Hydrogen peroxide potentiates organophosphate toxicosis in chicks

Banan K. Al-Baggou, Ahmed S. Naser, and Fouad K. Mohammad

Department of Physiology, Biochemistry and Pharmacology, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Mosul, Mosul, Iraq. Corresponding author: F. K. Mohammad, fouadmohammad@yahoo.com

Abstract. Objective: The purpose of the present study was to examine the effect of hydrogen peroxide \((\text{H}_2\text{O}_2)\) on the acute toxicity of organophosphate insecticides dichlorvos and diazinon and their inhibitory actions on plasma, brain and liver cholinesterase activities. Material and Methods: \text{H}_2\text{O}_2\ was given in drinking water (0.5\% v/v) for 2 weeks in unsexed day old chicks, a regimen known to induce oxidative stress in this species. A control group received drinking tap water. All experiments were conducted on the chicks at the age of 15 days after exposure to \text{H}_2\text{O}_2\. The acute (24 h) oral LD50 values of dichlorvos and diazinon in the insecticidal preparations as determined by the up-and-down method in the control chicks were 9.4 and 15.6 mg/kg, respectively. Results: The poisoned chicks manifested signs of cholinergic toxicosis within one hour after the dosing including salivation, lacrimation, gasping, frequent defecation, dropping of wings, tremors, convulsions and recumbency. The acute (24 h) oral LD50 values of dichlorvos and diazinon in chicks provided with \text{H}_2\text{O}_2\ were reduced to 3.5 and 6.5 mg/kg, by 63 and 58\%, respectively when compared to respective control LD50 values. The intoxicated chicks also showed cholinergic signs of toxicosis as described above. Plasma, brain and liver cholinesterase activities of the chicks exposed to \text{H}_2\text{O}_2\ were significantly lower than their respective control (\text{H}_2\text{O}) values by 25, 28 and 27\%, respectively. Oral dosing of chicks with dichlorvos at 3 mg/kg significantly inhibited cholinesterase activities in the plasma, brain and liver of both control (42-67\%) and \text{H}_2\text{O}_2\-treated (15-59\%) chicks. Diazinon at 5 mg/kg, orally also inhibited cholinesterase activities in the plasma, brain and liver of both control (36-66\%) and \text{H}_2\text{O}_2\-treated (15-30\%) chicks. In the \text{H}_2\text{O}_2\ groups, dichlorvos inhibition of liver cholinesterase activity and diazinon inhibition of liver and brain cholinesterase activities were significantly lesser than those of the respective values of the control group received tap water. Conclusion: The data suggest that \text{H}_2\text{O}_2\ may potentiate the toxicity of organophosphate insecticides irrespective of the extent of cholinesterase inhibition, and further studies are needed to examine the role of oxidative stress in this potential toxicity outcome.

Key words: Cholinesterase, organophosphate, oxidative stress, \text{H}_2\text{O}_2,\ chicks, insecticide.

Introduction. Organophosphate (OP) pesticides are frequently used to control and eradicate parasitic insects in veterinary medicine and agriculture (Moffett 2006). They pose high threats to public health because of their intrinsic toxicity and injudicious uses (Jaga & Dharmani 2003). The toxic actions of OP in mammals are initiated by inhibiting the target enzyme cholinesterase (ChE) at the nerve endings and neuromuscular junctions, resulting in the accumulation of acetylcholine, and subsequently cause parasympathomimetic overstimulation manifested as muscarinic, nicotinic, and central nervous system effects (Wilson 2005; Lotti 2010). Reduction in blood and nervous tissue ChE activities is the most important diagnostic biomarker endpoint of OP exposure and toxicosis (Wilson et al 1999, 2005).

The toxicity of OP insecticides can be modulated by many therapeutic and toxic agents (Ecobichon 2001; Jaga & Dharmani 2003; Pope et al 2005). Some of these agents such as metals are known to produce oxidative stress in biological membranes characterized by metabolic alterations of body oxidative defence mechanisms, changes of blood or brain cholinesterase activities as well as behavioral alterations resulting from
insults to the central nervous system (Al-Baggou 2002; Gao et al 2009). The OP insecticides also induce oxidative stress in laboratory animals such as rats (Possamai et al 2007; Łukaszewicz-Hussain 2010) and many reports indicate changes in oxidative stress markers among patients exposed to OP pesticides with concurrent depression of blood ChE activities (Ranjbar et al 2005; Łukaszewicz-Hussain 2010; Hundekari et al 2011). Hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) has many therapeutic and industrial applications with potential toxic oxidative effects (Douglass 2003; Watt et al 2004) and it was reported to induce oxidative stress in laboratory animals and modify their responses to drugs such as sedatives and anaesthetics (Wohaeib et al 1994; Mohammad et al 1999) probably by causing lipid peroxidation in the central nervous system (Watt et al 2004). Information on the response of H₂O₂-stressed animals to OP is rather limited. One report indicates that H₂O₂ inhibits ChE of myometrium sarcolemma in vitro (Danylovskyh 2009). Another in vitro study showed that low concentrations of H₂O₂ (10⁻⁶ M) activate recombinant human acetylcholinesterase by increasing the Vmax > 2-fold, whereas high concentrations (10⁻³ M) inhibit the enzyme with a significant decrease in Vmax (Schallreuter et al 2004). This form of activation/deactivation of skin ChE by H₂O₂ was found to be a reversible oxidation process (Schallreuter & Elwary 2007). Furthermore, the implication of H₂O₂-induced oxidative stress has been suggested in Alzheimer's disease by inhibiting membrane bound erythrocyte ChE activity (Molochkina et al 2005).

Assessing ChE inhibition profiles in the plasma and brain of young chicks is a widely accepted standard for monitoring toxicosis and lethality induced by OP insecticides (Farage-Elawar & Francis 1988; Mohammad et al 2008). Chicks have already been used in experimental models of acute or subchronic OP poisoning (Farage-Elawar & Francis 1988; Wilson 1988; Al-Badrany & Mohammad 2007). Various reports indicate concurrent reductions in blood and brain ChE activities in birds acutely intoxicated by doses close to or higher than the median lethal doses (LD₅₀) of OP insecticides (Farage-Elawar & Francis 1988; Wilson 1988; Burn & Leighton 1996; Mohammad & Al-Baggou 2005; Wilson et al 2005; Mohammad et al 2008). The aim of the present study was to examine the effect of H₂O₂ treatment (0.5% v/v in drinking water for 2 weeks) on acute OP toxicosis and ChE inhibition in chicks. In this context, the possible modulating effect of H₂O₂ on OP toxicosis can be assessed directly in vivo.

Material and Methods. Mixed breed day old unsexed chicks were used. They were maintained in a room with a temperature of 30-34°C, constant lighting and wood shavings as floor litter. The chicks had free access to water and feed. Chicks were either provided with plane tap water (control group) or H₂O₂ (Scharlau Chemie, Barcelona, Spain) prepared in tap water as 0.5% v/v drinking solution for two weeks in order to produce oxidative stress as reported before (Mohammad et al 1999; Ahmed 2010). The water sources were changed daily and freshly provided to chicks. Commercial insectical concentrate solutions of the OP insecticides dichlorvos (50% EC, Pacific Agriscience, Australia) and diazinon (60% Diazinon-60EC, VAPCO, Jordan) were further diluted in distilled water to obtain the desired concentrations of the individual insecticide for oral dosing of the chicks by a gavage needle in a volume of 5 mL/kg body weight (Mohammad et al 2008). The insecticidal solutions were freshly prepared before use, and all doses of the OP insecticide were based on their active ingredients. The selections of the doses of OP insecticides were based on our preliminary experiments in chicks and on the literature (Mohammad & Al-Baggou 2005; Mohammad et al 2008). All experiments were conducted on the chicks at the age of 15 days after exposure to H₂O₂.

Acute toxicity of OP insecticides. The acute (24 h) oral LD₅₀ values of dichlorvos or diazinon were determined in chicks provided with tap water or with 0.5% H₂O₂ in the drinking water for two weeks by the up-and-down method (Dixon 1980). The chicks were individually observed for the appearance of signs of cholinergic toxicosis for
1 h, and then the 24 h lethality was recorded (Wilson 1988; Al-Badrany & Mohammad 2007; Mohammad et al 2008). The LD50 experiments were concluded using only 5 or 6 chicks in each OP group over a period of 6 days. The LD50 of each OP in the insecticidal preparations was determined so that the relative changes in ChE activities at the doses of dichlorvos and diazinon in subsequent experiment could be compared to a bench mark dosage of acute toxicity.

In vivo effects of OP insecticides on plasma, brain and liver ChE activities. Chicks from the control group (tap water) and the H2O2 group (0.5% in the drinking water) were dosed orally using a gavage needle with either distilled water at 5 mL/kg (control) or with dichlorvos at 3 mg/kg body weight and diazinon at 5 mg/kg body weight (6-9 chicks /each group). The doses of the OP were chosen so that they comprised about 30% of their respective LD50 values, and other than salivation or slight depression, they did not cause overt acute signs of cholinergic toxicosis or death in chicks within two hours after the dosing. Two hours after each OP dosing, chicks were euthanized to obtain the plasma, whole brain and liver for determination of ChE activity by an electrometric method described previously in chickens (Mohammad 2007; Al-Badrany & Mohammad 2007; Mohammad et al 2008). All samples were kept at –20ºC pending ChE analysis within one week.

The whole brain and liver were homogenized on an ice bath by a glass homogenizer in a pH 8.1 barbital-phosphate buffer solution (1.237 g sodium barbital 0.163 g potassium dihydrogen phosphate and 35.07 g sodium chloride/L of distilled water) at 3 mL/100 mg wet weight (Mohammad & Al-Baggou 2005; Mohammad 2007; Al-Badrany & Mohammad 2007). We determined ChE activity in the plasma, brain and liver samples by the electrometric method as follows: the reaction mixture contained 3 mL distilled water, 0.2 mL plasma or whole brain homogenate and 3 mL of pH 8.1 buffer described above. Initial pH of the mixture (pH1) was measured with a glass electrode using a pH meter (Hanna, Romania), and then 0.10 mL of the substrate 7.5% acetylthiocholine iodide was added to the mixture which was incubated at 37 ºC for 30 min. At the end of the incubation period, the pH of the reaction mixture (pH2) was measured. The enzyme activity (expressed as ΔpH/30 min) was calculated as follows: ChE activity (ΔpH/30 min) = (pH1 – pH2) - Δ pH of blank

The blank was without the plasma or brain homogenate sample. The % of ChE inhibition was calculated as follows: % ChE inhibition = [ChE activity (without OP)-ChE activity (with OP)/ ChE activity (without OP)] X 100

Data as multiple means were subjected to the analysis of variance followed by least significant difference test (Petrie & Watson 1999). The statistical difference between two groups was measured by Student’s-t-test. The level of statistical significance was at p < 0.05.

Results. The acute (24 h) oral LD50 values of dichlorvos and diazinon in the insecticidal preparations as determined by the up-and-down method in the control chicks provided with tap water were 9.4 and 15.6 mg/kg, respectively (Table 1). The intoxicated chicks manifested signs of cholinergic toxicosis within one hour after the dosing including salivation, lacrimation, gasping, frequent defecation, drooping of wings, tremors, convulsions and recumbency. The acute (24 h) oral LD50 values of dichlorvos and diazinon in chicks provided with H2O2 (0.5%) in tap water were reduced to 3.5 and 6.5 mg/kg, by 63 and 58%, respectively when compared to respective control LD50 values (Table 1). The intoxicated chicks also showed cholinergic signs of poisoning as described above.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dichlorvos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD50 (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of the doses used (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>15-5=10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial dose (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last dose (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of chicks used</td>
<td>5 XOXXO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase or decrease in dose (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diazinon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD50 (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of the doses used (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>20-10=10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial dose (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last dose (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of chicks used</td>
<td>5 OXOOX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase or decrease in dose (mg/ kg, orally)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*X=death; O=survival The LD50 was determined by the up-and-down method (Dixon 1980).

Plasma, brain and liver ChE activities of the chicks exposed to $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ (0.5%) were significantly lower than their respective counter parts of the control ($\text{H}_2\text{O}$) group by 25, 28 and 27%, respectively (Figure 1). Oral dosing of chicks with dichlorvos at 3 mg/kg significantly inhibited ChE activities in the plasma, brain and liver of both control (42-67%) and $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$-treated (15-59%) chicks (Table 2). Diazinon at 5 mg/kg, orally also inhibited ChE activities in the plasma, brain and liver of both control (36-66%) and $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$-treated (15-30%) chicks (Table 2). In the $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ groups, dichlorvos inhibition of liver ChE activity and diazinon inhibition of liver and brain ChE activities were significantly lesser than those of the respective values of the control group that received tap water (Table 2).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cholinesterase</th>
<th>Dichlorvos</th>
<th>Diazinon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\text{H}_2\text{O}$</td>
<td>$\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasma</td>
<td>67±6</td>
<td>59±5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain</td>
<td>55±5</td>
<td>48±7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>42±5</td>
<td>15±5†</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values are mean±SE of 6-9 chick/group.
†Significantly different from the respective dichlorvos value, p < 0.05.
‡Significantly different from the respective control value, p < 0.05.

Cholinesterase activity was measured 2 hour after the organophosphate dosing.

Percentages of inhibition of plasma, whole brain and liver cholinesterase activities in chicks exposed to $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ (0.5% in drinking water for 2 weeks) and subsequently dosed orally with organophosphate insecticides dichlorvos (3 mg/kg) and diazinon (5 mg/kg).

Mean baseline cholinesterase activities ($\text{A}_{\text{pH} / 30 \text{ min}}$) of the plasma, brain and liver in the control group were 1.1, 0.66 and 0.265, respectively, and in the $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ they were 0.83, 0.41 and 0.193, respectively. These values were used to calculate the % of cholinesterase inhibition.
Discussion and Conclusions. The findings of the present study showed that chicks exposed orally to H$_2$O$_2$ became susceptible to OP toxicosis more than the control (tap water) group as was evident by the decreases of the LD50 values of dichlorvos and diazinon by 63 and 58%, respectively. H$_2$O$_2$ treatment in the drinking water rendered rats and rabbits sensitive to sedatives and anesthetics (Wohaeib et al 1994; Mohammad et al 1999). Treatment of laboratory animals including the chicken with H$_2$O$_2$ in the drinking water for periods ranging between 2-8 weeks was reported to induce tissue oxidative stress (Imre & Juhásza 1987; Mohammad et al 1999; Ahmed 2010). Oxidative stress was reported to severely damage muscarinic receptors signaling system which might in turn add an additional burden on the toxic insult of OP insecticides (de Jongh et al 2007). H$_2$O$_2$ was found to modulate (activation/deactivation) ChE activity in a concentration dependent manner (Schallreuter et al 2004). It is possible that the H$_2$O$_2$-induced oxidative stress has potentiated the OP poisoning in the chicks. Oxidative stress has been also implicated in the adverse effects of OP insecticides (Possamai et al 2007; Shadnia et al 2007; Lukaszewicz-Hussain 2010). The role of oxidative stress in ChE inhibition is not clear yet. It may activate or even deactivate the enzyme (Schallreuter et al 2004) independently from the OP and its binding site. In support of this notion, the baseline ChE activities in the plasma, brain and liver of H$_2$O$_2$-treated chicks were lower than those of the control values by 25-28%, suggesting a deactivation process of the ChE. However, the acute LD50 experiment indicated increased toxic interaction (potentiation) between the OP and H$_2$O$_2$.

Dichlorvos and diazinon variably inhibited plasma, brain and liver ChE activities in both control and H$_2$O$_2$-exposed chicks by 15-67%. Organophosphates are known to differentially inhibit blood and tissue ChE activities (Pope et al 2005; Wilson 2005; Lotti 2010). However, in the H$_2$O$_2$-treated chick, dichlorvos inhibited liver ChE to a lesser extent than that of the respective value of the control group supplied with tap water. Similarly, diazinon inhibited liver and brain ChE activities to a lesser extent when compared with the control (Table 2). This effect could be attributed to H$_2$O$_2$ which modulates ChE activity and modifies its susceptibility to further inhibition by other agents.
H₂O₂ was reported to modify erythrocyte membrane structure and activity of acetylcholinesterase (Molochkina et al 2005). H₂O₂ may deactivate ChE active site via oxidation of the Trp432, Trp435, and Met⁴³⁶ residues inducing conformational changes and loss of the physiological function (Schallreuter et al 2004). Several studies also suggested that oxidative stress and subsequent deleterious effects of OP may be an alternative mechanism of cytotoxic effects of these pesticides (Poovala et al 1999; Shadnia et al 2007; Lukaszewicz-Hussain 2010). Recent reviews suggested that many non-ChE mechanisms could be involved in the acute toxicity of OP (Pope et al 2005; Lukaszewicz-Hussain 2010; Lotti 2010). In this context the current data suggest that H₂O₂ may potentiate the toxicity of OP irrespective of the extent of ChE inhibition, and further studies are needed to examine the role of oxidative stress in this potential toxicity outcome of the OP insecticides.

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Authors:
Banan Kh. Al-Baggou, Department of Physiology, Biochemistry and Pharmacology, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Mosul, Mosul, Iraq, email: banankh71@yahoo.com.
Ahmed S. Naser, Department of Physiology, Biochemistry and Pharmacology, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Mosul, Mosul, Iraq, email: vetmedmosul@yahoo.com.
Fouad K. Mohammad, Department of Physiology, Biochemistry and Pharmacology, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Mosul, Mosul, Iraq, email: fouadmohammad@yahoo.com.

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