Theoretical considerations and experimental procedures involved in the measurement of metabolic clearance rate (MCR) and blood production rate were compared and described, e.g., single injection and continuous infusion methods. Emphasis was placed on applications in endocrinology and particularly for steroid hormones. [The SCI® indicates that this paper has been cited over 275 times since 1963.]

James F. Tait
Department of Physics as Applied to Medicine
Middlesex Hospital Medical School
London W1P 6BB
England

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"Applications in endocrinology of the experimental procedures and theoretical considerations for the estimation of metabolic clearance rate, largely originating from the work of Hamilton and co-workers,1 were a feature of this review. The concept of blood production rate was also introduced. "This concept arose because the labelled reagent methods for the estimation of nanomole amounts or less of biologically important substances in blood had become generally applicable. These originated in Bethesda with the radioactive pipsyl method and had been applied there and elsewhere to the estimation of steroid hormones using labelled pipsyl, acetic anhydride, and thiosemicarbazide reagents. These methods have now been supplanted by immunoassay procedures, but were the first practical methods in blood for important steroids such as aldosterone, androstenedione, and testosterone. Although laborious they were quite accurate and indeed it is doubtful whether some of the estimates of secretion rates for blood production rates then made could have been achieved with the present accuracy of routine immunoassays.

"The blood production rate is the metabolic clearance rate multiplied by the blood concentration of hormone and represents its secretion rate plus the amount irreversibly converted to it from precursors. These concepts originated mainly from the general theoretical ideas of E. Gurpide and co-workers.2 The blood concepts, which proved to be more generally valid than those involving measurement of urinary metabolites, were largely evolved from the experimental work by myself and colleagues on aldosterone metabolism which presented a starting point for consideration of more complicated situations such as when steroids were converted peripherally. Their development also followed extensive discussions with J. Coghlan of the Florey Institute of Experimental Biology and Medicine, Melbourne, Australia, and S. Burstein, who worked, as did I then, at the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology, US. The S35 thiosemicarbazide method, which was probably both the most difficult and sophisticated labelled reagent method ever developed, was vital for the critical estimation of androstenedione which first showed that concentrations of this prehormone in female and male plasma were similar. The use of this reagent was developed with the chemical advice of Marcel Cut at Worcester.

"If the review has been highly cited and has had some influence it is because it was timely and the concepts, although not completely original in general physiology, had not been appreciated generally in endocrinology. Appropriate experimental methods had also just become available.

"Later work at the Worcester Foundation followed this review when experimental collaborative studies with R. Horton, C. Longcope, and D. Baird4 exploited these concepts culminating in a presentation at the Laurentian Hormone Conference."