THE EFFECTS OF VITAMINS A AND E ON THE BIOSYNTHESIS OF 17-OXOSTEROIDS

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basal Diet</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of the Animals for Collection of Urine</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrolysis and Extraction of Urine</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chromatographic Separation of Steroids</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of Histological Sections</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording Electroretinograms</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weights and Symptoms</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation and Identification of 17-oxo-steroids</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Histological Changes</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electroretinograms</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

It has been well established that vitamins and steroid hormones are involved in the intermediary metabolism and various other essential vital processes in life. It is known that some of the vitamins are correlated with the biosynthesis of many other biologically active substances including steroids. The definite role played by the vitamins in this respect is still to be determined. It has been shown that changes in the concentration of the steroids are associated with many diseases and disorders. This abnormality can be verified by the isolation and identification of the steroids from the biological fluids through which they are excreted.

Thus, the assay of urinary excretion of the 17-oxosteroids has been extensively used in an endeavor to study diseases of the adrenal gland, and to differentiate tumors of the adrenals from hyperplasia of the organ. In many of these instances the 17-oxosteroid assay has proved to be of considerable value. In Addison's disease there was a decrease in the output of the 17-oxosteroids (32). Elevated 17-oxosteroid levels were seen in Cushing's disease (4).

Since about one-third of the 17-oxosteroids were derived from the testicular hormones, the assay for the 17-oxosteroid had been of some aid in diagnosing hypogonadism in the male (11). When there was an interstitial tumor of the testes the 17-oxosteroid output was usually markedly elevated (12).

The 17-oxosteroids coupled with the assay of the corticoste-
roids as performed by the 17-ketogenic steroid assay of urine, furnished valuable information to the clinician in cases of adrenal gland imbalance (15).

However, during the past few years interest has grown in the possibility that vitamin A has a function in the adrenal gland. In 1955, Clark and Colburn (10) found that when cortisone was injected into rats, the level of vitamin A decreased in the liver and kidneys. There was also a decrease in vitamin A when Reichstein's compound was injected (7).

These experiments demonstrated some connection between the function of an adrenal steroid and the storage or metabolism of vitamin A. Hays and Kendall (22) injected progesterone into vitamin A deficient rats, and found that it did not insure normal growth, but restored the estrous cycle to normal. By the injection of pregnenolone it was found that it had no effect on the estrous cycle, although it is known to be the precursor of progesterone (46). It was concluded that vitamin A acted in that step. The foregoing considerations indicated a diversity of approach to the problem of the function of vitamin A. In spite of this diversity, a few main areas are emerging. The most promising one is in the biosynthesis of the adrenal steroids. This is mainly because of the basic importance for the maintenance of life, and also because of the early involvement of the adrenals in vitamin A deficiency. It may also be noted that both the adrenal steroid biosynthesis and a vitamin A requirement are found in mammals only.

The adrenal glands have also been reported to be affected by vitamin E deficiency. It was found that the action of vitamin E
was to some extent, comparable to that of ACTH from the anterior pituitary in stimulating secretion of the corticosteroids (1).

Ingelman-Sundberg (27) studied genital function of guinea pigs, fed a vitamin E deficient diet with or without supplementation of daily doses of vitamin E. Estrogens could not be demonstrated in the urine of guinea pigs, but the excretion of the 17-oxosteroids and corticosteroids was similar in both cases.

From various sources of information it is also evident that vitamins A and E are related in metabolism in several ways. The liver vitamin A reserves were reported to be lowered in avitaminosis E (34). It was also shown that the depletion, or absorption and storage, of vitamin A in the liver was somewhat dependent on vitamin E. Optimum utilization of vitamin A or β-carotene is dependent on an adequate amount of vitamin E. This effect has often been referred to as "physiological synergism" and is in part due to the action of vitamin E as a physiological antioxidant. Vitamin E can affect the rate of growth in animals on low levels of vitamin A, and the extent of liver deposition of vitamin A. The beta carotene could produce two molecules of vitamin A more often with adequate vitamin E. This was probably due to the antioxidant properties of vitamin E (36). This antioxidant property of vitamin E in the conversion of beta carotene was demonstrated in chickens and turkeys by Kramke, et al. (29). Hence, it is quite likely that vitamin E plays some role in the biosynthesis of steroids.

The main purpose of the experiment was to determine the effects of avitaminosis A and E on the biosynthesis of the 17-oxo-
steroids. The effects on general health and growth were also studied.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Among the many by-products of the process of metabolism which are excreted in the urine are a group of steroid hormones which possess a ketone group at carbon 17. These are designated as 17-oxosteroids. The first 17-oxosteroid isolated was androsterone, crystallized from male urine in 1931 by Butenandt (33). At present there are more than 48 known compounds which can be grouped under 17-oxosteroid classification (55). In the male, the 17-oxosteroids arise from two organs, approximately one-third from the testes and two-thirds from the adrenal cortex (33). The portion arising from the testes are metabolites of the androgen, testosterone. The portion arising from the adrenal cortex are metabolites of the corticosteroids, and are secretory products of the zona reticularis of the adrenal gland. In the female, the 17-oxosteroids arise from the adrenal cortex and the ovaries (33).

From the clinical point of view, the major 17-oxosteroids of diagnostic importance are: androsterone, etiocholanolone, dehydroepiandrosterone, 11-hydroxyandrosterone, 11-hydroxyetiocholanolone, 11-oxoetiocholanolone and 11-oxoandrostosterone (9). Besides these naturally occurring compounds, artifacts of hydrolysis appear quite often. These compounds are: 3 β-chlorodehydroepiandrosterone, and Δ2(or 3)-androstene-17-one. The Δ9, 11-dehydration products of the 11-oxygenated steroids are found in insignificant amounts (31).
In early days, while working with adrenal extracts, it was assumed by Hartman, et al. (20) that there was only one corticosteroid, "Cortin." Then investigations were being carried out by numerous chemists in order to determine the active principle of the corticosteroids. At present, at least 46 steroids have been isolated from the adrenal cortex by Dorfman (14), and more recently by Wettstein and Anner (50).

Owing to similarity in structure, it was assumed that cholesterol was the precursor for all the steroids. First experimental evidence for this was shown by Bloch (6). He isolated $^{14}$C-progesterone and pregnanediol after administering $^{14}$C-cholesterol to a human subject. This was further proved by Kurath, et al. (30) and by Werbin, et al. (49). Both groups isolated $^{14}$C-cortisol by using $^{14}$C-cholesterol. It was demonstrated by Zaffaroni, et al. (54) that cortisol and corticosterone might be produced quite efficiently by using acetate as precursor. Probably this occurred in two pathways, one involving cholesterol and the other going around this step, as found by Bligh, et al. (5).

It was demonstrated by Gloor and Weiss (17) that the biosynthesis of cholesterol and squalene was influenced by vitamin A deficiency in the rat. They fed rats $^{14}$C-mevalonic acid during the deficiency period, and detected 2 percent of the total radioactivity of unsaponifiable material in squalene and 95 percent in cholesterol.

As shown by Saba, et al. (37), the first step of conversion of cholesterol was to $\Delta^5$-pregnenolone. This was also proved by Staple, et al. (42). The intermediates formed during this conver-
sion were probably 20β-OH-cholesterol and 20, 22-dihydroxycholesterol. The next step was the conversion of Δ⁵-pregnenolone to progesterone. There was also some evidence that synthesis of the corticosteroids might proceed from acetate without going through cholesterol (24). However, progesterone may undergo 11, 17, 18 or 21 hydroxylations. Of these, 11β-hydroxylation is not to be considered as a major pathway. It is due to the fact that by using 11β-OH-progesterone as substrate, corticosterone and cortisol were produced by Eichhorn and Hechter (16) only in insignificant amounts. Usually, the 11 and 18 hydroxylating enzymes are found in the mitochondria, and the 17 and 21 ones are found in the microsomes. The hydroxylation reactions were studied by Stachenko and Giroud (41). The 18 hydroxylation was found to occur in the zona glomerulosa, the 17 hydroxylations in the zona fasciculata and reticularis, and the 11 and 21 hydroxylations in the various zones of the adrenal cortex.

Ungar and Dorfman (45) showed that androgens were produced in significant amounts by the adrenal cortex. They incubated the adrenal tissue with C¹⁴-carboxyl-labeled acetate and cholesterol, and isolated: dehydroepiandrosterone, 3 β-chloro-Δ⁵-androstene-17-one, Δ⁵-androstene-3 β, 17β-diol, etiocholane-3α-ol-17-one, androsterone, and Δ⁵-pregnene-3 β, 20α-diol.

Another main aspect in the corticoid production is the role of ACTH, secreted by the anterior pituitary. Its action was found to be somewhere in between cholesterol and progesterone, and more specifically in the scission of the side chain (43). Haynes and Berthet (21) showed that ACTH stimulated the phosphorylase activity
which in turn produced more TPNH, and the latter produced more steroids because of the many steps which required it. Another hypothesis put forward by Hechter (23) was that ACTH might act by increasing the entry of cholesterol or some other necessary substances into the mitochondria.

The biosynthesis of the corticosteroids from progesterone by microorganisms is also of considerable importance. Thus Ophiobolus herpotrichus, Cunninghamamella blakesleeanus or Curvularia lunata, Cephalothecium roseum were used for hydroxylation of progesterone at 21, 11β, and 17α positions respectively (24).

However, complete oxidative removal of the side chain in cholesterol and progesterone will lead to the formation of the C19 steroids, androgens. The principal naturally occurring androgens are: androsterone, dehydroepiandrosterone and testosterone (28). Testosterone was first isolated from the testes; the other two together with a large number of related substances have been obtained from urine. It was first thought that the testes produced only one hormone, testosterone (35). But the concept was further advanced by Vidgoff, et al. (47) that the testes secreted more than one hormone. Dominguez (13) incubated a testicular tumor from a boy with progesterone-4-C\textsuperscript{14}, 20α-hydroxyprogesterone-4-C\textsuperscript{14}, and isolated: 4-pregnene-17 α, 20 α-diol-3-one, 4-pregnen-17 α, 20 β-diol-3-one, 6β-hydroxyprogesterone, 11-deoxycorticosterone, testosterone, 4-androstene-3, 17 dione, progesterone, and 4-pregnene-20 α-diol-3-one. Chromic acid oxidation of dibromocholesteryl acetate yielded after several steps and among other products, Δ\textsuperscript{5}-androsten-3β-diol-17-one (dehydroepiandrosterone). Previously, this reaction was an
important avenue of approach to the partial synthesis of steroids.

Certain microorganisms might cause removal of the steroid side chains (24). Thus *Penicillinum* and *Aspergillus* species were used for microbiological oxidation of progesterone and of various 17-hydroxysteroids to $\Delta^4$-androstene-3, 17-dione, testosterone, and testolactone. *Pseudomonas testosteroni* was used for reversible reduction of androstenedione to testosterone and its reduction to dehydroepiandrosterone. The reduction of androstenedione to etiocholan-17$\beta$-ol-3-one was possible by *Bacillus putrificus*.

However, in mammals, androgens are produced mainly by the adrenal cortex, the testes and the ovaries. While the production of androgens by the adrenals is controlled by ACTH of the anterior pituitary, the gonadal biosynthesis of androgens is regulated by the gonadotropic hormones of the pituitary and placenta. Probably, as in the case of adrenocortical hormones, cholesterol is not an obligatory precursor of testicular androgens.

There was ample evidence that the ovary became capable of liberating effective amounts of androgen during unusual or abnormal circumstances (44). It was reported and confirmed that ovarian homotransplants persisting in the ears of orchidectomized mice and rats frequently secreted sufficient androgens to maintain the vesicular glands and prostates in a normal condition. Although it was known that progesterone evoked certain androgenic effects, there was strong evidence by Hill and Strong (25) that the action of ovarian grafts was due to another androgen similar to that produced by the testes.

The 17$\alpha$-hydroxylation and the side chain splitting were not
the rate-limiting steps in the biosynthesis of androgens in the normal animal, as both were reduced in the cryptorchid animal (26). Yet the seminal vesicles were slightly larger than normal, indicating a greater output of androgenically active substances.

The necessary steps for the biosynthesis of the corticosteroids were demonstrated by Van Dyke (46), as shown in figure 1. Similarly, the steps for the biosynthesis of the androgens were demonstrated by Heftman and Mosettig (24), as shown in figure 2. Important neutral 17-oxosteroids were determined and isolated from human urines by Mason and Engstrom (33), as shown in table 1.

However, the present experiment was concerned with the 17-oxosteroids, which are excreted in the urine as metabolites of the corticosteroids and the androgens, and the effects produced by avitaminosis A and E in this regard.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

Basal Diet

A modification of a semi-purified vitamins A and E deficient diet used by Wooley (52), Wolf, et al. (51), Greenberg, et al. (18 and 19), Brown and Sturtevant (8), and Sherman and Trupp (40) was employed, and consisted of the following:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>gms./1000 gms. diet</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casein (vitamin free)</td>
<td>350.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard (molecularly distilled)</td>
<td>250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn starch</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dextrose</td>
<td>80.00</td>
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Estrogens

↑

Androstenedione

Androstenedione

↓

Dehydroepiandosterone

↓

Squalene

↓

Cholesterol

↓

Δ⁵-Pregnenolone

↓

Progesterone

↓

17α-OH-Progesterone

↓

11β-OH-Progesterone

↓

17α-OH-Desoxycorticosterone

↓

Corticosterone

↓

Aldosterone

↓

Mevalonic acid

↓

Acetate

↓

Cholesterol

↓

Δ⁵-Pregnenolone

↓

Progesterone

↓

17α-OH-Progesterone

↓

11β-OH-Progesterone

↓

17α-OH-Desoxycorticosterone

↓

Corticosterone

↓

Aldosterone

Fig. 1

Biosynthesis of Corticosteroids
Biosynthesis of Androgens
Table 1. Important neutral 17-oxosteroids isolated from human urines.

1. Androsterone (Androstan-3α-ol-17-one).
2. Etiocholanolone (Etiocholan-3α-ol-17-one).
3. Dehydroepiandrosterone (Δ⁵-Androsten-3β-ol-17-one).
4. Isoandrosterone (Androstan-3β-ol-17-one).
8. 11-Hydroxyandrosterone (Androstane-3α, 11β-diol-17-one).
9. 11-Hydroxyetiocholanolone (Etiocholane-3α, 11β-diol-17-one).
10. 11-Ketoandrosterone (Androstane-3α-ol-11, 17-dione).
11. 11-Ketoetiocholanolone (Etiocholane-3α-ol-11, 17-dione).
12. Δ⁲(or 3) -Androsten-17-one.
13. Δ³,⁵ -Androstadien-17-one.
14. 3-Chloro-Δ⁵-Androsten-17-one.
15. Δ⁹,¹¹ -Androsten-3α-ol-17-one.
16. Δ¹¹ -Androsten-3αol-17-one.
17. Δ⁹,¹¹ -Etiocholen-3α-ol-17-one.
18. 1-Androsten-6-ol-17-one.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sucrose</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briggs' salt mixture</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linolenic acid</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium acetate</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium oxide</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin mix</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium carbonate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipotassium hydrogen phosphate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disodium hydrogen phosphate</td>
<td>12.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tricalcium phosphate</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium chloride</td>
<td>14.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium sulfate (hydrated 7H₂O)</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese sulfate (hydrated 7H₂O)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium iodide</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc carbonate</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupric sulfate</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferrous sulfate</td>
<td>0.84</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vitamin mix</th>
<th>mgs./100 gms. of vitamin mixture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thiamine hydrochloride</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium pantothenate</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Nicotinic acid 1000
Pyridoxine hydrochloride 60
Folic acid 40
2-methyl-1, 4-naphthoquinone 40
Cobalamin 0.5
Choline chloride 3000
Inositol 4000
p-Aminobenzoic acid 2400
Ascorbic acid 500
Vitamin D<sub>3</sub> (15000 units/gm.) 100
Biotin 6
Glucose (make the mix 100 gms.) 88093.5

Preparation of the Animals for Collection of Urine

Thirty-two weanling, albino male, 3 weeks old rats, purchased from Sprague-Dawley, Inc., Madison, Wisconsin, were used for the experiment. They were divided into 4 groups, comprising 8 in each group, and were subjected to a semipurified regimen for a period of three months as follows:

- Group I—Complete with all nutrients
- Group II—Deficient in vitamin A
- Group III—Deficient in vitamin E
- Group IV—Deficient in vitamins A and E

At the beginning of the experiment, all rats weighed 40-50 gms. Group I was fed the basal diet, supplemented with 120 I.U. vitamin A acetate and 0.3 mg. alpha tocopherol acetate per rat daily. Group II was fed the basal diet, supplemented with alpha tocopherol
acetate, 0.3 mg. per rat per day. Group III was fed the basal diet, supplemented with vitamin A acetate, 120 I.U. per rat per day. Group IV was fed the basal diet only. The diet was freshly prepared every 7 days, and kept under refrigeration. The rats were weighed every 3 days until the end of the feeding period for 30 days. The weights were recorded as shown in tables 2, 3, 4 and 5, and Plate I.

At the end of 30 days feeding, the animals were transferred to metabolism cages for the collection of urine from each group. A considerable amount of urine was collected also from a normal bull for a comparative study. Several 48-hour specimens of urine were collected from each rat, then combined for their respective groups. All the specimens were preserved by the addition of a few ml. of chloroform frozen and stored.

Hydrolysis and Extraction of Urine

The majority of the procedures followed in this investigation were taken from the work of Watson and Besch (48).

Fifty ml. of urine were taken separately from each specimen. To each aliquot was added 300 U./ml. of β-glucuronidase (from beef liver). The pH was carefully adjusted to 4.5, and 1/10th volume of acetate buffer (1.5 parts of 1 M aqueous acetic acid added to 3 parts of 1 M sodium acetate soln.) was added. All the urine specimens were incubated at 37° C for 24 hours, permitting hydrolysis of the glucuronide-conjugated steroids. The incubated urines were extracted with 2 x 1 volumes of ethyl acetate. The organic phases were washed with 1/10th volume of 10 percent aqueous NaOH,
1/5th volume of NaHCO₃ soln. and 1/10th volume of water. They were dried over a small amount of anhydrous Na₂SO₄, the same being washed with ethyl acetate, and the washings added to the organic phases, which were evaporated to dry residues. The residues, containing the free and glucuronide-conjugated steroids, were transferred to test tubes for chromatography. The aqueous phases of the urines were acidified to pH 1 with HCl (about 15 percent) and boiled for 1 hour under a fume hood. They were cooled, and extracted with 1 x 1 and 2 x 1/2 volumes of ether. The combined ether phases were washed similarly as organic phases of urine, evaporated, and transferred to test tubes for chromatography.

Chromatographic Separation of Steroids

Chromatography was carried out as done by Zaffaroni, et al. (53), with some modification (2). The solvent system used for the purpose was ligroin/propylene glycol as shown by Savard (38 and 39). All the chromatograms were 35 cm. long and 2 cm. wide.

About 200 ml. of mobile solvent (ligroin, B. P. 65°-90°C) were placed in cylindrical chromatography chambers, allowing them to equilibrate over night. Standards were made by mixing 50% each of androsterone, etiocholanolone and dehydroepiandrosterone in a test tube, and evaporating them to a dry residue. Chromatography papers were impregnated with propylene glycol: methanol (1:1), removing the excess solvent by blotting the papers between two sheets of filter paper. Both samples from the extractions were streaked on impregnated papers, dissolving the residues in acetone. While streaking, the spots were dried with the aid of a current
of dry nitrogen. Standards were spotted on a side limb for location of the unknown steroids from the urines of the different groups of rats. The papers were placed in the chambers for chromatographic separation of the steroids by the ligroin/propylene glycol system for 12 hours. At the end of that period, the papers were removed, dried, and the steroids identified by the modified Zimmermann's reagent (3). For that, the paper strips were immersed in a mixture of 1 percent of aqueous m-dinitrobenzene and 15 percent of aqueous KOH (2:1), removing the excess reagent by thorough blotting. The colors were quickly developed by gentle warming of the strips. The urine extracts were also chromatographed in toluene/propylene glycol system for 4 hours.

Preparation of Histological Sections

After collection of the urine specimens, the rats were transferred to ordinary cages, while restricted to the same diets. On the 15th day after this transfer, 2 rats died from Group IV; 4 died previously. Next day, the other 2 from that group, and 2 each from other groups were sacrificed, autopsied, and the adrenals, the testes, the gastrocnemius muscle and the sciatic nerve were collected and preserved in 10% buffered formalin. Later, histological sections were made from the specimens, using hematoxylin eosin stain. All the sections were examined under the microscope.

Recording Electroretinograms (ERG)

The vitamin A deficient group of rats was tested for night blindness at the end of three months feeding. For this, electro-
retinograms were differentially amplified by a Tektronix Type 122 preamplifier, displayed on a Tektronix Type 502 oscilloscope, and photographed with a Tektronix C-12 polaroid camera. One each from the control and vitamin A deficient animals was prepared for recording sessions. The brain stem of the ether-anesthetized rat was severed at the mid-collicular level, and anesthesia was then discontinued. The rim of the bony orbit, and the eyelids were removed, and the eye muscles severed. After immobilization of the animals, 30 minutes were allowed for dark accommodation of the eye. The indifferent electrode was placed near the origin of the optic nerve, and the recording electrode* was placed on the center of the cornea in such a manner as to minimize interference of the light beam used to evoke the ERG. The duration of light flash was one second.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Weights and Symptoms

The individual weights of each rat of Groups I to IV inclusive are shown in tables 2 to 5 respectively. The average weights of each group per unit of time are depicted in Plate I.

Table 2 shows the weights of the control (Group I) rats. The group grew normally, manifesting no abnormal symptoms. Except for the first 3 days, the group showed maximum rate of gain in weights. No animal died from this group.

*The electrode consisted of a glass tube with a cotton wick in one end, and a chlorided silver wire in the other. The tube was filled with mammalian Ringer's solution. The wire was attached to the input of the preamplifier.
Table 3 shows the weights of the vitamin A deficient (Group II) rats. The group showed only a little less rate of gain in weights. There were indications of blindness and loss of appetite after two months of feeding. One animal died on the 70th day of feeding.

Table 4 shows the weights of the vitamin E deficient (Group III) rats. The group was apparently normal, manifesting no abnormal symptoms throughout the experiment. No animal died from the group.

Table 5 shows the weights of the vitamins A and E deficient (Group IV) rats. For the first 3 days, the group showed maximum rate of gain in weights, then minimum. The group was actually losing weight during the last 3 days. The animals started developing paresis and blindness from the third week. The syndrome was quite pronounced at the end of the fourth week. At first, they manifested a disturbance in the gait, which became slower and slightly incoordinated. Later, the feet of the hind legs were placed a little out to the side, and the gait became dragging. The muscular power of the hind legs was still good, and the group had a normal appetite. The function of the adductors of the thigh became impaired, and most conspicuous when the animals were taken out of the cage. In walking, the knees were extended abnormally. In moving about, the hind quarters were kept close to the floor. There was distinct atrophy of the musculature of the hind quarters and lower extremities. The hair coat became scanty. The fore legs were normal. The animals commenced to move slowly. While moving, they kept the hind legs greatly abducted, without
Table 2. Weights (gms.) of Group I (control rats) taken every three days, mentioned as wt. no. 1, wt. no. 2 etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Wt. no. 1</th>
<th>Wt. no. 2</th>
<th>Wt. no. 3</th>
<th>Wt. no. 4</th>
<th>Wt. no. 5</th>
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Table 3. Weights (gms.) of Group II (vitamin A deficient rats) taken every three days, mentioned as wt. no. 1, wt. no. 2 etc.

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Table 4. Weights (gms.) of Group III (vitamin E deficient rats) taken every three days, mentioned as wt. no. 1, wt. no. 2 etc.

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Table 5. Weights (gms.) of Group IV (vitamins A and E deficient rats) taken every three days, mentioned as wt. no. 1, wt. no. 2 etc.

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<td>1124</td>
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<td>1200</td>
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any adduction. The hind quarters were dragging along the floor. The muscular atrophy increased, involving also the buttocks and abdominal muscles. Loss of hair increased, forming large bald spots here and there on the trunk and hind legs. The animals showed inappetence, were not so lively, sleeping most of the time, and moving about but little. They were almost unable to walk, and preferred a reclining position. When they were forced to move, they dragged the hind quarters along, supporting themselves on the fore legs. They failed to stand on their feet, and rolled over on the side. The sensibility appeared lowered, muscular atrophy became extreme. Sometimes, they would step on their tails, or lie on them for hours. They ate and drank very little. One fourth (2 out of 8) of the animals died on the 40th, one half (4 out of 8) on the 42nd, and three fourths (6 out of 8) on the 57th day of the experiment, about 67 percent (4 out of 6) showing rectal hemorrhages. On autopsy, hemorrhagic spots were found in the gastrointestinal tract.

All of the above findings demonstrated the physiological synergistic effects of vitamins A and E. It also seemed that probably avitaminosis A and E together had some stimulating effects initially on growth. The utilization of vitamins A and K appeared much lowered in the absence of vitamin E, indicating the physiological antioxidant property of the latter. Probably, the actual depletion of the levels of vitamins A and E from the body took about three weeks when Group IV started losing weight.
EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

Average weights (gms.) recorded every three days for different groups of animals during the first 30 days of feeding experiments:

Group I--Diet complete with all nutrients
Group II--Diet deficient in vitamin A
Group III--Diet deficient in vitamin E
Group IV--Diet deficient in vitamins A and E
Isolation and Identification of 17-oxosteroids

Plate II depicts the 17-oxosteroids identified and determined from the different urine extracts. The most common 17-oxosteroids, androsterone, etiocholanolone and dehydroepiandrosterone were used as standards. These known steroids were chromatographed on the paper strip a. The urine extracts from the control, the vitamin E deficient, the vitamin A deficient, and the combined vitamins A and E deficient groups of rats were chromatographed on the paper strips b, c, d and e respectively. The urine extract from the normal bull was chromatographed on the paper strip f. The known steroids were first identified from the paper strip a by noting violet-colored spots for the 17-oxosteroids. The unknown steroids were then identified by a comparison of the violet-colored spots synchronously with those developed on the paper strip a. Thus the control group was found to produce all the three major 17-oxosteroids, androsterone, etiocholanolone and dehydroepiandrosterone. The vitamin E deficient group produced the steroids, androsterone and etiocholanolone. The vitamin A deficient group produced those two steroids in a lesser quantity. The combined vitamins A and E deficient group produced those two steroids in the least quantity. No dehydroepiandrosterone could be identified from the paper strips c, d or e. The bull was found to produce the steroids, androsterone and dehydroepiandrosterone in quite an appreciable quantity, but revealed no presence of etiocholanolone. On rough estimation from the different paper strips, the control group was found to produce a maximum quantity of steroids. The vitamin E deficient group produced less steroids. The vitamin A
deficient group produced still less steroids. The combined vitamins A and E deficient group produced the least quantity of steroids. The urine extracts were further chromatographed in toluene/propylene glycol system for four hours, the results being similar.

From the above findings, it was evident that the control animals did not lack in any of the major 17-oxosteroids produced by the adrenal cortex or the testes. Conversely, all the animals deficient in vitamin A or E separately, or together lacked in the steroids produced exclusively by the adrenal cortex. This demonstrated that vitamins A and E were necessary for the biosynthesis of the 17-oxosteroids. In other words, the deficiencies of these two vitamins affected the production of the 17-oxosteroids. The vitamin E deficiency affected it to the least extent. The vitamin A deficiency affected it to a greater extent. The vitamins A and E deficiencies together affected it to the greatest extent. Thus, the present findings gave evidence to the established fact that vitamins are correlated with the biosynthesis of many other biologically active substances including steroids.

The present findings gave evidences for some relation between the function of an adrenal steroid and the storage or metabolism of vitamin A (7 and 10). Although the actual mechanism of the functions of the adrenal steroids was not clear, the present findings might be correlated with those of Hays and Kendall (22). The amount of the 17-oxosteroids was found lowered more appreciably by the vitamin A than by the vitamin E deficiency, the former situation causing adrenal insufficiency. This gave evidence for the original findings of Lieberman, et al. (32). The quantity of the
EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

Chromatography papers run in ligroin-propylene glycol system for 12 hours for isolating and separating 17-oxosteroids (from urine), the latter then identified and determined by the Zimmermann reaction (with m-DNB and KOH), with the development of violet-colored spots, indicating the presence of 17-oxosteroids:

a. Paper strip showing the known 17-oxosteroids, androsterone, etiocholanolone and dehydroepiandrosterone, used as standards;
b. Paper strip showing the same steroids as above with different concentrations, isolated from the urine of control rats;
c. Paper strip showing the steroids, androsterone and etiocholanolone, isolated from the urine of vitamin E deficient rats;
d. Paper strip showing the same steroids as above with less concentrations, isolated from the urine of vitamin A deficient rats;
e. Paper strip showing the same steroids as above with least concentration, isolated from the urine of vitamins A and E deficient rats;
f. Paper strip showing the steroids, androsterone and dehydroepiandrosterone, isolated from the urine of a normal bu
17-oxosteroids was found to be more in the vitamin E than in the vitamin A deficiency. This was due to the fact that the former situation, although causing testicular degeneration, also caused hypertrophy of the zona glomerulosa in the adrenal cortex. It might be correlated with the original findings of Birke, et al. (4). The determination of the urinary steroids was related with the original findings of Drektor, et al. (15). It was evident from the present findings that the action of vitamin E was to some extent similar to that of ACTH from the anterior pituitary (1).

**Histological Changes**

The control group appeared normal in all cases. The vitamin A deficient group appeared apparently normal, except some atrophy of the adrenal cortex. The vitamin E deficient group indicated moderate hypertrophy of the zona glomerulosa in the adrenal cortex. There was degeneration of the germinal epithelium in the testes along with loss of spermatocytes. In some cases, lysis and fusion of the mature spermatozoa, and spermatids assuming vesicular forms and disintegrations were also observed. The gastrocnemius muscle showed hyalinization and necrosis of the fibers. All these abnormalities were observed in much more pronounced form in the combined vitamins A and E deficient group, demonstrating the synergistic effects of vitamins A and E.

**Electroretinograms (ERG)**

Figures 5a and 5b depict the electroretinograms of the control and the vitamin A deficient rats respectively. The control
EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

Electroretinograms (ERG) recorded by Tektronic Polaroid camera, using silver-silver chloride Ringerswick electrodes, the eyeball stimulated by the luminance of one second flash, $x$ to $y$, after allowing darkness for 30 minutes:

a. Electroretinogram of a rat from the control group, showing a measurable ERG, indicating normal vision;

b. Electroretinogram of a rat from the vitamin A deficient group, showing very little ERG, indicating blindness.
rat responded to the luminance of one second flash, 
indicating a measurable ERG. The vitamin A deficient rat did not so
respond, indicating very little ERG. By a comparison of the two
figures, it was evident that the vitamin A deficient rat was
night blind, the control rat having normal vision.

The present findings thus gave evidence to the fact that vita-
min A functions in certain photochemical changes occurring in the
retina. The retinal receptors concerned in dim-light vision con-
tain the pigment, rhodopsin. When exposed to light, rhodopsin
breaks into a pigment, retinene, and a protein, opsiv. During
the reactions in the retina, some of the vitamin A or retinene is
lost, and is replaced by vitamin A from the blood. If the blood
level of vitamin A is nil or too low, a functional blindness will
result. This was evident from the very little ERG, revealed by
the vitamin A deficient rat, as compared to the control rat.

Thus, all the above findings demonstrated that vitamins A and
E had synergistic effects on general health, growth and the bio-
synthesis of the 17-oxosteroids, although not much effect by
either alone. However, further study with more animals, and more
known steroids, and investigations into the effects of recovery
after supplementing the vitamins to the deficient animals in some
future experiment would give more evidences for the present find-
ings. The effects of vitamins A and E on the biosynthesis of the
17α-oxosteroids would be more clarified thereby.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the results of the present investigation, it was concluded that vitamins A and E are involved in various essential vital processes of life. The two vitamins are necessary for general health, growth of animals, and the biosynthesis of the 17-oxosteroids.

It was ascertained from the determination of the 17-oxosteroids that the deficiency of either vitamin A or E alone, or together, affected the production of steroids by the adrenal cortex. This effect was more pronounced when the diet was deficient in vitamins A and E together rather than either alone. The quantity of steroid production was found maximum by the control animals. The vitamin E deficient animals produced less steroids. The vitamin A deficient animals produced still less steroids. The combined vitamin A and E deficient group produced a minimum quantity of steroids.

In regard to the effects of vitamins A and E on the general health and growth of the animals, the deficiencies together had much more pronounced effect than either alone. For instance, the vitamin A deficient group started to show anorexia and blindness after two months of feeding; the vitamin E deficient group was apparently normal throughout the entire investigation. Conversely, the combined vitamins A and E deficient group started to manifest anorexia, blindness and paresis even from the third week.

Histological abnormalities of the adrenals, the testes and the gastrocnemius muscle were much more evident in case of deficien-
cies of the vitamins A and E together rather than either alone. The above tissues from the vitamin A deficient group were apparently normal, except some atrophy of the adrenal cortex. The vitamin E deficient group showed moderate hypertrophy of the zona glomerulosa in the adrenal cortex, and degeneration of the testicular and muscular tissues. The combined vitamins A and E deficient group revealed the above abnormalities more prominently.
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THE EFFECTS OF VITAMINS A AND E ON THE BIOSYNTHESIS OF 17-OXOSTEROIDS

by

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The research was undertaken, mainly, to investigate the correlation of vitamins A and E with the biosynthesis of other biologically active substances, like the 17-oxosteroids. The general health and development of the animals were also studied.

Thirty-two weanling, albino, male rats of the Sprague-Dawley strain were subjected to a semipurified regimen for a period of three months as follows:

- **Group I**—Complete with all nutrients
- **Group II**—Deficient in vitamin A
- **Group III**—Deficient in vitamin E
- **Group IV**—Deficient in vitamins A and E

After 30 days on the regimen, the animals were transferred to metabolism cages. Urine specimen was collected separately from each rat, then combined in their respective groups, preserved by the addition of a few ml. of chloroform, frozen, and stored.

Urine specimens collected from different groups were chemically hydrolyzed and extracted. The 17-oxosteroids were separated from the urine extracts by paper chromatography in a ligroin/propylene glycol and a toluene/propylene glycol system. They were identified and determined from the chromatographic paper strips by a modified Zimmermann reaction.

From the results of this investigation, it was concluded that the control group of animals was not lacking in any of the major 17-oxosteroids. Conversely, all the groups deficient in vitamin A or E separately, or together, lacked some of the steroids produced exclusively by the adrenal cortex. The quantity of steroid
production was maximum by Group I. Group III produced less steroids. Group II produced still less steroids. Group IV produced a minimum quantity of steroids. This indicated that the biosynthesis of the 17-oxosteroids was affected by the deficiency of vitamin A or E, more being noted by that of vitamin A. The greatest deficiency of the steroids was noted when vitamins A and E were lacking together. This demonstrated stimulating effects of vitamins A and E on the biosynthesis of the 17-oxosteroids.

The health and body development of the control group were good, manifesting no abnormality. The vitamin E deficient group remained apparently normal. The vitamin A deficient group indicated anorexia and blindness after two months of feeding. The combined vitamin A and E deficient group started to show anorexia, blindness and paresis from the third week. The syndrome was quite pronounced at the end of the fourth week, demonstrating a synergistic relationship between vitamins A and E.

Histological abnormalities of the adrenals, the testes and the gastrocnemius muscle were more evident in vitamins A and E deficiencies together. The above tissues from the vitamin A deficient group were apparently normal, except for some atrophy of the adrenal cortex. A moderate hypertrophy of the zona glomerulosa of the adrenal cortex, and degeneration of the testicular and muscular tissues were observed in the vitamin E deficient group. The combined vitamins A and E deficient group revealed the abnormalities more prominently, demonstrating synergistic effects of these vitamins.