

Generation and metabolism of 5-lipoxygenase pathway leukotrienes by human eosinophils: Predominant production of leukotriene C₄

(neutrophils/oxidative metabolism/polymorphonuclear leukocytes/inflammatory mediators/arachidonic acid)

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ABSTRACT 5-Lipoxygenase pathway-derived products of arachidonic acid released by human eosinophils activated *in vitro* have been measured by using radioimmunoassays specific for leukotriene B₄ (LTB₄) and for sulfidopeptide leukotrienes including leukotriene C₄ (LTC₄). Eosinophil-enriched leukocytes (mean, 85% eosinophils) from five hypereosinophilic donors activated with 5.0 μM ionophore A23187 for 15 min at 37°C in the presence of 50 mM L-serine released 69 ± 28 and 1.5 ± 0.8 (mean ± SEM) ng of LTC₄ and LTB₄, respectively, per 10⁶ cells; ratios of LTC₄ to LTB₄ ranged from 16 to 149. Eosinophils stimulated with ionophore (2.5 μM) or phorbol myristate acetate (1 μg per ml) metabolized exogenously added LTC₄ to products that coeluted on reverse-phase high-performance liquid chromatography with synthetic *S*-diastereoisomeric LTC₄ sulfoxides and 6-*trans*-LTB₄ diastereoisomers, and this metabolic inactivation was inhibited by L-serine or catalase. Ionophore-activated eosinophils purified from three normal donors also preferentially generated LTC₄ (38 ± 3 ng per 10⁶ cells) relative to LTB₄ (6.0 ± 3.1 ng per 10⁶ cells), whereas neutrophils from the same donors released LTB₄ (48 ± 21 ng per 10⁶ cells) in a >7-fold excess to LTC₄. The predominant production by human eosinophils of LTC₄ with its potent smooth muscle spasmogenic and vasoactive properties may contribute to the pathobiology of allergic and other diseases associated with eosinophilia.

Human polymorphonuclear leukocytes, activated with diverse stimuli, oxidatively metabolize arachidonic acid by the 5-lipoxygenase-dependent pathway to 5,6-*trans*-oxido-7,9-*trans*-11,14-*cis*-icosatetraenoic acid (leukotriene A₄, LTA₄) (1), which in turn is converted enzymatically to (5*S*,6*R*)-5,6-dihydroxy-6,14-*cis*-8,10-*trans*-icosatetraenoic acid (leukotriene B₄, LTB₄) or to (5*S*,6*R*)-5-hydroxy-6-*S*-glutathionyl-7,9-*trans*-11,14-*cis*-icosatetraenoic acid (leukotriene C₄, LTC₄) (2-4). LTB₄ is a potent chemoattractant and aggregating stimulus for both neutrophilic and eosinophilic polymorphonuclear leukocytes (5, 6), and LTC₄ is exquisitely active as a spasmogenic and vasoactive substance when administered locally to human airways and skin, respectively (7, 8).

Human polymorphonuclear leukocytes, predominantly neutrophils, when stimulated with the calcium ionophore A23187 produce LTB₄ in marked preference to the sulfidopeptide leukotrienes, LTC₄ and its peptide cleavage products (5*S*,6*R*)-5-hydroxy-6-*S*-cysteinylglycyl-7,9-*trans*-11,14-*cis*-icosatetraenoic acid (leukotriene D₄, LTD₄) and (5*S*,6*R*)-5-hydroxy-6-*S*-cysteinyl-7,9-*trans*-11,14-*cis*-icosatetraenoic acid (leukotriene E₄, LTE₄) (2, 4, 9, 10). We now report that human eosinophils, stimulated with calcium ionophore A23187, produce LTC₄

as their predominant 5-lipoxygenase product, a finding with substantial implications for understanding the pathobiology of human disease states associated with tissue and blood eosinophilia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials. Hanks' balanced salt solution (HBSS) (Microbiological Associates); Ficoll/Hypaque, Percoll, and 6% dextran 70 (Macrodex) (Pharmacia); phorbol myristate acetate (PMA), catalase (thymol-free bovine liver, 11,000 units/mg), and L-serine (Sigma); calcium ionophore A23187 (Calbiochem); HPLC grade methanol (Burdick and Jackson Laboratories, Muskegon, MI); Aquasol scintillation fluid, [14,15-³H]LTC₄ (40 Ci per mmol, 1 Ci = 3.7 × 10¹⁰ becquerels), and [14,15-³H]LTB₄ (40 Ci per mmol) (New England Nuclear); and hydroxyethyl starch (Hetastarch 6% in 0.9% saline) (American Hospital Supply, McGraw Park, IL) were obtained as indicated. LTB₄, LTC₄, LTD₄, LTE₄, 6-*trans*-LTB₄ diastereoisomers, and the *S*-diastereoisomeric sulfoxides of LTC₄ were prepared as described (11-14).

Cell Purification. Human neutrophils were prepared from citrate-anticoagulated blood of normal volunteer donors by dextran sedimentation of erythrocytes, centrifugation on cushions of Ficoll/Hypaque, and hypotonic lysis of erythrocytes (15). Human eosinophils were obtained from the citrate-anticoagulated blood of five donors with eosinophilia associated with rheumatoid arthritis (78% eosinophils), mastocytosis (32%), bronchial asthma (40%), a cephalosporin drug reaction (46%), and an idiopathic hypereosinophilic syndrome (85%) by erythrocyte sedimentation. In order to purify eosinophils from donors with blood eosinophilia of <78% and to obtain both neutrophil-enriched and eosinophil-enriched leukocytes from normal donors, leukocytes obtained after sedimentation of erythrocytes in dextran or hydroxyethyl starch were centrifuged on gradients of isotonic Percoll (16) at 1,600 × *g* (average) at 10°C for 22 min in a fixed-angle SM-24 rotor on an RC-5B super-speed centrifuge with a slow-start mechanism (Sorvall).

Leukotriene Generation and Catabolism. Leukocytes (1-7 × 10⁶) were preincubated in 1 ml of HBSS with or without L-serine (50 mM, pH 7.4) for 5 min at 37°C and stimulated with calcium ionophore A23187 for various durations. After incubations were terminated by quenching on ice, supernatants were collected by centrifugation at 8,000 × *g* for 1 min. Selected cell pellets and supernatants were assayed for eosinophil peroxidase

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Abbreviations: LTA₄, leukotriene A₄; LTB₄, leukotriene B₄; LTC₄, leukotriene C₄; LTD₄, leukotriene D₄; LTE₄, leukotriene E₄; PMA, phorbol myristate acetate; RIA, radioimmunoassay; RP-HPLC, reverse-phase high-performance liquid chromatography.

activity at pH 6.0 in 0.1 M *N*-(2-acetamido)iminodiacetic acid buffer by using *p*-phenylenediamine as the hydrogen donor (17). LTB₄ and LTC₄ were measured in the supernatants at several dilutions by radioimmunoassays (RIAs). The LTB₄ RIA detects synthetic LTB₄ on the linear portion of the radioligand binding inhibition curve over dose ranges of 0.1–5.0 ng, with 50% inhibition of the radioligand binding—ID₅₀—occurring at 0.3 ng, and does not recognize 6-*trans*-LTB₄ diastereoisomers (9). The LTC₄ RIA, specific for sulfidopeptide-class leukotrienes, detects LTC₄, LTD₄, and LTE₄ over dose ranges of 0.1–5.0 ng with ID₅₀s at 1.4, 0.7, and 0.6 ng, respectively (18, 19). L-Serine had no effect on the RIAs.

For studies of catabolism, eosinophils (10⁶ in 1 ml of HBSS) and neutrophils (10⁷ in 1 ml) were incubated alone or with PMA (1 μg per ml) or calcium ionophore A23187 (2.5 μM), with and without L-serine (50 mM, pH 7.4) for 5 min at 37°C. Synthetic LTB₄ or LTC₄ (1–2 μg) mixed with 0.08–0.16 ng of [³H]LTB₄ or 0.14–0.28 ng of [³H]LTC₄ (10,000–20,000 ³H cpm) were incubated with cell suspensions for 5, 15, or 60 min. The reactions were quenched on ice, and the supernatants were collected.

Reverse-Phase High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (RP-HPLC). Aliquots (0.4–0.8 ml) of the supernatants from generation or catabolism experiments were analyzed by RP-HPLC with an isocratic solvent of methanol/water/acetic acid, 65:34.9:0.1 (vol/vol), pH 5.6, at a flow rate of 1 ml per min with a 10-μm C₁₈ Ultrasphere ODS column (4.6 × 250 mm) and an Altex HPLC column (Rainin, Woburn, MA). Column eluates were continuously monitored for absorbance at 280 nm (model 100-40 spectrophotometer, Hitachi, Tokyo). Radioactivity was determined in 1.0-ml fractions. Synthetic LTB₄, LTC₄, LTD₄, and LTE₄ were eluted with average retention times of 20.8, 13.2, 20.8, and 26.3 min, respectively. Synthetic *S*-diastereoisomeric LTC₄ sulfoxides and 6-*trans*-LTB₄ diastereoisomers each were eluted as doublets with average retention times of 10.6 and 11.7 min and of 16.2 and 18.0 min, respectively (19, 20). Recovery of [³H]LTC₄ and [³H]LTB₄ from RP-HPLC averaged 86% and 85%, respectively.

RESULTS

Generation of Leukotrienes by Eosinophils. The extracellular release of LTC₄ and LTB₄ by ionophore-stimulated (0–20 μM) eosinophils (mean ± SEM, 85 ± 3%) from five hyper-eosinophilic donors was dose-related with maximal generation of both products occurring at 2.5–5 μM ionophore. In a representative experiment with eosinophils from the donor with 78% eosinophilia, maximum generation of LTC₄ with and without L-serine was 155 and 80 ng per 10⁶ leukocytes and of LTB₄ with and without L-serine was 2.3 and 2.2 ng per 10⁶ cells (Fig. 1). In a kinetic experiment with eosinophils from the same donor, LTC₄ generation was near maximal at 15 min with and without L-serine at values of 130 and 65 ng per 10⁶ cells, whereas LTB₄ at 15 min was 1.4 and 0.9 ng per 10⁶ cells with and without L-serine, respectively (Fig. 2). The preferential generation of LTC₄ relative to LTB₄ for each donor at 15 min in the presence of L-serine yielded LTC₄/LTB₄ ratios from 16 to 149 (Table 1).

The addition of L-serine to 5 μM ionophore-stimulated eosinophils from the five hyper-eosinophilic donors increased LTC₄ concentrations by 160–290% (mean ± SEM, 211 ± 40%) at 15 min. In contrast, LTB₄ concentrations were not altered, with means ± SEM of 1.7 ± 0.8 and 1.6 ± 0.8 ng per 10⁶ cells with and without L-serine, respectively. The supernatants of eosinophils stimulated in the absence of L-serine (Fig. 3 *Left*) resolved a peak with the retention time of LTC₄ and a less polar

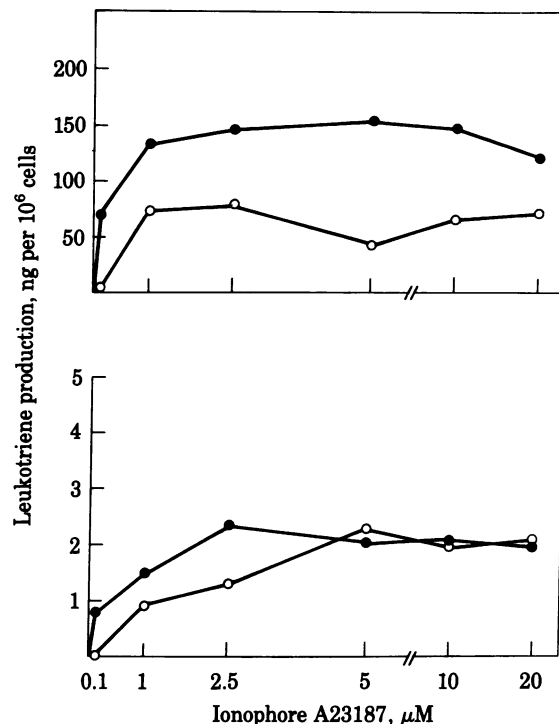


FIG. 1. LTC₄ (Upper) and LTB₄ (Lower) production (measured by RIAs) by 10⁶ leukocytes (78% eosinophils) stimulated for 15 min with doses of calcium ionophore A23187 in the presence (●) or absence (○) of 50 mM L-serine.

doublet with the retention times of the 6-*trans*-LTB₄ diastereoisomers. In the presence of 50 mM L-serine (Fig. 3 *Right*), the LTC₄ peak increased in magnitude and the 6-*trans*-LTB₄ doublet was markedly diminished. The other sulfidopeptide

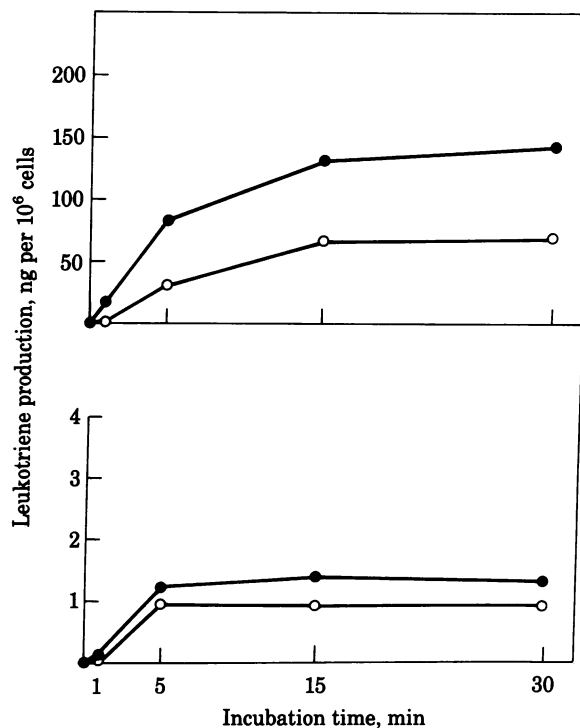


FIG. 2. Time course of production of LTC₄ (Upper) and LTB₄ (Lower) by 10⁶ leukocytes (78% eosinophils) stimulated with 1 μM calcium ionophore A23187 in the presence (●) or absence (○) of 50 mM L-serine.

Table 1. Leukotriene production by eosinophil-enriched leukocytes from hyper-eosinophilic donors

	Donor					Mean \pm SEM
	1	2	3	4	5	
Eosinophils, %	93	81	87	85	78	85 \pm 3
Neutrophils, %	7	17	13	7	13	11 \pm 5
LTC ₄ , ng/10 ⁶ cells	9.8	104	6	70	155	69 \pm 28
LTB ₄ , ng/10 ⁶ cells	0.3	0.7	0.3	4.4	2.0	1.5 \pm 0.8
LTC ₄ :LTB ₄	33	149	20	16	77	59 \pm 25

Eosinophil-enriched leukocytes ($1-7 \times 10^6$ in 1 ml) were stimulated with 5 μ M calcium ionophore A23187 for 15 min at 37°C in the presence of 50 mM L-serine; leukotriene production was measured by RIAs.

leukotriene-derived products that were eluted as doublets at 8 and 9 min and at 10 and 11 min were also less apparent in the presence of L-serine. The integrated area under the LTC₄ A₂₈₀ peak increased 144% in the presence of L-serine, corresponding to the 160% increase in LTC₄ measured by RIA in the supernatant.

For 10⁷ normal neutrophils (>97% purity) stimulated in 1 ml with an optimal dose of 1 μ M ionophore, peak LTC₄ production occurred at 15 min in three experiments and was increased 76% to a mean \pm SEM of 3.7 \pm 0.6 ng per 10⁶ cells in the presence of 50 mM L-serine. RP-HPLC analysis of the supernatants from the stimulated neutrophils confirmed the quantitative production of LTC₄ and the protective effect of L-serine. The major leukotriene products from neutrophils resolved by RP-HPLC were LTB₄, the 6-*trans*-LTB₄ diastereoisomers, and a polar peak with a retention time of 6 min, compatible with the ω -oxidation products of LTB₄. When neutrophil activation was reduced to 5 min to increase LTB₄ relative to the ω -oxidation products, LTB₄ release was 32.1 \pm 11.1 ng per 10⁶ cells (mean \pm SEM, *n* = 4).

Eosinophil- and neutrophil-enriched cells, from the same three

normal donors, when stimulated with ionophore in the presence of L-serine, yielded a predominance of LTC₄ from normal eosinophils and LTB₄ from normal neutrophils. Eosinophil-enriched leukocytes (mean, 87% eosinophils) elaborated an average of 38 ng of LTC₄ per 10⁶ cells and 6 ng of LTB₄ per 10⁶ cells, whereas the neutrophil-enriched preparations (mean, 96% neutrophils and 3% eosinophils) yielded 7.5 ng of LTC₄ per 10⁶ cells and 48 ng of LTB₄ per 10⁶ cells (Table 2).

Catabolism of Exogenous Leukotrienes. The catabolism of exogenous LTC₄ and [³H]LTC₄ by 10⁶ eosinophil-enriched leukocytes from two donors (87% and 78% eosinophils), activated for 15 min with PMA (1 μ g per ml), which did not elicit measurable leukotriene production, or with calcium ionophore (2.5 μ M), was analyzed by resolution of the products on RP-HPLC monitored at A₂₈₀ and quantitated by assay of radiolabel. The LTC₄ metabolites were resolved by RP-HPLC into three products, which were eluted as three doublets with mean retention times of 7.2 and 7.6, 8.8 and 9.3, and 15.7 and 16.8 min, respectively, in response to either PMA or ionophore stimuli. In a representative experiment (Fig. 4) in which the response to PMA was analyzed at 15 min, 77% of the radioactivity was recovered: 11% from the front, 7% from the most polar doublet, 7% from the doublet coeluted with synthetic *S*-diastereoisomeric LTC₄ sulfoxides, 33% with LTC₄, and 17% with the doublet coeluted with synthetic diastereoisomeric 6-*trans*-LTB₄.

In the presence of L-serine, catabolism at 15 min of [³H]LTC₄ into tritiated products corresponding to the three doublets was decreased an average of 89% and 94% in experiments with PMA and ionophore, respectively. The addition of 1,000 units of catalase completely prevented the formation of tritiated metabolites. Eosinophil peroxidase activity was present in the stimulated supernatants and ranged from 0.7% to 2% of total cellular peroxidase activity.

Catabolism of exogenous LTB₄ and [³H]LTB₄ was assessed with 10⁶ eosinophils, from the same two donors utilized above,

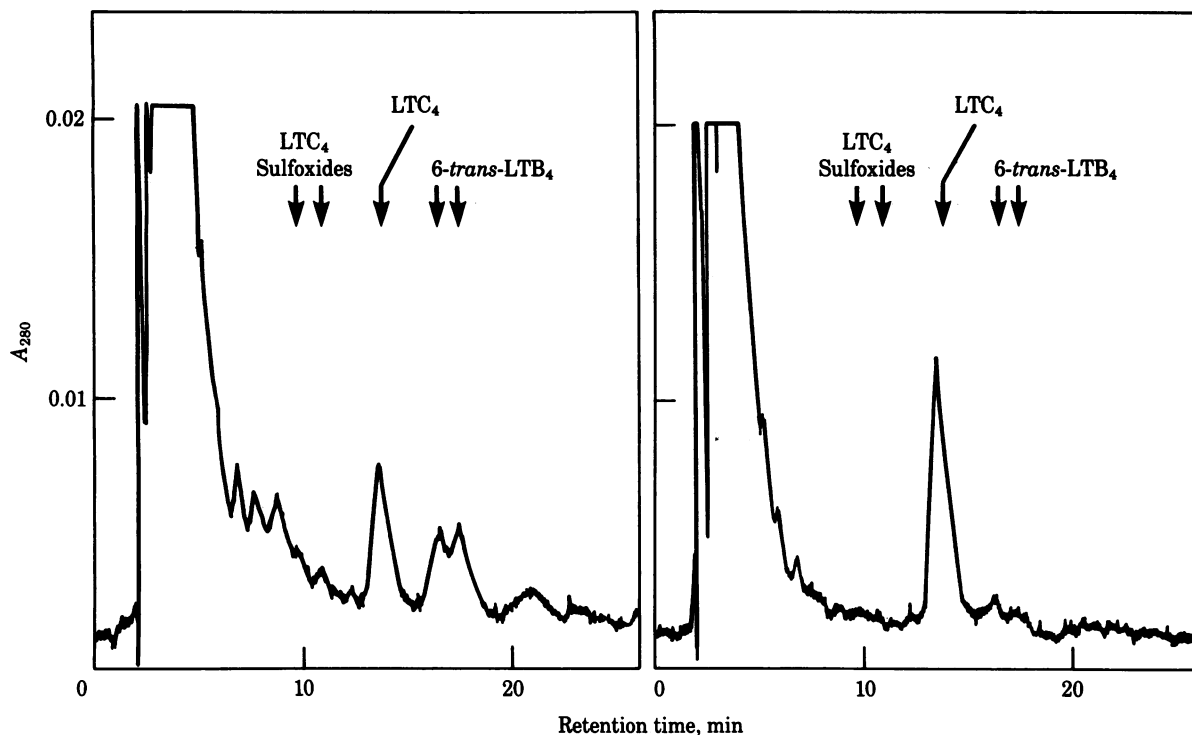


FIG. 3. RP-HPLC of supernatant from 10⁶ leukocytes (81% eosinophils) stimulated with 5 μ M calcium ionophore A23187 for 15 min in the absence (Left) or presence (Right) of 50 mM L-serine. Products were detected by absorbance at 280 nm. Retention times of synthetic *S*-diastereoisomeric LTC₄ sulfoxides, LTC₄, and diastereoisomeric 6-*trans*-LTB₄ are indicated.

Table 2. Leukotriene production by eosinophil- and neutrophil-enriched leukocytes from normal donors

	Donor			Mean \pm SEM
	1	2	3	
Eosinophil-enriched leukocytes				
Eosinophils, %	88	88	85	87 \pm 1
Neutrophils, %	12	12	15	13 \pm 1
LTC ₄ , ng/10 ⁶ cells	40	32	42	38 \pm 3
LTB ₄ , ng/10 ⁶ cells	0.5	6.1	11	6 \pm 3
Neutrophil-enriched leukocytes				
Eosinophils, %	4	1	5	3 \pm 1
Neutrophils, %	96	99	94	96 \pm 1
LTC ₄ , ng/10 ⁶ cells	4.4	3.2	15	7.5 \pm 4
LTB ₄ , ng/10 ⁶ cells	5.5	70	68	48 \pm 21

Eosinophil- and neutrophil-enriched leukocytes (10^6 in 1 ml) from the same normal donors were stimulated with 5 μ M calcium ionophore A23187 for 15 min in the presence of 50 mM L-serine. Leukotrienes were quantitated by RIAs.

stimulated with PMA (1 μ g per ml) or ionophore (2.5 μ M) for 15 and 60 min. RP-HPLC of the supernatants from the eosinophils showed no catabolism in that >99% of the recovered tritium radioactivity was eluted as a single peak coincident with the single LTB₄ A₂₈₀ peak; 87% of the tritium applied was recovered. In contrast, incubation of LTB₄ with 10^7 neutrophils from one normal donor, with or without PMA activation, resulted in conversion at 15 min of one-third of the unlabeled and ³H-labeled LTB₄ to a more polar peak that was eluted at 6 min.

DISCUSSION

Although the eosinophil and neutrophil are both polymorphonuclear leukocytes, stimulation of these two cell types with calcium ionophore A23187 causes them to preferentially elaborate different subclasses of leukotrienes from the 5-lipoxygenase

pathway of arachidonic acid metabolism. With eosinophils derived from hypereosinophilic donors and enriched to a mean of 85% purity, 2.5–5 μ M ionophore elicited maximal detected release of both LTC₄ and LTB₄ by these cells at 15 min. The inclusion of 50 mM L-serine during cell stimulation increased recoveries of immunoreactive LTC₄ in the supernatant fluids by a mean of 211% and had no significant effect on the concentrations of immunoreactive LTB₄. Eosinophils from hypereosinophilic donors released a mean of 69 ng of LTC₄ per 10^6 cells but only a mean of 1.5 ng of LTB₄ per 10^6 cells (in the presence of 11% neutrophils) (Table 1). Although the range of LTC₄ production for the five donors was 25-fold, for each there was an excess of LTC₄ to LTB₄, with the lowest ratio being 16. RP-HPLC of the supernatants confirmed the results of the RIAs (Fig. 3) in documenting a marked preponderance of LTC₄ relative to LTB₄. The preferential generation of LTC₄ to LTB₄ found with hypereosinophilic donor-derived eosinophils was not solely a consequence of the "activated" state manifested by these cells (21) but was also observed with eosinophils from normal donors (Table 2).

A role for L-serine in protecting sulfidopeptide leukotrienes from oxidative metabolism is consistent with the findings with activated neutrophils that a myeloperoxidase-dependent reaction, involving H₂O₂ and chloride ion, generated hypochlorous acid, which interacted with the sulfur moiety of LTC₄ to generate three products: an unidentified, nonsulfone polar metabolite that was eluted with retention times of 7.4 and 8.4 min; the S-diastereoisomeric LTC₄ sulfoxides that were eluted at 10.6 and 11.7 min; and the 6-*trans*-LTB₄ diastereoisomers that were eluted at 16.2 and 18.0 min (19, 20). The metabolites resolved from endogenously generated LTC₄ by eosinophils were similar (Fig. 3 *Left*), and the increased immunoreactive LTC₄ in cell supernatants stimulated in the presence of L-serine, a scavenger of hypochlorous ions (22), was shown by RP-HPLC analysis (Fig. 3 *Right*) to be a consequence of the inhibition of me-

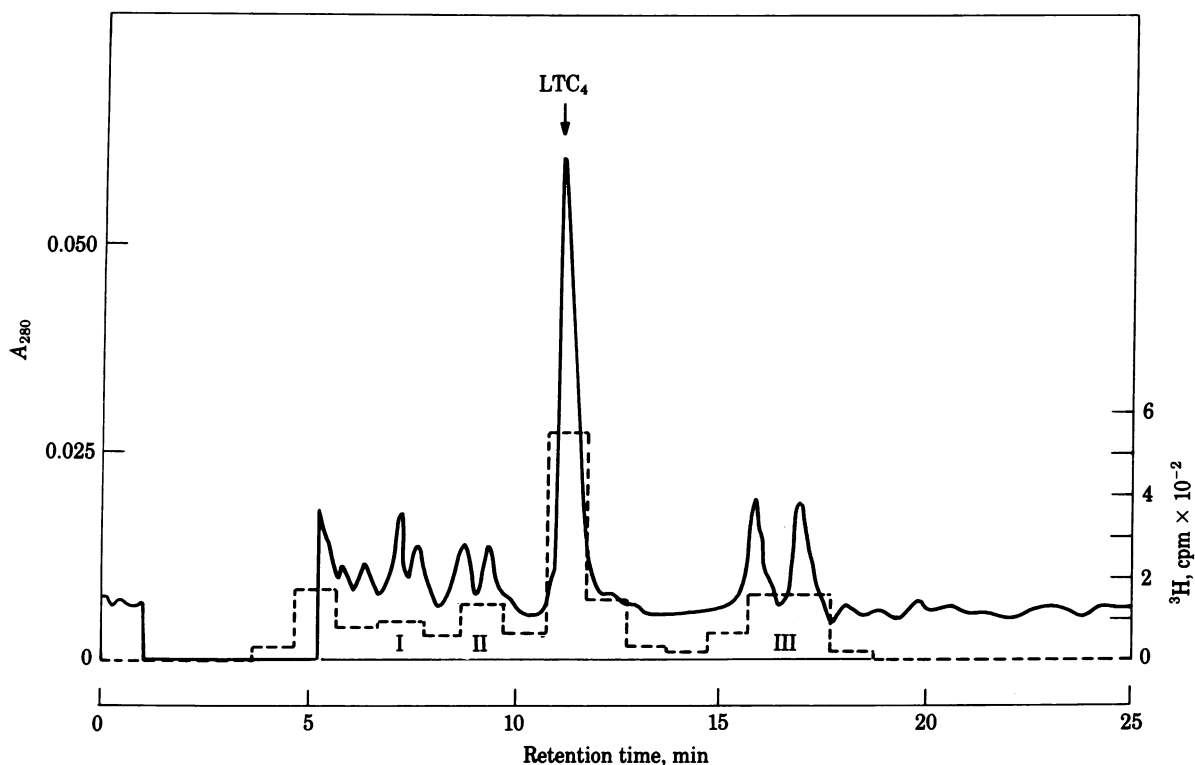


FIG. 4. RP-HPLC of supernatant from 10^6 leukocytes (78% eosinophils) incubated with 1 μ g of LTC₄ and 0.11 ng of [³H]LTC₄ and stimulated with PMA (1 μ g per ml). Products, detected by absorbance at 280 nm (—) and by tritium radioactivity (---), include three doublets.

tabolism of endogenously generated LTC₄. Catabolism of exogenous LTC₄/[³H]LTC₄ by eosinophil-enriched leukocytes stimulated with ionophore (2.5 μM) or PMA (1 μg per ml) (Fig. 4) yielded the same products as assessed by the A₂₈₀ and the tritium radioactivity of eluates from RP-HPLC. Eosinophil peroxidase, which may inactivate leukotrienes (23), was released into the supernatants of the ionophore-activated eosinophils. The protection of LTC₄ degradation by L-serine and catalase and the resolution of metabolites from endogenous and exogenous LTC₄ with retention times of those fully characterized in studies with activated neutrophils (19, 20) suggest that eosinophil peroxidase may cause sulfidopeptide leukotriene inactivation by means of hypochlorous acid reactivity with the sulfur atom.

In contrast to the neutrophil, which metabolizes LTB₄ to 20-hydroxyl and 20-carboxyl LTB₄ by ω-oxidation (24, 25), eosinophils from hypereosinophilic donors stimulated with PMA or ionophore failed to metabolize exogenously added LTB₄. Although the ratios of LTC₄/LTB₄ generated from the hypereosinophilic donor-derived leukocytes in the presence of L-serine are not affected by catabolic degradation of either LTC₄ or LTB₄, it is likely that contaminating neutrophils in the eosinophil preparations contributed to the measured LTB₄. Conversely, in neutrophil preparations the elaboration of LTC₄ by contaminating eosinophils, together with the ongoing degradation of LTB₄ to ω-oxidation products, would yield overestimated LTC₄/LTB₄ ratios. Five-minute incubations for neutrophils increased the amounts of undegraded LTB₄ and, with 15-min periods for LTC₄, yielded an increased LTC₄/LTB₄ ratio of 1:9, as compared to 55:1 for eosinophils from the hypereosinophilic donors.

The almost complete suppression of 6-*trans*-LTB₄ production by L-serine indicates that, in the eosinophil, precursor LTA₄ is efficiently utilized to form LTC₄ and that little LTA₄ is available for nonenzymatic hydrolysis to 6-*trans*-LTB₄. Leukotriene generation by ionophore-stimulated horse eosinophils (98% purity) has been noted, with LTC₄ and LTD₄ production exceeding that of LTB₄ (26). Human eosinophils, relative to neutrophils, produce more 15-lipoxygenase products from arachidonic acid (27) in addition to their demonstrated preferential elaboration of LTC₄ from the 5-lipoxygenase pathway. This predominant production by the eosinophil of LTC₄ with its capacity to impair normal airflow in human airways (7) and to elicit vasoactive changes in human skin (8) suggests that the eosinophil may contribute to the manifestations of the allergic diseases with which it is frequently associated (28). In bronchial asthma eosinophilia of respiratory tissues and secretions is common, and increases in blood eosinophilia have been correlated with symptomatic exacerbations, including those associated with idiosyncratic reactions to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents (29, 30). The effects of LTC₄ generation by human eosinophils may contribute to the pathobiology of allergic, metazoan parasitic, and other diseases characterized by blood or tissue eosinophilia.

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