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The Biosynthesis of Ribonucleic Acid Pyrimidines in Ehrlich's Ascites Tumor

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In a previous communication we have proposed the following scheme for the synthesis of orotic acid in rat liver slices \(^1\): L-aspartic acid + CO\(_2\) + NH\(_3\) → L-ureidosuccinic acid → dihydro-orotic acid → orotic acid.

Reichard \(^2\) has presented strong evidence that orotic acid is a normal intermediate in the biogenesis of polynucleotide pyrimidines and therefore the scheme given above probably represents the actual pathway of pyrimidine synthesis in rat liver. The pyrimidine biogenesis of the Ehrlich ascites tumor \(^3\) has now been investigated for comparison.

Two different experimental approaches were used. In the first one tumor cells were incubated in Krebs-Henseleit medium with any of the following N\(^14\) labeled substances: Ammonia, aspartic acid, L-ureidosuccinic acid, orotic acid, uracil, dihydrooracil, ureidopropionic acid, β-alanine. The ribonucleic acid pyrimidines were isolated and their isotope content determined. In experiments with N\(^14\) ammonia and aspartic acid the distribution of the isotope in the pyrimidine ring was determined \(^4\).

In the second approach the tumor cells were incubated with an isotopically labeled precursor (known to give an incorporation of isotope into the polynucleotide pyrimidines) in the presence of a pool of the non labeled substance suspected to be an intermediate (ureidosuccinic acid, dihydroorotic acid or orotic acid). Both the substance under investigation and the polynucleotide pyrimidines were isolated at the end of the incubation and their isotope content was determined.

The results of these two experimental approaches show that the same precursors as in rat liver slices can be used by the ascites tumor for the synthesis of polynucleotide pyrimidines. The question of these substances being also normal intermediates tends to be obscured by permeability effects and will be discussed.

2. Reichard, P. J. Biol. Chem. 197 (1952) 391.

Formation in vitro of Uridine Phosphates from Orotic Acid

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The transformation of orotic acid into different uridine phosphates has been demonstrated in rat liver in vivo \(^5\); since it was shown that one or several of these nucleotides are precursors of polynucleotide pyrimidines and since orotic acid has been demonstrated to be a normal intermediate in pyrimidine biosynthesis in rat liver \(^6\) an investigation of the enzymatic conversion of C\(^14\)-orotic acid into uridine phosphates has been started.

The enzymes were obtained either from the dialyzed supernatant of homogenized liver (rat and pigeon) after high speed centrifugation or from extracts of pigeon liver acetone powder. In the presence of ribose-5-phosphate, Mg\(^2+\) and ATP (or fructose-di-phosphate DPN, Mg\(^2+\) and ATP) C\(^14\)-orotic acid was converted into several radioactive compounds, one of which was identified as uridine-5-phosphate (UMP). The other compounds gave rise to UMP upon acid hydrolysis and were probably pyrophosphates of uridine (e. g. uridine-diphosphate and uridinetriphosphate). In some cases enzymatic breakdown of the uridinephosphates to uridine and uracil took place. In a time study it was found that UMP was the first uridine compound formed from orotic acid. This result was confirmed by the finding that C\(^14\)-UMP was rapidly transformed into radioactive uridinepyro-