

Invited review

Quinolones in urology*

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Summary. The new quinolones have broad antimicrobial spectra covering all aerobic gram-negative and gram-positive bacteria encountered in urinary tract infections. All are administered orally, some also parenterally, low degree of resistance, few side effects and bacteriological and clinical cure rates similar to or higher than traditional antimicrobials make them especially suitable for treatment of complicated urinary tract infections including bacterial prostatitis. Non-critical use of quinolones in simple infections where standard drugs may be equally effective and safe should be discouraged.

Key words: Quinolone – Urinary tract infection – Bacterial prostatitis – Prophylaxis

Introduction

During the last decade, the synthetically made quinolone antimicrobials have gained much interest and clinical application due to their broad antimicrobial spectrum, excellent pharmacokinetics and low degree of resistance and side-effects. Nalidix acid and oxolinic acid, pipemidic acid and cinoxacin constitute the first and second generation of the quinolones. The third generation, the fluoroquinolones (ciprofloxacin, norfloxacin, ofloxacin, enoxacin, pefloxacin, fleroxacin) is the scope of this review.

Structure and mode of action

The basic chemical structure of the fluoroquinolones is shown in Fig 1. Manipulations of the side groups at

different positions changes the properties of the molecule [32, 54]. Antimicrobial activity depends on a 2-carbon fragment at position 1 and on the ketone and carboxylic acid groups in position 3 and 4. The fluorine atom at position 6, which is the hallmark of the fluoroquinolones, increases the antibacterial activity of the molecule up to 30-fold regardless of all other side chains. Further, the addition of a piperazin ring at position 7 has enhanced the antibacterial activity apparently by improving the penetration of the molecule. Absorption is increased by substituting the H-atom at position 2 with a N-atom while tissue distribution can be slightly improved by placing a NH₂ group at position 5.

The antibacterial activity of the quinolones is caused by binding and thus blocking of the DNA gyrase enzyme in the bacteria thus preventing negative supercoiling of the DNA molecule and normal function of the bacteria. Human cells contain a slightly different gyrase enzyme which is not attacked by the quinolones.

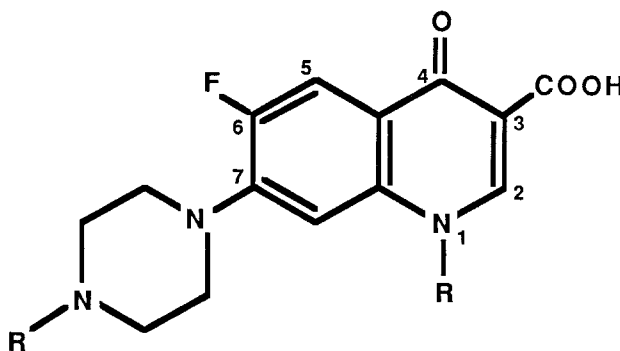


Fig. 1. Basic structure of the fluoroquinolone antimicrobial (R indicates side group)

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Table 1. Comparison between the in-vitro antimicrobial activity of six fluoroquinolones. Minimal inhibitory concentration for 90% of the strains (MIC₉₀) is listed

	MIC ₉₀ (mcg/ml)					
	CIPRO	NORF	ENOX	OFLOX	PEFLOX	FLEROX
<i>E. coli</i>	0.03	0.12	0.40	0.20	0.25	2.0
<i>Kleb. pneum.</i>	< 0.12	1.6	3.1	0.20	2.0	2.0
<i>Proteus mirabilis</i>	< 0.12	0.10	0.80	0.20	0.50	0.5
<i>Serratia marcescens</i>	1.0	3.1	6.3	6.3	1.0	2.0
<i>Pseudomonas aerug.</i>	0.50	3.1	2.0	3.1	2.0	2.0
<i>Enterobacter</i>	< 0.12	0.40	0.40	1.0	–	2.0
<i>Shigella species</i>	0.02	0.03	0.20	<0.10	0.06	–
<i>Bacteroides fragilis</i>	2.00	128	50	6.3	16	16
<i>Staph aureus</i>	1.0	6.3	3.1	0.40	0.50	1.0
<i>Strep faecalis</i>	2.0	12	12	1.6	–	–
<i>Neisseria gonorrhoea</i>	0.01	0.06	0.25	0.06	–	0.015
<i>Chlamydia trachomatis</i>	1.0	16	16	4.0	–	6.25
<i>Ureaplasma urealyticum</i>	32	32	64	8.0	–	–

From Refs. [29, 30, 67]

CIPRO = ciprofloxacin; NORF = norfloxacin; ENOX = enoxacin; OFLOX = ofloxacin; PEFLOX = pefloxacin; FLEROX = fleroxacin

In vitro antibacterial activity

The fluoroquinolones are active against all aerobic gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria including several *Pseudomonas* strains and beta-lactam resistant bacteria [70]. Ciprofloxacin is the most active drug in vitro followed by norfloxacin, ofloxacin, fleroxacin, pefloxacin and enoxacin [44] but this difference may be clinically insignificant due to the high serum concentrations obtained. Gram-positive cocci are usually less sensitive, but ciprofloxacin and ofloxacin both reach sufficiently high serum concentrations to be effective against these bacteria. Anaerobic bacteria are resistant to quinolones while *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Ureaplasma urealyticum* are relatively resistant [7]. The MIC's for the common uropathogens are several times below the obtainable serum concentrations of the fluoroquinolones since a serum concentration of the quinolone of 1–4 times the minimal inhibitory concentration (MIC) is bactericidal [70] (Table 1). The in vitro antibacterial activity of the fluoroquinolones is decreased in the presence of urine and if the pH of the urine is decreased below 7.0 [24] but whether this is of any clinical importance is doubtful in the face of peak urine concentration above 100 mcg/ml for all fluoroquinolones after a single oral dose. However, when bacteria are challenged in vitro with these very high concentrations, a paradox effect leading to a decrease in bactericidal effect may be observed [15]. This is thought to be caused by a second action of the quinolones which causes inhibition of DNA synthesis and thus interferes with the lethal action on the DNA molecule [57]. We found discrepancy between in vitro activity expressed

by MIC and in vivo activity for ciprofloxacin in the treatment of experimental rat prostatitis when the ratio between ciprofloxacin concentration in the prostatic tissue and MIC was above 500. The cure rate was lower in this group of rats compared to rats treated with temafloxacin and difloxacin where the serum/MIC ratio was <90 [47].

The incidence of mutational resistance to quinolones is low, one or fewer instances per 10¹¹ colonies [46]. Plasmid transferred resistance does not seem to occur although a case of plasmid mediated resistance to nalidix acid in *Shigella dysenteriae* has recently been published [41]. Cross resistance among the fluoroquinolones is common [63] but does not extend to non-quinolone antimicrobials.

Pharmacokinetic

Some fluoroquinolones can be administered both orally and intravenously. The intestinal absorption is rapid but variable and food and magnesium containing antacids will delay the absorption [35]. Peak serum concentration (C_{max}) after a 400–500 mg oral dose of norfloxacin and ciprofloxacin range from 1–3 mcg/ml while enoxacin, ofloxacin, fleroxacin and pefloxacin reach peak concentrations around 4 mcg/ml (Table 2). The quinolones are partially metabolized in the liver and excreted in urine and bile. The peak urine concentration of all fluoroquinolones is many times the MIC for common uropathogens. Several metabolites, some of which have antibacterial activity, have been identified in the urine: 73% of ofloxacin and 67% of

Table 2. Pharmacokinetic parameters for six fluoroquinolones following a single oral dose (mean values as listed by authors)

	Oral dose (mg)	C _{max} (mcg/ml)	T _{1/2} (h)	24 h urine rec (%)	Ref.
Ciprofloxacin	500	2.3	3.9	30.6	14
Norfloxacin	400	1.6	7.4	30.0	60
Enoxacin	600	3.7	6.2	67.3	68
Ofloxacin	400	3.5	4.9	73.6 ^a	37
Fleroxacin	400	3.7	13.5	50.3	49
Pefloxacin	400	3.9	11.5	10.0	69

^aFollowing an oral dose of 200 mgC_{max} = peak serum concentration; T_{1/2} = half life in serum**Table 3.** Concentration of six fluoroquinolones in human prostatic secretion and tissue (mean values as listed by authors)

	PS (mcg/ml)	PS/P	PT (mcg/g)	PT/P
Ciprofloxacin	0.16	0.26	3.2	2.05
Norfloxacin	0.14	0.12	2.2	1.86
Enoxacin	0.39	0.39	4.9	2.48
Ofloxacin	1.34	1.10	4.08	1.12
Fleroxacin	1.00	0.28	4.24	1.10
Pefloxacin	8.7 ^a	no data	no data	no data

Data compiled from Refs. [11, 34, 45, 59]

^a Drug concentration in split ejaculate 1

PS = prostatic secretion; PT = prostatic tissue; P = plasma

enoxacin are recovered unchanged in the urine following oral administration while approximately one-third of an oral dose of norfloxacin and ciprofloxacin are excreted unchanged in the urine [30].

Ciprofloxacin [8], norfloxacin [29] and enoxacin [18] are recovered in the feces in high concentration and all three quinolones decreased the number of aerobic bacteria while ciprofloxacin completely eradicated coliform bacteria leaving the anaerobic flora unaffected. One week after cessation of quinolone administration, the fecal flora had returned to normal.

Tissue distribution

Special attention has focused on the distribution of the fluoroquinolones in prostatic tissue and secretions. The low degree of protein binding and minimal ionization at plasma pH make a large percentage of the drugs available for passive diffusion into the prostate. This is in contrast to other antimicrobials such as ampicillin and cephalosporins. Several human studies have determined the concentration of quinolones in prostatic tissue obtained during postatectomies and

following administration of the drugs. However one major shortcoming of these studies is the lack of steady state. It is therefore unknown at the time of tissue and serum sampling if the quinolone concentrations are changing in one or both of the compartments. With this reservation in mind, the investigated quinolones all concentrated in the prostatic tissue (Table 3). Ciprofloxacin and enoxacin reached the highest tissue/serum ratio between 2 and 2.5 while the ratio for norfloxacin was around 1.8 and for ofloxacin and fleroxacin 1.1. We have evaluated the distribution of fluoroquinolones in prostatic tissue and fluid using a dog model during steady state conditions [16, 20, 31, 38] and found prostatic secretion/plasma ratios somewhat lower: enoxacin reaching the highest ratios (appr 1.5) followed by fleroxacin (1.1), ciprofloxacin (0.7) and norfloxacin (0.5). Results obtained in the dog can, however, not be applied directly to humans since the pH of dog prostatic secretion is lower than that of humans.

Clinical studies in urinary tract infections

Numerous clinical trials have studied the efficacy of fluoroquinolones in the treatment of urinary tract infections (UTI). Comparison between the studies is difficult because of different criteria for patient enrollment, wide variations in definition of bacteriological and clinical cure and length of follow-up. Furthermore several studies are manufacturer controlled and designed as open and non-randomized trials.

Uncomplicated urinary tract infections

Antimicrobial treatment of uncomplicated UTI, i.e infection in a urinary tract with no anatomical abnormalities, can effectively and safely be performed using single dose treatment with conventional drugs like

trimethoprim combined with a sulfonamid or amoxicillin. However in patients allergic to these antimicrobials or with infection caused by 8 resistant bacteria, the fluoroquinolones are an excellent second choice and can be administered in low dosages.

Two dosages of norfloxacin, 200 mg and 400 mg, were compared to trimethoprim-sulfametoxazole (TMP-SMX) 160/800 mg in a double blind randomized study involving 9 primary care centers and 886 patients with UTI [62]. All antimicrobials were administered orally twice daily for seven days and less than 15% of the patients in each group had complicated UTI. Bacteriological cure ranged from 97.5 to 98.6%, 3 to 13 days after treatment, decreasing to 87.9 to 88.8% at 5¹/₂ week follow-up in all three groups. 5.1% of the patients treated with TMP-SMX discontinued therapy because of adverse reactions compared to 1.5% receiving 200 mg norfloxacin. Enoxacin, 400 mg, administered as a single dose to 29 women achieved a bacteriological cure rate of 69% compared to 85% of 26 patients cured receiving a single dose of trimethoprim 600 mg [2] in a double-blind trial while an open study on a single dose of enoxacin, 400 mg, sterilized the urine in 92.5% of the patients at 1 week follow-up compared to 65% of the patients receiving a single oral dose of 3 g amoxicillin. Similar results showing no differences between standard therapy and ciprofloxacin and ofloxacin treated patients have been reported [13, 21]. Although the risk of generating resistant bacteria is minimal using short-term therapy and especially single-dose treatment, one should probably restrict the use of the fluoroquinolones to difficult to treat urinary tract infections.

Complicated urinary tract infections

Complicated UTI is defined as infection in an anatomically abnormal urinary tract. In general, all fluoroquinolones achieve cure rates equal to or higher than the standard drugs. No clinical significant differences were demonstrable when norfloxacin, 400 mg twice daily, was compared to TMP-SMX 160–800 mg twice daily in 3 studies using a 10 days treatment period [27, 29, 48]. Cure rates between 94–97% were obtained for norfloxacin while 90–95% of TMP-SMX treated patients were cured. Norfloxacin, 400 mg twice daily, was compared to amoxicillin, 250 mg three times daily, both administered for 7 days in 40 elderly patients with complicated UTI [36]. Cure rates at 5 to 9 days follow-up were 95% for norfloxacin and 75% for amoxicillin; no long-term follow-up was performed. However amoxicillin has relatively limited activity against gram-negative bacteria and is therefore not ideal for treatment of UTI. Comparison between norfloxacin, 400

mg, and cinoxacin 500 mg, both given twice daily for 10 days, cured 93% and 83% of the patients, respectively [53]. However, direct comparison between the two treatments is difficult since 70 patients were treated with cinoxacin while only 15 patients were enrolled in the norfloxacin group. Three oral dosages regimens of ciprofloxacin, 250, 500 and 750 mg twice daily for 7 days were compared in the treatment of complicated UTI in 110 patients [23]. The cure rates (range 84–87%) were similar in the three groups, five to nine days after treatment, suggesting that 250 mg ciprofloxacin twice daily is sufficient therapy. Long-term cure rates of 64 to 67% at 4–6 weeks follow-up were reported in 3 studies [6, 12, 40] using treatment duration of 10–28 days and ciprofloxacin, 250 to 500 mg dosages twice daily. In a multicenter study, ciprofloxacin, 250 mg twice daily, was compared to TMP-SMX 160–800 mg, both administered twice daily for 9 days [1]. Cure rates of 94% and 86% were obtained respectively but in cases where *Klebsiella* and *Enterobacter* were the causative organism, this difference disappeared. No difference in cure rates was observed when ciprofloxacin was compared to norfloxacin [43] and ofloxacin [33] in double-blind randomized studies involving patients with uncomplicated and complicated UTI. Treatment results with ofloxacin [5, 13] and enoxacin [44, 51] are generally not different from those obtained with ciprofloxacin and norfloxacin. The newest fluoroquinolones, pefloxacin and fleroxacin, are not yet available for clinical use in the USA but are expected to be marketed within the coming year in West Germany while lomefloxacin and temafloxacin are undergoing investigation. Pefloxacin and fleroxacin are long acting (T_{1/2} approx 11–12 h) and therefore attain high urine concentrations up to 48 h after administration of a single oral dose. Results from open studies published as abstracts indicate cure rates of 64 to 90% in patients with complicated UTI treated with i.v. or peroral pefloxacin [17, 40, 56]. Clinical studies of fleroxacin are sparse but suggest that cure rates comparable to norfloxacin can be obtained using either 200 or 400 mg dosages [3, 62].

Side effects

The incidence of side effects using fluoroquinolones is about 5%. Gastrointestinal side effects (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea) prevail but are usually mild. Photosensitivity is known to occur with nalidix acid but the incidence for the fluoroquinolones is unknown at present.

Crystalluria has been described in healthy volunteers receiving high doses of norfloxacin (1.2–1.6 g) and having a urine pH of 7.0 to 7.8 and urine drug concentration between 1,200 to 2,300 mcg/ml [60].

Animal studies have shown the fluoroquinolones to accumulate in developing bone and cartilage and damage joints. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should therefore not be treated with fluoroquinolones. The fluoroquinolones, especially enoxacin [65] and to a lesser extent ciprofloxacin [55] and pefloxacin [66], interfere with the hepatic metabolism of theophylline by lowering its clearance up to 30% leading to possible overdose symptoms. In conclusion, all the mentioned fluorquinolones show low rate of resistance, favorable pharmacokinetics and few side effects which make these antimicrobials an excellent choice in the treatment of patients with complicated UTI, reaching high clinical and bacteriological cure rates.

Bacterial prostatitis

The fluoroquinolones reach prostatic tissue levels 1–2 times the simultaneous plasma concentration and are found in the prostatic secretion in concentrations well above the MIC for most pathogens isolated from patients with chronic bacterial prostatitis. *E. coli* is the bacteria most frequently isolated but *Pseudomonas*, *Klebsiella*, *Proteus* and *Enterobacteriaceae* species are also seen. *Chlamydia trachomatis*, *Ureaplasma urealyticum* and gram positive cocci are less often encountered. Acute bacterial prostatitis is relatively easy to treat using various parenteral antibiotics showing in vitro effect against the isolated microorganism.

In chronic prostatic bacterial infection, the characteristics of the drug determine the drug concentration obtainable in the prostate. A low degree of drug ionization at serum pH, low level of drug binding to serum protein, high lipid solubility, and maybe a small sized drug molecule increases the drug diffusion into the prostatic acini [58]. In the US, carbenicillin indanyl sodium is yet the only antibiotic approved by the Food and Drug Administration for treatment of acute and chronic bacterial prostatitis. However, the diffusion of the drug into the prostate is negligible according to the Henderson-Hasselbach equation since the drug is an acid [58]. The fluoroquinolones, like norfloxacin, ciprofloxacin and enoxacin are amphoteric and have two pKa values. At pH 7.4, approximately 10% of these quinolones are ionized [34] and 15–30% bound to serum proteins leaving a large proportion available for passive diffusion. Once the quinolones have diffused into the prostatic acini, more of the drug will be ionized since the pH of prostatic secretion in patients with chronic bacterial prostatitis is often above 8.0 [19]. This leads to “ion-trapping” of the drugs in the acini. From a theoretical standpoint the fluoroquinolones should be excellent in the treatment of this disease.

Clinical studies on chronic bacterial prostatitis are difficult to undertake because of the low incidence of the disease. Therefore most studies are open, non-randomized including small patient numbers and unfortunately most of the studies have a short follow-up period which makes it difficult to evaluate the treatment results. 17 patients with symptoms of chronic bacterial prostatitis and failing to show clinical improvement following at least 6 weeks treatment with trimetoprim and/or TMP-SMX were treated with oral ciprofloxacin 500 mg twice daily for two weeks [64]. 12 patients were infected with *E. coli* while *Streptococcus faecalis* was isolated in three patients and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Enterobacter aerogenes* in one patient each. During ciprofloxacin treatment all 4 localization specimens were sterile and at 1 year follow-up 5 of 10 evaluable patients originally infected with *E. coli* were considered as treatment successes. Recurrent bacterial prostatitis was found in 3 patients while 2 patients had low counts of *E. coli* in expressed prostatic secretion. Ciprofloxacin treatment of *Streptococcus faecalis* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* prostatitis was unsuccessful. A similar short term treatment success was reported by Childs [10]. 39 patients with chronic bacterial prostatitis were treated with ciprofloxacin, 500 mg twice daily, for a median period of 29 days. Clinical cure rate was 77% at short term evaluation (< 10 weeks) but unfortunately no data on the long-term results (> 1 year) were reported. Six patients had treatment failures due to reinfection or relapse caused by *Streptococcus* (3), *Pseudomonas* (1), *Citrobacter* (1) and *Klebsiella* (1). Other studies published as abstracts have evaluated ofloxacin in 8 patients with acute exacerbation of chronic bacterial prostatitis [50] and norfloxacin for long-term prophylaxis in patients with chronic bacterial prostatitis [52]. Following 4 months of continuous suppression therapy with norfloxacin, 400 mg daily, 19 patients were asymptomatic with sterile urine culture. However, after cessation of therapy, 12 patients had relapsing UTI and recurrent symptoms. Long-term, low dosage treatment with fluoroquinolones may be an option in these patients. Standard treatment of chronic bacterial prostatitis using f ex. trimethoprim which also concentrates in the prostate seldom gives cure rates above 30% probably caused by poor drug diffusion into the alkaline prostatic secretion.

Antimicrobial prophylaxis

Prophylactic use of fluoroquinolones during urological surgery are concentrated on transurethral procedures. The quinolones appear suited for prophylactic use because of their broad antibacterial spectrum covering

all common uropathogens. The incidence of postoperative bacteriuria, usually defined as $> 10^5$ colonies/ml, in patients with sterile urine prior to transurethral surgery and not receiving prophylactic antimicrobials varies between 6 and 70%, while approximately 10% of patients undergoing transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) will have transient bacteremia during surgery which in 1% of the patients leads to septicemia [25]. The value of prophylactic antimicrobials in TURP is usually measured by the incidence of postoperative significant bacteriuria and postoperative fever and length of hospital stay. Oral ciprofloxacin (250 mg) was compared to placebo in 101 patients undergoing TURP [42]. The drug was administered twice daily for 3 days perioperatively with the first dose given preoperatively. Postoperative bacteriuria developed in 38% of patients in the placebo group compared to 6% in the ciprofloxacin group ($p = 0.002$). In addition, length of hospital stay was shorter among patients receiving prophylaxis. However, no clinical significant differences were reported in a study comparing oral ciprofloxacin, 500 mg every 12 h, in one group starting preoperatively and continued until the day of catheter removal totalling 3 to 4 days of drug administration and in a second group, prolonged by five days after catheter removal totalling 8–9 days drug administration to a third group receiving placebo [26]. Postoperative significant bacteriuria was found in 3.4 and 2.5% of the patients with sterile urine preoperatively respectively compared to 19.4% in a placebo group. All cases with bacteriuria resolved spontaneously without treatment and were thus of no clinical importance. The newest fluoroquinolone (floxacin, pefloxacin) with long half lives seem promising for use as single dose prophylaxis and preliminary results showed a single dose of pefloxacin, 800 mg 2 h preoperatively to be as effective as a 2 days course in 50 patients undergoing TURP [9].

The fluoroquinolones are very effective in the treatment of urinary tract infections caused by gram-positive and gram-negative aerobic bacteria. Cure rates comparable to or higher than those obtained by standard antimicrobials are obtained in treatment of uncomplicated and complicated UTI. Bacterial prostatitis can be successfully treated with fluoroquinolones but there is, so far, no dramatic increase in the cure rate compared to traditional drugs and especially long term results are poorly elucidated.

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