

D. Michael Salmon

PRactical
PHARMACOLOGY
for the
PHARMACEUTICAL
SCIENCES

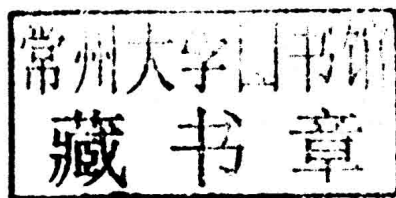


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Practical Pharmacology for the Pharmaceutical Sciences

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This edition first published 2014
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John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ,
United Kingdom

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Salmon, Michael (D. Michael), author.

Practical pharmacology for the pharmaceutical sciences / Dr. Michael Salmon.

p. ; cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-119-97550-2 (pbk.)

I. Title.

[DNLN: 1. Pharmacology--Laboratory Manuals. 2. Chemistry, Pharmaceutical--Laboratory Manuals. 3. Pharmaceutical Preparations--Laboratory Manuals. QV 25]

RM301.25

615.1078--dc23

2013037819

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 9781119975502

Set in 10.5/13pt Sabon by Aptara Inc., New Delhi, India

Printed and bound in Malaysia by Vivar Printing Sdn Bhd

Practical Pharmacology for the Pharmaceutical Sciences

Preface

It is a startling fact that it is 30 years since the last text book on pharmacology laboratory practicals (Kitchen, 1984) was published. An obvious assumption would be that there has been a drastic fall in demand. A common response is that laboratory practicals are redundant and have been replaced by computer-assisted learning (CAL) and simulated experiments (Hughes, 2003). This is due to the challenges of increasing student numbers, decline in staff numbers and the high cost of maintaining laboratories and animal facilities (Hughes, 2001). It has been claimed that CAL experiments and problem-based learning provide an equal or superior student learning experience (Hughes, 2001, 2002). Yet surveys of the curriculum of pharmacology courses in the United Kingdom (Dewhurst and Page, 1998), and currently using a world-wide Internet survey, quickly reveals that this is not the case. “Wet” laboratory practicals remain a central part of most courses, and clearly many universities and colleges are reluctant to abandon them completely, as employers in the pharmaceutical industry and academia expect hands-on experience of pharmacological techniques. In the United Kingdom, the British Pharmacology Society ([www.bps.ac.uk/Education/University resources/Core curricula in pharmacology](http://www.bps.ac.uk/Education/University%20resources/Core%20curricula%20in%20pharmacology), (accessed June 2013)) currently recommends an undergraduate pharmacology core curriculum in which skills in pharmacological experimentation form an essential component (see [www.bps.ac.uk/education/university resources/core curricula](http://www.bps.ac.uk/education/university%20resources/core%20curricula)). Most courses now appear to rely on in-house schedules of variable quality. Meanwhile, the equipment available for the pharmacology laboratory has greatly improved mainly through the use of computers to control experiments and record data, which makes them easier to use and improve the quality of data obtained by novice students. It is a fear that some of the skills involved in real, wet experimentation may be lost

as new lecturers themselves have not been taught these methods. It is therefore timely to produce a book for use in pharmacology practical classes using state-of-the-art equipment and using modern nomenclature. Several books have recently described laboratory techniques and calculations for the biosciences in general. In contrast, this book specifically aims to introduce practical pharmacology to the pharmaceutical sciences undergraduate student.

The book opens with an outline of how to prepare to work in the pharmacology laboratory, and progresses to briefly describe some of the basic principles of pharmacology, which I believe are most clearly understood from a historical perspective. The central core includes experiments using *in vitro* tissues, isolated cells and cell-free biochemical systems, focusing on those that are unique to pharmacology. Some of these are classical experiments which were introduced some years ago, and form the basis of the discipline of pharmacology. However, it is important to note that they are still topical in that they are still being interpreted in new ways in the light of current research. Several techniques included in the BPS core curriculum, such as molecular biology, biochemistry, electrophysiology and tissue culture widely used in pharmacological research are only alluded to, as these have been well covered elsewhere. In conclusion, since no experiment is complete without communicating the results, there is a section on the presentation and interpretation of results and how to use and cite information sources. This book aspires to be useful for students in all pharmaceutical science courses that include pharmacology modules giving a real life experience in learning pharmacology.

Powerpoint slides to accompany this book can be downloaded from <http://booksupport.wiley.com> by entering the book name, author or isbn information.

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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to many colleagues at the University of East London with whom I worked for many years. Without their experience and fortitude this book would not have been written. I am especially indebted to my fellow lecturers, Barry Jones, Alun Morrinan, Wilson Steele, Pat Freeman and Gill Sturman. I also received unstinting technical support from Nick Seeley and Kevin Clough. Finally, I must take the blame for any errors in this book that have been overlooked, and would be most grateful if they are brought to my attention.

Contents

Preface	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
1 Before Entering the Pharmacology Laboratory	1
1.1 Safety and Risk Assessment	1
1.2 The Laboratory Record Book	3
1.3 Use of Animals in Practical Pharmacology	4
1.4 Experimental Design	5
1.5 Units, Dilutions and Logarithms	7
1.5.1 Units of Mass	8
1.5.2 Units, Concentrations and Logarithms	8
1.5.3 Dilutions	9
1.5.4 Logarithms	10
1.6 Essential Statistics	12
1.6.1 Continuous Data – <i>t</i> -test, ANOVA, Non-parametric Tests and Regression	12
1.6.2 Discontinuous Data – χ^2 and Fisher's Exact Test	21
References	25
2 Basic Pharmacological Principles	27
2.1 Drug–Receptor Interaction	27
2.1.1 Agonists	27
2.1.2 Antagonists	30
2.1.3 Receptor Classification	36
2.2 Bioassays	37
2.2.1 Single-point Assays	38

2.2.2	Bracketing Assays, Three-point or 2×1 Assays	38
2.2.3	Multi-point Assays, Such As Four-point or 2×2 Assays	39
	References	40
3	Isolated Tissues and Organs	43
3.1	Equipment for <i>In Vitro</i> Experiments	44
3.2	Organ Baths	45
3.3	Physiological Salt Solutions	46
3.4	Transducers	47
3.5	Recording Equipment and Software	49
3.6	Dosing	50
3.7	Electrically Stimulated Preparations	52
3.8	Fault-Finding of <i>In Vitro</i> Isolated Tissue Preparations	53
	References	54
4	Smooth Muscle Preparations	55
4.1	Gastrointestinal Smooth Muscle Preparations	55
4.2	Guinea Pig Isolated Ileum	56
4.2.1	Concentration-Response Curves for Cholinesters	57
4.2.2	Selective Antagonism	59
4.2.3	Specificity of Blood Cholinesterases	62
4.2.4	Quantification of the Potency of an Antagonist	64
4.2.5	Bioassays	67
4.2.6	Calcium Channel Blockers	73
4.2.7	Field-stimulated Guinea Pig Isolated Ileum	76
4.3	Rabbit Isolated Jejunum and the Finkleman Preparation	78
4.3.1	Adrenoceptor Sub-types	79
4.4	Isolated Tracheal Rings	80
4.5	Isolated Vas Deferens	82
	Questions on Isolated Tissue Preparations	83
	Answers to Problems	87
	References	92
5	Cardiovascular Preparations	93
5.1	Isolated Perfused Heart Preparations	94
5.1.1	The Langendorff Preparation	95
5.1.2	Cardiac Interactions of Anti-asthma Drugs	98
5.1.3	The Rat Isolated Auricle Preparation	99

5.2	Thoracic Aorta Preparation	102
5.2.1	Drugs Regulating Nitric Oxide-mediated Relaxation	104
	References	105
6	Skeletal Muscle	107
6.1	Types of Skeletal Muscle	107
6.2	Multiply-Innervated Skeletal Muscle Preparations	108
6.2.1	Agonists and Antagonists Acting on the Frog Rectus Abdominis	109
6.2.2	Action of Anticholinesterases on the Dorsal Muscle of the Leech	111
6.3	Focally Innervated Skeletal Muscle Preparations	116
6.3.1	The Frog Gastrocnemius Muscle–Sciatic Nerve Preparation	119
	References	120
7	Isolated Cells	121
7.1	Freshly Isolated and Cultured Cells	121
7.1.1	Advantages of Isolated Cells	121
7.1.2	Cultured Cells	122
7.1.3	Cell Counting	122
7.2	Platelets	125
7.2.1	Inhibition of Aggregation by Nitric Oxide Donors	127
7.3	Neutrophils	131
7.3.1	Measurement of NADPH Cytochrome <i>c</i> Reductase	132
7.3.2	Measurement of Intracellular $[Ca^{2+}]$	134
	References	139
8	Biochemical Pharmacology	141
8.1	Pharmacological Applications of Common Biochemical Techniques	141
8.2	Enzyme Inhibitors	142
8.3	Acetylcholinesterase Inhibitors	143
8.4	Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors	145
8.4.1	Sub-cellular Distribution of MAO Activity	146
8.4.2	Specificity of MAO Inhibitors for Isoenzymes	149
8.5	Thrombin Inhibitors	151
8.6	ATPase Inhibitors	155
	References	158

9	Complementary Methods for Teaching Practical Pharmacology	161
9.1	The Comparative Merits of Available Methods	161
9.2	Interpretation of Experimental Data	162
9.2.1	Behavioural Experiments	162
9.2.2	Analysis of Metabolites of 5-hydroxytryptamine	166
9.2.3	Radioligand Binding	167
	Answers to Questions	171
	References	176
10	Communicating Results	177
10.1	Preliminary Reports	177
10.1.1	Tables	178
10.1.2	Graphs	178
10.1.3	Bar Graphs	179
10.1.4	Preliminary Conclusions	179
10.2	Poster Presentations	180
10.3	Oral Presentations	181
10.4	Project Reports	183
10.5	Pharmacological Literature	184
10.6	How to Cite Scientific Information Sources	187
10.7	Plagiarism	188
	References	188
	Appendix 1: Molecular Weights of Commonly Used Drugs	189
	Appendix 2: Useful Resources for Practical Pharmacology	191
	Index	193

1

Before Entering the Pharmacology Laboratory

Before embarking on any new activity, it is wise to be familiar with the language, concepts and possible risks of the venture. So this book begins with a number of topics with which an experimenter must be familiar, such as health and safety, ethical and legal considerations and fundamental principles of experimental pharmacology. No experiment has much value unless a coherent design has been devised first. The design of an experiment is crucial if it is to yield meaningful results. Having obtained the experimental data, it is important to decide on the relevant statistical methods that will be employed to evaluate the results. Obvious as this may seem, it is shocking, even in professional research, how many experiments are wasted due to a lack of planning in design.

1.1 SAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENT

All activities which involve the use of chemicals, from the factory floor to the research laboratory, are subject to the Health and Safety legislation. In the United Kingdom, this is done by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), and of particular relevance in the laboratory is the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH, 2002). In the United States, the body is the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), who require a Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP) for each

experiment, whilst in the EC the relevant body is the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA).

In the United Kingdom, COSHH regulations apply to all places of work, and all workers must be conversant with all risks and safety procedures. A risk assessment of all procedures must be carried out and a documentation of how these risks are to be minimized during the procedure and safe procedures for disposal of chemicals must be displayed. Any accidents must be reported and logged for future reference.

The bioscience laboratory presents many hazards not encountered elsewhere, and COSHH regulations are especially important. All laboratory workers must be aware of the regulations governing all work in laboratories. Drinking, eating and smoking are banned in all laboratories. No chemicals should come into contact with the body – including the mouth, eyes and skin whilst inside a laboratory. Remember that in a pharmacology laboratory, there is exposure to many highly biologically potent chemicals. A protective coat (frequently white) must be worn at all times, and protective eye goggles and gloves worn when required. In addition, laboratory workers must be familiar with the international warning symbols for toxic, corrosive and inflammable chemicals and gases, cancer-causing and suspected cancer-causing chemicals, radioactive materials, biological hazards, and reproductive hazards. These are widely available and explained on the internet. If a student is unsure of the meaning of any symbols they should ask their supervisor. These are not only displayed at the entrance to laboratories, but also on individual chemicals and equipment.

For class laboratory exercises, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to identify all risks and display them in the laboratory. This is not just a piece of administration, but an important document all students must be familiar with before they start the experiment to ensure safe practice. Students must be familiar with all the chemicals to be used and if there are any special precautions that must be taken. Before a project is undertaken, a risk assessment must be carried out by the student with appropriate guidance. The information that must be sought is given as follows.

- What are the dangers of handling individual chemicals? These are shown on data sheets supplied by chemical distributors. It should be ascertained if there are any particular hazards associated with entry into the body of any of the chemicals; are any substances absorbed by the skin or inhaled through the nose? Precautions that might be necessary are the use of disposable gloves and/or goggles.

Volatile compounds should be handled in a fume cupboard, which is certified as conforming to legal requirements (such as those laid down by the HSE in the United Kingdom). Fume cupboards should not be used with the front open above the displayed marks to ensure the correct airflow.

- Are there any aspects of the use of equipment or procedures that expose laboratory workers to any hazards? There are the ubiquitous procedures, such as pipetting. This should never be done by mouth, and must be done using either an automatic pipette or a device that can be attached to the end of a plastic or glass pipette. The instructions for operating equipment must be adhered to. Examples are centrifuges, spectrophotometers and equipment containing lasers or radiation sources.
- A vital part of a risk assessment is to identify methods of disposal of hazardous chemicals and biological materials. Many water-soluble compounds can be disposed of in a sink, usually after appropriate dilution. Lipophilic compounds and solvents are disposed of in specially designated bottles. Biological waste is usually placed in yellow bag to await later incineration. Used plastic pipettes and tips are placed in special containers, as are sharp objects such as syringe needles.
- The procedures to be taken in event of an accident or emergency must be clear. Chemical spills are a common occurrence and different procedures are required depending on the nature of the chemical. Dilute solutions of water-soluble, non-toxic chemicals are easily cleaned up by use of absorbent materials such as paper towels. All other potential hazards must be assessed, such as flammability, reactivity to air or water, corrosion or high toxicity; the incident should be immediately reported. Special measures will have to be taken. Flammable chemicals are absorbed with sawdust or special pads and the laboratory is ventilated maximally. Acids and alkalis should be diluted and neutralized.

1.2 THE LABORATORY RECORD BOOK

The importance of keeping a laboratory notebook is often underrated. Evidence collected for any purpose will not be credible if a contemporaneous record of events is not available. This is no less true for laboratory evidence than it is for police and forensic records. A book must be kept where all procedures, calculations, observations and results, along with

the relevant health and safety forms, are kept. This should be a permanently bound book, and not a loose-leaf from which pages may be removed. Entries must be made contemporaneously in the laboratory at the time at which they occurred. This is frequently not appreciated by students who think that they will “write it up neatly” at some later time. This is unacceptable. For this reason, many hospital and research laboratories employ strategies such as forbidding record books to be removed from the laboratory, or insisting that duplicate records are kept and one copy left in the laboratory upon leaving at the end of the day. There are several essential pieces of information that must always be recorded.

- Entries must be done using a pen and not an erasable pencil. Corrections should be made by crossing out rather than deleted.
- Pages must be dated and the name(s) of experimenters be recorded. All entries of data on computers are date-stamped and not subject to later manipulation. Computer records should be backed up after each day to prevent loss.
- All details of methods, instruments and apparatus must be recorded. All details of chemicals and solutions (especially their concentrations) noted. Details of animals used must be available, including their species, age, weight and sex.
- Raw data must be carefully recorded and fully annotated. This includes any photographs or diagrams.
- All stages of calculations and dilutions must be written down so that any errors can later be unequivocally detected and corrected.
- Graphs and tables derived from the results should be drawn as soon as possible, preferably before leaving the laboratory. This enables an early interpretation of the results to be made, so that any adjustments in the protocol can be made before proceeding with further experimentation.

1.3 USE OF ANIMALS IN PRACTICAL PHARMACOLOGY

Even before enrolling on a pharmacology course, students must be aware that the use of living tissues and cells are integral to the discipline. Most universities post a caveat to this effect in their course descriptions. The anti-vivisectionist viewpoint is highly appreciated, and in all developed countries it is incorporated into the laws governing the use of animals in teaching and research. The use of living animals in teaching up to