsomal enzyme activity, and other enzyme inducers such as 3-methylcholanthrene fail to stimulate bile production (619, 640). Phenobarbital apparently stimulates bile acid-independent flow in the rat (102, 622, 900) and rhesus monkey (962). This increase in bile acid-independent flow might be mediated through an increase in  $\text{Na}^+$ - $\text{K}^+$ -ATPase (968, 1091). Other microsomal enzyme inducers that are choleric include carbutamide (1198), diazepam (459), pregnenolone-16 $\alpha$ -carbonitrile (PCN), and spironolactone (1110, 1300). The enzyme inducer and hypolipidemic agent clofibrate stimulates bile acid-independent flow and decreases biliary cholesterol excretion (697).

### B. Cholestasis

Cholestasis is bile flow stagnation which is usually accompanied by increased levels of biliary substances in blood. Common bile duct stones, sclerosing cholangitis, or cancer of the biliary tree or the pancreas can obstruct bile flow and produce extrahepatic cholestasis. Intralobular obstruction, which occurs during cirrhosis or inflammatory processes, can also cause cholestasis (244). In contrast, drug-induced "intrahepatic cholestasis" is apparently due to biochemical interference with cellular function (1298). This term emphasizes functional derangement of the hepatocanalicular bile secretory system and attempts to differentiate it from other mechanisms that could account for accumulation of biliary constituents in plasma and clinical jaundice. Intrahepatic cholestasis has been reviewed extensively (85, 101, 384, 555, 927, 931, 932, 972, 1028, 1054, 1298).

Our present understanding of the pathogenic mechanisms involved in chemical-induced cholestasis is incomplete. Cholestatic lesions, which are often morphologi-

cally and functionally similar to those observed clinically, can be induced by chemicals in laboratory animals. However, no experimental model of cholestasis has been successfully developed which duplicates all the manifestations observed in man. Investigations on experimental intrahepatic cholestasis suggest that several different functional alterations may be important. Targets of cholestatic chemicals may be the lipid phase of several cell structures: the sinusoidal and/or canalicular membranes, the endoplasmic reticulum, and the mitochondria. Interactions with lipids or proteins within these membranes can impair cellular functions such as the activity of carrier proteins or microsomal enzymes and the intracellular energy supply. Other targets could be cytoplasmic binding proteins and possibly the microfilaments. Interference with other regulatory processes in the cell may also be important. However, the primary event of drug-induced intrahepatic cholestasis is unknown (932, 1054).

Several chemicals that have been extensively studied will be discussed to facilitate our understanding of bile formation and biliary excretion. A more comprehensive listing of cholestatic agents may be obtained from several reviews (669, 905, 928, 931, 1297, 1298).

**1. Endogenous Compounds.** a. **BILE ACIDS.** The toxic effects of the monohydroxy bile salt, lithocholate, have been known since Holsti described a ductular cell reaction in rabbits fed desiccated hog bile (503, 504). Later Javitt (554) reported rapid onset of cholestasis in rats after intravenous infusion of taurolithocholic acid. One hypothesis for this toxic response stated that aqueous solubility of sodium salts of lithocholate and its conjugates is lower than that of potassium salts (1099). Secretion of the bile acid from a high  $\text{K}^+$ /low  $\text{Na}^+$  intracellular environment to a high  $\text{Na}^+$ /low  $\text{K}^+$  biliary environment could result in intracanalicular precipitation of sodium taurolithocholate (557, 1099). Abolition of cholestasis by simultaneous infusion of primary bile acids is consistent with this hypothesis (557, 944). The more soluble 3- $\alpha$ -sulfates of tauro- and glycolithocholate are less potent cholestatic agents (346), a response that does not result from a reduced hepatic clearance or biliary excretion of these metabolites (740). Additional studies support the notion that formation of insoluble salts in the hepatocyte or the canalicular lumen may initiate hepatic injury and cholestasis (163). Administration of di- and trihydroxy bile acids prevents or reverses lithocholate-induced cholestasis (576, 718).

More recent studies indicate lithocholic acid directly affects the structure, composition, and function of the canalicular membrane (575-577, 718, 813).  $\text{Na}^+$ - $\text{K}^+$ -ATPase activity is decreased in hepatocyte plasma membranes isolated from rats with reduced bile flow after treatment with taurolithocholate (969). Cholestasis induced by monohydroxy bile acids partially results from inhibition of the ATPase which may be due to loss of

enzyme or decreased membrane fluidity. Significant quantities of free cholesterol are released into the canaliculi from its limiting membrane within minutes of an intravenous injection of tauroolithocholate (122). This drastic change in membrane composition could modify active and passive transport properties of the hepatocytes and induce cholestasis. Recent preliminary data indicate that inhibitors of protein synthesis apparently block the cholestatic response to lithocholic acid, suggesting that the microsomes may be potentially involved in mediating the cholestasis (1293). Studies in rats with bile fistulas indicate that tauroolithocholate-sulfate has little effect on bile flow; lithocholate-sulfate depresses bile flow by 20% while glycolithocholate-sulfate reduces bile flow by 60% in a dose-dependent manner (1292). Lithocholate-sulfate, mainly excreted as the taurine conjugate, appears in bile soon after administration and does not produce morphological changes as evaluated by electron microscopy. In contrast, glycolithocholate sulfate produced membrane-bound cytoplasmic vacuoles as early as 10 min after injection while appearance of the bile acid in bile was delayed. Thus, sulfated glycolithocholic acid is cholestatic in rats by a mechanism apparently different from that of lithocholic acid (1292).

The transmembrane potential of the hepatocyte, an indicator of the structural integrity of the plasmalemma, is altered following administration of bile acid (874). Hyperpolarization was observed after treatment with tauroolithocholate at doses that decrease bile flow and hepatobiliary permeability (874). In contrast, taurocholate produces slight depolarization and increases in bile flow and permeability. However, lack of understanding of the mechanisms which maintain the resting membrane potential in hepatocytes makes accurate interpretation of these data difficult.

Intrabiliary pressure generated during retrograde intrabiliary infusion of saline was increased while bile flow decreased after intravenous infusion of tauroolithocholate (552). Simultaneous infusion of taurocholate or glycolithocholate with tauroolithocholate prevented the rise in intrabiliary pressure and cholestasis, while the choleric bile acids decreased intrabiliary pressure. These changes in intrabiliary pressure were likely the result, and not the cause, of more fundamental alterations of bile formation and hepatocyte morphology.

Bile acids other than lithocholic acid and its conjugates are also cholestatic. Drew and Priestly (264) ranked the cholestatic potency of three bile acids as taurodeoxycholate > taurochenodeoxycholate > taurocholate when infused into rats. Bile acid overload appears to lead directly to cholestasis. Administration of tauroursodeoxycholate prevented taurocholate-induced cholestasis (612). Additional studies indicate the allo-monohydroxy bile acids are cholestatic in rats (1215) and that a) 3- $\beta$ -hydroxy-5- $\alpha$ -cholanic acid (allo analog) is a more potent cholestatic agent than the 5- $\beta$  analog; b) sulfation does not reduce

or prevent depression of bile flow; and c) allo-monohydroxy cholanic acid causes dilatation of canaliculi with partial or total loss of microvilli and formation of pericanalicular diverticuli. A recent report suggests that the potency of dihydrotestosterone glucuronide is greater than the allo bile acids which is greater than tauroolithocholate in producing cholestasis (818). The order of potency of bile acids to produce hemolysis (892) is similar to their cholestatic potential. The reproducible, reversible cholestatic response induced in rats by intravenous bile acid administration may be useful in studying the characteristics of intrahepatic cholestasis. However, attempts to modify this response by drugs that produce cholestasis in man (chlorpromazine and erythromycin) do not appear to provide a suitable toxicological approach to prediction of their cholestatic potential (265).

b. **MANGANESE-BILIRUBIN.** Early studies by Witzleben and colleagues (1274-1277) indicate that acute intravenous administration of manganese sulfate reduces bile flow and the  $T_m$  for bilirubin excretion into bile, and produces ultrastructural changes resembling the cholestatic response. Bile flow was further reduced in a dose-dependent manner after injection of bilirubin. In addition, the manganese-induced ultrastructural changes were exacerbated by bilirubin and the cholestatic mechanism was postulated to involve intracanalicular precipitation of a manganese-bilirubin complex. However, when BSP was infused into the animals to prevent the manganese-bilirubin cholestasis, biliary excretion of manganese was significantly increased. Hence, the concentration of manganese in bile may not be a determining factor but the interaction between manganese and bilirubin at the level of the hepatocyte may be more important.

Use of the manganese-bilirubin-induced cholestasis as an experimental tool has been developed (236-238). Combination of low, non-cholestatic doses of manganese and bilirubin produces a rapid and reversible reduction in bile flow if the substances are injected in proper sequence and time interval (634), i.e. manganese first followed by bilirubin 15 minutes later. Recently, deLamirande and Plaa (239) demonstrated that 1,3-butanediol, a potentiator of haloalkane hepatotoxicity (480), exacerbated manganese-bilirubin-, tauroolithocholate-, and  $\alpha$ -naphthylisothiocyanate-induced cholestasis. Potentiation of manganese-bilirubin cholestasis could occur by enhancement of biotransformation leading to increased bilirubin availability and/or increased susceptibility of cellular constituents to manganese. A recent report notes a marked modification in the amount of bile canalicular membranes obtained by differential centrifugation after manganese-bilirubin. These authors suggest that manganese induces changes in the membrane lipid layer that permits bilirubin incorporation and subsequent cholestasis (240).

2. *Drugs.* a. **STEROIDS.** Cholestasis induced by ana-

bolic and contraceptive steroids has been observed in humans and laboratory animals (928). In humans, estradiol, estriol, and oral contraceptives provoke a reversible retention of BSP and an increase in plasma alkaline phosphatase activity (679, 683, 861). Estrone produces a 30% reduction of bile flow in female rats during both the basal period and during dehydrocholate-induced cholestasis (352). Rats given ethinylestradiol for 5 days develop hepatomegaly and depression of both basal and BSP-stimulated bile flow (492). Estrone causes a 50% decrease in steady-state BSP excretion by affecting its active transport into bile. Similar effects have been observed after ethinylestradiol (446, 683). Estradiol-17 $\beta$  decreased bile flow and the biliary excretion of diphenylhydantoin in perfused rat liver and in vivo (1220). Chronic estrogen administration reduced biliary excretion of BSP, bilirubin, and other organic anions in humans (203, 714, 821) and rats (376, 474, 475).

Anabolic steroids such as methyltestosterone and norethandrolone produce dose-related increases in BSP retention (472, 726, 1205). Norbolethone also impairs clearance of BSP and indocyanine green in isolated perfused rat livers (79) and decreases bile flow in higher concentrations. Furthermore, norethandrolone, estradiol, and progesterone inhibit taurocholate uptake into isolated hepatocytes (1055).

Estrogens inhibit bile flow of both bile acid-dependent (446, 805, 913) and -independent (446, 805) fractions. These effects may result from increased permeability of the biliary tree (352, 913), increased microviscosity of hepatocyte membranes (595, 1091), or a decrease in concentration of Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase (233, 474, 968), but are not due to an alteration in bile acid carriers (1090).

Recent evidence indicates the D-ring glucuronide conjugate of estradiol is cholestatic in rats (804). In fact, intravenous injection of several steroids conjugated with glucuronic acid on the D-ring, but not the A-ring, induces an immediate, dose-related, reversible cholestasis. Thus the cholestatic effect of several steroids might be due to the glucuronide conjugate (805).

Administration of phenobarbital, which increases the bile acid-independent fraction of bile flow, reverses the ethinylestradiol-induced cholestasis (440). Furthermore, clearance of infused taurocholate was reduced in ethinylestradiol-treated rats and was not reversed after phenobarbital pretreatment (446, 1090). Triton WR-1339, a nonionic detergent, has been shown to return the decreased membrane fluidity produced by ethinylestradiol toward normal and reestablish basal bile flow and bile acid excretion (1090). However, Hoenig (492) has recently been unable to reproduce these protective effects of Triton WR 1339 on ethinylestradiol-induced changes. Coadministration of S-adenosylmethionine has also been shown to reverse the cholestasis produced by ethinylestradiol, possibly by enhancing the biliary excretion of its methylated metabolites (1143, 1144).

Although the results in laboratory animals may be indicative of cholestasis, no demonstration of fully developed intrahepatic lesions has been made. However, signs very similar to those of intrahepatic cholestasis in man have been reported in some strains of mice (DS and C57BL, most sensitive; CBA and C3H, intermediate; and ICR, least sensitive) but not in Sprague-Dawley rats (533). These large species and strain differences in susceptibility to steroid-induced cholestasis may be due to variations in inherent tissue sensitivity or in biotransformation.

b. **ERYTHROMYCINS.** There are several clinical reports of mild reversible cholestasis associated with use of the lauryl sulfate salt of erythromycin propionate (138, 756). Other derivatives have a lower potential to produce cholestasis (184). Signs of a typical cholestatic reaction include hyperbilirubinemia, elevation of serum aspartate aminotransferase and alkaline phosphatase activities, and fever. An erythromycin-induced cholestatic reaction in experimental animals in vivo has not been demonstrated (928). However, reduction of bile flow in the isolated rat liver has been observed after treatment with erythromycin propionate and its lauryl sulfate salt (598). Inability to demonstrate cholestasis in laboratory animals may be related to species variation. Biliary excretion of erythromycin is the major route of elimination in the rat, but the importance of this route in man is equivocal (830, 831). The most cytotoxic erythromycin in cultured Chang cells (hepatocytes) was the propionate and relative cytotoxicity correlated with surfactant properties (272). A similar relationship between surfactant properties and cytotoxicity in in vitro preparations has been noted for bile acids, phenothiazines, and the laxative dioctylsulfosuccinate (275).

c. **PHENOTHIAZINES.** Intravenous injection of chlorpromazine reduces bile flow in dogs which is accompanied by an increase in bilirubin concentration (1077) and an increase in intrabiliary pressure (1126). Similar results were observed in rats (673). Whether chlorpromazine-induced neurohumoral changes could be responsible is unknown (1123). Chlorpromazine decreases bile flow in monkeys (1003, 1149), which may be due to inhibition of Mg<sup>++</sup>- or Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPases (1023), and depresses the plasma clearance of BSP (291). Chlorprothixene-induced cholestasis is also characterized by a decrease in bile acid-independent flow which depresses the biliary clearance and T<sub>m</sub> for BSP (2). Other neuroleptics, *cis*-thiothixene and both *cis* and *trans* isomers of flupenthixol and clopenthixol, cause dose-dependent reductions in bile flow, and elimination of BSP and indocyanine green (3). Decreased anion excretion is not due to an effect on hepatic uptake or BSP conjugation rate. These data indicate depression of bile acid-independent flow by an unknown mechanism.

Hepatotoxicity has been demonstrated in isolated perfused rat liver as a reduction in bile flow and BSP

excretion after addition to the perfusate of chlorpromazine (594, 599, 1000), other phenothiazines (1185), chlor-diazepoxide, (5) or chlorprothixene (2). Dose-related leakage of intracellular enzymes from isolated hepatocytes is observed after exposure to phenothiazines (2, 273), thioxanthenes (6), and tricyclic antidepressants (4). Chlorpromazine also inhibits bile acid excretion when added to the perfusate in isolated liver of the rat (1166). Although hepatic perfusion is reduced, the inhibition of taurocholate excretion by chlorpromazine is predominantly due to a generalized effect on the plasma membranes of hepatocytes (1165). In fact, these *in vitro* results may be manifestations of a direct toxic effect of the surfactant properties of these drugs (274, 1021, 1288, 1289), implying that surfactant interactions could be a major mechanism for production of intrahepatic cholestasis.

3. *Other Chemicals.* a.  $\alpha$ -NAPHTHYLISOTHIOCYANATE (ANIT). A single dose of ANIT produces a dose-dependent cholestasis and hyperbilirubinemia in susceptible species such as rat and mouse (83, 84, 535, 925). In the rat, onset of hyperbilirubinemia occurs between 12 and 24 hours and peaks at 5 days before returning to normal values at about 7 days. The decrease in bile flow is more abrupt in mice, occurring between 16 and 24 hours and lasting about 5 days (263, 535, 746). Hamsters are more resistant and require larger doses to induce the response whereas dogs are completely resistant to the cholestatic effects of acute ANIT administration (535). Even before cessation of bile flow, ANIT produces retention of BSP (84) and bilirubin (991) in plasma by affecting hepatic uptake of the exogenously administered compound. In addition, ANIT increases plasma alanine aminotransferase activity in rats (263) and dogs (535). Concentrations of 5'-nucleotidase (263), BSP, and taurocholate (684) increase in plasma after ANIT administration thus indicating that increased leakage across the tight junctions may contribute to the regurgitation of these substances and enzymes in blood (684). Incorporation of radiolabeled  $\delta$ -aminolevulinic acid into bilirubin increases after ANIT administration in a dose-related manner (993). This suggests that enhanced bilirubin synthesis may also be involved in drug-induced hyperbilirubinemia. Finally, ANIT causes an impairment of microsomal enzyme activity (150, 263, 432, 929).

Pretreatment of rats with inhibitors of protein and RNA synthesis block ANIT-induced hyperbilirubinemia and cholestasis (536, 1186). A direct effect of these inhibitors on the enzymes involved in ANIT biotransformation is possible (156, 748, 1095) but not completely established. However, these inhibitors do not affect early BSP retention or prolong pentobarbital-sleeping time (537).

Hepatic clearance of exogenously administered bilirubin is reduced in ANIT-treated rats and mice before complete cessation of bile flow occurs (991). Moreover,

the maximal rate of bilirubin excretion into bile is significantly diminished. ANIT decreases the uptake of bilirubin into the liver even in mice with bile duct ligation but does not influence bilirubin conjugation. Thus, ANIT appears to have a direct effect on hepatic uptake, storage, and biliary excretion. However, the mechanism of the acute action of ANIT is complex and further studies are needed to clarify the causes of cholestasis.

b. **CHOLEPHILIC ANIONS.** Hepatic transport of cholephilic organic anions has been widely studied to elucidate the mechanisms of bile production, hepatic uptake, and elimination. Indocyanine green, rose bengal, unconjugated BSP, and bromocresol green are cholestatic in rats and mice, and eosine decreases bile flow only in mice when administered at doses above the  $T_m$  (425, 428). The cholestatic effects of these anions is greater in mice that have a higher basal bile flow rate (428). Cholephils that have a low biliary  $T_m$  tend to be cholestatic while those with a high biliary  $T_m$  tend to be choleric (428). The cholestatic effect appears to be due to accumulation of cholephils in the liver because of their limited rate of excretion. Toxic effects of these organic acids as manifested by a decreased bile flow may be due to inhibition of mitochondrial respiration (25, 149, 425, 428, 604, 705, 706) or  $Mg^{++}$ - and  $Na^+$ - $K^+$ -ATPases (704, 705, 796, 1043, 1044). Other possible mechanisms for cholestasis are discussed in the review of Plaa and Priestly (928).

c. **MISCELLANEOUS.** Experimental hypothermia induced by administration of anesthetics to rats decreases bile flow and biliary excretion of bilirubin and BSP (990). Other studies in rats and rabbits indicate that hypothermia markedly reduces bile flow, bile acid excretion, and bile acid-independent flow (757). The last effect is thought to be due to a decrease in  $Na^+$ - $K^+$ -ATPase activity.

Cholestasis can be induced by administration of phalloidin to rats (268, 269, 297, 312). A decrease in bile acid secretion and an increase in the bile/plasma ratios of inulin and sucrose are observed. Freeze fracture replicas reveal alterations of the junctional complex that separates the canalicular lumen from the lateral intercellular space. A microfilament-mediated change in junctional permeability might permit efflux of biliary constituents into intercellular space during phalloidin-induced cholestasis. Rats made cholestatic by bile duct ligation survive phalloidin poisoning because uptake of demethylphalloin is depressed 75% after 4 hours of ligation (1228). Bile acids prevent phalloidin toxicity in isolated hepatocytes (366) by inhibition of toxin uptake (916, 918).

Aflatoxin B<sub>1</sub> is rapidly taken up by isolated perfused rat livers and approximately 30% of the dose is excreted into bile in 4 hours. Bile flow decreases after 90 minutes and is completely stopped by 4 hours, indicating complete cholestasis (1193).

The antibiotics, novobiocin and rifampicin, produce jaundice and BSP retention (669, 723, 921), which may

be due to inhibition of hepatic uptake of organic anions or inhibition of UDP-glucuronosyltransferase (41, 703, 1104). Rifampicin reduced the biliary excretion of warfarin by 56% (1284).

The oral hypoglycemic drugs, carbutamide, chlorpropamide, and tolbutamide, produce a very low incidence of hepatic reactions including elevated alkaline phosphatase activity and cholestatic jaundice (709). Endotoxin from *Escherichia coli* decreases bile flow in the isolated perfused liver of the rat (1195) which may be accounted for by a decrease in  $\text{Na}^+\text{-K}^+\text{-ATPase}$  (1196). Since the endotoxin also causes impairment of BSP and indocyanine green clearance, circulating endotoxin may contribute to the production of intrahepatic cholestasis observed during bacterial infection (1197). Endotoxin is concentrated in liver because two thirds of an intravenous dose is recovered in the organ 8 hours after administration while about 7% is excreted into bile (767). However, the mechanisms for uptake and secretion remain obscure.

In allergic hepatitis, lymphocytes elaborate macrophage migration inhibitory factor which, when administered via a mesenteric vein in rats, produces a marked reduction in bile flow and bile acid secretion (815). Histological changes resemble those for intrahepatic cholestasis and include dilatation of bile canaliculi and loss of microvilli. This factor is not produced by lymphocytes from normal patients. The mechanism whereby this factor from patients with hepatitis induces cholestasis in rats is not understood.

Recently, the tetradecapeptide hormone, somatostatin, was shown to inhibit basal and food-stimulated biliary secretion in the dog (806). Studies in rats indicate somatostatin decreases bile flow by 30%, bile acid secretion by 35% to 45%, and the bile acid-independent fraction of canalicular bile flow. Endogenous bilirubin excretion is not affected (984). A similar somatostatin-induced decrease in bile flow has been observed in dogs (502). Other natural products that induce cholestasis include icterogenin, 22  $\beta$ -angeloyloxyoleanolic acid, and spirodesmin (283).

Effects of ethanol on bile formation have been reviewed recently (1147). Acute administration produces an apparent dose-related reduction in bile flow and bile acid secretion in dogs, rats, and humans. The acute response is present even if the animal has been fed alcohol chronically. This cholestatic effect is probably due to inhibition of bile acid-dependent secretion. Biliary excretion of BSP and indocyanine green is decreased by acute ethanol administration. Elimination of propoxyphene (864) and lorazepam (510) on first pass through the liver is decreased during acute ethanol infusions. Low ethanol exposure for 3 days depresses transport of methylfolate into bile (1132). Chronic exposure to ethanol apparently stimulates both bile acid-dependent and -independent fractions of canalicular bile flow. Mechanisms for this effect involve alterations in rates of hepatic

bile acid synthesis or degradation, intestinal metabolic pathways, and the enterohepatic circulation.

Although the central theme of this review is biliary excretion, understanding the proposed mechanisms of cholestasis assists our comprehension of bile formation and biliary excretion. Based on the aforementioned discussion, the following mechanisms may be involved in intrahepatic cholestasis: 1) impairment of sinusoidal membrane function of hepatic uptake; 2) interference with intracellular binding and distribution; 3) altered bile acid metabolism; 4) interference with mitochondrial energy supply; 5) morphological changes in canalicular membrane such as loss of microvilli and membrane enzymes; 6) disruption of microtubule and microfilament formation and function; and 7) interference with canalicular bile elaboration (928, 972, 1028, 1054).

### C. Cholelithiasis

Cholelithiasis, or gallstone disease, is associated with insolubility of cholesterol since it is the predominant solid constituent of gallstones (88, 1153). Cholesterol is maintained in solution in bile by formation of mixed micelles consisting of bile acids, cholesterol, and phospholipids (162, 843, 1097, 1098, 1100). Solubility of cholesterol depends on the relative concentrations of these three biliary constituents. This relationship can be illustrated by triangular coordinates (fig. 5) which can distinguish bile from patients with cholesterol stones from bile of those without (17). Bile from patients with stones is supersaturated with cholesterol (1102, 1207, 1208) and the predominant components of biliary calculi are cholesterol and insoluble calcium salts (1153).

Lithogenesis results from some metabolic defect in liver and may be due to excessive synthesis and excretion of cholesterol, a relative lack of bile acids, or both (438, 602, 853, 961, 1089, 1207, 1208). Increased synthesis and excretion of cholesterol are the predominant events in obese patients (107). However, in the majority of gallstone-forming patients, diminished secretion of bile acids is a fundamental defect that reduces the total body pool of bile acids (1207, 1208). Currently, the most accepted view is that there is an increased cycling frequency of bile acids which suppresses bile acid synthesis (816, 856, 1071). Enzymatic activities of hepatic  $\beta$ -hydroxy- $\beta$ -methylglutaryl-CoA reductase are higher, and cholesterol-7- $\alpha$ -hydroxylase lower, in patients with gallstones compared to those without (849). Defective conjugation of bilirubin monoglucuronide could result in an increased proportion of this poorly soluble conjugate in bile which may act as a nucleation site for gallstone formation in humans (281). In addition, the functional integrity of the gallbladder is important in maintaining normal bile composition (930). Micellar binding accounts for 80% of the calcium in hepatic bile but only 50% in gallbladder bile, suggesting that calcium binding in soluble micelles lowers the activity of calcium and hence its liability to precipitate as gallstone nuclei (1267). Administration of



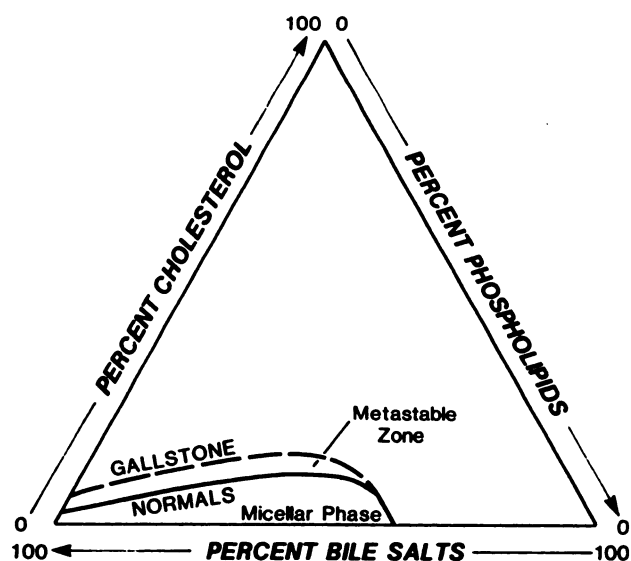


FIG. 5. Triangular coordinates illustrating the relationship of bile acids, cholesterol, and phospholipids. Bile from patients with cholesterol stones can be distinguished from bile of those without.

clofibrate (218) and estrogens (88) increases the lithogenicity of bile and has been associated with a high incidence of cholelithiasis.

Medical treatment of gallstones has been reviewed, and drug therapy is directed toward decreasing the lithogenicity of bile by increasing the bile acid pool (123, 499, 1098). Chronic administration of exogenous bile acids to man (taurocholate, 380; chenodeoxycholate, 64, 220, 229, 540, 550, 775, 1173; ursodeoxycholate, 47, 325, 326, 544, 768, 770, 780, 1020, 1138) decreases cholesterol saturation in bile and induces gallstone dissolution in the majority of patients with radiolucent gallstones. Lithogenicity is reduced decreasing the proportion of cholesterol relative to bile acids and lecithin (13) and perhaps by reducing hydroxymethylglutaryl-CoA reductase (602, 1020). Correlation between cholesterol and bile acid secretion suggests cholesterol transfer across the canalicular membrane is best explained on the basis of incorporation into lecithin-bile acid mixed micelles (461). Secretion of these lipids depends on bile acid secretion (262, 1246, 1250). However, bile acid secretion rate (1224), bile acid structure (390, 496, 1103), and species of animal being studied (91, 1173) can all alter bile lipid composition.

## VI. Hepatic Elimination of Xenobiotics

The liver probably developed evolutionarily as a union of a secretory diverticulum of gut endoderm and as a storage organ, and the hepatic portal venous system draining the intestines preceded formation of a proper liver (33). The anatomical position of this organ is particularly advantageous for removing toxicants from the blood after absorption by the gastrointestinal tract. Since blood from the intestine passes through the liver prior to systemic circulation, the liver can theoretically remove a chemical from the portal circulation and decrease or

prevent distribution to other parts of the body. The liver is also unique in that chemicals in plasma come in direct contact with the hepatocytes which are not separated from the plasma by vascular tissue as in other organs. Chemicals entering the systemic circulation may be excreted by the kidney or liver or may be biotransformed prior to excretion. Factors determining whether a xenobiotic is eliminated via urine or bile are largely unknown (245, 246, 1114). The relative importance of either route in the excretion of foreign compounds is difficult to ascertain. Studies have often drawn conclusions after quantifying the amount of chemical in urine or feces. In experiments where a chemical was administered orally and later found in feces, the importance of biliary excretion was often minimized by concluding that the fecal fraction resulted from poor absorption and not biliary excretion. Experiments in which the chemical was administered intravenously are generally easier to interpret. However, the importance of biliary excretion may not be recognized if the compound undergoes an enterohepatic circulation and is eventually cleared from the body by the kidneys and may be overestimated if the chemical is excreted across the intestinal wall rather than into bile (1008, 1009). Thus, accurate determination of the role that biliary excretion plays in the elimination of a xenobiotic from the body requires an experimental design which permits analysis of bile for content of the chemical and its metabolites and evaluation of these results in relation to experiments where enterohepatic circulation, plasma disappearance, and urinary and fecal excretion of that compound are also measured.

### A. First-Pass Effect

The liver is capable of removing chemicals from blood in one pass through the liver. This phenomenon has been called the "first-pass effect" or presystemic hepatic elimination (385, 386). All chemicals absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract, except for the mouth and rectum, pass through the liver before reaching the general systemic circulation. In addition to extraction and/or biotransformation in the liver, metabolism in intestine and lung and excretion by the lung can also contribute to presystemic elimination. Theoretically, the liver can remove xenobiotics from the blood after absorption from the gastrointestinal tract and prevent their distribution to other parts of the body. However, large interindividual differences in first-pass effect due to variations in hepatic extraction ratios permit different amounts of a chemical to enter the systemic circulation in different patients.

Numerous chemicals are known or expected to undergo a first-pass effect. These include physiological compounds such as bile acids (21, 36, 393, 497, 498, 528, 542, 769, 779, 879, 943), and the pharmacological agents propranolol (1075, 1076), lidocaine (1134), oxyphenbutazone (1258), coumarin (988), sodium chromoglycate (201), propoxyphene (864, 906, 1278), nortriptyline (1209), imipramine (82, 1128), lormetazepam (517), nitroglycerin

(841), methyltestosterone (31), alprenolol (437), morphine (542), nalorphine (543), pentazocine (293), ouabain (526), phenol-3,6-dibromophthalein disulfonate (526), amaranth (526), insulin (1187), diethylstilbestrol (1176), ethinylestradiol (484), Org 6368 (20), prazosin (1011), and manganese chloride (1175). In fact, more than 90% of a low dose of propranolol is cleared from blood after a single pass through the liver (1073). However, presystemic elimination of propranolol appears saturable; no drug is found in the systemic blood when a dose of 0.8 mg/kg is administered to humans or 40 mg/kg to rats. With higher doses, a linear increase in the amount of propranolol in blood is found (1004). Also, the first-pass effect is not different for *l*-propranolol or *dl*-propranolol (545). In addition, hepatic biotransformation of a parent drug may produce metabolites that also undergo presystemic elimination. For example, approximately 90% of monoethylglycine xylylidide, a metabolite of lidocaine, is extracted after a single pass through the liver (896), and sequential first-pass elimination of acetaminophen, the metabolite of phenacetin, has been demonstrated (893).

The fractional uptake of insulin in man decreases with increasing insulin dose and is lower during induced hyperglycemia than at fasting (1187). Results suggest hepatic uptake of insulin depends upon plasma glucose concentrations. Clearance from blood of drugs administered systemically with significant first-pass effects is highly dependent upon hepatic blood flow, although presystemic extraction is independent of liver blood flow (850, 851, 894–896). For example, clearance of lidocaine in humans was reduced after administration of propranolol (860). Clearance and metabolism of propranolol and extraction of indocyanine green were decreased by a 25% reduction in hepatic blood flow induced by cimetidine in humans (327). Short-term exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls enhances the intrinsic clearance and first-pass effect of pentobarbital in rats (1133). A pharmacokinetic model to differentiate preabsorptive, gut epithelial, and hepatic first-pass metabolism has been described (205).

Experiments to determine the effect of presystemic elimination on the toxicity of xenobiotics need to be performed. Existence of a first-pass effect would be desirable for a non-therapeutic, toxic compound, preventing its distribution to other parts of the body. However, in cases of decreased hepatic function, the chemical may escape the first-pass effect and produce a greater toxicity. If the toxicant is biotransformed by the liver to a more toxic metabolite that re-enters the blood, an increase in presystemic elimination may increase the toxicity of the chemical (640).

### B. Hepatic Clearance

Clearance is a precise physiological measurement of the efficiency of xenobiotic elimination. This concept is closely analogous to those in nephrology and provides a measure which changes linearly with respect to a variation in function. Total systemic clearance is the sum of

the efficiency of each route of elimination and does not indicate the site or rate-limiting process. However, for many chemicals, the liver is the major site of elimination and systemic clearance reflects hepatic clearance.

Clearance is the volume of blood from which a drug is completely removed per unit time (1263). At steady state, xenobiotic elimination by the liver can be estimated from the product of hepatic blood flow ( $Q_H$ ) and the extraction ratio ( $E_H$ ):

$$Cl_H = Q_H E_H = Q_H \left[ \frac{C_a - C_v}{C_a} \right]$$

where  $E_H$  is the arterial-venous concentration difference across the liver,  $C_a$  is the concentration in mixed portal venous and hepatic arterial blood and  $C_v$  is the concentration in hepatic venous blood. Thus, hepatic clearance is a function of liver blood flow and the ability of the liver to extract the xenobiotic as blood perfuses the hepatic sinusoids. To overcome the modifying effect of flow on extraction, total intrinsic clearance may be used to express the maximal ability of the liver to irreversibly remove a chemical by all pathways in the absence of any blood flow limitations. When the hepatocyte plasma membrane is highly permeable to a particular compound,  $E_H$  may be expressed in terms of intrinsic clearance,  $Cl_{INT}$ , (132, 389, 850) such that:

$$Cl_H = Q_H \cdot \frac{Cl_{INT}}{Q_H + Cl_{INT}}$$

Physiologically, intrinsic clearance is an index of the rate at which a substance crosses the hepatic parenchymal sinusoidal membrane. Intrinsic clearance and liver blood flow are two independent biological variables which influence hepatic clearance and extraction. When intrinsic clearance is low, liver blood flow is adequate to maintain hepatic clearance at the same level as intrinsic clearance. If intrinsic clearance is high, then hepatic blood flow becomes rate-limiting and total hepatic clearance varies in direct proportion to flow. Hepatic clearance is partly flow-dependent for chemicals with intermediate intrinsic values.

Factors that can alter hepatic blood flow can be physiological, pathological, and/or pharmacological (136, 137, 336, 850, 956, 957, 1261). Physiological factors that decrease flow include upright posture, thermal stress, exercise, (224) and volume depletion (476), while food and supine posture increase hepatic blood flow. Hepatic cirrhosis, cardiovascular collapse, renal hypertension, and congestive heart failure are pathological conditions that decrease hepatic blood flow (1262). Myocardial ischemia produced by occlusion of coronary arteries causes a 60% reduction in hepatic blood flow (377). A diminished sinusoidal perfusion may be responsible for the impaired elimination of propranolol observed in some patients (923) and during experimental cirrhosis (1283). Administration of propranolol, norepinephrine (336), and gen-

eral anesthetics (449, 868, 1068) decrease hepatic blood flow, while glucagon, isoproterenol, and repeated administration of phenobarbital increase flow (867, 868). Normal hepatic perfusion in several species, including man, is 1 ml/min/g of liver (418, 1003). Hepatic blood flow determined under a variety of physiological and pathological conditions or after drug administration is 0.5 to 2.0 ml/min/g of liver (133, 224, 1134).

Blood concentration of a chemical after intravenous and oral administration can be affected by a decrease in hepatic blood flow (1263). For a xenobiotic that has low extraction, systemic clearance and half-life are flow-independent and the blood concentration/time curve is similar over a wide range of hepatic blood flows. However, for a chemical with a high extraction, both clearance and half-life are flow-dependent after either route of administration. Thus, a decrease in hepatic blood flow would increase the half-life of the xenobiotic. Clearance and half-life for chemicals with intermediate extraction ratios are dependent on flow to an extent estimated from knowledge of the extraction ratio.

Alterations of intrinsic clearance can affect the blood concentration versus time curve of a xenobiotic after intravenous and oral administration. The major effect of increasing intrinsic clearance as after microsomal enzyme induction is a proportional increase in the efficiency of hepatic extraction. The area under the concentration/time curve and half-life change in inverse proportion to the change in intrinsic clearance. For a compound with a low intrinsic clearance, a twofold increase in extraction would produce a 50% reduction in half-life. However, systemic availability after oral administration decreases only slightly. In contrast, when intrinsic clearance is high, an increase in extraction produces minimal alteration in clearance or half-life but markedly increases presystemic elimination after oral administration. Peak blood levels are decreased and systemic availability is markedly reduced.

Large changes in the rate of hepatic perfusion may alter regional distribution of blood flow within hepatic lobes and influence the magnitude of bile acid-independent flow without significant changes in oxygen uptake, aminotransferase release,  $\text{Na}^+\text{-K}^+\text{-ATPase}$  activity, or evidence of morphological damage (1164).

Many *in vivo* investigations demonstrating the effect of liver blood flow on systemic clearance and half-life and the dependence of this effect on the original extraction ratio have been reviewed (1261). Studies in isolated perfused rat liver also demonstrate interrelationships of extraction rate, liver blood flow rate, kinetic elimination constants ( $K_m$ ,  $V_{max}$ ), and route of administration with respect to the blood concentration versus time curve (133, 597, 1074, 1273). From the hepatic extraction ratio, one can generalize about the disposition of a xenobiotic. In particular, compounds with high or low extraction ratios have definable differences in disposition. If a

chemical has a low extraction ratio due to a small intrinsic clearance relative to liver blood flow, then hepatic clearance and elimination half-life will be independent of changes in flow but sensitive to hepatic metabolism. In addition, only a small first-pass effect after oral administration will be observed. In contrast, for a compound with a high extraction ratio, hepatic clearance and half-life will be sensitive to changes in flow and insensitive to alterations in metabolic activity. Such a xenobiotic will exhibit a significant first-pass effect after an oral dose. Chemicals having intermediate extraction ratios have mixed properties, in that clearance is partly dependent on liver blood flow and hepatic metabolism.

### C. Hepatic Uptake

Before a solute located in sinusoidal blood can be incorporated into the parenchymal cell, the compound must pass through fenestrations of the sinusoidal epithelia and enter the space of Disse (see fig. 2). Then the solute contacts the microvilli of the plasma membrane and uptake occurs. Besides these structural considerations, the velocity of blood flow is an important determinant of the probability of interaction between solute and microvilli.

The uptake of substances by the liver has been examined by several methods: 1) determination of the rate of removal of a chemical from plasma after administration; 2) study of the partition between plasma and liver cells after infusion for a sufficient time to achieve a steady state; 3) quantification of the hepatic concentration at various times; 4) examination of the ability of the isolated perfused liver to concentrate a chemical from the perfusate; 5) determination of the ability of isolated or cultured hepatocytes to accumulate a chemical from the medium; and 6) measurement of xenobiotic influx into isolated membrane vesicles.

Two methods for the study of hepatic uptake have been discussed recently (401, 666). The *in vivo* multiple indicator dilution technique (223) has been adapted to study uptake of chemicals at the liver cell surface (401). This process (fig. 6) has been modeled and outflow profiles consist of a throughput component which does not enter the liver ( $^{51}\text{Cr}$ -labeled red blood cells or albumin labeled with Evans blue dye) and a return component which enters the cell and returns to the plasma space to emerge at the outflow (tritiated water). When the process is concentrative, the throughput component emerges well ahead of the returning component by virtue of the enlarged cellular volume. In a non-concentrative process, the throughput and returning components are not widely separated in time. The uptake of tracer rubidium, like potassium, is a concentrative process while that of tracer glucose is non-concentrative. When intracellular sequestration occurs, the magnitude of the returning component in a tracer experiment is reduced and a decreasing steady state lobular gradient is produced from the periportal to the centrilobular region. Diminution in return-

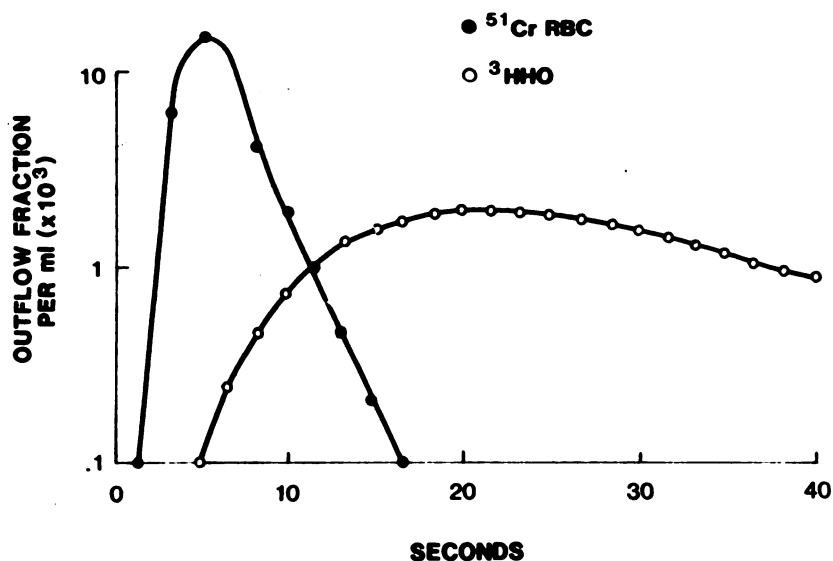


FIG. 6. In vivo multiple indicator dilution technique adapted to study uptake of chemicals at liver cell surface. Outflow profiles are a throughput component which does not enter the liver ( $^{51}\text{Cr}$ -labeled red blood cells or albumin labeled with Evans blue dye) and a return component which enters the liver cell and returns to the plasma space to emerge at the outflow (tritiated water).

ing components has been observed for galactose, BSP, bilirubin, cholate, taurocholate, and chenodeoxycholate (401, 967). While this technique has been useful, it is very labor intensive, and thus most of the work presently being performed is with isolated hepatocytes.

Suspensions of hepatocytes isolated by the method of Berry and Friend (98) are particularly advantageous for examining the characteristics of the hepatic uptake of chemicals (666, 1053). Isolated hepatocyte suspensions allow rapid, multiple sampling which permits estimation of initial velocities and calculation of kinetic parameters. These cells are useful for studying uptake processes because there is no interference from unspecific binding to plasma proteins, different distributional compartments or hemodynamic factors. However, workers must demonstrate that cell viability is high and maintained throughout the study. Transport characteristics of several classes of compounds have been tabulated recently (1057) which include bile acids (38, 39, 529, 1051), ouabain (284), procainamide ethobromide (285), 3-O-methylglucose, D-fructose, and D-galactose (221, 222), morphine and nalorphine (541), BSP (1058, 1059), BSP-glutathione (1053), insulin (1171), thiamine (755), bilirubin (525), parathion (838), lipoproteins (886, 1199), iron (434, 435), zinc (1121), cadmium (320-322, 1119), estrogens (1060), taurine (464), alanine (687), and other amino acids (175, 292, 328, 571, 721, 722). The majority of these organic compounds appear to be taken up by a carrier-mediated system while lipophilic xenobiotics may pass through the membrane by diffusion (1057). Lidocaine uptake is not carrier-mediated, and binding to intracellular components may account for its accumulation in hepatocytes (176).

Recently, hepatic transport of three xenobiotics, DBSP, *d*-tubocurarine and ouabain, has been evaluated

in the rat in vivo, in isolated perfused liver, and in isolated hepatocytes (116). Uptake is similar in vivo and in the perfused liver for all three substrates. However, uptake of DBSP and ouabain into isolated hepatocytes is lower by a factor of 2 to 3, while that of *d*-tubocurarine is similar. Rate of secretion from isolated hepatocytes is identical for DBSP and lower for ouabain and *d*-tubocurarine than that of the in vivo preparation. Results indicate that transport function is well preserved in perfused livers and isolated hepatocytes although, for certain substrates, uptake and/or secretion may be lower in freshly isolated cells of high viability.

**1. Bile Acids.** Hepatocellular uptake of taurocholic acid appears to be saturable in dogs (393) and perfused rat liver (967). This carrier-mediated transport system is sodium-dependent (114, 967, 1051) and energy-dependent (1051). Uptake of cholate occurs apparently by both simple diffusion and a saturable process and undergoes counter-transport (188) with taurocholate and chenodeoxycholate (39). Transport of cholate appears concentrative in nature but is complicated by conjugation with glycine or taurine and protein binding. The relative potencies of seven bile acids to inhibit cholate or taurocholate uptake suggest several carriers are available for bile acid uptake which may have affinity for more than one bile acid (40). The difference in activation energies between cholate and taurocholate (13.3 and 29 Kcal/mol, respectively) and selective inhibition of taurocholate uptake by ouabain further suggest that multiple carriers are involved in bile acid transport into the hepatocyte. Saturable binding sites for taurocholate and cholate have been demonstrated on rat liver plasma membranes (11). However, uptake is not rate-limiting in transport from blood to bile as the maximal velocity of taurocholate uptake exceeds the secretory  $T_m$  by sixfold (967).

Centrilobular hepatocytes have a higher capacity for bile acid uptake than periportal cells (1120). While the  $K_m$  of each subpopulation was the same, the  $V_{max}$  of the centrilobular enriched fraction was 2.03 nmol/min/mg of protein and that of the periportal-enriched fraction was 1.57.

The hepatic extraction of taurocholic, glycocholic, cholic, deoxycholic, and chenodeoxycholic acids is 80%, 65%, 55%, 55%, and 40%, respectively, indicating that conjugation is more important than the number of hydroxyl groups for bile acids to be removed by the liver (495, 528). Studies determining  $K_m$  and  $V_{max}$  for bile acid uptake into isolated hepatocytes demonstrate that conjugation with taurine increases the affinity of the bile acid for its transport carrier. In contrast, conjugation with glycine did not affect either  $V_{max}$  or  $K_m$ . The trihydroxy bile acids have a higher affinity but a lower transporting capacity for the saturable processes than the dihydroxy bile acids. In vivo hepatic extraction appears to be more dependent on the affinity of the bile acids for the carrier system than the capacity at which it can be transported (592).

Uptake of taurocholate into cultured hepatocytes has also been shown to be transported by an energy-dependent, saturable system (1050, 1051) that is sodium-dependent (1036). Similar results were recently observed with isolated rat liver plasma membrane vesicles (538, 1014). Sodium ion-coupled uptake was inhibited by other bile acids and by preloading the vesicles with  $Na^+$ . When the electrical potential difference was changed by anion replacement, a more negative potential inside stimulated  $Na^+$ -dependent taurocholate transport.

Additional studies indicate that bile acids inhibit the uptake of phallotoxins into isolated hepatocytes (366, 917), suggesting phalloidin and demethylphalloin enter the hepatocyte via the bile acid carrier. Pretreatment with numerous xenobiotics reduces the sensitivity of isolated hepatocytes to phalloidin probably by inhibiting hepatic uptake of the toxin (918).

**2. Bilirubin.** Conflicting evidence exists on the cellular mechanism of bilirubin uptake. Over a wide range of plasma concentrations, hepatic extraction of bilirubin approaches 26% with little change in bile flow or bilirubin conjugation. However, when bolus injections of bilirubin were used to produce higher levels of unconjugated bilirubin in the perfusate than could be attained during constant infusion, the disappearance rate of bilirubin from the perfusate decreases with increasing bilirubin concentrations. These data suggest uptake is a saturable process (119, 903). Other data indicate that deoxycholate inhibits bilirubin clearance from the plasma (118). Moreover, bilirubin uptake can be defined in terms of Michaelis-Menten kinetics and is competitively inhibited by indocyanine green and BSP (1038) but not by taurocholate (903). These data indicate that bilirubin is a likely substrate for a carrier-mediated uptake mecha-

nism. However, other studies report bilirubin clearance depends on binding to both albumin (69) and intracellular binding proteins such as ligandin (728).

In isolated hepatocytes, uptake is extremely rapid and equilibrium between cell and medium is attained within 60 seconds with a 100-fold greater concentration in the hepatocyte (525). The initial velocity of uptake is linear with respect to bilirubin concentration from 12.5 to 200  $\mu M$ . Pretreatment of cells with various metabolic inhibitors or replacement of sodium ion with choline or lithium ion had no effect on bilirubin uptake. Accumulation was not inhibited by the inclusion of organic acids (BSP or taurocholate) or steroidal compounds (diethylstilbestrol or spironolactone). This study suggests that bilirubin apparently reaches the cytoplasm simply by passive diffusion; however, the high accumulation probably results from association with intracellular constituents.

**3. Exogenous Organic Anions.** Mutant Southdown sheep with normal bile acid uptake are unable to concentrate other organic anions such as BSP, bilirubin, rose bengal, and indocyanine green (217). This evidence of separate carrier systems for organic anionic dyes and bile acids is supported by the observation that taurocholate does not inhibit BSP uptake (1059, 1212). At lower dye concentrations, however, taurocholate can inhibit uptake of BSP (422) and DBSP (1210). A recent study indicates that two systems are involved in BSP uptake by rat hepatocytes and that one carrier is shared with bile acids (707). Taurocholate inhibition reveals a bile-acid-sensitive carrier with a 10-fold higher affinity for BSP than that of the insensitive one, which is probably the  $Na^+$ -independent carrier of bile acids (38).

Bilirubin, BSP, and indocyanine green are competitive substrates for a transport system which follows Michaelis-Menten kinetics (400, 1038). Similar results have been obtained with isolated hepatocytes (1058, 1127, 1200). BSP uptake in isolated cells follows Michaelis-Menten kinetics only at low substrate concentrations and is independent of metabolic energy and  $Na^+$  transport. Taurocholate does not affect uptake while indocyanine green inhibits at low concentrations and activates when BSP is greater than 20  $\mu M$ . Similar findings indicate that DBSP uptake also occurs against an electrochemical gradient and utilizes the sodium ion-dependent carrier (115). Recent work indicates that the hepatic uptake of BSP-glutathione is substantially lower than that of BSP, but both compounds share a common transport mechanism (1052). Hepatocytes with poor viability, as compared to high viability cells, have different kinetic properties for BSP uptake which suggests that the lower BSP clearance observed in patients with impaired liver function may be due to depressed uptake (1059).

Rifamycins, broad-spectrum antibiotics with low toxicity, interfere with the elimination of bilirubin, BSP, and indocyanine green in humans (12) and with hepatic uptake of indocyanine green (899) and bilirubin and BSP

(600) in rats. In addition, hepatic transport of taurocholate is inhibited by rifamycin SV in isolated perfused rat liver (688, 689). These antibiotics inhibit cholate uptake into isolated hepatocytes more than taurocholate uptake and the inhibition appears to be non-competitive (41). Furthermore, hepatocyte uptake of rifamycin is a saturable carrier-mediated process independent of metabolic energy and is not inhibited by BSP. However, BSP uptake is competitively inhibited by rifamycin (703).

Biliary contrast agents are specifically taken up by the liver and are actively secreted into bile. Uptake into rat liver slices is biphasic and consists of a non-saturable, low affinity system and a saturable, high affinity carrier that may be energy dependent. Inhibition of uptake is apparently influenced by the affinity of the agent for plasma albumin (95-97, 741, 749, 750, 819, 822, 823, 1112). Uptake of ethacrynic acid into the isolated rat liver is mediated by a saturable, energy-dependent, and partially  $\text{Na}^+$ -dependent transport mechanism. Maximal velocity of uptake can be increased by raising extracellular  $\text{Na}^+$  concentration (908).

An energy-dependent and saturable system is responsible for the rapid uptake of warfarin but not dicoumarol (1285). A saturable, active transport system has also been shown for both uptake and biliary excretion of orotate which is inhibited by probenecid and *p*-aminohippurate (459). Thus, the hepatic uptake of several exogenous anions appears to occur by a carrier-mediated transport system distinct from that of bile acids, but the number of transport systems and their specificity for uptake of exogenous organic anions requires further examination.

**4. Exogenous Organic Cations.** Rat liver has an efficient system for uptake and biliary excretion of quaternary (486, 1031) and tertiary (839) ammonium compounds. Uptake is not inhibited by bile acids, BSP, or probenecid (524, 1031). Procainamide ethobromide (PAEB) uptake by rat liver slices is saturable and can be inhibited by omission of sodium ion or addition of the metabolic inhibitors, 2,4-dinitrophenol and iodoacetate (1031). Because liver slices contain both canalicular and sinusoidal spaces, it is impossible with this technique to determine whether this concentration gradient is due to accumulation of PAEB within the hepatocytes or within the bile canaliculi and sinusoidal spaces. PAEB is positively charged regardless of pH and if one assumes a membrane potential of  $-35$  mV (81), a slice/medium concentration ratio greater than 4 would be needed to demonstrate uptake against an electrochemical gradient for a cation if no metabolism or intracellular binding occurred. In the rat, a liver/plasma ratio of unchanged PAEB of 7 has been reported (518).

Recently, isolated hepatocytes have been used to demonstrate that PAEB enters the liver by a carrier-mediated, saturable, and energy-dependent uptake process (285). Initial velocity rates at substrate concentrations

from 30 to 400  $\mu\text{M}$  indicate a  $K_m$  of 54  $\mu\text{M}$  and  $V_{\text{max}}$  of 0.13 nmol/min/mg of protein. The process involves active transport because uptake against an electrochemical gradient is evident even after correction for biotransformation and intracellular binding. This system appears to be distinct from those responsible for the accumulation of neutral compounds such as ouabain or organic anions like taurocholate. Whether more than one carrier is responsible for hepatic uptake of organic cations is not known. Transport of numerous tertiary amines may share a similar uptake system with PAEB (839).

**5. Neutral Organic Compounds.** Farah (323) first suggested that uptake and excretion of ouabain might occur by active transport because accumulation was inhibited in rat liver slices by potassium cyanide. Ouabain uptake is a saturable, energy-dependent process that occurs against a concentration gradient and is not inhibited by organic anions or cations (696). Uptake is inhibited by other neutral steroids such as corticosterone, progesterone, testosterone, and dehydrocholate (695). These early studies suggested that bile acids and ouabain might be transported by the same carrier. However, developmental studies (651) showed that taurocholate transport was near adult levels much earlier than that of ouabain.

Hepatic uptake for ouabain has been studied in detail in isolated hepatocytes (284, 1061). Uptake is saturable, with a  $K_m$  of 159  $\mu\text{M}$  and  $V_{\text{max}}$  of 1.43 nmol/min/mg of protein, and energy dependent as dinitrophenol, potassium cyanide, and rotenone reduced ouabain transport into the hepatocytes. Ouabain uptake is independent of  $\text{Na}^+$ , which also indicates that its uptake is by a different carrier than that for bile acid transport. Reduction of incubation temperature from 37°C to 27°C greatly decreased uptake velocity, yielding an approximate  $Q_{10}$  of 6. Ouabain is transported against a concentration gradient and achieves a cell/medium ratio of about 10 (284). Similar values have been reported in vivo (79, 1016). Several steroidal compounds (six hormones and three cardiac glycosides) inhibit ouabain uptake into isolated hepatocytes, suggesting that they may share the same transport system (284). Recent work with hepatocyte subpopulations indicates ouabain uptake into the centrilobular-enriched population was greater than that into periportal hepatocytes (1020).

The uptake of galactose into isolated hepatocytes appears to be a carrier-mediated diffusion process where the rate of uptake greatly exceeds that of biotransformation (80, 1020). This system is probably different than that which transports ouabain.

A biphasic system has been demonstrated for cortisol uptake into isolated hepatocytes (955) before the steroid becomes bound to intracellular proteins. At low concentrations, uptake occurs by two saturable processes with high and low affinities, respectively, which can be blocked in the presence of the metabolic inhibitors 2,4-dinitrophenol or potassium cyanide. At high concentra-

tions, simple diffusion becomes the major route of cortisol uptake into hepatocytes. Cortisone and corticosterone are competitive inhibitors while dexamethasone, estrone, and testosterone are non-competitive inhibitors of cortisol uptake. Additional studies indicate estrone, estradiol, and testosterone also enter hepatocytes by diffusion and by carrier-mediated transport (954). Similar findings have been observed for the uptake of tri-iodothyronine by isolated (290) and cultured (685, 686) hepatocytes.

6. *Metals*. A biphasic mechanism is involved in the hepatic uptake of zinc and cadmium. Studies on cadmium transport in isolated perfused rat liver (361, 362, 606) and suspensions of isolated hepatocytes (1121) indicate a simple diffusion phase as well as a carrier-mediated phase that can be inhibited by zinc. Neither phase is affected by administration of metabolic inhibitors. Pretreatment of rats with cadmium chloride, which increases hepatic metallothionein content (288, 1073, 1241, 1242, 1272), increases the rate of the diffusion phase of uptake (1121). This diffusion phase may be related to the intracellular sequestering of cadmium by metallothionein. Cadmium complexes with dithiols (2,3-dimercaptopropanol, dithiothreitol) are rapidly removed from the plasma by Kupffer cells (1096) while either free or non-thiol complexes of cadmium are taken up by parenchymal cells (154).

A similar biphasic response with the first phase showing characteristics of carrier-mediated transport has been observed for the uptake of zinc into 3T3 mouse lymphocytes (1049), isolated rat hepatocytes (1121), and primary cultures of rat liver cells for zinc (320, 321) and cadmium (322).

Ferrous iron is taken up by hepatocyte suspensions by simple diffusion while that of ferric iron is receptor-mediated. Transferrin-bound iron uptake is biphasic: receptor-mediated at low concentrations and by diffusion at higher levels (435). Uptake of ferric iron from iron-transferrin depends on temperature and the transferrin concentration and is inhibited by exposure of hepatocytes to proteases (1291). These data support the role of a surface receptor-mediated uptake component.

#### D. Macromolecules in Hepatic Uptake

1. *Membrane Receptors*. a. BILE ACIDS. Specific bile acid binding sites on liver surface membranes have been postulated to represent the initial step in bile acid translocation across the hepatocyte membrane (11). Pretreatment of rats with cycloheximide to block hepatic protein synthesis reduced bile acid transport capacity to 38% of control. Values of liver function tests, bile flow, and histological profiles were all normal. The maximum number of [<sup>14</sup>C]cholic acid binding sites was reduced 75% 24 hours after cycloheximide, while no effect was observed on the activities of the marker enzymes, Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase, Mg<sup>++</sup>-ATPase, or 5'-nucleotidase. The associated alterations in bile acid transport and the maximum num-

ber of binding sites after cycloheximide suggests these receptors may be the bile acid carriers (398).

The liver responds to an increased bile acid load by increasing the bile acid excretory maximum (14, 1092, 1235). This substrate-induced effect produces an increase in the number of bile acid receptors which may occur via increased protein synthesis, decreased receptor degradation, or a shifting from a possible intracellular pool to the surface membrane (1092). Whatever the mechanism, the number of putative bile acid carriers can apparently adapt to the taurocholate pool size. Further work is needed to characterize this bile acid receptor both biochemically and functionally.

b. ORGANIC ANIONS. An integral protein from the hepatocyte plasma membrane has been isolated that exhibits a high affinity for BSP (1183). This protein was separated from an acetone powder of a crude preparation of rat liver plasma membrane that was subjected to salt extraction and chromatographed on Sephadex G-100 and then AG-1X8 resin. Based on BSP binding, this isolation procedure gave an approximate 40% yield of BSP binding protein that can bind 100 nmol of BSP per milligram of protein. This receptor is a single protein with an apparent molecular weight of 170,000 and has a dissociation constant for BSP around 4 μM.

An organic anion binding protein has also been isolated from rat liver plasma membrane by affinity chromatography on bilirubin and BSP-agarose (964). It has a molecular weight of approximately 60,000. More recent work indicates that three classes of binding sites are needed to account for the observed BSP binding with capacities of  $3.5 \times 10^{-11}$ ,  $1.6 \times 10^{-7}$ , and  $5.4 \times 10^{-7}$  mol/mg of protein (966). BSP-glutathione binding sites had maximal capacities of  $5 \times 10^{-11}$  and  $2 \times 10^{-7}$  mol/mg of protein. BSP-glutathione, indocyanine green, and bilirubin, but not taurocholate, compete with BSP for binding. Demonstration of a saturable binding site with greater affinity for BSP than albumin or ligandin suggests a membrane-bound transport system is responsible for hepatic uptake and biliary excretion of organic anions.

Further studies (1280) indicate isolation of a 5500 dalton protein which has high affinity ( $K_a = 0.27 \mu\text{M}^{-1}$ ) and saturable binding (6.3 nmol/mg of protein) for BSP. This protein is immunologically distinct from ligandin and rat albumin and binds bilirubin ( $K_d = 20 \mu\text{M}$ ).

Thus, three groups have isolated proteins from plasma membranes of liver that bind BSP. Whether the marked differences in molecular weights may be due to differences in polymer formation or to distinct proteins is not known. Also, it is not known whether these BSP binding proteins are the transmembrane carrier(s). While one or all of these proteins may be the putative receptor for organic anions, further studies in animal models with reduced hepatic uptake of organic anions (mutant South-

down sheep and fetal or neonatal animals) may elucidate the relationship of this receptor to hepatic transport.

c. **DESIALYLATED GLYCOPROTEINS.** Rapid removal of circulating desialylated glycoproteins from blood of mammals occurs exclusively by liver and is mediated by a carbohydrate recognition system present only on hepatocytes (845, 1047). This cell surface receptor recognizes, binds, and internalizes molecules having exposed residues of galactose, N-acetylgalactosamine, and glucose. After internalization via coated pits and coated vesicles, desialylated glycoproteins subsequently appear in a complex network of tubules and uncoated vesicles before reaching the lysosomes where they are degraded (279, 513, 1226, 1227). Studies in isolated hepatocytes indicate only 5% of the receptors ( $6.7 \times 10^4$  receptors/cell) are present on the external surface of the sinusoidal membrane and the rest are in the cytoplasm. Ligand binding to the receptor is time-dependent, saturable, and dissociable ( $K_d = 3.4 \times 10^{-8}$  M) (1124). Furthermore, the receptor is apparently stable under conditions where the ligand is being destroyed and hence undergoes recycling such that most receptor molecules are located intracellularly (1160). In spite of the 50% reduction of receptor protein by inclusion of cycloheximide in the medium, metabolism of asialo-orosomucoid was 34 times greater than the amount that could be bound to the receptor (1124), which supports the hypothesis of receptor recycling. Molecular weights for the asialoglycoprotein binding receptor are 104,000 and 109,000 for rat and rabbit, respectively (1125). Infusion of receptor-specific antibody substantially reduces hepatic uptake of asialo-orosomucoid but not that of bilirubin, thereby suggesting that the receptor is essential for clearance of desialylated glycoproteins (1139).

Approximately 70% to 80% of an intravenously administered dose of mannosaminated ribonuclease A dimer and serum albumin is taken up by the endothelial and Kupffer cells of the liver (1270). Since hepatic uptake of non-glycosaminated derivatives was <5%, these proteins are thought to enter hepatocytes via the desialylated glycoprotein receptor-mediated carrier.

d. **LIPOPROTEINS.** Hepatic uptake of E apoprotein from high density lipoproteins by rat liver is a receptor-mediated saturable process with high affinity for the lipoprotein (1083). Results suggest that the mechanism of uptake is identical for that of chylomicron remnants, and that E apoprotein is the receptor recognition site for chylomicron uptake into liver (164, 165, 173). However, non-parenchymal as well as parenchymal cells are involved in the uptake of cholesterol ester-labeled serum lipoproteins (1199). These data indicate the importance of non-phagocytosing parenchymal cells in the clearance of endogenous compounds.

e. **ENDOTOXINS.** Receptors for the lipopolysaccharide endotoxin have been detected on the plasma membranes of isolated rabbit hepatocytes (953). Binding to the mem-

brane increases directly with endotoxin concentration between 0.01 to 1.0 mg/ml. Results demonstrate that parenchymal cells are also involved in hepatic clearance of endotoxin.

f. **IMMUNOGLOBULINS AND IMMUNE COMPLEXES.** Intravenously administered immunological aggregates are taken up by and sequestered in hepatocytes of rabbits and rhesus monkeys (772). Receptors for the Fc portion of immunoglobulin G (IgG) and the third complement component (C3) have been localized on the hepatocyte plasma membrane (368, 505). Small amounts of immune complexes are taken up by non-parenchymal cells (506). The mechanism for the *in vivo* uptake of foreign compounds such as human IgG by mouse hepatocytes is thought to involve binding to a receptor followed by macropinocytosis (44). Extensive work has characterized the clearance of IgA and IgA antibodies from blood by the liver and subsequent active transport into bile (107, 547, 562, 671, 725, 884). The uptake process appears to be initiated by binding to a receptor, secretory component, which is found on the sinusoidal surface of hepatocytes (347, 883). Receptor-mediated endocytosis is generally associated with coated pits and coated vesicles (318). However, elucidation of the structure of the receptor and the mechanism initiating the formation of vesicles are needed before a complete understanding of the uptake of immunological complexes can be achieved.

g. **INSULIN.** The initial interaction of  $^{125}$ I-insulin with binding sites on the hepatocyte plasmalemma was demonstrated by electron microscope radioautography (89). Results showed that binding distributed evenly over the sinusoidal and lateral surfaces of the hepatocyte and was notably absent from the canalicular membrane (90). Interaction of hormone with receptor activates pinocytosis and the formed vesicle is transported through the cytoplasm to the Golgi apparatus. Biochemical evidence from studies with isolated hepatocytes indicates that both receptor and insulin are internalized (1172). Light and electron microscopic observations suggest that the pinocytotic process is probably activated by high concentrations of hormone as grains visually appeared close to one pole of the membrane of the macropinocytotic vesicle (89, 90). Photoaffinity-labeling and receptor-specific antibodies have been used to characterize this receptor (548, 1290); however, its biological importance is not completely determined.

h. **OTHER CHEMICALS.** Additional receptors are involved in uptake of fatty acids (976), hemoglobin-haptoglobin (607), transcobalamin (848), and several hormones such as growth hormone (360), prolactin (121), estradiol (922), etc. A recent review discusses properties of these receptors, transmembrane movement of endogenous and exogenous compounds, and liver plasma membrane biogenesis (318).

2. *Intracellular Proteins.* a. **LIGANDIN.** In 1969, two proteins designated Y and Z were identified in rat liver



cytosol on the basis of their ability to bind organic anions (348, 728, 981). Y protein, quantitatively the more important protein, has been purified to homogeneity and found to bind various drugs, hormones, and metabolites (540). This protein was termed ligandin and proposed to be an important determinant of organic anion transfer from blood to liver. This hypothesis was based on the following indirect data. 1) A deficiency of ligandin in liver of newborn guinea pigs (728) and monkeys (729) was suggested to account for the observed neonatal unconjugated hyperbilirubinemia. Normalization of hepatic organic anion transport coincided with growth and the appearance of ligandin. 2) A phylogenetic study demonstrated that the elasmobranch bony fish and the gill-breathing mudpuppy have no detectable levels of ligandin, have only trace amounts of Z protein, and lack selective BSP uptake. All tested lung-breathing amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals have appreciable levels of Y and Z proteins and hepatic organic anion uptake (731). In addition, there is an apparent correlation between hepatic BSP uptake and content of soluble binding proteins. Furthermore, ligandin, which is undetectable in gill-breathing tadpoles, becomes detectable after metamorphosis to lung-breathing adult frogs (731). 3) The concentration of ligandin in rat liver increases after administration of phenobarbital, *trans*-stilbene oxide, or butylated hydroxyanisole and is associated with a concurrent enhancement of anion uptake (348, 429, 981). Pregnenolone-16 $\alpha$ -carbonitrile induces ligandin and doubles BSP and bilirubin binding (758). However, conflicting data indicate binding to ligandin is not the sole determinant of hepatic organic ion uptake. 1) Mutant Southdown sheep have impaired hepatic uptake of BSP, bilirubin, rose bengal, and indocyanine green yet have normal concentrations of the binding proteins of liver (217). 2) Novobiocin and probenecid interfere with the hepatic uptake mechanism but do not compete with bilirubin and BSP for the binding proteins (728). 3) Little correlation exists between the ability of microsomal enzyme inducers to enhance ligandin levels and the biliary excretion of chemicals (638). 4) Evans blue dye binds appreciably to ligandin *in vitro* but is not readily taken up by the hepatocytes (728). 5) Although ligandin is barely detectable in the liver of newborn guinea pigs, uptake of BSP on their second day of life is comparable to that observed in adults (1256). 6) Hepatic uptake is reduced in hypophysectomized and thyroidectomized rats although ligandin is increased (981). 7) *In vitro*, ligandin has a lower affinity for BSP and bilirubin than does albumin, yet these compounds are readily removed from albumin during hepatic uptake (364, 583, 1281).

More recent experiments demonstrate a decrease in bilirubin or DBSP efflux from liver after both phenobarbital-, nafenopin-, or thyroidectomy-induced increases in hepatic ligandin concentration (794, 1281, 1282). The role of ligandin in the transport of organic anions from

blood to bile is mainly limited to performing an intracellular binding function (586, 1279). Although no evidence suggests these proteins are responsible for recognition and uptake of organic anions from vascular space, binding to these proteins can reduce anion efflux into plasma.

However, an additional function of ligandin was discovered in 1973 when the BSP that bound to ligandin during gel filtration became conjugated to glutathione (GSH) (589). Subsequently, ligandin was demonstrated to be identical to GSH S-transferase B, one of six distinct GSH transferases in rat liver cytosol (450, 451). Recently it has been demonstrated that BSP binding to ligandin was not affected by the presence of bilirubin or indocyanine green; however, conjugation of BSP was significantly reduced by the latter anion (230). Results suggest the presence of catalytic and non-catalytic binding sites on ligandin. In fact, many organic anions including indocyanine green and bilirubin bind non-covalently to GSH transferases but are not conjugated (103, 584, 585, 601, 739, 1093).

Butylated hydroxyanisole and *trans*-stilbene oxide induce GSH S-transferase, increase hepatic ligandin content, and enhance the biliary excretion of BSP (429). These treatments did not enhance the biliary excretion of DBSP, a phthalein dye that binds to ligandin but is not conjugated with GSH. Thus, ligandin is more important as an enzyme than as a binding protein for the excretion of phthalein dyes. Also, the hepatic accumulation of biliary contrast agents does not correlate with binding to cytosolic proteins (738).

b. METALLOTHIONEIN (MT). MT is a small protein of 6600 daltons that contains approximately 30% cysteine and no cystine residues. MT does not contain any aromatic amino acids or histidine and hence does not absorb ultraviolet light at 280 nm. Absorption at 250 nm does occur and depends on the metal-mercaptide bond. If the metal-free protein, thionein, is prepared by dialyzing MT at a low pH or against ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA), this 250 nm absorption disappears (131, 147, 512, 573, 676, 678, 774).

The ability of MT to bind metals is due to the abundance of cysteinyl-free sulfhydryl groups. A stoichiometric relationship of three mercapto residues per metal ion exists. In normal animals, the major metal bound to hepatic MT is zinc (573, 574). Although numerous metals bind MT, their actual binding affinities have not yet been determined.

Concentration of MT in tissues can be increased by administration of metals such as zinc (288, 1117, 1242, 1271) and cadmium (288, 1072, 1242, 1272). In addition, MT can be induced in rat liver by food restriction (139), alkylating agents (677), stresses such as heat, cold, strenuous exercise, etc. (865), and bacterial infection (1108). MT concentration in the liver of hamsters was increased 40% to 80% by hydrocortisone and dexamethasone, and 700% and 2000% by zinc and cadmium, respectively

(655). Data suggest that stress-induced increases in MT concentration could be mediated by adrenal corticosteroids. MT induction by metals is probably not mediated via these steroid hormones since even very large doses do not induce MT to the same order of magnitude as these metals (655).

The physiological function of MT is not known but probably is important in the homeostasis of essential trace elements, such as zinc and possibly copper (131, 315, 656, 668, 778, 985, 986). The function most widely studied is the ability of MT to sequester metals and reduce their toxicity (605, 855, 1241, 1242) by binding metals. MT may increase their uptake into liver in a similar manner to that originally proposed for ligandin for the uptake of organic anions. Indirect support for this hypothesis is available from several studies. A large plasma to liver concentration ratio of about 30 for lead (665) may be due to its binding to MT. The major concentration gradient for copper is also from plasma to liver and appears to be bound intracellularly to a large nondialyzable or nondiffusible protein (628, 1169). The dominant concentration gradient for mercury and methylmercury is also from plasma to liver (639). Since these metals both bind to cytoplasmic MT and concentrate in liver, MT could facilitate hepatic uptake by sequestering the free metal upon entering the liver. However, pretreatment of rats with cadmium to induce MT does not enhance the net uptake of cadmium, lead, arsenic, manganese, copper, mercury, or zinc (649). Induction of MT decreases the biliary excretion of cadmium over 90%, excretion of copper, mercury, zinc, and silver about 60%, and that of lead 20% (179, 193, 649). MT has relatively little effect on the biliary excretion of arsenic, manganese, and methylmercury. These results suggest MT does not influence the plasma disappearance of metals but does cause intracellular sequestration and decreases their excretion into bile.

### E. Biliary Excretion

1. *Classification of Chemicals Excreted into Bile.* Compounds undergoing biliary excretion may be categorized into three classes based on their bile to plasma concentration ratios (135, 137). Class A substances have a ratio of approximately 1.0 and include Na<sup>+</sup>, K<sup>+</sup>, Cl<sup>-</sup>, and glucose. Class B compounds have a bile to plasma ratio usually between 10 and 1000. Examples are the bile acids, bilirubin, BSP and other dyes, and numerous xenobiotics. Class C substances have ratios less than 1.0 and include cholesterol, phospholipids, sucrose, albumin, and other macromolecules.

Most xenobiotics for which biliary excretion is an important route of elimination are class B compounds. Most of the remainder of the review will be concerned with class B compounds except for the next few paragraphs where the biliary excretion of class A and C compounds will be discussed.

Little is known about the mechanism by which com-

pounds of class A are excreted into bile. The distribution of cations in bile is similar to that in plasma as Na<sup>+</sup> ion dominates. Passage of sodium into bile may result from a passive response to actively secreted organic anions, predominantly bile acids, or the formation of the bile acid-independent fraction by active sodium ion transport. Potassium ion appears to reach bile only by passive diffusion (752) with two components: a rapid one compatible with the interstitial paracellular shunt and a slower part which may represent transcellular K<sup>+</sup> movement (409). Chloride ion concentration in bile is influenced by bile acid secretion (74). Species with high bile acid secretion rates such as dogs (1253), rabbits (1026), and man (938) have low biliary chloride concentrations. Bicarbonate ion excretion is influenced by several gastrointestinal hormones and neural stimuli, and a postulated canalicular bicarbonate pump (465) may be partly responsible for elaboration of the bile acid-independent fraction of canalicular bile.

Several lipid-insoluble saccharides are excreted in bile at a concentration similar to or less than that in plasma. In the rat, the bile to plasma ratios of inulin, sucrose, and mannitol are 0.1, 0.2, and 1.1, respectively, which suggests a possible relationship between biliary excretion and molecular size (1030). Biliary lipids are also present in bile at concentrations lower than in plasma, but the origin of these phospholipids and cholesterol is not clear. The role of microtubules and vesicular transport in the biliary excretion of lipids is not known with certainty (1130). However, the canalicular membrane is devoid of the enzymes required for de novo synthesis of lecithin (420). Since microtubule inhibitors decrease lipid excretion into bile and since the biosynthetic enzymes are present in the smooth endoplasmic reticulum, the microtubular network appears responsible for translocation of the lipids from their site of synthesis to the canalicular membrane for excretion (419). Whether biliary lipoproteins analogous to those present in plasma are involved in biliary lipid excretion is still controversial (773, 1040).

The origin of cholesterol in bile is unclear. The importance of phospholipids and bile salts in maintaining cholesterol solubility is discussed earlier in the section on cholelithiasis. The rate of excretion of biliary cholesterol appears independent of the rate of cholesterol synthesis, the level of hepatic cholesterol ester pool, and the amount of cholesterol absorbed from the diet (1190, 1191). In the rat, biliary cholesterol is derived from three sources: 70% from plasma cholesterol, 20% newly synthesized, and 10% from an unidentified hepatic microsomal subpool (420, 753, 1048).

Another major driving force of phospholipid and cholesterol excretion into bile is bile acid secretion (420). Interruption of the enterohepatic circulation of bile acids leads to a substantial decline in lipid secretion in man (1040), rhesus monkey (260, 262), dogs (1157), and rats (461), while cholesterol excretion is less affected (1040).

Studies in healthy human volunteers indicate cholesterol and phospholipid outputs are linearly coupled to bile acid secretion before and after endogenous bile acid pool replacement (1022). The rapidity of the changes in cholesterol and phospholipid secretion suggests that secretory coupling of biliary lipids is altered and not biosynthetic or absorptive mechanisms. Administration of the choleric BSP causes a dose-related decrease in cholesterol and phospholipid secretion but does not affect bile acid excretion in dogs and humans (1070). It is apparent that complex physiological and physicochemical relationships must be understood before a definitive mechanistic model can be elucidated.

Other class C compounds whose excretion is poorly understood include albumin, immunoglobulins, and other macromolecules. Approximately 80% of the protein appearing in bile is derived from serum proteins and the remainder are bile-specific proteins (257, 258). In rat and mouse bile, few extrinsic canalicular enzymes (alkaline phosphatase, 5'-nucleotidase, and leucine naphthylamidase) can be found in bile under normal conditions (316). These are increased during bile acid-induced choleresis, perhaps by detergent action of bile acids (501). Rabbit, rat, and guinea pig have detectable activities of alkaline phosphatase, alkaline phosphodiesterase, leucine naphthylamidase, and lactate dehydrogenase in bile (207, 394). In addition, the intact trypsin- $\alpha_2$ -macroglobulin complex and some degradation products are excreted into bile by rats (414).

Transfer of proteins into bile is thought to occur by bulk movement via micropinocytosis or by selective passage through a sieving mechanism. Amylase and ribonuclease A in the rabbit (1001) and other  $^{35}\text{S}$ -labeled pancreatic proteins in the guinea pig (998) are also secreted into bile in significant amounts. Recent studies (977) demonstrate that horseradish peroxidase 1) remains inside membrane-limited compartments with hepatocytes, 2) reaches the pericanalicular cytoplasm via vesicles 100 nm or larger in diameter, and 3) subsequently enters the biliary space by exocytosis. Similar kinetic constants for hepatic uptake and biliary excretion have been determined for four other glycoproteins (1174).

A significant amount of the plasma-membrane-bound enzyme, 5'-nucleotidase, is found in bile (824), suggesting that membrane fragments may break off of the vesicular membrane or the adjacent canalicular membrane during exocytosis. However, the relevance of this mechanism to production of bile or the excretion of xenobiotics is not known. Insulin is another protein that normally is in bile in lower concentrations than those found in plasma (50, 477). Insulin uptake occurs by pinocytosis of receptor-bound hormone followed by intralysosomal degradation (1171).

A technique combining cytochemistry with quantitative autoradiography (564, 977) has demonstrated that within 20 minutes of injection into the portal vein, in-

ulin and/or metabolites appear in bile, while horseradish peroxidase appears later. Rates of decline in appearance in bile are similar with both proteins. Thus, there seems to be a rapid-transport pathway that moves substances from the sinusoidal surface directly into bile and a slower pathway involving lysosomal complexes. Both proteins have a vesicular transport mechanism for secretion into bile.

Recently, vesicular transport has also been demonstrated for dimeric immunoglobulin A (IgA) and an antigenically distinct glycoprotein called secretory component (347, 825-829, 977, 978, 983, 1140). Additional data suggest that secretory component is the sinusoidal membrane receptor for dimeric IgA (883) (see section VI D f). Uptake of IgA has also been studied in cultured hepatocytes of the rat (562). These proteins are encapsulated by endocytosis and, hence, the vesicles contain associated plasma membrane proteins. During fusion with the canalicular membrane, portions of these vesicles can break off and deposit secretory component and 5'-nucleotidase into bile along with vesicular contents (883). Since the glycoprotein is found free in bile, there may be more receptors than IgA molecules (347). Immunoglobulin transport from plasma to bile is very rapid (884). IgA and IgM are concentrated in bile while IgG, albumin, and transferrin are not (235). Endogenous IgA appears to concentrate in bile ducts rather than hepatocytes (235). At present it is unclear how other proteins such as albumin enter bile; however, such a mechanism may be responsible for the appearance of lysosomal enzymes in bile (214). In contrast to most proteins, IgA and haptoglobin are concentrated in bile of rats and rabbits and have bile to plasma concentration ratios greater than 1.0 (483, 725).

2. *Biliary Excretion of Cholephils.* Brauer's class B compounds have a bile to plasma concentration ratio greater than 1 and are referred to as cholephils. Biliary excretion is most likely to be an important route of excretion for these compounds since they are concentrated in bile. However, for compounds that have long biological half-lives, such as methylmercury, bile can be an important route of excretion even though it is not concentrated in bile (640). Class B compounds are thought to be excreted by active, carrier-mediated transport systems (640, 648, 1029). Classic properties of active transport are: 1) movement of the chemical against a concentration or electrochemical gradient; 2) substrate saturation such that a  $T_m$  is exhibited; 3) selectivity of chemical structure; and 4) the system requires expenditure of energy. Although class B substances are considered to be actively transported, these four criteria are rarely, if ever, met. Use of inhibitors such as dinitrophenol, ouabain, and hypothermia to decrease biliary excretion of a test compound has not consistently determined whether a substance is actively transported by the liver. The third criterion is seldom met, but some specific

examples will be discussed later. However, competition between chemicals for biliary excretion is usually less marked compared to active transport systems in kidney and intestine. The first two criteria are most commonly involved to define whether a compound is actively transported (648, 1107).

Transport maxima and high bile to plasma concentration ratios have been demonstrated for numerous compounds, but these are often ambiguous. Since many compounds undergo biotransformation during passage from plasma to bile,  $T_m$ 's may reflect the rate of metabolism and not excretion. Misinterpretation of bile to plasma ratios can occur if a compound binds to intracellular proteins such as ligandin, intrabiliary proteins, or is sequestered within micelles. It is difficult to determine with certainty that any chemical is actively transported into bile. The strongest evidence available, however, is presence of a higher concentration in bile than in plasma (1029).

Biliary excretion of endogenous and exogenous compounds requires transport into and out of the liver. A bile-to-plasma concentration ratio greater than 1.0 could result from several possible transfer mechanisms. A compound may penetrate the sinusoidal membrane by passive diffusion and enter bile by an active process; the substance could be transported actively into the hepatocyte and simply diffuse across the canalicular membrane; or the chemical could undergo active transport across both the sinusoidal and canalicular membranes. It should be noted that techniques are available for selective investigation of hepatic uptake (into intact liver, isolated perfused liver, isolated hepatocytes, isolated plasma membrane vesicles) but not the excretory transport step. When measuring the biliary excretion of a compound, the overall production of hepatobiliary transport (uptake plus canalicular transport) is quantified. With our present state of knowledge, compounds can be classified into groups according to their overall hepatobiliary transport characteristics without knowing the cellular mechanism of transfer at each site. In spite of these limitations, it is thought that at least five transport systems are involved in excretion of chemicals by the liver. There are transport mechanisms for: 1) organic anions such as BSP, indocyanine green, bilirubin, and glucuronide conjugates; 2) bile acids; 3) organic cations with procainamide ethobromide (PAEB) as the prototype; 4) neutral organic compounds such as ouabain; and 5) metals (32, 644, 648, 970).

a. **ORGANIC ANIONS.** Most compounds are conjugated before excretion into bile; the most common pathways are conjugation with glutathione and glucuronic acid. Many compounds are excreted into bile at a higher rate after conjugation presumably because it increases molecular weight and polarity and decreases the toxicity of most chemicals.

i. *Conjugated with glutathione (GSH).* Chemicals are

conjugated with the tripeptide GSH by a family of enzymes referred to as GSH S-transferases (549). These GSH derivatives are subsequently cleaved enzymatically to cysteine derivatives that may be acetylated to form the mercapturic acid.

GSH and oxidized glutathione (GSSG) are also found in bile. The concentration of GSH is lower in bile than liver, and GSSG is higher in bile than liver. However, the concentration of GSH is much higher than GSSG in bile. Elimination of GSH and GSSG may be important in regulating hepatic levels of GSH, but the mechanism for its secretion into bile is not known (23, 24, 141, 289, 587, 588).

Sulfobromophthalein (BSP). BSP has been used widely as a measure of hepatic function and is excreted into bile predominantly as the GSH adduct (209). Conjugation with GSH facilitates BSP excretion into bile by producing BSP-GSH which has a higher excretion rate than BSP (71, 340, 423, 1255) and by eliminating the parent compound which is an inhibitor of BSP-GSH excretion (424). However, the rates of excretion of BSP and its metabolites into bile are much slower than their uptake into liver. This accumulation of BSP in liver, referred to as storage (1249, 1252), results from a difference in the rate of uptake into the liver and excretion into bile, not the amount of ligandin (153). However, there is also an appreciable amount of extrahepatic distribution (642). The importance of GSH conjugation on biliary excretion of BSP has been demonstrated by its decreased secretion into bile when GSH levels have been decreased by feeding a protein-free diet (208), by administration of iodomethane (946), or by diethyl maleate (1204) and by inhibiting GSH S-transferase by benziodarone (945) or various organic analogs of mercury, tin, and lead (152).

Recent evidence further emphasizes the importance of GSH conjugation in the biliary excretion of BSP (429). Butylated hydroxyanisole and *trans*-stilbene oxide induce GSH S-transferase, increase hepatic ligandin content, and enhance the biliary excretion of BSP. However, these inducers do not increase the biliary excretion of BSP-GSH. Similar conclusions result from studies in vitamin A-deficient rats (1087).

The  $T_m$  for biliary excretion of BSP and its conjugates is around 1.3 mg/min/kg in rats (479, 660, 1255), 1.3 mg/min/kg in rabbits (660), 0.14 mg/min/kg in dogs (71, 660, 878), and 9.5  $\mu$ mol/min in man (1252) when BSP is administered. Since BSP produces cholestasis at high doses, it is difficult to measure a true  $T_m$  (250). Studies in isolated hepatocytes indicate that transport of BSP-GSH into bile is energy dependent and saturable (1056). Maximal velocity of excretion was 60% of that for uptake and 20% of the maximal velocity of conjugation which suggests that excretion may be the rate-limiting step in BSP elimination into bile.

Others. Ethacrynic acid, a potent and effective diuretic, is also excreted into bile after conjugation with

GSH (178, 658). About 60% is excreted into bile within 4 hours of administration. Pretreatment of rats with phenobarbital increases and diethyl maleate decreases the conjugation of ethacrynic acid with GSH, producing similar changes in its biliary excretion (1229). Diethyl maleate, a compound that is used experimentally to lower liver GSH levels, is conjugated with GSH prior to excretion into bile (73).

ii. *Conjugated with glucuronic acid.* The most common synthetic reaction produces glucuronic acid derivatives of various substrates, which can be either foreign or endogenous compounds such as steroids or bilirubin. The enzymes carrying out these reactions are UDP-glucuronosyltransferases, and the co-substrate is UDP-glucuronic acid. Accumulating evidence supports the hypothesis that there are multiple forms of this transferase, which differ in preferred substrate and inducibility (280, 1233).

**Bilirubin.** In contrast to BSP, which is excreted predominantly as the GSH conjugate, bilirubin is excreted as several metabolites (335, 691) but the most common are glucuronide conjugates. Excretion of bilirubin into bile occurs after conjugation with either one (bilirubin monoglucuronide, BMG) or two (bilirubin diglucuronide, BDG) molecules of glucuronic acid (210, 399, 1241). BMG formation is catalyzed by the inducible microsomal enzyme UDP-glucuronosyltransferase (280, 590). BDG has been suggested to be produced by a transglucuronidation reaction catalyzed by bilirubin glucuronoside glucuronosyltransferase (183, 186, 187), although other data suggest BDG is formed by the microsomal system (110, 111). Studies on these two enzymes have been reviewed (185, 590, 1041).

In most species, bilirubin exists in bile mainly as the mono- and the diglucuronides. Bilirubin excretion into bile is almost totally dependent upon conjugation as evidenced by the inability of the Gunn rat, which lacks bilirubin UDP-glucuronosyltransferase, to conjugate and excrete bilirubin while having normal  $T_m$  for conjugated bilirubin (42). In addition, the amount of BMG in bile is higher and BDG lower in conditions associated with deficient UDP-glucuronosyltransferase activity, e.g. Crigler-Najjar disease, Gilbert's syndrome, and heterozygous Gunn rats (111, 335, 397, 403, 1237). The excretory transport maximum for bilirubin is also species-dependent ranging from 39  $\mu\text{g}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$  in man (1194) to 610 in rats (991, 1243). These large species variations may relate to differences in hepatic conjugating capacity, such as the activity of bilirubin UDP-glucuronosyltransferase (335, 433). Maximal biliary secretion of bilirubin into bile appears to be very dependent on UDP-glucuronosyltransferase activity (1203). Moreover, depletion of UDP-glucuronic acid in liver by galactosamine or diethyl ether decreases the conjugation and biliary excretion of bilirubin (433).

Bilirubin is not a choleric. In sheep during a state of maximal bilirubin excretion, bile flow rate and osmolar-

ity are not changed while biliary sodium ion concentration increases (77). Since no change in osmolarity or bile flow occurs with the increased biliary bilirubin concentration, bilirubin may associate with mixed micelles or form molecular aggregates and mask the osmotic activity of the biliary bilirubin.

**Others.** Many, if not most, compounds excreted into bile are conjugated with glucuronic acid. Examples include the uricosuric agent probenecid (439), the biliary contrast agent iopanoate (211-213), the synthetic steroid, diethylstilbestrol (627), the disinfectant hexachlorophene (379, 653), the anticonvulsant valproic acid (252, 253, 1234, 1236), the dyes phenolphthalein (199), and phenolsulfonphthalein (phenol red) (467), fluorescein dyes (1240), vitamin D<sub>3</sub> (745), and thyroxine (349, 395).

The importance of glucuronidation on the biliary excretion of a number of compounds is emphasized by the alteration in biliary excretion that is observed after an increase or decrease in glucuronidation. Induction of UDP-glucuronosyltransferase by phenobarbital or 3-methylcholanthrene has been shown to enhance the biliary excretion of thyroxine (349), iopanoate (211), diethylstilbestrol (627), hexachlorophene (653), and valproic acid (1236). However, enhancement of the glucuronidation of morphine does not increase its excretion into bile (373, 534, 910). Depression of UDP-glucuronic acid concentrations by galactosamine or diethyl ether has been shown to decrease the glucuronidation and biliary excretion of diethylstilbestrol, valproic acid, phenolphthalein, and iopanoic acid (213, 433, 1236).

iii. *Not Biotransformed.* Several chemicals are excreted into bile without prior biotransformation. Some of the chemicals have been used diagnostically to determine hepatic excretory function in man similar to that for BSP. These chemicals have been extremely useful in dissecting the effect that physiological, pharmacological, and toxicological factors have on hepatic excretory function.

**Indocyanine Green (ICG).** ICG is used clinically to measure both cardiac output and hepatic function and is not biotransformed before excretion (181, 521, 1248). Clearance of ICG from plasma, in contrast to BSP, fits a one-compartment open model and its half-life is very dependent on dose (664) in the first 20 minutes after administration. However, at longer times, ICG elimination is non-linear (1141). It is difficult to obtain a  $T_m$  for ICG because of its cholestatic properties (507, 508, 664). Removal of ICG from plasma (3.8  $\mu\text{moles}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$ ) is much faster than its excretion into bile (0.244  $\mu\text{moles}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$ ) in rats (901, 902). Biliary excretion of ICG and rose bengal depends on bile acid excretion (427).

**Rose Bengal.** Rose bengal has been used clinically to measure hepatic function and is not biotransformed before excretion (343, 559, 690). It exhibits a rapid and biphasic disappearance from plasma (646). The rates are similar between 0.01 and 10 mg/kg in the rat but slower

at 100 mg/kg. Rose bengal concentrates in liver and appears to be bound to proteins other than ligandin (646). The transport maximum for rose bengal into bile of rats is 100  $\mu\text{g}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$  (646).

Phenol-3,6-Dibromophthalein Disulfonate (DBSP). DBSP is the dibrominated analog of BSP, is not conjugated before excretion (553), and is handled by the liver in a similar manner to BSP. The disappearance from plasma, storage in liver, and excretion into bile are similar for both dyes in rats, rabbits, and dogs (662). In humans, the plasma disappearance and storage of DBSP is somewhat greater than for BSP but the  $T_m$  for excretion is similar (249).

Others. Several other dyes are excreted into bile without being biotransformed. Amaranth (red dye no. 2) (531, 1012, 1018), eosine (1040), bromocresol green (200), chlorothiazide (466), succinylsulfathiazole (809), and tartrazine (100) are pertinent examples. However, more recent evidence indicates amaranth does undergo biotransformation (1012). Further work is needed to ascertain whether any other of these "non-metabolized" chemicals are biotransformed as well.

b. BILE ACIDS. Originally, a common carrier system was postulated for the biliary excretion of all organic acids. Then, Alpert et al. (32) demonstrated that mutant Corriedale sheep were unable to excrete BSP, iopanoic acid, phylloerythrin, conjugated bilirubin, etc. but eliminated bile acids normally via the bile. Although incapable of excreting BSP-GSH, Corriedale sheep secrete unconjugated BSP at a lower rate than normal ewes (76). Further support for independent carriers was obtained by the observations that phenobarbital pretreatment enhances the biliary excretion of BSP and DBSP but not taurocholate (620, 663, 900), that indocyanine green has no effect on taurocholate uptake into the isolated perfused rat liver (902), and that nafenopin decreases the biliary excretion of organic acids but not bile acids (790, 791).

Within the hepatocyte, bile acids are largely bound to cytosolic proteins and subcellular organelles with 1% to 10% free in the cytosol (1145, 1146). The rate-limiting step in the excretion of bile acids (393, 398, 970) is their transport across the canalicular membrane which appears to be a saturable process and is characterized by a  $T_m$  under steady-state conditions (obtained by stepwise increased infusions of bile acids). Reported  $T_m$  values for taurocholate are 14.2  $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$  in sheep (473), 8.5  $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$  in dogs (874), and 13  $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$  in rats (14, 398, 904). Biliary transport is more efficient for conjugated bile acids than unconjugated analogs, and for trihydroxy bile acids than that of dihydroxy bile acids (971).

However, maximal bile acid secretion for individual bile acids also depends on the toxicity of each acid. Recent data obtained in rats indicate the maximal secretion rate decreases as the toxicity of the bile acid in-

creases (462). Maximal excretion of nontoxic taurochenodeoxycholate was about 55  $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$  or 2.5 times higher than that of taurocholate. Similar results have been observed by others (264, 611).

Bile acid transport depends on maintenance of normal membrane structure in that a decrease in fluidity can reduce the transport maximum. Both periportal and centrilobular hepatocytes can transport bile acids and other organic anions (441, 1120); however, the capacity of the centrilobular cells is higher than the periportal cells (1120). Adaptation to selective biliary obstruction and intraduodenal infusion of taurocholate (14) or its repeated oral administration (1092, 1235) is manifested as an increase in taurocholate excretory transport. This is accompanied by stimulated synthesis of bile acid plasma membrane binding protein which can be blocked indirectly by cycloheximide (398) and directly by binding studies (1092). The transport processes for bile acid uptake and secretion are efficient and rapid allowing an effective enterohepatic circulation of bile acids while protecting the peripheral circulation from high bile acid concentrations and removing the need for a major storage protein.

c. ORGANIC CATIONS. Evidence for an active excretory system at the canalicular membrane for organic bases is the reported bile/liver ratios of 10 or more for total PAEB in the rat (518, 792, 835, 1031). Further studies indicate that several organic bases which are excreted into bile inhibit PAEB secretion. Taurocholate, but not dehydrocholate, enhances PAEB elimination into bile, but PAEB does not affect taurocholate excretion (694, 1031). These effects are not due to binding to micelles (1213) or choleresis (694). Isopropamide iodide decreases the liver/plasma ratio for PAEB and its biliary excretion (835). Similar results have been observed for acetyl procainamide ethobromide (acetyl-PAEB) (837) which has saturable uptake and excretory processes (834). Additional studies indicate that retrograde intrabiliary infusion of the fluorescent probe *N*-[*p*-(2-benzimidazolyl)phenyl] maleimide reduces the biliary concentration of acetyl-PAEB by 50% (836). These data suggest that binding to exposed sulfhydryl groups on the carrier protein can inhibit cation excretion into bile. Comparison of liver/plasma concentration ratios of PAEB and acetyl-PAEB after administration of sulfhydryl reagents intraportally or via intrabiliary infusion indicates that *p*-chloromercuribenzoate and iodoacetamide inhibit hepatic uptake of the cations, *N*-ethylmaleimide decreases only excretion, and *p*-chloromercury phenyl sulfonic acid inhibits both steps. Thus, these authors suggest that exposed sulfhydryl groups appear to be present on both uptake and excretory transport systems (833).

The structural requirements for transport by the organic cation pathway are a basic amino group on one side of the molecule and one or more nonpolar groups on the other side making the molecule amphipathic (486,

640). Several bis-onium compounds including *d*-tubocurarine and hexafluorenum appear to be actively transported from plasma to bile (787, 788, 792, 793, 796–798). In spite of marked physicochemical differences, thiazinamium and its sulfoxide analog differ slightly in hepatic uptake and biliary excretion (842). A similar mechanism has been determined for the tertiary amine chloroguanide-triazine in vivo (839). However, transport of bisquaternary compounds is decreased by K-strophanthoside while that of PAEB is not (792). This effect is due to depression of uptake by interfering with binding of the bisquaternary compounds to intracellular organelles (788, 793, 798).

d. NEUTRAL ORGANIC CHEMICALS. Two classes of chemicals eliminated via this system are monosaccharides and neutral steroids. Under normal physiological conditions few mono- or oligosaccharides enter bile. Glucose appears in human bile only when the plasma glucose concentration exceeds 350 mg/dl (970). In the rat, glucose is reabsorbed from bile into liver and little is found in bile until the plasma glucose concentration exceeds 280 mg/dl. This can be blocked by phlorizin, a specific inhibitor of glucose transport (447). Glucose reabsorption from the biliary tree has also been demonstrated by using the retrograde intrabiliary injection technique (872). However, localization of this specific transport system which prevents loss of glucose via the bile remains to be established. No sugar is known to be concentrated in bile.

The second class of neutral compounds include the endogenous steroid hormones and cardiac glycosides. The prototype of this class is ouabain. This cardiac glycoside is not biotransformed (219, 696) before its excretion. Ouabain also does not appear to be bound to components of liver homogenates (696) or ligandin in particular (638). The bile/liver concentration ratio 20 minutes after administration is 70 which suggests ouabain may be excreted by an active mechanism (1016). Although ouabain is tightly bound to micelles, taurocholate administration does not affect its biliary excretion and cannot account for the concentrative accumulation of ouabain in bile (1216).

Biliary excretion of endogenous estrogens varies from 20% to 60% depending upon the species (15). Although the mechanism for steroid excretion in humans is not clear, these hormones are conjugated with glucuronic acid, sulfate, or glucosiduronate (698, 1168) and thus might be excreted by the organic anion transport system. However, in rats steroids appear to be excreted by the same pathway as ouabain (412, 696). Digoxin and digitoxin may be excreted by the ouabain pathway; however, since they are glucuronidated before excretion they are probably secreted by the organic acid pathway.

e. METALS. Excretion of heavy metals into bile has been studied systematically only in the past decade and has been reviewed (644). Although many metals are

retained in the body for a longer time than most organic compounds, some metals including lead, manganese, mercury, copper, zinc, and cadmium are excreted into bile to a greater extent than into urine.

i. *Copper*. More work has been conducted on the hepatic disposition of copper than with the other metals because of attempts to characterize abnormal metabolism in patients with Wilson's disease (hepatolenticular degeneration) (1019, 1136). The main route for excretion of copper is via the feces. Rats excrete 20% of an intravenous dose of copper in the feces within 24 hours and only 6% in urine (888). When administered to humans, 40% is found in the stool within 2 weeks and less than 1% in urine (396, 882).

When administered to an animal, copper is rapidly taken up into the liver by a mechanism that does not appear to be saturable (405). Copper can then be excreted into bile (191, 888), stored in liver (890), or integrated into ceruloplasmin and secreted into plasma (890, 891).

The excretion of copper into bile has been shown to increase with increasing dose in the rat up to 1 mg/kg but not at 3 mg/kg (628). This suggests that a transport maximum for copper has been reached, although excretion may be limited by copper toxicity since 3 mg/kg is near the lethal dose in this species. Copper is excreted into bile against a concentration gradient with a bile/plasma ratio of 20. The major concentration gradient for copper is from plasma to liver while the liver to bile gradient is quite small (628). The copper excreted into bile of rats is associated with two different molecular weight substances (194). In humans, binding to a 5000 dalton protein is thought to reduce its enterohepatic circulation (369).

ii. *Lead*. Lead is removed from the body at a slow rate. When lead was administered intravenously to sheep, only 5% to 8% of the dose was excreted over a 5-day period; 83% of the eliminated metal was found in feces and 17% in urine (112). When lead was similarly administered to rats and excreta collected for 14 days, 50% of the dose was excreted, of which 70% was found in feces and 30% in urine (167). The rate of excretion of lead into feces is highest during the first day after administration and decreases rapidly thereafter (167, 665); over 20% is excreted into the feces within the first 24-hours, 9% within the second 24-hour period, with a rapid decline to minimal amounts thereafter (665). Most of the lead excreted into feces is via bile (112, 190). In humans, urine appears to be a more important route of elimination (596).

An apparent transport maximum for excretion of lead into bile (1.2  $\mu\text{g}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$ ) suggests that lead may be actively transported (665). The bile/plasma concentration gradient of 100 for lead is largely due to the gradient from plasma to liver, which is 30, and partially due to the gradient from liver to bile. However, the large bile/plasma concentration gradient could be due to binding of lead to cellular or biliary components, since lead is

bound to proteins of varying molecular weights in bile (195). Liver proteins have the highest, plasma intermediate, and bile the lowest affinity for lead. This suggests that lead does not passively move from plasma to bile because of a higher affinity for bile than for plasma but rather that excretion most likely is carrier mediated (665).

*iii. Manganese.* In contrast to most other metals, manganese is rapidly excreted from the body via the gastrointestinal tract with only trace amounts in the urine. Greenberg and colleagues (415, 416) found that 90% of a 1-mg dose injected intraperitoneally into rats was in the feces within 3 days. When manganese was administered intravenously to rats, over 50% of the dose was in feces within the first 24 hours and 17% within the second 24-hour period (634). About 40% of the manganese is removed by a single pass through the liver which is a very significant first-pass effect (1175). Additional work indicates the biliary excretion of manganese depends partly on lysosomal uptake and release (1154).

There is an overall bile/plasma concentration ratio greater than 150 for manganese. Approximately two thirds of this overall gradient is due to the gradient from plasma to liver, and about one third from liver to bile. The large bile/plasma concentration ratio is difficult to interpret because much of the manganese is not present as the free cation in bile (634, 1180). Tichy and Cikrt (1180) suggested that manganese may be transferred passively from plasma to bile and then undergoes a non-enzymatic complex formation in bile. Later studies indicate the metal is bound to bile pigments (1181). However, plasma and liver contain ligands with a higher affinity for manganese than bile (634). Thus it would appear that manganese is not transferred from plasma to bile by a passive mechanism, but rather by an active one. About 35% of excreted manganese undergoes enterohepatic circulation (191).

*iv. Arsenic.* Arsenic is slowly eliminated from the body as are most metals. When arsenic trichloride was administered intravenously to rats, 13% was excreted the first day and only an additional 7% in the next 6 days. Of that excreted in the first day, 60% was eliminated in urine and 40% in feces (633). The concentration of arsenic is 600-times higher in bile than plasma. The gradients from plasma to liver and from liver to bile are greater than one, the latter usually being the larger ratio. This high concentration of arsenic in bile is not due to a higher affinity of arsenic for macromolecules in bile than in liver because macromolecules in bile have little or no affinity for arsenic whereas the liver does (633). The high bile/plasma concentration ratio suggests that arsenic is excreted into bile by an active transport system, although no transport maximum has been demonstrated.

*v. Mercury.* The fecal route appears to be more important than the urinary route for excreting inorganic or organic mercurial compounds in rats. No transport maximum

for inorganic mercury appears to exist; as the dose of mercuric chloride is increased there is a proportional increase in its excretion into the bile (639). Mercury is the first metal discussed in this review that is not considered a class B compound. Concentration of mercury in liver is slightly higher and that in bile is about one-fourth that in plasma. Mercury is bound to large molecular weight proteins in bile (471) and about 20% undergoes enterohepatic circulation (191). Recent evidence indicates mercury is excreted into bile with GSH but as GSH auto-oxidizes to GSSG, the metal associates with higher molecular weight proteins (63).

The biliary excretion of methylmercury, like mercuric chloride, is not dose-dependent (639, 857). Bile/plasma concentration ratio after methylmercury chloride is about 10 and is due to the higher concentration of methylmercury in liver than plasma (639, 857). The concentration of methylmercury is considerably less in bile than in liver (639). Most of the mercury in bile is bound to proteins and amino acids (857) after it is excreted as methylmercury glutathione (62, 485, 858, 880).

*vi. Cadmium.* The major route of excretion of cadmium is fecal (148, 170, 196, 234, 659, 863). Biliary excretion is apparently more important than urinary excretion for cadmium intoxication even in long-term exposure to rats and humans (298). The concentration of cadmium in liver is 150 to 800 times higher than in plasma (659). This is most likely due to saturation of cadmium binding to metallothionein at higher doses. The percent of cadmium excreted into bile is related to dose but opposite to that observed for most chemicals secreted into bile; at higher doses a higher percentage is excreted into bile (179, 180, 659). Thus the bile/plasma ratio increases as the dose increases: the bile/plasma ratio is 2.5 at 0.1 mg/kg and 130 at 3.0 mg/kg (659). The concentration of cadmium in bile is actually lower than in liver. Sephadex gel chromatography studies demonstrate that cadmium in bile is not bound to large macromolecules (471, 676) but is excreted as a low molecular weight compound, perhaps complexed with glutathione (180).

*vii. Other Metals.* The major route of excretion for zinc is fecal with little being excreted into urine (1082, 1122). The main pathway is not via bile but appears to be across the intestinal wall (680, 802, 810, 1201).

The importance of the oxidation state of a metal on its excretion has been demonstrated for tin (481). While bile is not the major route for excretion of any form of tin, it has been shown that divalent tin is excreted into bile while quadravalent tin is not.

About 70% of silver is excreted into bile and 1% in urine within 4 days of administration (652). Its concentration in bile is about 20 times higher than in plasma. Concentration gradient for silver from plasma to liver is about equal to that from liver to bile. No transport maximum is demonstrable.



Beryllium is also excreted into bile, but urine appears to be important (192). Cobalt is also preferentially eliminated via the urine, but the fraction excreted into bile increases with dose (198).

*viii. Role of Glutathione in Metal Excretion.* Methylmercury, copper, silver, and zinc are excreted into bile via a proposed mechanism where GSH is the carrier molecule (26–28, 880, 963). High concentrations of GSH are found in rat bile (1 to 3 mM) and the metal-GSH stability constants are very high (silver,  $K=10^{15}$ ; methylmercury,  $K=10^{15.9}$ ). Infusion of GSH enhances the biliary excretion of methylmercury (763). Gel filtration studies suggest that the silver ion in bile is predominantly found in a 1:1 complex with GSH and in some polynuclear complexes with GSH or biliary proteins. Pretreatment of rats with either diethyl maleate or selenite, depleters of GSH (511, 967), inhibits the biliary excretion of copper (26), silver (27), methylmercury (29, 30), and zinc (28). Administration of BSP or indocyanine green, which bind to ligandin, decreases the biliary excretion of methylmercury while bilirubin has no effect (764). These data suggest that glutathione conjugation may be important in the biliary excretion of some metals.

## VII. Factors Influencing Hepatobiliary Transport

### A. Physicochemical Characteristics of Chemicals Excreted into Bile

*1. Polarity and Molecular Size.* Two physicochemical factors, polarity and molecular weight, can influence the biliary excretion of a compound (1107). Presence of a strongly polar group or potentially ionizable moiety on a molecule augments biliary excretion. This polar group may be part of the parent molecule or acquired by biotransformation. Conjugations with glucuronic acid, sulfate, glutathione, glycine, and taurine are particularly significant in adding polar groups. Such moieties allow a molecule to exist at physiological pH as a water soluble anion. There is no charged center on the cardiac glycosides and no apparent correlation between polarity of the glycosides and biliary excretion in rats, dogs, rabbits (1016), or guinea pigs (777). However, presence of one or more water-soluble sugar residues can compensate for the lack of a charged moiety and facilitate excretion. Many drugs excreted into bile are eliminated in the form of metabolites. In essence, biotransformation (notably conjugation) augments the biliary excretion by introducing a strong polar center into the molecule and by increasing the compound's molecular weight (1107).

Brauer (135) noted that substances which are highly concentrated in bile are usually organic carboxylic acids with molecular weights greater than 300. Sperber (1115) stated that the compounds efficiently secreted by the renal tubules have low molecular weights (200 to 400), whereas chemicals excreted into bile are larger (molecular weight greater than 400). Studies comparing series of

monocyclic benzene derivatives (8), bi- and triphenyls (808), and sulfonamides (809) indicate compounds whose molecular weights exceed a threshold of  $325 \pm 50$  are excreted in appreciable quantities into bile. Threshold molecular weights for biliary excretion in the guinea pig, rabbit, and man are 400, 475, and 500, respectively. Excretion occurs mainly via the bile for xenobiotics with molecular weights greater than 850 (487). Above these thresholds, no relationship exists between the extent of biliary excretion and molecular weight (488, 489). Comparison of the excretion of monoquaternary ammonium cations in bile by rat, rabbit, and guinea pig indicate that molecular weight may not be important in organic cation excretion (516).

*2. Plasma Protein Binding.* Solutes destined for hepatic metabolism and/or excretion commonly bind to albumin in the circulation and hence, have smaller volumes of distribution. Familiar examples include bile acids, bilirubin, sulfobromophthalein, indocyanine green, and many drugs. Although important in transporting chemicals to the liver, albumin does not play an important role in hepatic extraction or biliary elimination (400, 794, 1038, 1281, 1282). Most chemicals excreted into bile are highly bound to plasma proteins. How free solute becomes available to the cell surface, however, is not clear. The conventional view is that spontaneous dissociation of the albumin-ligand complex allows the liver to remove much more solute than is free in the circulation. For many solutes, however, the affinity for albumin and/or the hepatic extraction fraction is so high that it is difficult to believe that spontaneous dissociation is the only mechanism. For example, less than 1% of serum bilirubin is free in the peripheral circulation, but its hepatic extraction is at least an order of magnitude higher.

Forker and colleagues recently reported that perfused rat livers remove taurocholate (357) and rose bengal (358) substantially faster than can be accounted for by the concentration of free bile acid or rose bengal in the perfusate. Both studies demonstrate that increasing the perfusate albumin concentration leads to a reduction in the extraction fraction that is much less than that predicted by equilibrium binding measured *in vitro*. Thus it appears that liver cells enjoy a special mechanism for enhancing the dissociation of ligands from albumin and that the release mechanism has a limited capacity.

### B. Biological Factors Influencing Biliary Excretion of Xenobiotics

*1. Species Variation.* The amount of an organic chemical or a metal that is excreted in bile varies widely among species. These differences make it difficult to extrapolate results obtained in laboratory animals to predict effects in humans. Species have been classified into three groups based on the percent of an administered dose of a xenobiotic that is excreted into bile (7, 8). In general, the rat, dog, hen, and mouse are good biliary

excretors; the rabbit, guinea pig, and rhesus monkey are relatively poor; and cat and sheep are intermediate. Unfortunately, the significance of these classifications is reduced by a large number of exceptions. For example, rats excrete about 50% of an injected dose of ouabain into bile in 2 hours whereas only 0.5% is excreted by dogs in that time (1016). Chromoglycate is excreted as well by the monkey as the rat (45). Terbutaline is excreted extensively in rats (40% of injected dose) but not in dogs or man (1% to 2% of dose) (852). Comparison of the excretion of phenol red and indocyanine green in four marine species indicates several species variations (949). Indocyanine green was excreted unchanged by all four fish whereas phenol red was eliminated into bile as the glucuronide by dogfish shark and skates and unchanged by hagfish and flounder. A recent study compared the biliary excretion of eight cholephilic anions by mice and rats (428). Male Swiss-Webster mice excreted indocyanine green, rose bengal, DBSP, and eosine at a rate 120% to 460% higher than male Sprague-Dawley rats. Secretion of bromocresol green and BSP-GSH conjugate were similar in the two species, whereas that of amaranth was lower in mice. Depression of bile production by cholestatic organic anions was stronger, and stimulation of bile flow by choleric acids was weaker in mice than in rats. Differences in biliary bile acid excretion (mouse, 3.62; rat, 1.42  $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$ ), bile flow rate (mouse, 102; rat, 69  $\mu\text{l}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$ ), and liver weight (mouse, 57; rat, 38 g/kg) but not hepatic ligandin concentration (mouse, 132; rat, 214 nmol BSP/g of liver) may explain the differences in organic anion excretion into bile between mice and rats. Until the biliary secretion of cationic and neutral organic compounds is studied, the mouse can only be tentatively classified as a good biliary excretor. In general, rats and mice may be considered to excrete chemicals into bile better than other species.

There is a paucity of data examining biliary excretion in humans due to difficulties in obtaining samples. However, several xenobiotics have been detected in human bile and have been compiled (657, 999). Commonly used drugs concentrated or readily excreted in bile include meperidine (278), ampicillin (144), several cephalosporin analogs (143, 959), erythromycin (174), clindamycin (145), practolol and acibutalol (594), digoxin and digitoxin (672, 1025), adriamycin (987), vincristine (546), indocyanine green and ioglycamide (86, 488), and the psychotropic agents diazepam and lithium (765, 1064, 1170). Conjugates of several steroids such as estradiol, progesterone, corticosterone, and cortisone are also excreted into bile (698, 1107).

There are also species differences in the rate of biliary transport. BSP is readily excreted by rat, rabbit, dog, and man but the  $T_m$  for BSP is 5 to 10 times higher in rats and rabbits than in dogs or man (660, 939). This observation may be due to large variations in bile flow

rate since biliary BSP concentrations are comparable. Species variation in the biliary excretion of metals (lead, arsenic, manganese) appears to be due to differences in movement of metal from hepatocytes into bile and not from plasma into liver (644). Biliary excretion of cadmium by rabbits is about 0.16 and that of dogs 0.003 times the rate in rats (659), whereas silver is excreted 0.1 to 0.01 times the rate in rats for rabbits and dogs, respectively (652). Rats consistently excrete lead, arsenic, manganese, and methylmercury to a greater extent than rabbits and both species had higher rates than dogs (633, 634, 639, 665). Species differences in biotransformation may also influence biliary excretion. Ethacrynic acid is a strong choleric in rats (178, 658) but only slightly choleric (1078) or even cholestatic (311) in rabbits. Since the increased bile flow is due to the osmotic activity of the glutathione conjugate in bile (178, 658), this species difference may be accounted for by a 10-fold greater rate of glutathione conjugation in the rat (431). Diethylstilbestrol-monosulfate is taken up by the liver of the rat, conjugated with glucuronic acid, and excreted into bile (66, 67). The disulfate conjugate is hydrolyzed to the monosulfate before glucuronidation and biliary excretion. In guinea pigs, however, appreciable amounts of diethylstilbestrol monosulfate are either sulfated, glucuronidated, or unchanged before excretion into bile (66, 67). Finally, species differences in hepatic blood flow and bile flow do not appear to correlate with biliary excretion of all chemicals (1107). Thus, there are no steadfast theories as to the mechanism(s) for species variations in biliary excretion. Obviously, further work is necessary before we have a complete understanding of species differences in the complex process involved in biliary excretion.

2. *Sex.* Differences in biliary excretion between male and female rats exist but do not necessarily relate to documented sex differences in drug metabolism (591, 659). Sex variations in biliary excretion have been noted in rats for indocyanine green and chlorothiazide (466). Tartrazine (100) is secreted metabolically unchanged. Its excretion is more efficient in female rats. However, another study found no difference in the biliary excretion of ouabain, indocyanine green, amaranth, or DBSP (667).

A recent study indicates a sex difference in biliary excretion of 2,4-dinitrotoluene (120). After perfusion with 20  $\mu\text{M}$  dinitrotoluene, male Fischer 344 rats excreted more 2,4-dinitrobenzyl alcohol glucuronide into bile (392 nmol) than female rats (172 nmol). Capacity for metabolism of 2,4-dinitrophenol and for hepatic macromolecular covalent binding were not different between livers from male and female rats. The major difference between the sexes in the disposition of 2,4-dinitrophenol appears to be the greater excretion of the glucuronide into bile by male rats.

Lactating female rats have a higher basal bile flow (80

$\mu\text{l}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$ ) than normal female or male rats ( $50 \mu\text{l}/\text{min}/\text{kg}$ ), and both bile acid-dependent and independent fractions of canalicular bile flow are increased (667). The lactating rats tend to excrete indocyanine green to a greater extent than normal rats, but no significant differences in biliary excretion of DBSP, ouabain or amarant were observed in male and female rats (667).

3. *Age.* The effects of aging on drug disposition may result from progressive physiological changes in metabolism, excretion, tissue distribution, and blood flow (609, 610, 1200). The plasma clearance of several drugs that require hepatic metabolism is depressed in aged animals and corresponds with decreased activity of hepatic drug metabolizing systems (659). The terminal disposition phase of benzodiazepines in plasma is slightly longer in geriatric patients and depends on volume of distribution (517, 760, 1069).

Decreased biliary excretion of BSP has been observed in older rats (609). Kitani et al. (614) noted a marked difference in the plasma disappearance and biliary excretion of ouabain between young and older rats. They suggested that differences in bile production may be important for the age-related effects. A recent study has examined the pharmacokinetics of ouabain in 2- and 6-month-old rats (527). Plasma ouabain concentrations were significantly higher in the older rats due to a reduction in the apparent volume of distribution and not a decrease in the biliary excretory rate.

BSP retention in plasma increases significantly in humans around 40 years of age (609). Similar results were observed with indocyanine green clearance in healthy geriatric Japanese men (609). Furthermore, studies of antipyrine and indocyanine green clearance in geriatric patients indicate impairment depends not only on the effects of aging on hepatic blood flow and activity of drug metabolizing enzymes but also on environmental factors such as smoking (1283).

More extensive work has evaluated the development of hepatic excretory function. Newborn animals are not miniature adults, either physiologically or in their response to xenobiotics (259, 761, 1085). Possible mechanisms that may account for differences in sensitivity between mature and immature animals include variations in absorption, distribution, biotransformation, excretion, and sensitivity of affected tissues. Biliary excretion is not mature in newborn rats (626), dogs and rabbits (643), and guinea pigs (1256). Indirect evidence indicates newborn humans also have a decreased capacity to excrete foreign compounds into bile (1206).

The decreased excretion of ouabain in newborn rats has been extensively studied and reviewed (650). Results indicate that neonatal rat liver is unable to extract ouabain from plasma which enables ouabain to produce its toxic effects (625). This relative inability of the liver of newborns to remove xenobiotics from blood has been observed for BSP, BSP-GSH, eosine, indocyanine green,

and taurocholate (629, 631, 645, 650, 670). The excretory capacity approaches adult levels by 1 month of age and can be stimulated to develop earlier by pretreatment with microsomal enzyme inducers (637, 645). Decreased hepatic excretory function does not appear to relate to the low ligandin levels in the liver of the newborn (638). Ouabain uptake could not be measured in hepatocytes isolated from 12-day-old rats, thus suggesting that a low hepatic uptake capacity is probably the mechanism by which ouabain exhibits greater toxicity in the newborn rat (1118). Thus, a decreased uptake process appears to be responsible for differences in toxicity of ouabain.

Neonatal rats are tolerant to the toxic effects of phalloidin (1296). Decreased sensitivity of the 5-day-old rats is not caused by lack of microfilaments (19). Isolated hepatocytes from newborns exhibit reduced uptake of both bile acids and  $^3\text{H}$ -demethylphalloin (918, 1296). Since phalloidin is not biotransformed in the liver (950), tolerance is apparently due to decreased uptake of the toxin (1295, 1296).

Depressed uptake in neonatal animals has been observed for other xenobiotics. Cumulative hepatic uptake of bilirubin is low in young guinea pigs and does not achieve adult capacity until 15 days of age (381). Accumulation of indocyanine green in liver slices from newborn guinea pigs is lower than that in slices from adults (522). Moreover, the transport maximum for indocyanine green is one-third the adult level in neonatal guinea pigs (523).

Hepatic uptake of taurocholate in fetal sheep is similar to that in adults. However, adult liver excretes the tracer dose more rapidly than fetal or neonatal liver which indicates that hepatic bile acid transport is not completely mature (1066). Hepatic transport of eosine is lower and phenobarbital could not increase its biliary excretion in 20-day-old rats (338). The ability of neonatal rats to excrete methylmercury into bile develops between 2 and 4 weeks of age and correlates with the capacity of the liver to secrete glutathione (62). Excretory transport may be limited by the available concentration of GSH.

The increased toxicity of colchicine in newborn rats is largely due to immaturity of hepatic excretory function (519, 520). About 68% of colchicine is excreted into bile within 2 hours in rats (520) against a concentration gradient and the liver/bile gradient is larger. Comparison of excretion in 10- and 35-day-old rats indicates higher plasma and liver concentrations and lower biliary excretion rates for colchicine in the immature rats. Results suggest colchicine is more toxic to newborns because of the lower capacity of the liver to concentrate colchicine and excrete it into bile (519).

Excretion of drugs by the liver into bile cannot be studied directly in newborn rats. However, the morphological development of the biliary tract in rats has been described as an indirect estimate of biliary function (248). From days 16 to 19 of fetal age, the canaliculus is

forming and is defined by an intracellular invagination of two adjacent cell membranes into one of the two neighboring hepatocytes. The canalicular lumen dilates during the first 3 days postpartum but then regresses to normal size and fills with microvilli by day 10. However, hepatic excretory function in the rat remains depressed at 10 days of age. If adult-like canalicular structure reflects secretory function, then maturation of excretory function following day 10 must be due to development of uptake and/or conjugation.

4. *Fasting.* Fasting induces a slight increase in serum bilirubin concentration in normal humans and patients with hemolytic jaundice (78, 331). A much greater absolute rise in serum bilirubin concentration occurs after fasting in patients with Gilbert's syndrome (93, 334) and appears to result from an acquired depression of hepatic bilirubin UDP-glucuronosyltransferase activity (331, 332). A similar increase in plasma bilirubin is observed in ponies under food deprivation (300). Caloric restriction is responsible for diet-induced hyperbilirubinemia but not alterations in dietary components of carbohydrates, protein, or fat (330). Hepatic clearance of bilirubin (300, 608), BSP and indocyanine green (1129), and bile acids (299) is decreased during fasting.

More recent studies indicate that depressed carbohydrate reserves can affect bilirubin conjugation. Fasting produced a 50% inhibition of UDP-glucose dehydrogenase activity resulting in a 43% decrease in hepatic UDPGA concentration in rats (333). Furthermore, nutritional states can alter UDPGA levels which affects the glucuronidation of *p*-nitrophenol in isolated rat liver (973, 974). Short-term fasting (48 hours) can also increase the turnover of hepatic GSH and decrease its concentration in livers from control or acetaminophen-pretreated rats (716). Acute changes in nutrition can markedly affect other factors of metabolism such as xenobiotic transport, oxygen or energy states, NAD or NADP concentrations as well as the major phase I and conjugation pathways (1179).

However, the complete mechanism of fasting hyperbilirubinemia is not totally understood. For example, data obtained in fasting subjects with Gilbert's syndrome suggest there was no modification in bilirubin clearance but rather an increased intrahepatic production of bile pigment (870). These results are at variance with conclusions made by several laboratories (93, 331, 333, 608, 1129). In addition, the plasma disappearance and biliary excretion of BSP, which is not glucuronidated, are also decreased after fasting (1129).

Results of a recent study suggest alterations in uptake account for the diminished clearance of BSP (708). In fasted rats, two distinct carriers for organic anions appear to exist: a high affinity, Na<sup>+</sup>-dependent system and a low affinity, Na<sup>+</sup>-independent system. Although total BSP binding capacity was not changed, fasting decreased the affinity of the low-affinity component 53% and re-

duced the capacity of the high affinity site 50%. In addition, a slight depression of hepatic blood flow and/or an increase in BSP efflux may also affect the plasma clearance of BSP. The higher rate of efflux probably results from a fasting-induced decrease in hepatic ligandin concentration (1129). Administration of glucocorticoids increases the hepatic clearance and uptake of bilirubin but does not influence the biliary excretion of the pigment in patients with Gilbert's syndrome (866). Obviously, the effects of fasting on biliary excretion are complex and may affect the uptake and biotransformation of xenobiotics.

5. *Pregnancy.* The physiological state of pregnancy affects biliary excretory function in several ways: BSP retention is increased while its transport maximum is depressed; the extraction of bilirubin from plasma is impaired and the serum activity of alkaline phosphatase is enhanced (979, 982). Biliary excretion of 12 different estrogenic chemicals (16), progesterone metabolites (699), cholic and chenodeoxycholic acids (700), biliary lipids (980), diphenylhydantoin (1219, 1222), and BSP (982) is depressed in pregnant animals.

In the hamster, pregnancy decreased bile acid-independent flow, hepatic Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase activity and cholic acid excretion, and increased the concentration of biliary lipids without altering the lithogenic index (980). The decrease in cholic acid excretion accounts for the diminished secretion of total bile acids and part of the decrease in bile flow.

When examined in pregnant rats both in vivo and in the isolated perfused liver, biliary concentration of 5-phenyl-5-*p*-hydroxyphenylhydantoin glucuronide, the primary metabolite of diphenylhydantoin, was decreased and the liver had apparently lost its ability to concentrate the metabolite in bile (1222). Similar effects on diphenylhydantoin metabolism and excretion can be observed in the isolated perfused rat liver and in vivo following administration of estradiol-17 $\beta$  (1220), and the synthetic estrogen, diethylstilbestrol (817).

UDP-glucuronosyltransferase activity toward estrone and estradiol was decreased by 30% in pregnant rats and rabbits (1221) but was more susceptible to induction by 3-methylcholanthrene. Other studies have demonstrated depression of glucuronide conjugation of steroidal and non-steroidal acceptors (840, 1221). Pregnancy and pretreatment with estradiol-17 $\beta$  decreased UDP-glucuronosyltransferase activities toward morphine and estrone by 20% and 50%, respectively, and could be induced by 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-*p*-dioxin (TCDD) in pregnant rats (142). Moreover, estradiol depressed the biliary excretion of morphine 3-glucuronide but did not affect bile flow (142). In contrast, pregnancy reduced bile flow slightly but did not alter the excretion of morphine. These data indicate the effects of estrogens, as in pregnancy, on xenobiotic metabolism and biliary excretion

vary with the chemical and the dose and duration of estrogen exposure.

### C. Pharmacological Factors Influencing Biliary Excretion of Xenobiotics

1. *Microsomal Enzyme Inducers.* Chemicals that increase the synthesis of various metabolizing enzymes affect the hepatobiliary disposition of xenobiotics. These agents may produce their actions by influencing one or more of the following factors: hepatic blood flow rate, uptake into the hepatocyte, biotransformation and/or intracellular storage, transport into bile, and bile flow rate.

Changes in hepatic blood flow can markedly alter hepatic extraction of chemicals having a high intrinsic clearance (1164, 1263) (see section VI B). Administration of microsomal enzyme inducers increases the efficiency of hepatic extraction (867, 868), and both plasma elimination and half-life of drugs with high extractions depend on hepatic blood flow rate. Alteration of blood flow by phenobarbital was suggested to be the mechanism for the enhanced clearance of indocyanine green (784); increases in blood flow and intrinsic clearance were directly proportional to the increase in liver mass. However, it has recently been demonstrated that indocyanine green does not have high intrinsic clearance in the rat (526) and earlier that phenobarbital does not enhance the plasma disappearance and biliary excretion of indocyanine green (344, 621).

Microsomal enzyme inducers could affect the uptake of xenobiotics into hepatocytes. Phenobarbital, 3-methylcholanthrene, and pregnenolone-16 $\alpha$ -carbonitrile (PCN) affect hepatic uptake of ouabain, PAEB, and taurocholate differently (286). Phenobarbital and PCN significantly increase the initial velocity of uptake of ouabain but do not affect that of PAEB or taurocholate (286) or DBSP (789). 3-Methylcholanthrene does not enhance uptake velocities for these three substrates but does produce a significant increase in their steady-state intracellular concentrations (286). Results suggest that 3-methylcholanthrene inhibits the excretory processes for these substrates. PCN enhances ouabain and not taurocholate uptake, which further indicates independent transport systems for bile acids and ouabain. The data suggest that these microsomal enzyme inducers increase the number of carriers for transport into liver.

Many microsomal enzyme inducers increase liver weight, and the mechanism first proposed to explain the increase in bile flow produced by phenobarbital was that it increased liver weight (992). For several reasons this does not appear to be correct. First, biliary flow and liver weight do not increase at the same rate. Biliary flow is significantly elevated 24 hours after one dose and reaches a plateau between 2 and 7 days of administration, whereas liver weight is not significantly elevated after one dose of phenobarbital and tends to increase throughout 7 days of treatment (619). Second, they do not

increase to the same extent. While phenobarbital produces about a 50% increase in bile flow, it only increases liver weight 15% to 25% (619). Finally, the abilities of various microsomal enzyme inducers to increase liver weight and bile flow do not seem to be at all related. Large increases in liver weight without increases in bile flow are produced by 3-methylcholanthrene and benzo(a)pyrene (619, 620).

Extensive studies on the effects of barbiturates on biliary excretion have been reviewed (159, 640, 648). Stimulation of bile flow does not correlate with microsomal enzyme induction; the increase in bile flow occurs earlier than the rise in P-450 (158, 184, 339, 341). While cobaltous chloride, an inducer of heme oxygenase, blocks the increase in cytochrome P-450 produced by phenobarbital, it does not prevent the choleresis. The phenobarbital-mediated increase in bile flow is due to an increase in bile salt-independent flow (102, 622), which may be due to stimulation of Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase (935, 968, 1091). However, the role of Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase in bile formation is controversial and some authors have not seen an increase after phenobarbital (595).

Once in the hepatocyte, binding to intracellular components can facilitate accumulation of a chemical in the liver cell. The importance of two such proteins, ligandin and metallothionein, was discussed earlier. However, many xenobiotics that are cleared from blood by the liver do not bind to these components. For example, ouabain does not bind to ligandin (638) yet microsomal enzyme inducers enhance its biliary excretion. Also, the amount of ligandin in liver is not related to the increased biliary excretion after microsomal enzyme inducers (638). Stimulation of the enzymatic properties of ligandin (GSH S-transferase) by butylated hydroxyanisole and *trans*-stilbene oxide enhances the biliary excretion of BSP presumably by increasing the rate of conjugation (429). It appears that the ligandin induced by microsomal enzyme inducers is more important as an enzyme than as a binding protein in enhancing the biliary excretion of drugs.

The importance of biotransformation in biliary excretion is well known (733). Most xenobiotics are made more water soluble by phase I and phase II metabolic reactions, and phase II reactions significantly increase the molecular weight of the xenobiotic thereby enhancing its elimination. For example, 3-methylcholanthrene and phenobarbital pretreatments stimulate the rate of excretion into bile of metabolites of N-N-dimethyl-4-aminobenzene (DAB). Conversely, mixed-function oxidase inhibitors, SKF 525A and piperonylbutoxide, and agents which deplete GSH, diethyl maleate and iodomethane, decrease biliary excretion. Metabolism appears to be the rate-limiting step in the elimination of DAB (735) although conjugation with GSH is also involved; later studies showed that N-demethylation is the major rate-determining factor (734). Agents that modify biotrans-

formation also affect the biliary excretion of 4'-(9-acridinylamino)methanesulfon-*m*-anisidide (1084), valproic acid (1236), hexachlorophene (653), and many other chemicals. Administration of phenobarbital to children with intrahepatic cholestasis reduces the concentration of bile acids in serum and increases that of bile acid glucuronides in bile (1137).

Administration of phenobarbital, clofibrate, spironolactone, or PCN to male and female rats stimulates the plasma clearance of bilirubin and its biliary excretion (558, 771, 952, 992, 1110, 1300). PCN enhances rat liver UDP-glucuronosyltransferase activity toward bilirubin (1233, 1237). Furthermore, spironolactone induction of UDP-glucuronosyltransferase increases the conjugation of phenolphthalein and *p*-nitrophenol as well as bilirubin (807). These examples further demonstrate the importance of metabolism on the biliary excretion of xenobiotics.

Administration of spironolactone to rats also increases the biliary excretion of several cardiac glycosides (168, 169, 636), indomethacin (647), and various metals (453–455, 616, 641, 654). Specifically, when injected 15 minutes before mercuric chloride, spironolactone stimulates the plasma disappearance and biliary secretion of mercury. This effect of spironolactone is too rapid to be explained by induction of microsomal enzymes. Apparently, the spironolactone metabolite, thioacetic acid, complexes the metal and causes it to distribute throughout the body in similar fashion to organic mercurials with lower plasma and kidney concentrations and higher levels in blood and other tissues (641). The metal is then excreted into bile as a low-molecular weight complex (1182). However, spironolactone does not influence the excretion of all metals similarly. For example, the concentrations of mercury and copper in kidney and plasma were lower after spironolactone and excretion into bile was increased three- and sevenfold. Spironolactone does not alter the distribution or biliary excretion of lead, manganese or arsenic, increases the kidney concentration of cadmium and silver, and decreases the biliary elimination of silver (654).

Microsomal enzyme inducers also stimulate the excretion of several nonmetabolized organic compounds. More than a decade ago phenobarbital was shown to enhance the biliary excretion of BSP, DBSP, amaranth, succinylsulfathiazole, chlorothiazide, and ouabain (620, 1045, 1255). More recently it has been demonstrated that bromocresol green, BSP-GSH (340, 341), eosine, amaranth, and iodoxamic acid (344) are also eliminated more rapidly into the bile of barbiturate-pretreated rats. The biliary excretion of neostigmine and its two metabolites is also stimulated in phenobarbital-treated rats (1111). However, the increase in excretion of the unchanged drug was greater than that of either 3-hydroxyphenyltrimethylammonium or 3-oxyglucuronide (1111). The mechanism for the enhanced excretion is not known but

might be due to an increase in amount of carrier protein (286) or to a stimulation in bile flow causing a "wash out" effect (620). Since the inducers do not enhance the biliary excretion of all compounds such as rose bengal (766) and indocyanine green (344, 620), there might be more than one transport system for the excretion of exogenous organic acids.

The mechanism for the increased biliary excretion of drugs after administration of microsomal enzyme inducers is complex. For some chemicals the difference in rate of biotransformation is important, for others bile flow or hepatic blood flow. The most important factor is probably the ability or number of transport carriers to move chemicals into the hepatocyte and into bile. For many xenobiotics, a combination of these factors is needed.

2. *Chlorotoxicants*. As noted earlier, 3-methylcholanthrene is a microsomal enzyme inducer which does not enhance bile flow, hepatic uptake, or biliary excretion and in fact tends to decrease hepatic excretory function (287, 619, 620). In contrast to the barbiturates that induce a family of isozymes that have an absorption spectrum maximum at 450 nm (P-450), 3-methylcholanthrene induces heme proteins with a maximal absorbance of 448 nm (P-448). The chlorotoxicants 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-*p*-dioxin (TCDD), polychlorinated biphenyls, polybrominated biphenyls, chlorodecone (Kepone), and mirex are similar to 3-methylcholanthrene and decrease hepatic excretory function.

TCDD pretreatment delays the plasma disappearance and biliary excretion of ouabain and indocyanine green (456, 1062, 1063, 1287) but not BSP or DBSP (1287). The polychlorinated biphenyls are generally regarded as microsomal enzyme inducers, but they impair the elimination of digitoxin by apparently decreasing the activity of the enzymes responsible for cleavage of the digitoxose residues (1042). Mirex and Kepone reduce the biliary excretion of imipramine metabolites and phenolphthalein glucuronide, but not of BSP, despite an increase in bile flow (227, 785). Impaired biliary excretion probably results from decreased transfer of metabolites into bile (785).

The detrimental effects of the chlorotoxicants might be due to an effect on ATPases. Both TCDD (915) and mirex depress the activities of Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase and Mg<sup>++</sup>-ATPase (225, 226, 242, 786). The TCDD-induced depression of ouabain excretion was masked by pretreating rats with PCN or spironolactone on days 6 to 9 after TCDD injection (914). Even though ouabain transport into bile is normal, the activities of the ATPases remain depressed suggesting that the carrier system for ouabain is separate and distinct from the two ATPases (915). Peterson (909) has suggested that TCDD causes retro-differentiation to the neonatal state of hepatic gene expression such that TCDD-poisoned and newborn rats exhibit impaired excretion of ouabain. Pretreatment of

adult TCDD-intoxicated (914) and control newborn rats (637) with PCN produces expression of normal adult levels of ouabain uptake and biliary excretion (456).

3. *Bile Acids*. Intravenous infusions of bile acids can increase the biliary excretion of BSP (106, 128, 313, 355, 422, 426, 678, 989), indocyanine green (1211, 1218), bilirubin (404, 632), DBSP (1211), and rose bengal (422, 766). However, bile acid administration does not enhance the biliary excretion of ouabain or K-strophanthoside (795, 1216), eosine, BSP-GSH (422), ethoxyquin (1094), acetyl-PAEB, or *d*-tubocurarine (1213).

Bile acids probably even have a physiological role in the biliary excretion of bilirubin. For example, it appears that taurocholate is essential for normal exogenous bilirubin excretion in ponies (300). More recent studies indicate infusions of either chenodeoxycholate or taurocholate (8 to 9  $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$ ) increase bilirubin excretion 60% to 80% following 5 hours of biliary diversion where endogenous bile acid excretion equals the amount being synthesized (301). Infusion of dehydrocholate (10.5  $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$ ) after biliary diversion increases bile flow 45% to 60% and excretion of bile acid 35% above the level due to hepatic synthesis. Bilirubin secretion is not changed. These results suggest that bilirubin excretion depends on the micelle-forming capacity of endogenous bile acids.

Cholestyramine-induced bile acid depletion markedly decreases the excretion of indocyanine green, BSP, rose bengal, and bromcresol green (427). Biliary secretion of these anions is stimulated by simultaneous infusion of taurocholate (422). The mechanism by which the bile acids enhance the biliary excretion of xenobiotics is not clear. Since many organic anions bind to biliary micelles (1211, 1218), formation of macromolecular aggregates would decrease the effective canalicular concentration and back diffusion of these dyes and increase their net excretion (1035, 1218, 1232). However, no differences were observed in binding of organic anions to micelles (1211), and non-micelle-forming dehydrocholate also increases excretion of exogenous dyes (94, 1211). Other studies also suggest that complexation with biliary micelles is not the only factor involved. Excretion of diethylstilbestrol was increased during taurocholate or taurodehydrocholate infusions (820). Since diethylstilbestrol monoglucuronide does not form micelles with taurodehydrocholate, micelle formation alone cannot explain the evidence for bile-flow-dependent, carrier-mediated transport of the conjugate into bile. It is possible that bile acids can facilitate anion transport by allosteric interactions with canalicular membrane carriers or causing changes in membrane fluidity. Finally, interference with storage within the hepatocyte may also influence excretion (125, 1211).

This phenomenon to increase the biliary excretion of xenobiotics is not unique for bile acids. Bucolome enhances ouabain excretion (613) and the  $T_m$  for indocy-

anine green but not for BSP (615). Not all compounds that increase canalicular bile flow increase biliary excretion of xenobiotics. For example, theophylline (70), SC-2644 (867), or ethacrynic acid (1210) do not enhance the biliary excretion of BSP and/or DBSP.

However, bile acids can also depress the elimination of some exogenous cholephils. For example, the excretion of amaranth into bile was inhibited by simultaneous injection of lithocholic, chenodeoxycholic, deoxycholic, cholic, and dehydrocholic acids (430). The inhibitory effect of lithocholic acid may be due to toxic actions on mitochondrial respiration (430) or ATPase function (796).

4. *Hepatotoxicants*. Chemicals that are toxic to liver cells can affect biliary excretion in several ways. Toxicants can affect hepatic blood flow, uptake into the hepatocyte, biotransformation and storage, excretion, and biliary tract permeability.

Acute treatment with carbon tetrachloride markedly decreases the biliary excretion of BSP (661, 947). Furthermore, rats chronically intoxicated with carbon tetrachloride have a delayed plasma clearance and biliary excretion of indocyanine green (530). Intrahepatic metabolism and/or transport into bile of BSP is also impaired after styrene- or styrene oxide-induced liver injury (171, 172).

Biliary excretion of acetaminophen depends on dose and biotransformation (1088) and is reduced in rats anesthetized with diethyl ether (560). This may be due to decreased conjugation with glucuronic acid since diethyl ether depletes hepatic UDP-glucuronic acid concentration (303, 1238, 1239). Pretreatment of rats with galactosamine and borneol, which also deplete UDPGA (1239), reduces the biliary elimination of valproic acid (1236). Excretion of acetaminophen-GSH conjugate may be reduced after toxic doses of acetaminophen due to suppression of hepatic GSH synthesis (716). Perfusion of rat liver with paraquat produces a 70% decrease in hepatic GSH concentration with a concomitant increase in oxidized GSH excretion into bile (414). Chemical-induced loss of microsomal metabolizing systems has been reviewed (241). Thus, numerous data indicate hepatotoxicants can markedly alter xenobiotic metabolism.

Several studies have attempted to demonstrate liver lobule heterogeneity with respect to drug-metabolizing enzymes (324, 551, 957). However, a comprehensive study of the effects of seven hepatotoxicants (allyl alcohol, aflatoxin B<sub>1</sub>, ANIT, bromobenzene, carbon tetrachloride, 1,1-dichloroethylene, cadmium chloride) indicates that poisoning seriously affects the microsomal oxidases without significantly influencing the activities of epoxide hydrolase or the glucuronosyl-, acetyl-, sulfo-, and glutathionyltransferases (432). Although mono-oxygenases are unevenly distributed in the hepatic lobule, no reliable information on localization of conjugative enzymes was obtained by determination of enzyme

activity after chemically induced necrosis of a specific region of the hepatic lobule (432). In vivo metabolism of ethanol or aminopyrine was not affected by regio-selective damage by bromobenzene or allyl alcohol (1269).

After exposure to bromobenzene or carbon tetrachloride, centrilobular hepatocytes contributed to the removal of 13% to 18% of a physiological load of taurocholate. The 50% decrease in bile flow after bromobenzene suggests that damage to the centrilobular region produces alterations in bile production and that 13% to 18% of physiological bile acids reach bile via centrilobular hepatocytes (443). Pentachlorophenol and 2,4,6-trichlorophenol inhibit the excretion of BSP into the medium by isolated liver cells (406). Impaired BSP transport may be due to depressed energy production since both phenols uncouple oxidative phosphorylation in hepatocellular mitochondria. Although acute administration of aflatoxin B<sub>1</sub> decreases bile flow (1193), excretion of BSP in bile is not seriously diminished (165). In contrast, taurolithocholate-induced reduction in bile flow significantly decreases the secretion of adriamycin into bile, and the data suggest that the disposition of this chemotherapeutic agent depends on the rate of bile production (1163). A toxic metabolite of ticrynafen reportedly reduces bile flow and BSP excretion, but the mechanism is not known (1299). Administration of an extract of *Amanita phalloides* significantly increases the permeability of the biliary tree as evidenced by the reduction in recoveries of several markers after segmented retrograde intrabiliary injection (372). Thus, exposure to hepatotoxic chemicals can affect bile flow, xenobiotic transport, and biliary tree permeability.

**5. Liver Injury.** Injury to the liver generally produces deleterious effects on hepatic excretory function. The jaundice following liver injury results from decreased removal of bilirubin from plasma and its excretion into bile. Dye clearance techniques determine the effect of disease or chemical-induced liver injury on the plasma disappearance and biliary excretion of cholephilic dyes (BSP and indocyanine green). Liver injury of the cholestatic type usually decreases bilirubin excretion to a greater extent than does parenchymal cell injury.

Several studies have evaluated the effect of liver injury on the toxicity of chemicals normally excreted into bile (626, 627, 635, 1065). Results show marked differences in the effect of bile duct ligation on the LD<sub>50</sub> of 20 xenobiotics (626). An extensive study of 175 chemicals indicated that ligation of the common bile duct and partial hepatectomy increase the adverse effects of 39 and 53 drugs, respectively (1065). The mechanism for increased toxicity after ligation of the bile duct is unclear and does not necessarily relate to the percentage of compound normally excreted into bile. For example, BSP is excreted almost exclusively via the bile, but its toxicity is not increased appreciably by ligation. In contrast, plasma concentrations of ketamine and its N-demethyl-

ated metabolite are increased prolonging ketamine sleeping time (539). If toxicity relates to the peak concentration in blood, bile duct ligation would probably have no effect. However, if toxicity relates to persistence of elevated blood levels, then ligation would be expected to have marked effects. Further work is needed to test this hypothesis.

Bile duct ligation increases diethylstilbestrol toxicity 130-fold and decreases the plasma disappearance of this steroid (627). These data indicate biliary excretion is the primary excretory pathway for diethylstilbestrol. Another hypothesis of why ligation increases toxicity of some drugs to a greater extent than others is that there could be compensatory shifts to excrete these chemicals into urine once the biliary pathway has been eliminated. In fact, increased urinary elimination of bile acid sulfates in hamsters is observed after decreased excretion by the biliary route (68). Biliary excretion of melphalan is enhanced by ligating the renal arteries (151) indicating the interrelationship of biliary and renal excretion. Similar alterations of xenobiotic excretion have been noted after reduced renal or hepatic function produced by potassium dichromate and carbon tetrachloride, respectively (231).

Bile duct ligation reduces the plasma clearance of pentobarbital and meperidine by apparently altering the initial volume of distribution. A significant reduction in perfusate flow was observed in isolated perfused liver experiments with organs from rats with previous bile duct ligation. Reduced clearance of both a high extraction drug and a lower extraction drug suggest both hepatic blood flow and drug-metabolizing activity may be altered by extrahepatic biliary tract obstruction (675).

Two-thirds hepatectomy or selective biliary obstruction and bile duct ligation affect the plasma disappearance of xenobiotics differently (635). Ligation decreased the elimination of BSP and indocyanine green to a greater extent than did partial hepatectomy, while that of PAEB and ouabain was decreased more after two-thirds hepatectomy. The data indicate that clearance of BSP and indocyanine green is more sensitive to interruption of transfer from liver to bile, while elimination of PAEB and ouabain is more dependent upon hepatic mass. Hepatic excretion of hexachlorophene was diminished by both bile duct ligation and two-thirds hepatectomy and its toxicity was markedly increased (653).

There appears to be a reserve capacity to excrete foreign compounds. Even though livers from partial hepatectomized rats weighed 40% to 45% of controls, biliary excretion of the above four drugs and bile flow rate were 60% to 65% and 80% to 90% of that of the controls (635). Further evidence of this reserve capacity was the observation of a 13-fold increase in serum bile acids 48 hours after selective biliary obstruction, and that secretion of water, bile acids, cholesterol, and phospholipids by the nonobstructed lobes was similar to con-



trols (14). This reserve capacity can be stimulated by increased substrate concentrations (14, 1092, 1235).

Bile duct ligation 24 hours before administration of a lethal dose of an extract of *Amanita phalloides* protects rats from lethality and prevents a toxin-induced increase in biliary tree permeability (372). An increase in bile flow and enlarged biliary tree capacity were observed after bile duct ligation. The mechanism for protection against phallotoxins by ligation is unclear but may result from increases in bile acid concentrations (18) or by competition with bile acids for binding sites (916) since phalloidin uptake is inhibited in cells isolated from bile duct ligated rats (1228).

Studies of the mechanism of postcholestatic cholestasis after biliary obstruction indicate canalicular permeability to inulin and  $\text{Na}^+\text{-K}^+\text{-ATPase}$  activity are increased (10). Canalicular permeability is greater after administration of estrogens, phalloidin, taurolithocholate, and chlorpromazine (268, 352, 1149). These data indicate net solvent flow across tight junctions and the canalicular membrane, suggesting canalicular flow does not depend primarily on the leakiness of these barriers. This increased permeability is not a typical response of drug-induced cholestasis (928). Moreover, the enhanced  $\text{Na}^+\text{-K}^+\text{-ATPase}$  activity in livers from 3-day cholestatic rats correlates with the postobstructive cholestasis (10). The hepatic content of this enzyme increases during cholestasis which suggests an adaptive response of the ATPase to complete biliary obstruction.

Liver regeneration has been studied following partial hepatectomy (722). Apparently there is an adaptive regulation involving derepression by low concentrations of solutes and also hormonal changes. Specifically, in hepatocytes isolated from 70% hepatectomized rats, there was an increase in both influx and efflux of  $\alpha$ -aminoisobutyric acid. The amino acid transport system was  $\text{Na}^+$ -dependent and energized partly by cationic transmembrane gradients. The rapid emergence of this high affinity carrier system in the liver remnant following partial hepatectomy may be important in the regulation of liver regeneration after injury and the maintenance of xenobiotic clearance and excretion.

The effect of experimental hepatobiliary injury on drug metabolism was studied by using two surgical (selective and complete biliary obstruction) and two drug-induced (ethinylestradiol and ANIT) models. Mild injury induced by either selective obstruction or ethinylestradiol administration did not appreciably affect  $^{14}\text{C}$ -aminopyrine elimination by  $^{14}\text{CO}_2$  breath analysis or the maximal velocity of demethylation. Severe injury caused by complete obstruction and ANIT decreased  $^{14}\text{CO}_2$  elimination 30% and 60%, respectively, and demethylation by 35% (1268).

Hepatobiliary function is compromised in several disease states. The total clearance of numerous drugs is reduced in patients with cirrhosis (22, 109). Biliary ex-

cretion of *d*-propranolol is reduced in cirrhotic patients because of an impaired ability of the liver to extract the drug from blood (907). Another study indicates that cirrhotic patients have increased serum concentrations and urinary elimination of bile acids (1024). Patients with chronic liver disease have a decreased clearance of bile acids (299). Excessive accumulation of copper occurs in livers of patients with primary cirrhosis (1029). Although bile acid excretion is decreased, that of copper was unaffected; this suggests that elevated copper concentrations do not occur as a result of decreased biliary excretion of the metal. Administration of the chelating agent, D-penicillamine, reduces the levels of copper and the excretion of bile acids increases toward normal rates. The mechanism for this effect is not known. In another study, patients with porphyria cutanea tarda demonstrated reduced storage and elimination of BSP. Effects may be related to derangement of porphyrin metabolism as coproporphyrin may compete with BSP for binding to ligandin and for excretion (302). In smokers, systemic bioavailability of lidocaine is decreased secondarily to an increased clearance after oral administration presumably reflecting induction of drug-metabolizing enzymes (515). In contrast, oral and systemic clearances of lidocaine are increased in patients with chronic hepatitis B. Administration of perhexiline maleate induces liver injury in patients (937) and in rats (494) which can be characterized by an impairment of the transport maximum of BSP. Additional information on the effect of liver disease on drug disposition has been reviewed (134, 1086, 1262, 1264). Interrelationship between toxicity of endotoxin and liver injury has also been discussed (854).

### VIII. Enterohepatic Circulation

Numerous chemicals are secreted into bile, deposited into the intestinal lumen, reabsorbed by the intestine into the portal blood, and taken up by hepatocytes. This process is limited topographically to the liver and intestine and is aptly called the enterohepatic circulation (fig. 7). This process enables living organisms to conserve endogenous substances such as the bile acids, vitamins  $\text{D}_3$  and  $\text{B}_{12}$ , folic acid, pyridoxine, and estrogens. Drugs also undergo enterohepatic cycling and include cardiac glycosides, chlorpromazine, indomethacin, antibiotics, cholephilic dyes, and biliary contrast media. The most physiologically important of these chemicals is the bile acids as their transport out of hepatocytes and ileocytes into bile and portal blood, respectively, is a major driving force for solute and water movement within the enterohepatic circulation. The degree of cycling of other lipophilic and hydrophilic xenobiotics depends on bile acid movement. Additional information on the enterohepatic circulation may be obtained in numerous reviews (160, 260, 497, 498, 640, 648, 926, 1101, 1107).

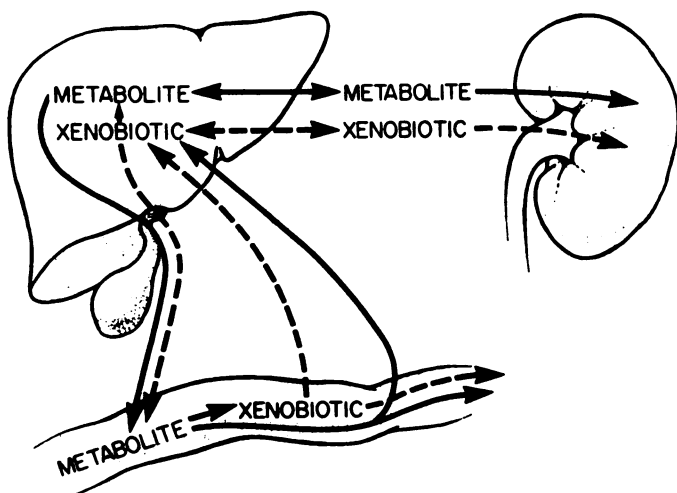


FIG. 7. Enterohepatic circulation.

### A. Bile Acids

In the seventeenth century, Giovanni Borelli calculated that the total amount of bile entering the intestine was substantially greater than the quantity present in the biliary tract. In 1759, the Irish physician, Edward Barry suggested bile was reabsorbed by the intestines and returned to the liver. This prescient idea of enterohepatic cycling of bile acids was strengthened by discovery of the bile acids in 1809 by Berzelius and their enterohepatic circulation in 1937 by Sobotka and in 1941 by Josephson (490). Quantification of the enterohepatic circulation of bile acids in humans by Lindstedt's isotope dilution method indicates a 3- to 5-g bile acid pool cycles 6 to 10 times per day (744). Between 20% to 25% of this pool escapes intestinal reabsorption and is excreted in the feces (92) but endogenous synthesis from cholesterol generally equals this loss. However, details of the homeostatic mechanisms controlling synthesis, pool size, turnover frequency, bacterial metabolism, fecal loss, and bile acid secretion rates in health and disease are reviewed but are poorly understood (160).

The driving forces of the enterohepatic circulation include bile acid secretion, concentration and storage in the gallbladder, intestinal absorption, transport in portal venous blood, and hepatic uptake. Active excretion of bile acids across the canalicular membrane into bile is the primary metabolic pump for the enterohepatic circulation. This is the rate-limiting step in the transfer of bile acids from blood or de novo synthesis into bile (936). These forces within the biliary tree result in continuous production of 0.8 to 1.0 l of bile per day in intact man. However, flow fluctuates greatly and is reduced at night and stimulated with feeding.

In species with a gallbladder, bile is concentrated five- to 10-fold by active absorption of sodium and chloride ions with passive movement of water (254). In response to cephalic and hormonal influences during eating, cholecystikinin and motilin, the gallbladder contracts and extrudes up to 80% of its contents into the duodenum

(319, 1113). Thus, the gallbladder is a storage organ and a mechanical pump in the enterohepatic circulation.

Bile acids are absorbed passively from all of the gastrointestinal tract via ionic and non-ionic diffusion (255). However, absorption of bile acids by non-ionic diffusion is about 10-fold greater than that of ionized species. Hence the relative contribution of each process depends on intraluminal and membrane pH, the dissociation constant ( $pK_a$ ) of the individual bile acid, the maximal solubilizing capacity of bile acid micelles for their own protonated forms, and the partition coefficients of the ionic and non-ionic species into absorptive membranes (160). In the upper small intestine with pH 5.5 to 6.5, about 50% of unconjugated bile acids ( $pK_a$  5.0 to 6.5) will be protonated and non-ionized; a small amount of glycine-conjugated acids ( $pK_a$  3.5 to 5.2) will be protonated; and no taurine derivatives ( $pK_a < 1.8$ ) will be non-ionized. To be absorbed by passive diffusion, these non-ionized bile acids must remain in solution.

The ionized bile acids, especially the taurine conjugates, depend on active sodium-coupled transport sites in the lower third of the ileum for absorption (255, 701). A reciprocal relationship exists between active and passive transport rates; the most polar bile acids with poor passive diffusion have the highest maximal transport rates across the ileum while passively absorbed bile acids have lower active transport maximums (701). Bile acids with two or more ionic substituents such as glucuronidated or sulfated derivatives (247) are poorly absorbed by either active or passive processes (407). Thus, there are three enterohepatic circuits: one fast, one intermediate, and one slow (779), as a high proportion of glycine-conjugated dihydroxy bile acids are passively absorbed in the jejunum (34, 35); taurine and glycine conjugates of di- and trihydroxy acids are actively absorbed in the distal ileum (681); and unconjugated bile acids are passively taken up in the colon (800).

All bile acids are transported back to the liver via the portal vein and only negligible concentrations are found in lymph (871). Even though the concentration of cholate and chenodeoxycholate in hepatic bile is roughly equal, portal blood is enriched with chenodeoxycholate because of its more rapid absorption in the upper small intestine and the more efficient conservation of the less polar bile acids (21, 294, 497, 498). The bile acids bind avidly to both serum albumin (294), high density lipoproteins, and perhaps low density lipoproteins (682). There is little binding to immunoglobulins or very low density lipoproteins (682). Conjugated and unconjugated bile acids bind to serum albumin at pH 7.4 with the free acid having higher binding (294).

Hepatic uptake of bile acids is extremely efficient during a single pass through the liver (497, 498, 779, 943). First-pass clearance in animals and humans is greater than 90% for cholates and between 75% to 80% for chenodeoxycholates and deoxycholates. Fractional

uptake of bile acids is independent of their perfusate level suggesting the liver's capacity to extract bile acids exceeds the transport maximum into bile (936). Hepatic uptake of bile acids usually functions with concentrations well below  $V_{\max}$ . Cholates are rapidly cleared and chenodeoxycholates are cleared more slowly, suggesting that uptake is directly related to the polarity of the bile acid and may also be inversely related to the strength of binding to albumin and lipoproteins (497, 498, 528, 529, 682, 779, 1013). Details regarding the mechanism of bile acid uptake may be found in an earlier section (VI, C1) of this review.

### B. Other Endogenous Compounds

Several endogenous substances other than bile acids are secreted into bile and undergo enterohepatic circulation. Bile is the major excretory route for 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin  $D_3$  and its metabolites (46, 87, 745, 881). Enterohepatic recycling of 25-hydroxyvitamin  $D_3$  has been demonstrated in man (43) and for 1,25- (693, 745, 1260) and 24,25-dihydroxyvitamin  $D_3$  (692) in the rat and man. Prostacyclin and several metabolites are excreted into bile after *p*-oxidation and glucuronidation and seem to undergo enterohepatic circulation (1167). The coenzyme 5-methyltetrahydrofolate undergoes carrier-mediated hepatic uptake, secretion into bile against a high concentration gradient, and enterohepatic cycling (1131, 1151). Enterohepatic circulations have been demonstrated for pregnenolone and its 3-sulfate, deoxycorticosterone and corticosterone (304), hydroxycortisone and its metabolites (1286), norethindrone (1257), androsterone, (781) and estrone (814). All of these compounds are metabolized and are excreted predominantly as either glucuronide or sulfate conjugates.

### C. Xenobiotics

Although foreign compounds undergo enterohepatic cycling, few are actively reabsorbed in the intestine. Compounds secreted into bile in lipid-soluble forms are reabsorbed by passive diffusion. Generally, these substances are biotransformed and conjugated before excretion. In this more polar form, these chemicals have insufficient lipid solubility to undergo passive diffusion. However, many compounds excreted as polar conjugates of glucuronic acid or sulfate may be hydrolyzed by bacterial  $\beta$ -glucuronidases or sulfatases present in bacterial flora (532), and the aglycone may be taken up into the portal circulation (1107, 1266).

Examples of xenobiotics that undergo enterohepatic recirculation include estradiol, mestranol and ethinylestradiol (140, 751), norethisterone (48), estrone-sulfate (49), propachlor (55, 713), aniline mustard (183), diclofenac (1188), fenclofenac (417), morphine (898), phenolphthalein (206, 898), diphenylacetic acid (898), 2-acetamido-4-(chloromethyl)thiazole (56), pentachloromethylthiobenzene (54), 3-phenoxybenzoic acid (514), warfarin (975), 7,12-dimethylbenz(a)anthracene (603), benzo(a)-

pyrene (182), chlordecone (448), numerous insecticides (776, 783), 3,4,4'-trichlorocarbanilide (482), oxazepam (99), lormetazepam (391), spironolactone (9), diethylstilbestrol (345, 457), diphenylhydantoin (295, 296), metronidazole (712), 1- $\alpha$ -acetylmethadol (996, 997), adriamycin (1163), and sulindac (270, 271). The enterohepatic circulation of morphine, methadone, etorphine, digitoxin, diethylstilbestrol, indomethacin, glutethimide, amphetamine, and others have been reviewed (926).

Some heavy metals have been shown to undergo an enterohepatic circulation (644). For example, 25% of an intravenous dose of arsenic is excreted into feces within 2 hours, yet less than 10% is in the feces within 1 week (633). Approximately 35%, 21%, and 17% of the divalent cations of manganese, mercury, and copper, respectively, are reabsorbed after biliary excretion (191). In addition, the organic mercurials, phenyl- and methyl-mercury, have a lower recycling than inorganic mercury (197).

It has been suggested the long pharmacological half-life of digitoxin in humans results from its enterohepatic recycling (592, 593, 869). Although interruption of this circulation leads to a reduced half-life, factors other than enterohepatic circulation are important in the slow elimination of digitoxin (1142).

Large species variations exist in the biliary excretion of many xenobiotics and animal studies do not always reflect the human situation. The investigation of enterohepatic cycling in humans has been limited to only a few drugs because of difficulties associated with prolonged interruption of the enterohepatic circulation.

### D. Factors Influencing Enterohepatic Cycling

1. *Binding Agents.* Administration of activated charcoal or anion-exchange resins can decrease enterohepatic cycling of xenobiotics and can be clinically useful. Cholestyramine treatment of patients receiving  $^3\text{H}$ -digitoxin decreases the serum half-life from 11.5 to 6.6 days (155). Similar results have been obtained with chlordecone (129, 204), phenprocoumon (799), and bile acids (561). In fact, bile acid depletion by cholestyramine has been shown to decrease the biliary excretion of numerous organic anions including BSP, bromocresol green, indocyanine green, rose bengal, and eosine (421). Cholestyramine-induced interruption of enterohepatic cycling produces a two- and seven-fold increase in the fecal excretions of phenprocoumon and chlordecone, respectively (129, 204, 799). Activated charcoal has also been used to trap drugs in the gastrointestinal tract after their biliary excretion. Although peak blood levels are not affected significantly, charcoal reduces the serum half-life of phenylbutazone, phenobarbital, and carbamazepine (847). Administration of a polythiol-binding resin to mice greatly increases the fecal excretion and reduces the body burden of methylmercury (202). This resin was therapeutically beneficial in enhancing methylmercury excretion in an exposed Iraqi population (53). Thus, use

of these binding agents is a practical means for detoxication of animals and patients exposed to toxicants.

More recent studies indicate administration of aliphatic hydrocarbons such as mineral oil and hexadecane, which are poorly absorbed by the gut, can enhance the fecal excretion of lipophilic xenobiotics. For example, presence of 5% mineral oil in the diet of rhesus monkeys resulted in a 50% increase in the fecal excretion of mirex (1010), 2,4,5,2',4',5'-hexabromobiphenyl (1008), and hexachlorobenzene (1006). Similar results have been observed after 4% cholestyramine for pentachlorophenol (1009) and hexadecane for hexachlorobenzene in rats and rhesus monkeys (1005, 1006). Mineral oil and hexadecane also decreased the body burden of hexachlorobenzene in sheep (1007) presumably by trapping these agents in the feces.

Similar cycling probably exists for many therapeutic agents but the relative importance to the pharmacodynamics of each drug will have to await experimental investigation in humans. Use of binding agents in the treatment of xenobiotic toxicity is efficacious, and may, in fact, further our understanding of the biliary excretory processes and enterohepatic circulation of drugs and toxicants in humans.

2. *Antibiotics.* Although hepatic biotransformation to more polar forms decreases the enterohepatic circulation, intestinal bacteria are sometimes able to convert xenobiotics back into their lipid-soluble forms and enhance reabsorption (1106, 1266). Alterations in intestinal flora with antibiotics may decrease the enterohepatic circulation of some xenobiotics and concurrently shorten their pharmacological half-lives. Use of antibiotics in studies of the enterohepatic cycling of xenobiotics has been reviewed by Illing (532). Specific examples of decreased hydrolysis of conjugates and enterohepatic circulation of the parent compound correlate with decreased numbers of microflora and last 3 to 4 days with rifampicin or 7 to 14 days with ampicillin (48). These two antibiotics are excreted into bile and may undergo an enterohepatic recirculation (1107). Numerous studies have demonstrated that microorganisms are capable of performing appropriate biotransformations in vivo and in vitro (532).

### IX. Concluding Remarks

Much new data have been published recently which greatly expand our understanding of biliary excretion. However, this knowledge about hepatic elimination lags behind that regarding mechanisms of secretion of compounds by the kidney and hepatic and renal biotransformation. Major obstacles hindering our search for new information include the relative inaccessibility of bile which deters examinations in humans and our technical inability to sample bile at various places in the liver, particularly the canaliculus. Unfortunately, we still do not completely comprehend the mechanisms of bile formation which would aid our understanding of biliary excretion and cholestasis. Despite these limitations, con-

siderable information has been gathered about factors influencing biliary excretion and mechanisms of hepatic uptake. A major thrust in current and future research will be to utilize sophisticated biochemical techniques to isolate and purify the putative carriers involved in both hepatic uptake and biliary excretion. The myriad data discussed herein indicate the enormous complexity of hepatic function. Future efforts must isolate and characterize these carriers and ascertain how these are functionally regulated. The road to new knowledge is open and considerable efforts should be expended to further our comprehension of regulatory and functional events that occur at the cellular level.

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