Electrolyte-balanced heparin in blood gas syringes can introduce a significant bias in the measurement of positively charged electrolytes

Citation for published version (APA):

DOI:
10.1515/CCLM.2011.047

Document status and date:
Published: 01/01/2011

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

Please check the document version of this publication:
• A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
• The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
• The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

Link to publication

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

If the publication is distributed under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license above, please follow below link for the End User Agreement:
www.tue.nl/taverne

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at:
openaccess@tue.nl
providing details and we will investigate your claim.
Short Communication

Electrolyte-balanced heparin in blood gas syringes can introduce a significant bias in the measurement of positively charged electrolytes

Miranda van Berkel and Volkher Scharnhorst*
Clinical Laboratory, Catharina Hospital Eindhoven, Eindhoven, The Netherlands

Abstract

Background: Heparin binds positively charged electrolytes. In blood gas syringes, electrolyte-balanced heparin is used to prevent a negative bias in electrolyte concentrations. The potential pre-analytical errors introduced by blood gas syringes are largely unknown. Here, we evaluate electrolyte concentrations in non-anticoagulated blood compared with concentrations measured in electrolyte-balanced blood gas syringes.

Methods: Venous blood was collected into plain tubes. Ionized calcium, potassium, sodium and hydrogen ions were analyzed directly using a blood gas analyzer and the remaining blood was collected into different blood gas syringes in random order: Preset (Becton Dickinson), Monovette (Sarstedt) and Pico 50-2 (Radiometer).

Results: Ionized calcium and sodium concentrations were significantly lower in blood collected in Becton Dickinson and Sarstedt syringes compared to non-heparinized (NH) blood. The mean bias exceeded biological variation-based total allowable error, which in most cases leads to clinically misleading individual results. In contrast, ionized calcium concentrations in blood collected in Pico 50-2 syringes were identical to values obtained from NH blood. Sodium showed a minor, yet statistically significant, bias.

Conclusions: Despite the fact that blood gas syringes now contain electrolyte-balanced heparin, one should be aware of the fact that these syringes can introduce pre-analytical bias in electrolyte concentrations. The extent of the bias differs between syringes.

Keywords: blood gas syringes; electrolyte-balanced heparin; ionized calcium; potassium; pre-analytical errors; sodium.
Venous blood (NH blood) was collected into a tube without additives and free of separator gel (Vacutainer ref. 368500, Becton Dickinson BV, Breda, The Netherlands) and measured immediately using a blood gas analyzer (ABL 735, Radiometer, Zoetermeer, The Netherlands). Within 1 min after venipuncture, 1 mL of NH blood was aspirated into three different blood gas syringes in random order: preset by Becton Dickinson (BD) (ref. 364390, Breda, The Netherlands), monovette by Sarstedt (SS) (ref. 051147020, Etten-Leur, The Netherlands) and Pico 50-2 by Radiometer (RM) (ref. 956-552VR10, Zoetermeer, The Netherlands). Blood was collected from 16 volunteers. Ionized calcium (Ca\(^{2+}\)), potassium (K\(^+\)), sodium (Na\(^+\)) and hydrogen ion (pH) concentrations were determined. All measurements were completed within 15 min after venipuncture. (A) The absolute concentration of each electrolyte and pH collected in the different syringes was related pairwise to the respective concentration in NH blood. The concentration in NH blood was set at 100%. The mean of the percentage deviation from values in NH blood (solid squares) and the range of the relative concentrations (bars) are shown. Significant differences are depicted (**p < 0.0001, *p = 0.0003). (B) Bland-Altman bias plots of the absolute electrolyte concentrations measured in blood from individual subjects collected in heparinized syringes compared to electrolyte concentration in NH blood. The x-axis shows the electrolyte concentration in NH blood. The y-axis shows the difference in either Ca\(^{2+}\), Na\(^+\) or K\(^+\) concentration between NH blood and blood collected in BD, RM or SS syringes. The thin, dotted lines indicate zero bias, the evenly stippled lines the observed bias, and the unevenly stippled lines show the 95% limits of agreement. Bland-Altman analysis was performed using Analyse-it Version 1.72 (Analyse-it Software, Ltd, Leeds, UK).

The biases in absolute electrolyte concentrations between NH and the heparinized syringes were assessed using Bland-Altman analysis (6). BD syringes introduced the most pronounced bias in concentrations of all electrolytes, while the biases introduced by RM syringes were minimal (Figure 1B). Similarly, the 95% limits of agreement were the narrowest and always encompassed zero bias with RM syringes.

Taken together, two out of the three syringes tested here introduced a clinically significant negative bias for many subjects in both ionized calcium concentrations and sodium concentrations, despite the fact that all syringes contain electrolyte-balanced heparin. These findings were not caused by inadequate filling volumes since the negative bias persisted after filling the syringes to more than the minimally necessary volume (according to manufacturers instruction, data not shown). The mean bias exceeded the TE for ionized calcium and sodium, which are based on intra-individual biological variation. Therefore, a clinically significant difference in results can be introduced by using the syringes from BD or SS for analysis of these electrolytes. Electrolyte values in blood collected into syringes manufactured by RM were most comparable to values measured in NH blood.

ABL blood gas analyzers do not use an algorithm to correct for a potential heparin bias caused by heparin in RM syringes (personal communication with H. Froklage, Radiometer). Therefore, the extent of interference found for the ABL blood gas analyzer used in this study is expected to be reproduced on an analyzer from a different manufacturer. Differences in the process of balancing heparin with electrolytes between manufacturers most likely explain the findings described here.

In conclusion, one should be aware of the bias that can be introduced in electrolyte concentrations by the use of different blood gas syringes, despite the fact that blood gas syringes now contain electrolyte-balanced heparin. These results emphasize the need for improving the manufacturing process of balanced heparin. Furthermore, a single type of electrolyte-balanced heparin should be used in one laboratory only in order to minimize the pre-analytical effects on variation of sodium, potassium and ionized calcium concentrations.

The experimental procedures were in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, Dutch law and the standards of the medical Ethical Commission of our institution. Informed consent was obtained from each subject before blood sampling.

Conflict of interest statement

Authors’ conflict of interest disclosure: The authors stated that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Research funding: None declared.

Employment or leadership: None declared.

Honorarium: None declared.

References


2. Sachs C, Rabouine P, Chanec M, Kindermans C, Dechaux M,


