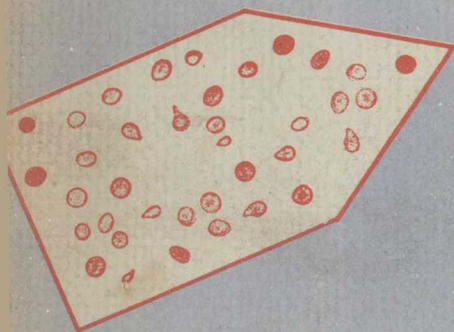
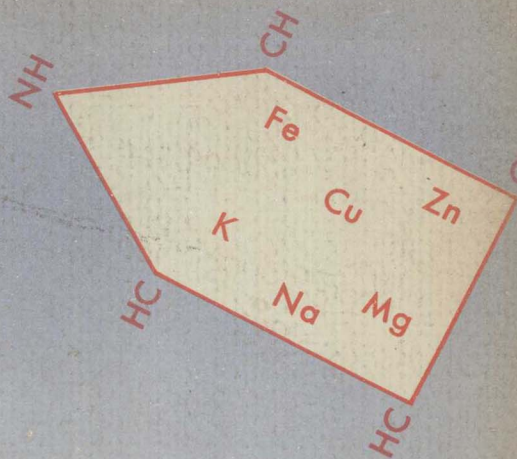


Chemistry of Erythrocytes

CLINICAL ASPECTS



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The PURPOSE of this book is ... to give clinically oriented guidance in the study of a subject which has long been a domain of physiologists but is now becoming of clinical importance.

This book might have been called THE CHEMISTRY OF RED BLOOD CELLS IN HEALTH AND DISEASE. It is written from the clinical point of view, and is intended primarily for medical students, physicians, clinical investigators and clinical pathologists.

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CHEMISTRY OF ERYTHROCYTES

Clinical Aspects ^W 603153

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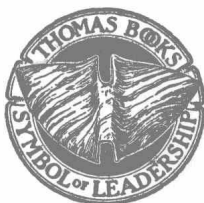
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Preface

The chemistry and functioning of the human erythrocyte, long the domain of physiologists, have recently become a matter of immediate concern to the clinician. The composition of the erythrocyte is assuming importance in the study of blood chemistry and there is now an extensive but widely scattered literature on the chemical constitution of erythrocytes and its relation to the composition of plasma in health and disease.

This volume represents an endeavor to give a clinically oriented account of the available knowledge in this rapidly developing field.

Neither in scope nor in depth does the discussion propose to compete with a biochemical treatise. The desirability of observing the boundaries commonly accepted for presentations of applied quantitative chemistry is recognized. I realize that the subject matter is not complete, but I have attempted to cover those more important facts and aspects which are likely to confront a steadily increasing number of physicians.

Vitamin and hormone substances have not been discussed in special sections, but were dealt with as the occasion arose. Methods of chemical analysis are not outlined in detail; their principles are described briefly, and appropriate references are given to the literature describing the technics.

The material constituting the substance of this book has been gathered through many years of active interest in the nature and pattern of intracellular blood constituents. The decision to gather my material into a monograph was spurred by the fact that so far no integrated description of the advances in erythrocyte chemistry has appeared.

The burden of my task was lessened by the ready encouragement and advice generously given by many colleagues and workers in the field. To all of them, I owe my sincere thanks. To Dr. S. Granick who read and criticized the entire manuscript, I am

particularly indebted and hereby acknowledge my debt with deep appreciation. Finally, my sincere thanks to Mrs. Natalie Friedheim for her editorial assistance.

New York, N. Y.

H. BEHRENDT

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Preface	v
 <i>Chapter</i>	
1. Structure, Chemistry, and Functional Organization	3
Architecture and Dimensions	3
Composition	4
Fixed framework (ghosts)	4
Interior	8
Relation between intra- and extracellular constituents	8
Metabolic Functions	10
Respiration	10
Glycolysis	10
Work performance	12
Viable cell membrane	13
Radioactive Indicators in Erythrocyte Study	14
References	15
 2. Separation of Formed Elements of Whole Blood	 18
Sedimentation in presence of coagulation	18
Sedimentation in nonclotted blood	19
Centrifugation	20
Preparation of Erythrocytic Material	21
Packed cells	21
Hemolysates	22
Erythrocytic suspensions	22
Ghosts	23
Methods of Expressing Measured Intracellular Quantities	24
Indirect Estimation of Cell Composition	25
Red cells	25
Ghosts	26
References	26

3. Hemoglobin and Its Derivatives	29
Hemoglobin Content of Blood and Erythrocytes	31
Determination as oxyhemoglobin	31
Determination as hematin	31
Determination as cyanmethemoglobin	32
Determination by oxygen capacity	32
Determination as carbon monoxide hemoglobin	32
Determination by iron content	33
Corpuscular hemoglobin	33
Hemoglobin in plasma	34
Oxygenated and Reduced Hemoglobin	35
Combination of Hemoglobin with Other Gases	38
Methemoglobin	38
Determination methods.	39
Physiologic levels	39
Methemoglobinemia	39
Cyanmethemoglobin	40
Sulfhemoglobin	40
The Physiologic Variants of Hemoglobin	41
Inherited Abnormalities of Hemoglobin Molecule	42
Porphyrins	46
Porphyrin in heme.	46
Free erythrocyte protoporphyrin.	47
References	51
 4. Proteins and Nonprotein Nitrogenous Substances	 56
Urea	58
Amino Acids	58
Glycine	61
Alanine	63
Serine	63
Tryptophane	63
Histamine	63
Glutamic acid.	64
Glutathione.	64
Thioneine	66
Phenylalanine and tyrosine	66
Creatine and creatinine	67
Uric acid.	69
Nucleotides.	69
Methods of determination	71

Abnormal variations	72
Nucleic acid	74
References	74
5. Carbohydrates	79
Glucose	80
Determination methods.	82
Normal distribution of sugar in blood	83
Abnormal variations	85
Lactic Acid	86
References	87
6. Lipids	90
Methods of determination	92
Normal Pattern of Erythrocyte Lipids	92
Neutral fat	93
Phospholipids	94
Cholesterol	97
Fatty acids	97
Lipid Patterns in Disease	98
Cancer	98
Diabetes	99
Jaundice	100
Blood dyscrasias	101
References	107
7. Water and Electrolytes	110
Water	112
Sodium	114
Methods of determination	115
Normal values	116
Abnormal variations	116
Potassium	119
Some controlling factors in potassium shift	120
Methods of determination	122
Normal values	122
Abnormal variations	122
Calcium and Magnesium	135
Chloride	136
Methods of determination	138
Normal values	138
Abnormal variations	139

Phosphorus	141
Lipid phosphorus	141
Inorganic phosphorus	142
Organic acid-soluble phosphorus	144
Sulfur	149
References	151
8. Trace Elements	157
Iron	157
Iron in blood	158
Hemoglobin iron	160
“Easily split off” iron (ESFe)	160
Plasma iron.	162
Correlations	163
Latent iron-combining capacity	166
Copper	166
Blood copper	167
Zinc	170
Methods of analysis	171
Normal values	171
Cobalt	173
Iodine	174
Methods of determination	175
Normal distribution of blood iodine	176
Effect of I^{131} administration	178
I^{131} erythrocyte-plasma ratio.	179
References	181
9. Enzymes	186
General Characterization of Corpuscular Enzymes	186
Enzymes Catalyze Metabolic Cycles	188
Respiratory enzymes	188
Glycolytic system enzymes	188
Enzymes catalyzing reduction of ferrihemoglobin	190
Enzymes catabolizing galactose	192
Other oxidation-reduction enzymes	193
Carbonic Anhydrase	193
Methods of determination	194
Normal values	194
Abnormal values	195
Cholinesterase.	196
Intra- and extracellular blood cholinesterases	199

Methods of determination	200
Normal activity	200
Changes in disease	202
Glyoxalase	203
Catalase	203
Proteolytic Enzymes	204
Proteinases	204
Peptidases	205
Phosphatases	207
Erythrocyte and serum phosphatases	208
Methods of determination	209
Normal rate of phosphatase activity	210
Abnormal variations	211
References	212
Index	217

CHEMISTRY OF
ERYTHROCYTES

Clinical Aspects

Chapter 1

Structure, Chemistry, and Functional Organization

Architecture and Dimensions

Ever since Swammerdam, in 1658, and Leeuwenhoek, in 1673, first observed the existence of "orbicular particles" in the blood serum of frog and man, respectively, the shape of the human red blood cell has become known as globular in plane view and symmetrically biconcave in cross section. As Ponder (29a) sets forth so instructively, this form is maintained in the absence of any heterogeneous structure, i.e., of any material other than fluid. Physical forces of tension arising in the interior and on the surface of the erythrocyte were regarded for a long time as the cause of this peculiar configuration. During the last 25 years, however, a fundamental change has taken place in the approach to the problems of shape and structure. The essential factor in shaping cell structure in general, and the red cell's form in particular, has been recognized as a special arrangement of molecules. The architecture of the erythrocyte, therefore, is created not by a stroma of heterogeneous material but by an ultrastructure of molecules, and what distinguishes these molecular structures in physicochemical respect is the variability of their gelation.

Whether the specialized molecular arrangement exists only in the surface layers or also in the cell interior is so far an unsolved problem. Ponder suggests that "surface envelope and an internal structure are not mutually exclusive," and that the potential existence of both should be tentatively assumed. These ultrastructures, referred to as stroma, ghost, matrix material, and fixed framework, remain as residue when red cells are hemolyzed.

All the constituents of the erythrocyte are assembled within the

molecular frame of the surface structure, and possibly supported by a similar network in the interior. Water accounts for about 70 per cent of the erythrocytic volume, 25 per cent is occupied by hemoglobin, and only 5 per cent by all the remaining components (29b).

The average dimensions of a normal mature erythrocyte are indicated in Figure 1. The spatial relations between the hemoglobin molecules and one of the intracellular electrolytes are schematically demonstrated in a scale drawing by Ponder (Fig. 2). From these it may be seen that hemoglobin occupies by far the greatest portion of the interior, and that the small spaces left between and around the hemoglobin molecules contain all the other chemical constituents. Table 1 gives a number of figures to supplement the illustrations.

TABLE 1
MEASUREMENTS OF HUMAN ERYTHROCYTE (29b,e,f)

Surface ultrastructure, thickness	130.0 Å*
Hemoglobin molecule, radius	28.2 Å
Hydrated Na ion, radius	2.6 Å
Shell (atmosphere) surrounding hemoglobin molecule, thickness	10.0 Å
Cell, volume	87 μ^3
Cell, surface area	163 μ^2

* If hydration were allowed for, the value for thickness would be almost doubled.

Composition

Fixed Framework (Ghosts). The framework of the erythrocyte has its own characteristic chemical composition. First, there is a typical protein commonly referred to as stromatin, sometimes as fibrous or structural protein. It is very insoluble in water, forms gels easily, and is distinguished by the nature of its constituent amino acids. It differs from both keratins and collagens. Changes in the erythrocyte's shape, whether artefactual or spontaneous (spherocytes, sickle forms), are mediated by corresponding changes in the degree of stromatin gelation. Other protein substances identified in the framework include elinin (6), a-protein (33), and the "antisphering substance" (15)

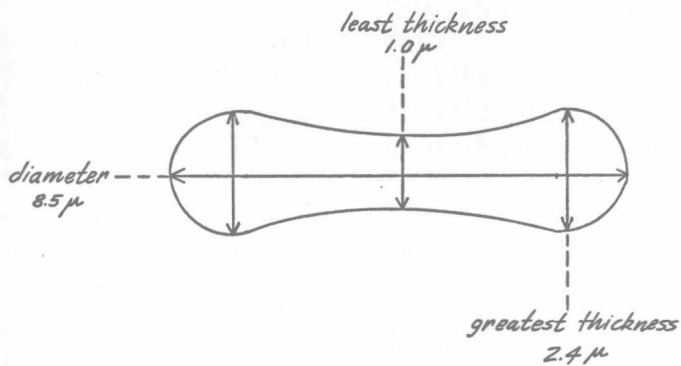


Fig. 1. Scale drawing of human erythrocyte in cross sectional view. From Ponder (29c).

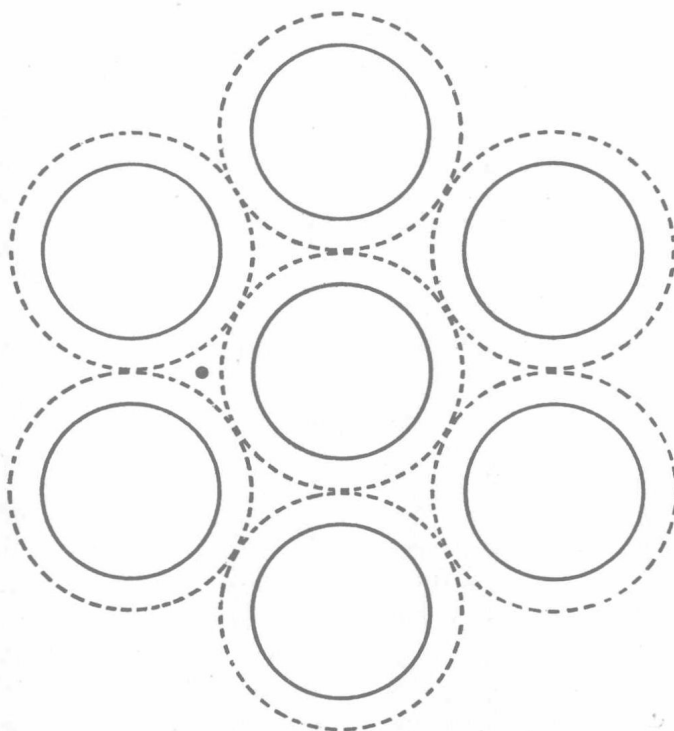


Fig. 2. Scale drawing showing proximity of hemoglobin molecules in concentrations in which they exist in erythrocyte's interior; small black object represents Na ion. From Ponder (29d).

A small amount of hemoglobin, about 2 per cent of the total cell content, is attached to the structural protein, held in chemical or physical combination (28,34). In this connection, two points are of practical importance: (1) the differentiation between hemoglobin protein and other proteins in the ghosts, and (2) the difficulty of detaching the hemoglobin from the ghosts.

TABLE 2
COMPOSITION OF RED CELL GHOST

<i>Substance</i>	<i>% of Total Residue</i>	<i>% of Total Lipid</i>	<i>% of Stromatin</i>	<i>% of Total N of Ghosts</i>
Hemoglobin	23			
Ash	5			
Protein	50			
Lipid (total)	11			
Phospholipid		65		
Free cholesterol		20		
Cholesterol ester		4		
Neutral fat		11		
Total nitrogen*			15.9	
Amino nitrogen*			11.6	
Histidin N				4.3
Arginin N				11.8
Lysin N				5.8
Tyrosin N				1.7
Cystin N				0.8
Methionin N				1.4
Tryptophan N				1.2
N not accounted for				27.0

According to Williams, Erickson, and Macy (35).

* From Ballantine (1).

Approximately 90 per cent of the total lipid content of the red cell must be assigned to the ghosts (29e); of the total dry residue of ghosts, lipids account for about 10 per cent (35).

As principle components of the surface structure the acidic lipids are held largely responsible for the well known fact that the isoelectric point of erythrocytes is shifted more or less to the acid side. According to recent measurements (12a) which may be considered as highly accurate with regard to technic and required corrections, suspended erythrocytes become isoelectric when the

pH of the suspending medium approaches 3.6. In contrast, hemoglobin is isoelectric at pH 6.9.

The figures on composition of ghosts vary considerably, depending on the analytic methods used. Furthermore, direct and indirect estimations often fail to agree. Normal figures, such as given in Table 2, are informative rather than standard values.

TABLE 3
COMPOSITION OF MATURE ERYTHROCYTES

<i>Constituents</i>	<i>A.</i>		
	<i>Gm./100 cc.*</i>	10^{-12} <i>Gram/cell</i>	10^{-16} <i>Mole/cell</i>
Hemoglobin	34	29	5.7
Minerals	0.67	0.6	
Total lipids	0.48	0.43	
Non-Hb protein	0.87	0.78	0.05†
Glucose	0.83	0.075	3.7
Solids	35%		
Water	65%		

According to Ponder (29 g). * Added by the author. † Molecular weight taken as 200,000.

<i>Constituents</i>	<i>B.</i>	
	<i>mg./100 cc.</i>	<i>Source</i>
Urea	20	Houssay (22)
Creatine	2	Ponder (29g)
Creatinine	8	Ponder (29g)
Amino acids	30	Christensen (8)
Glutathione	70	Granick (19)
Adenine nucleotides	61	Granick (19)
Neutral fat	4	Erickson <i>et al.</i> (13)
Phospholipids	196	Erickson <i>et al.</i> (13)
Cholesterol	139	Brun (5)
Total reducing substances (as glucose)	114	Ponder (29g)
Glucose	74	Ponder (29g)
Phosphorus		
inorganic	2.5	Guest <i>et al.</i> (20)
organic acid-soluble	55	Guest <i>et al.</i> (20)
Chloride	186	Gram (18)
Bicarbonate	100	Ponder (29g)
Total nonprotein sulfur	2.9	Reed (31)
Sodium	37.5	Nichols (26)
Potassium	386	Lans (24)
Magnesium	4.8	Snyder <i>et al.</i> (32)