

INVITED PAPER

The Pecking Order of Free Radicals and Antioxidants: Lipid Peroxidation, α -Tocopherol, and Ascorbate

Garry R. Buettner

ESR Center/EMRB 68, College of Medicine, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242

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Free radicals vary widely in their thermodynamic properties, ranging from very oxidizing to very reducing. These thermodynamic properties can be used to predict a pecking order, or hierarchy, for free radical reactions. Using one-electron reduction potentials, the predicted pecking order is in agreement with experimentally observed free radical electron (hydrogen atom) transfer reactions. These potentials are also in agreement with experimental data that suggest that vitamin E, the primary lipid soluble small molecule antioxidant, and vitamin C, the terminal water soluble small molecule antioxidant, cooperate to protect lipids and lipid structures against peroxidation. Although vitamin E is located in membranes and vitamin C is located in aqueous phases, vitamin C is able to recycle vitamin E; i.e., vitamin C repairs the tocopheroxyl (chromanoxyl) radical of vitamin E, thereby permitting vitamin E to function again as a free radical chain-breaking antioxidant. This review discusses: (i) the thermodynamics of free radical reactions that are of interest to the health sciences; (ii) the fundamental thermodynamic and kinetic properties that are associated with chain-breaking antioxidants; (iii) the unique interfacial nature of the apparent reaction of the tocopherol free radical (vitamin E radical) and vitamin C; and (iv) presents a hierarchy, or pecking order, for free radical electron (hydrogen atom) transfer reactions.

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Free radicals are now known to play an important role in many areas of biology and are therefore being actively investigated in connection with various human health problems (1, 2). Free radicals are in general reactive species that can be of benefit to an organism, e.g., the radicals produced during phagocytosis (3), as well as a liability, e.g., in producing DNA damage (4) or lipid peroxidation (5). A hierarchy of free radical reactions exists, which can

be exploited by organisms that generate these radicals during normal metabolic processes.

Organisms have developed many defenses to protect themselves from free radical processes. Antioxidant enzymes such as superoxide dismutase (6), catalase (7), and the glutathione peroxidases (8) are preventive antioxidants, because they eliminate species involved in the initiation of free radical chain reactions; while small molecule antioxidants, such as ascorbate (9), the tocopherols (10), CoQH₂ (reduced coenzyme Q₁₀¹) (11), urate (12), and glutathione (13), are able to "repair" oxidizing radicals directly and therefore are chain-breaking antioxidants.² In addition, it is now apparent that ascorbate and tocopherol function together to protect membrane lipids from damage (14-17).

THERMODYNAMICS, i.e., ONE-ELECTRON REDUCTION POTENTIALS

Because of their reactivity, most radicals undergo simple first- and second-order reactions; thus at least the elementary reactions of radicals are often straightforward and predictable. To be able to predict the direction of free

¹ Abbreviations used: AsCH⁻, ascorbate monoanion; Asc⁻, semidehydroascorbate radical or ascorbate free radical; CoQ, ubiquinone 10; CoQ⁻, semiquinone radical of the CoQ/CoQH₂ system; CoQH₂, reduced ubiquinone 10, ubiquinol 10; Desferal, trade name for deferoximine; DETAPAC, diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid; DMPO, 5,5-dimethylpyrroline-1-oxide; EtOH, ethyl alcohol; FA-CoA, fatty acyl-coenzyme A; GPx, glutathione peroxidase; GSH, glutathione; GS⁻, glutathyl radical; HRP, horseradish peroxidase; HRP-I, HRP compound I; HRP-II, HRP compound II; LDL, low density lipoprotein; PH-GPx, phospholipid hydroperoxide glutathione peroxidase; PUFA, polyunsaturated fatty acids; PUFA-H, polyunsaturated fatty acid where H represents a weakly bonded bis-allylic hydrogen; TOH, tocopherol; TO⁻, the tocopheroxyl (chromanoxyl) radical of tocopherol.

² Superoxide dismutase can be both a preventative and a chain-breaking antioxidant, depending on how superoxide is involved in a free radical chain reaction.

TABLE I

Couple	$E^{0'}/\text{mV}$ (pH) ^a	Ref.	Couple	$E^{0'}/\text{mV}$ (pH) ^a	Ref.
HO [•] , H ⁺ /H ₂ O	2310	22	Trolox C (T-O [•] , H ⁺ /TOH) ^d	480	18, 72
H ₃ CH ₂ C [•] , H ⁺ /CH ₃ CH ₃	1900	38	H ₂ O ₂ , H ⁺ /H ₂ O, [•] OH	320	66
O ₃ ^{•-} , 2H ⁺ /H ₂ O + O ₂	1800	65	Ascorbate ^{•-} , H ⁺ /ascorbate monoanion (vitamin C)	282	76
RO [•] , H ⁺ /ROH (aliphatic alkoxy radical)	1600	38	Ferricytochrome c/ferrocyclochrome c	260	77
N ₃ [•] /N ₃ ⁻	1330	18	Semiubiquinone, H ⁺ /ubiquinol (CoQ ^{•-} , 2H ⁺ /CoQH ₂)	200	79
[•] CH ₂ OH, H ⁺ /CH ₃ OH	1200	66	Fe(III)EDTA/Fe(II)EDTA	120	22
Fe(III)(1,10-phenanthroline) ₃ /Fe(II)(1,10- phenanthroline) ₃	1150	22	Fe(III)/Fe(II) (aqueous)	110 ^e	78
HOO [•] , H ⁺ /H ₂ O ₂	1060	22	Fe(III)citrate/Fe(II)citrate	≈ 100	<i>f</i>
ROO [•] , H ⁺ /ROOH (alkylperoxy radical)	1000 ^b	38	Fe(II)ADP/Fe(II)ADP	≈ 100	<i>f</i>
HRP-II/HRP (horseradish peroxidase)	970	67	TEMPO (R ₂ NO [•] , H ⁺ /R ₂ NOH)	80	80
Allyl [•] , H ⁺ /allyl-H (propene)	960	38	Fe(III)DETAPAC/Fe(II)DETAPAC	30	22
HRP-I/HRP-II	950	67	Ubiquinone, H ⁺ /Semiubiquinone (CoQ/CoQ ^{•-})	-36	79
O ₂ ^{•-} , 2H ⁺ /H ₂ O ₂	940	22	Dehydroascorbic/ascorbate ⁻	-174	76
RS [•] /RS ⁻ (cysteine)	920	68, 69	Fe(III)ferritin, 2H ⁺ /Fe(II)ferritin	-190	81
C ₆ H ₅ O [•] , H ⁺ /C ₆ H ₅ OH	900	70	Duroquinone (D ^{•••} O)/D ⁻ O ⁻	-264	70
O ₃ /O ₃ ⁻	890	65, ^c 66	Riboflavin/riboflavin ^{•-}	-317	82
Cyclopentenyl-3 [•] , H ⁺ /H-cyclopentenyl	700	38	O ₂ /O ₂ ⁻	-330	18
Cyclopentadien-1,3-yl-5 [•] , H ⁺ /H-cyclopenta- dien-1,3-yl-5	650	38	Adriamycin/adriamycin ⁻	-341	83
O ₂ (¹ Δg)/O ₂ ⁻	650	71	Fe(III)transferrin/Fe(II)transferrin	-400 (7.3)	84
Pentadien-1,4-yl-3 [•] , H ⁺ /H-pentadien-1,4-yl-3	600	38	Paraquat/paraquat ^{•-}	-448	18
PUFA [•] , H ⁺ /PUFA-H (polyunsaturated fatty acid, bis-allylic-H)	600	38	Fe(III)Desferal/Fe(II)Desferal	-450	85, <i>g</i>
HU ^{•-} , H ⁺ /UH ₂ (Urate)	590	12	O ₂ , H ⁺ /HO ₂ [•]	-460	66
Catechol-O [•] , H ⁺ /catechol-OH	530	70	RSSR/RSSR ⁻ (cystine or glutathione disulfide, GSSG)	-1500	31, 90 ^h
α-Tocopheroxyl [•] , H ⁺ /α-tocopherol (TO [•] , H ⁺ / TOH) (Vitamin E)	500	72-75	CO ₂ /CO ₂ ⁻	-1800	66
			H ₂ O/e _{aq} ⁻	-2870	86

^a pH, if other than 7.0.

^b Peroxy radicals have a wide range of reduction potentials, $0.77 < E^{0'} < 1.44$ V.

^c The value for this reaction was overestimated in Ref. (65) and has recently been updated (66).

^d Trolox C is 6-hydroxy-2,5,7,8-tetramethyl-chromane-2-carboxylic acid, alias 3,5-dihydro-6-hydroxy-2,5,7,8-tetramethylbenzo pran-2-carboxylic acid, a water soluble analogue of vitamin E.

^e It is surprising how often the Fe(III)/Fe(II) (aqueous) reduction potential of $E^{0'} = +770$ mV (pH 0) rather than $E^{0'} = +110$ mV (pH 7) is used as some apparently meaningful benchmark to compare processes occurring at pH 7.

^f This reduction potential has not yet been accurately determined at neutral pH. However, preliminary data suggest that $E^{0'}$ is similar to that of the FeEDTA couple, approximately 0.1 V (W.H. Koppenol, 1992, personal communication).

^g G.R. Buettner, unpublished observations.

^h Reference (90) adjusts experimental values to pH 7.

radical processes, it is necessary to understand the thermodynamics of free radical reactions. A key thermodynamic property to consider is the reduction potential, from which predictions can be made (18). With the advent of flash photolysis and pulse radiolysis (19, 20), methods have been developed to measure the one-electron reduction potential of transient species, such as free radicals. The work of the last three decades in this area has produced a wealth of information (18).

Table I is a summary of standard one-electron reduction potentials that are of interest for predicting the course of free radical processes. They are listed in order from highly oxidizing to highly reducing. Making a prediction is straightforward: Each oxidized species is capable of steal-

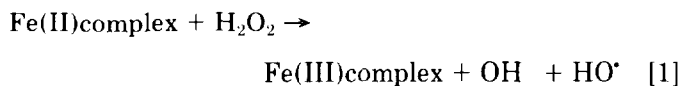
ing an electron (or hydrogen atom) from any reduced species listed below it, or viewed another way, each reduced species is willing to donate an electron (or hydrogen atom) to any oxidized species listed above.³ This table focuses on electron/hydrogen atom transfer reactions; other reactions may be possible or even preferred. For example, singlet oxygen in principle could react with PUFA to form O₂⁻ and PUFA[•]. However, the kinetically preferred reaction is not electron transfer, but rather an addition reaction of singlet oxygen to the double bonds of PUFA to

³ For a spontaneous process, the change in the Gibbs free energy must be negative, $\Delta G < 0$. But, $\Delta G = -\eta F \Delta E$; thus, the change in the reduction potential must be positive for a spontaneous reaction.

form lipid peroxides (21). Thus, it must be kept in mind that a reaction that is *thermodynamically possible* may not be *kinetically feasible*; i.e., the rate constant for the reaction may be too small for the reaction to be biologically significant.

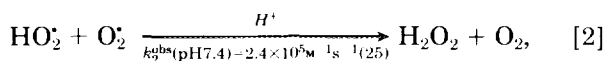
THE PECKING ORDER

The most oxidizing radical that is likely to arise in a biological system is the hydroxyl radical, HO[•]. Being at the top of the pecking order, it can oxidize all the reduced species below it, as listed in Table I. The most often cited source of HO[•] in a biochemical or biological system is the reductive cleavage of H₂O₂ by a reduced metal, such as Fe(II), i.e., the Fenton reaction (22–24):



From Table I we see that this reaction has $\Delta E^{O'}$ > 0 for Fe(II)EDTA (−120 mV for Fe(II)EDTA oxidation and +320 mV for H₂O₂ reduction yields $\Delta E^{O'} = +200$ mV), Fe(II)DETAPAC ($\Delta E^{O'} = +290$ mV), Fe(II)Desferal ($\Delta E^{O'} = +720$ mV), and ferrocyanide ($\Delta E^{O'} = +60$ mV), but not for Fe(II)(1,10-phenanthroline)₃ ($\Delta E^{O'} = -830$ mV). For biologically relevant iron complexes, the Fenton reaction has $\Delta E^{O'} > 0$ for Fe(II)citrate ($\Delta E^{O'} \approx +200$ mV), Fe(II)ADP ($\Delta E^{O'} \approx 200$ mV), Fe(II)-ferritin ($\Delta E^{O'} \approx 520$ mV), and Fe(II)-transferrin ($\Delta E^{O'} \approx 720$ mV). Thus, the presence of an Fe(II)complex and H₂O₂ can lead to HO[•], an oxidant that will indiscriminately initiate a cascade of oxidizing free radical reactions.

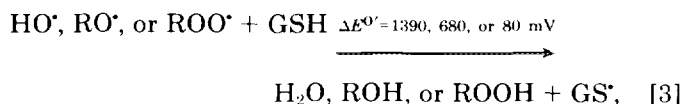
The source of H₂O₂ can be from a direct two-electron reduction of oxygen as well as from a one-electron reduction, which produces superoxide. The one-electron reduction appears to be a more dangerous route, because it will not only result in the production of H₂O₂ via superoxide dismutation,



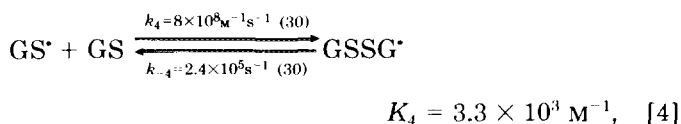
but the presence of O₂^{•−}, a reducing species, can convert an Fe(III)complex to an Fe(II)complex, thereby providing all the components for the Fenton reaction, Eq. [1] (26, 27). The formation of O₂^{•−} is often associated with the presence of even stronger reductants, such as the paraquat radical (28) or reduced anthracycline antibiotics such as adriamycin (29). These one-electron reducing species not only reduce O₂, forming O₂^{•−} but they also can efficiently reduce Fe(III) complexes, thereby producing the reduced metal required for the Fenton reaction (29).

The remarkable aspect of free radical electron transfer reactions is that not only can oxidants beget oxidants, but also that oxidants can beget reductants and reductants

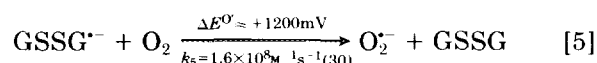
can beget oxidants. For example, glutathione can react with various highly oxidizing species



generating the glutathyl radical, GS[•], which is less oxidizing. However, GS[•] can react rapidly with another GSH, most efficiently via GS[•]

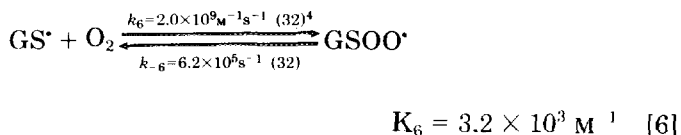


yielding a strongly reducing species, GSSG^{•−} Table I. The very negative potential of the GSSG/GSSG^{•−} couple ($E^{O'} \approx -1500$ mV (31, 90)) makes GSSG^{•−} probably the most reducing species that can arise in a biological setting (except for e_{aq}^{•−} from ionizing radiation). This species can reduce metals as well as produce O₂^{•−}



The possibility of reaction [5] has led to the proposal that superoxide dismutase and GSH in combination are an integral component of cellular antioxidant defense (13, 89).

If oxygen is present, the glutathyl radical can be converted to its thiol peroxyl radical



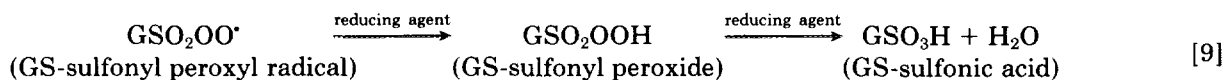
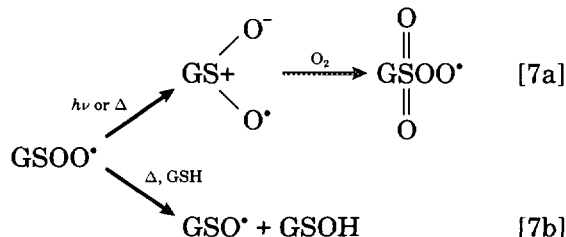
This thiol peroxyl radical is quite unstable toward reorganization. Low temperature EPR studies have demonstrated (33, 34) that visible light will bring about the isomerization of GSOO[•]. There is also evidence that GSOO[•] will undergo thermal isomerization at 300 K,

⁴ Direct kinetic measurement of k_6 poses many problems, principally from the lack of a strong absorption band for both the GS[•] and GSOO[•] radicals. Thus, not all measurements are in agreement. While a reversible reaction has been proposed, reaction [−6] (30, 32), and generally accepted by the research community, other researchers have proposed a non-reversible addition of O₂ to GS[•] with $k_6 = 3.0 \times 10^7 \text{M}^{-1} \text{s}^{-1}$ and $k_{-6} \approx 0$ (35). Using $K_6 = 3.2 \times 10^3 \text{M}^{-1}$, we can estimate the bond strength ($\approx \Delta H_f$) of the S-O bond in GSOO[•] using $\Delta G = -RT \ln K_6 = \Delta H - T\Delta S$. Because the loss of O₂ will dominate the ΔS term, we can estimate ΔS as ≈ -21 e.u. This leads to $\Delta H_f \approx -11$ kcal mol^{−1}, which is in remarkable agreement with -11.7 ± 0.9 kcal mol^{−1} found for formation of this bond in CH₃SOO[•](g) (91). Thus, the equilibrium results seem appropriate.

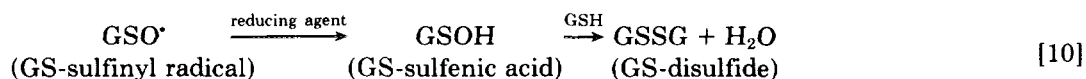
yielding the sulfonyl radical; ab initio calculations, using

$\text{CH}_3\text{SOO}^\bullet$ as a model, suggest that GS^\bullet would be more

thermodynamically stable than GSOO^\bullet (150 kJmol^{-1} for the model compound) (34).



and



Glutathione disulfide, glutathione sulfenic acid, and glutathione sulfonic acid are the stable end products observed in glutathione oxidation. In each of the reactions [8]–[10], a reducing agent is shown. If this agent is GSH, then GS^\bullet is a possible product. Although the mechanism for reaction [9] has not been investigated, $\text{GSO}_2\text{OO}^\bullet$ would be a very strong hydrogen abstractor; even stronger (higher on the pecking order) than an alkyl peroxy radical, ROO^\bullet (34). Thus, GS^\bullet would be a likely product, and as suggested by Sevilla *et al.* (34), GS^\bullet would then serve as the chain-carrying radical in glutathione autoxidation. Among the various glutathione-oxygen radicals, the predicted pecking order for hydrogen atom abstraction appears to be (34)

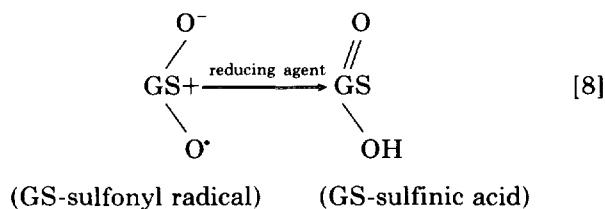
(Best) $\text{GSO}_2\text{OO}^\bullet > \text{ROO}^\bullet \gg \text{GSOO}^\bullet$

$> \text{GSO}_2^\bullet \approx \text{GSO}^\bullet$ (Poorest).

The intracellular concentration of GSH is $\approx 1 \text{ mM}$ (or more) while mitochondrial respiration keeps $[\text{O}_2] \approx 0\text{--}10 \text{ }\mu\text{M}$ in the cell. Thus, kinetics suggest that nearly all ($\approx 99\%$) GS^\bullet formed should react with GSH, yielding GSSG^- , reaction [4] rather than reaction [6], with subsequent formation of GSSG and O_2^- reaction [5]. This shows the importance of superoxide dismutase to keep $[\text{O}_2^-]_{ss}$ low (13, 89, 90).

Radicals that have acid/base properties can also have different reactivities that depend on their state of pro-

tonation. Thus, the glutathyl peroxy radical will lead to additional oxidizing intermediates, which can in turn react as follows (34):



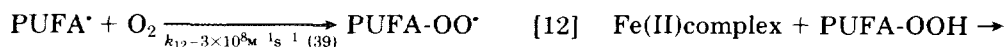
tonation. For example, the perhydroxyl radical (HOO^\bullet , the conjugate acid of superoxide, O_2^- $\text{p}K_a = 4.7$ (25)) is able to initiate lipid peroxidation, whereas O_2^- is ineffective (36–40). The pecking order suggests two possible pathways for the direct involvement of HOO^\bullet in lipid peroxidation: (i) the formation of PUFA^\bullet by abstraction of a weakly bonded bis-allylic hydrogen ($\Delta E^{O'} = +460 \text{ mV}$, reaction [11] below, with $\text{X}^\bullet = \text{HOO}^\bullet$) and/or (ii) the formation of PUFA-OO^\bullet from PUFA-OOH ($\Delta E^{O'} = +60 \text{ mV}$). The kinetically preferred site for HOO^\bullet attack appears to be PUFA-OOH (36).

LIPID PEROXIDATION ENERGETICS

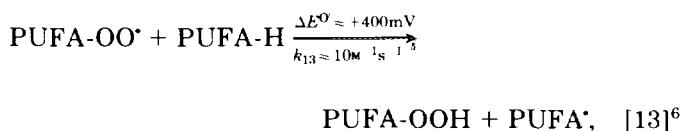
The free radical oxidation of polyunsaturated membrane lipids is the focus of many biological free radical studies. PUFA-H are especially susceptible to peroxidation because of the easily oxidizable bis-allylic hydrogens. The $\text{PUFA}^\bullet, \text{H}^+/\text{PUFA-H}$ couple has $E^{O'} = +600 \text{ mV}$ (38) (compared to $\approx 1900 \text{ mV}$ for an aliphatic hydrogen); thus, any oxidizing species above PUFA-H in Table I can in principle bring about initiation of lipid peroxidation:



Propagation of this chain reaction is both thermodynamically and kinetically favored because PUFA^\bullet , the pentadienyl radical, reacts rapidly with O_2 :

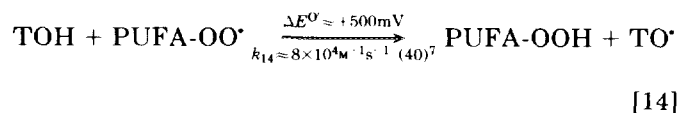


The peroxy radical formed is higher on the pecking order than PUFA* and thus is able to propagate the chain reaction:



thereby bringing about the oxidation of other unsaturated lipids.

This low rate constant for the propagation step (Eq. [13]) is a blessing, because it permits vitamin E, a lipid soluble small-molecule antioxidant, to outcompete the propagation reactions to "repair" PUFA-OO*, forming PUFA-OOH.



Thus, when comparing the rates for the competing reactions for PUFA-OO*,

$$\frac{\text{rate (PUFA-OO}^* + \text{TOH)}}{\text{rate (PUFA-OO}^* + \text{PUFA-H})} = \frac{8 \times 10^4 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1} [\text{TOH}][\text{PUFA-OO}^*]}{10 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1} [\text{PUFA-H}][\text{PUFA-OO}^*]}, \quad [15]$$

if TOH is to repair 90% of the PUFA-OO* produced, then [TOH]:[PUFA-H] must be $\approx 1:1000$, i.e., one tocopherol is able to protect ≈ 1000 lipid molecules from the chain propagation step, reaction [13]. Indeed, the experimentally observed level of TOH in membranes appears to be on the order of 1:1000 (14).

The lipid hydroperoxides produced, PUFA-OOH, in reactions [13] and [14] can undergo reductive cleavage by reduced metals, such as Fe(II), in a process parallel to reaction [1].

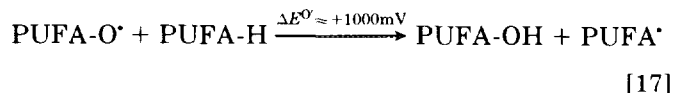
⁵ A rate constant of $40 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ has been found for the propagation step for linoleate in micellar solution (41, 42). The value of $10 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ is an estimate for the propagation step in a biological membrane, this lower value reflecting the more restricted motion of the fatty acid chains in a biological membrane.

⁶ Numbering this reaction as [13] was no accident.

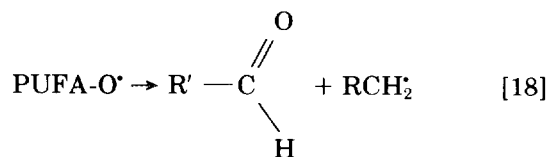
⁷ McKenna *et al.* (43) have determined a value for the inhibition rate constant $k_{14} = 5.0 \times 10^{-2} \text{ mol\%}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ in erythrocyte ghosts. The term mol% is the moles of antioxidant per total moles of organic phosphorus. Barclay *et al.* (41) have reported a value of $5.8 \times 10^3 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ for the inhibition rate constant for α -tocopherol in dilinoleoylphosphatidylcholine bilayers. This much slower rate constant is more difficult to rationalize with the observed membrane levels of α -tocopherol, see Eq. [15].



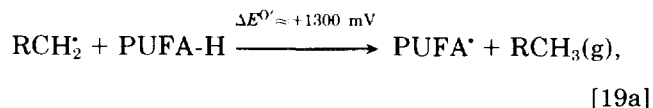
The lipid alkoxy radical produced, PUFA-O*, is higher on the pecking order than PUFA-H and PUFA-OOH and thus can initiate additional chain reactions, e.g.,



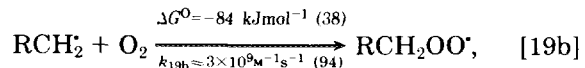
In addition, PUFA-O* can undergo a β -scission reaction that will produce a short chain alkyl radical such as the ethyl or pentyl radical (92).



This alkyl radical is also higher on the pecking order than PUFA-H or PUFA-OOH and could also initiate additional chain reactions,



forming ethane or pentane, end products observed in lipid peroxidation of ω -3 or ω -6 fatty acids (92, 93). Also, the alkyl radicals can easily react with O₂ to form peroxy radicals,

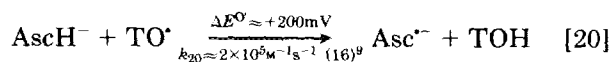


which will initiate further oxidations.

ASCORBATE AND TOCOPHEROL AS ANTIOXIDANTS

Each tocopherol can donate two electrons as a chain-breaking antioxidant, and then it is "consumed." To be an effective antioxidant, each oxidized tocopherol must be recycled (reduced back to TOH), but, at present, enzyme systems capable of reducing oxidized tocopherol have not been described.⁸ The current thinking is that ascorbate recycles tocopherol via TO*, producing the ascorbate radical (9, 15–17).

⁸ Evidence for a glutathione-dependent factor, presumably an enzyme, that cycles the tocopheroxy radical back to tocopherol has been observed in hepatic endoplasmic reticulum (44) and human platelets (45).



$\text{Asc}^{\bullet-}$ can be removed by dismutation, yielding AscH^- and dehydroascorbate. Both dehydroascorbate and $\text{Asc}^{\bullet-}$ can be reduced by enzyme systems that use NADH or NADPH as sources of reducing equivalents (46); thus, ascorbate is recycled. A possible problem with this model is that ascorbate being water soluble and tocopherol being lipid soluble are in different phases. But it has been demonstrated that in a membrane, the phenolic OH group of tocopherol will be at the membrane-water interface, i.e., near the polar head groups of the phospholipids that compose the bilayer, and the phytyl tail of tocopherol lies parallel to the phospholipid fatty acyl chains, Fig. 1 (47, 48). Thus, the peroxidation and antioxidant processes will proceed as follows:

1. Initiation, reaction [11], will produce the pentadienyl radical. Its very fast reaction with O_2 , reaction [12], and the physical separation of the radical site on the PUFA and the "OH" of tocopherol preclude any significant reaction between PUFA^{\bullet} and TOH , Fig. 1.

2. However, once the lipid peroxy radical is formed, a significant dipole is present, ≈ 2.6 Debye, (49, 50) that will allow the peroxy radical moiety on the lipid chain to "float" (partition) to the membrane-water interface, Fig. 1.

3. This yields the proximity required for the repair of PUFA-OO^{\bullet} by TOH , reaction [14], thereby preventing chain propagation, reaction [13].

4. The relatively stable tocopheroxyl radical formed, TO^{\bullet} , is at the membrane-water interface, allowing water soluble ascorbate access to membrane-bound TO^{\bullet} for the repair reaction, reaction [20], thereby recycling the tocopherol, Fig. 1.

5. The potentially dangerous lipid hydroperoxide can be cleaved by phospholipase A_2 , allowing GPx to detoxify the hydroperoxide to a fatty acid alcohol (51), or it may be converted directly to an alcohol by PH-GPx (52).

Ascorbate and tocopherol are both well-suited to serve as small molecule chain-breaking donor antioxidants in biological systems because:

⁹ The value of k_{20} is dependent on the solvent and environment. In a water/2-propanol/acetone homogeneous solution, $k_{20} = 1.55 \times 10^6 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (15). However, in positively charged hexadecyltrimethylammonium chloride micelles, with α -tocopherol in the micelle while ascorbate is in the aqueous phase, $k_{20} = 7.2 \times 10^7 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (62). In negatively charged sodium dodecyl sulfate micelles, $k_{20} = 3.8 \times 10^4 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (62); while in phosphatidylcholine liposomes, $k_{20} \approx 2 \times 10^5 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (16). In Triton X-100 micelles, this rate constant drops to $3.2 \times 10^2 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (63), but Triton X-100 may not be a good model for α -tocopherol in a membrane bilayer, because the oxygen present in the Triton X-100 chains will undoubtedly alter the position of tocopherol in the micelle. This range of values suggests that $2 \times 10^5 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ is probably a good estimate for k_{20} when tocopherol is in a biological membrane.

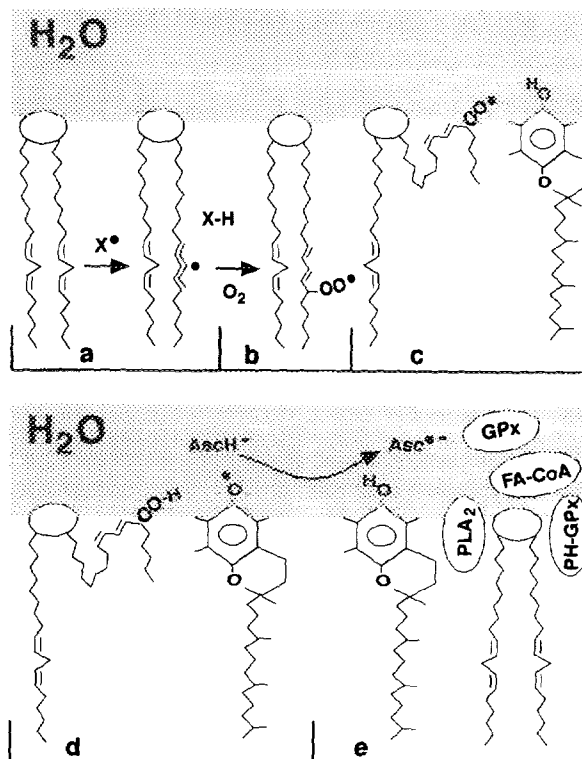


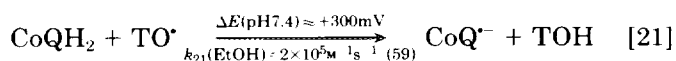
FIG. 1. Membrane lipid peroxidation. Only one leaflet of the bilayer is represented. (a) Initiation of the peroxidation process by an oxidizing radical, X^{\bullet} , by abstraction of a bis-allylic hydrogen, thereby forming a pentadienyl radical. (b) Oxygenation to form a peroxy radical and a conjugated diene. (c) The peroxy radical moiety partitions to the water-membrane interface where it is poised for repair by tocopherol. (d) The peroxy radical is converted to a lipid hydroperoxide, and the resulting tocopheroxyl radical can be repaired by ascorbate. (e) Tocopherol has been recycled by ascorbate; the resulting ascorbate radical can be recycled by enzyme systems. The enzymes phospholipase A_2 (PLA_2), phospholipid hydroperoxide glutathione peroxidase (PH-GPx), glutathione peroxidase (GPx), and fatty acyl-coenzyme A (FA-CoA), cooperate to detoxify and repair the oxidized fatty acid chain of the phospholipid. This cartoon cannot show the dynamic aspects of this process. TOH in the membrane will undoubtedly be bobbing "up and down" so that the position of the "OH" is variable. In addition, TOH and TO^{\bullet} may have somewhat differing positions at the interface. The chemical aspects of this process will undoubtedly also describe the free radical oxidation of LDL.

1. They are thermodynamically at the bottom of the pecking order for oxidizing radicals, Table I.
2. Their radicals are *relatively* harmless, being neither strongly oxidizing nor strongly reducing.
3. Their radicals react poorly with oxygen, producing very little, if any, superoxide via electron transfer or peroxy radical by O_2 addition.
4. Their kinetic properties require that only relatively small amounts be present for them to serve as effective antioxidants.
5. They can be recycled, directly or indirectly, by enzyme systems.

OTHER ANTIOXIDANTS

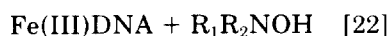
Carotenoids such as β -carotene are now considered to have lipid antioxidant properties, but very little information is available on the mechanism of this antioxidant activity (53–55). It has been hypothesized that β -carotene acts not as a chain-breaking *donor* antioxidant, such as ascorbate and tocopherol, but rather as a radical trap whereby the chain-carrying peroxy radicals add covalently to the conjugated system of β -carotene, thus breaking the chain reaction of lipid peroxidation, reaction [13] (53). β -Carotene appears to be an unusual antioxidant in that it is effective only at low oxygen tensions (53). The first evidence has recently been presented which demonstrates that β -carotene can act synergistically with α -tocopherol as a radical-trapping antioxidant in membranes (55).

Reduced CoQ, CoQH₂, has been proposed to have a role as a free radical chain-breaking antioxidant (11). CoQH₂ has been shown to protect against lipid peroxidation in liposomes (56, 57) as well as in LDL (58), but its most important antioxidant activity is probably in the mitochondrial membrane (11). In fact, it appears that as an antioxidant, CoQH₂ is sacrificed before α -tocopherol (57, 58). Consistent with this is the observation that CoQH₂ is able to regenerate tocopherol (59)



These observations are consistent with the relative positions of tocopherol and CoQH₂ in the pecking order, Table I.

Some nitroxide radicals have recently been shown to have SOD activity (60), and this has generated interest in their use as antioxidants in acute episodes of O₂⁻ production. However, a new mode of antioxidant action for nitroxides has been revealed, i.e., they can serve as chain-breaking *acceptor* antioxidants (61). The presence of Fe(II) in a system where active oxygen species, e.g., O₂⁻ and H₂O₂, are being produced can generate HO[•], the ultimate oxidizing free radical, Eq. [1]. However, nitroxides are able to oxidize Fe(II) complexed with DNA, thereby preventing HO[•] formation and subsequent DNA damage.



The hydroxylamine formed is relatively unreactive and in fact could serve as a chain-breaking donor antioxidant. Neither the nitroxide radical nor the hydroxylamine will react significantly with oxygen to produce damaging radicals; thus nitroxides are a safe place to put an electron.

Nitroxides serving as a "safe" way to oxidize Fe(II) to Fe(III) is reminiscent of ceruloplasmin in that it oxidizes

Fe(II) by a "safe" mechanism, i.e., there is no evidence for the formation of peroxides or superoxide as the reducing equivalents from Fe(II) are passed to dioxygen, forming water (87, 88).

NONSTANDARD CONDITIONS

The standard thermodynamic conditions for $E^{0'}$ imply that all reactants are 1 M (actually, unit activity). However, the vast majority of free radicals could never be at a concentration of 1 M, thus $\Delta E^{0'}$ should only serve as a guideline. The larger $\Delta E^{0'}$ is, the safer the prediction; the smaller $\Delta E^{0'}$ is, the more important the actual concentrations become for a prediction. To correct the standard redox potentials for the actual concentrations encountered in a one-electron free radical reaction, the Nernst equation is used (18):

$$\Delta E = \Delta E^{0'} - 60 \text{ mV} \log_{10} \frac{[\text{Products}] \times \dots}{[\text{Reactants}] \times \dots} \quad (23)$$

As an example, consider the ESR spin trapping observation that HRP can oxidize N₃⁻ to N₃[•] (64); briefly, the proposed reactions are:



where DMPO is the spin trapping agent. For reaction [25], $\Delta E^{0'} = -380 \text{ mV}$, (950 mV for HRP-I) – (1330 mV for N₃[•]), a thermodynamically uphill reaction. However, applying the Nernst equation and reasonable estimates for the steady-state concentration of the reactants and products for reaction [25], we have

$$\Delta E = -380 \text{ mV} - 60 \text{ mV} \log_{10} \frac{[\text{HRP-II}][\text{N}_3^\bullet]}{[\text{HRP-I}][\text{N}_3^-]} \quad [28]$$

If the ratio of [HRP-II]:[HRP-I] is $\approx 1:1$ and [N₃[•]]_{ss} = 10⁻⁹ M while [N₃⁻] = 10⁻² M, then $\Delta E = +100 \text{ mV}$, i.e., the reaction can be pulled to the right because the steady-state concentration of the very reactive N₃[•] is extremely low.

CONCLUSIONS

Knowledge of the one-electron reduction potentials for free radical reactions is invaluable in helping to understand experimental results of free radical processes. However, it must be kept in mind that reactions other than electron/hydrogen atom transfer are possible. In addition, $\Delta E^{0'} < 0$ does not make a reaction impossible;

equilibria may be shifted due to the disappearance of product by further reactions, thereby pulling a reaction. These potentials also could be invaluable in the design of new pharmacological antioxidants for use in acute episodes of high free radical flux.

The hierarchy of free radical electron transfer reactions presented here allow us to predict the cascade of free radical reactions that will occur after initiation. In general, each reaction in the sequence will generate less energetic radicals, with antioxidants producing the least energetic (most stable) radicals. However, the presence of oxygen and catalytic metals, such as iron, can result in reactions that produce *more* reactive, rather than less reactive, radicals; for example, reactions [1], [12], and [16]. It is these reactions that make unchecked free radical oxidation processes dangerous to an organism.

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