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Publication Date
1988-06-01
Presented at the Third International Symposium on Synthesis and Applications of Isotopically Labeled Compounds, Innsbruck, Austria, July 17–21, 1988, and to be published in the Proceedings

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June 1988

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THE OLD AND THE NEW: STUDIES OF METAL-CATALYSED EXCHANGE BY $^3$H NMR SPECTROSCOPY.

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SUMMARY

Studies of the use of platinum, palladium and Raney nickel catalysts for exchange into organic substrates under mild conditions have been undertaken. Encouraging results were obtained with Raney nickel as catalyst, with high activity and specificity of label, with a number of pilot experiments yielding tritiated hydrocarbons with specific activities in the region of 30-400 GBq/mmole. NMR analyses of products and have shown that the mechanism of the exchange process is accessible, that aromatic vs aliphatic effects may be quantified, and that the resolution of modern day NMR instruments allows simple resolution of multiply labelled species. With extension of these experiments to more diverse substrates, and with careful radio-GLC and $^3$H NMR analyses, we have gained insight into the range of application and the exchange mechanisms of these procedures.

INTRODUCTION

Most methods yielding high specific activity tritiated organic substrates (370-3700GBq per mmole, or 10-100Ci/mmole) require the synthesis of unsaturated or halogenated precursors (ref. 1). Catalysed hydrogen isotope exchange procedures (ref. 2) are effective for labeling to lower levels (in the range 0-37GBq/mmole), and may be very specific in some cases (ref. 3). The practical maximum specific activity obtainable by the use of metal catalysts and labelled solvents is limited by difficulty in handling the solvents. Tritium gas is much easier to manipulate and catalysed exchange with tritium gas has been used with some success (ref. 3, 4 and refs therein).

Raney nickel has been employed as a catalyst for hydrogen isotope exchange under many conditions, including the labelling of alkanes with $^{3}$H at room temperature or $60^\circ$C (ref. 5, 6 and refs therein), tritiation of several substrates with HTO at room temperature (ref. 7), tritium labelling of silanes with $^{3}$H at $100^\circ$C (ref. 8), and labelling of various substrates with $^{3}$H at $100^\circ$C (ref. 9). In addition Raney nickel is well-known as a hydrogenation catalyst, and has been used to reduce functional groups to give highly labelled products (ref. 10).

We have investigated the exchange of a series of simple organic substrates with tritium gas at room temperature, and analysed the products by the combined techniques of radio-GLC (ref. 11) and $^3$H NMR spectroscopy (ref. 7).

METHODS

Materials:

Substrates were of spectroscopic grade, from various suppliers, and were used without further purification. Tritium gas was purchased from Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and contained 97.9% $^3$H, with the largest contaminant being DT (1.76%). A 10:90 T:H source mixture was made by expanding 25kPa of $^3$H into a stainless steel container, and addition of H$_2$ to a final
pressure of 250kPa. A 5:95 T:H mixture was made in a similar fashion.

**Preparation of Catalysts:**

Raney Nickel was prepared according to the method of Dominguez et al (ref. 12), stored at 40°C under ethanol, and was tested for pyrophoric and magnetic properties before use. Platinum and palladium catalysts were prepared by suspension of the oxide (100mg) in H2O (approx 10mL) and slow addition of NaBH4, after which the catalyst and supernatant were held at a temperature of 70°C for 30 minutes. The H2O was decanted from the reduced catalyst and the catalyst washed with absolute ethanol (10mL, 3x).

**Reaction Procedure:**

Substrate (1mL) was outgassed by the application of several freeze-pump-thaw cycles in the side-arm tube shown in Figure 1 (part A). The sealed (teflon plunger) tube was then added to the reaction vessel (B), and catalyst (approx. 50mg) was added as a slurry. As much ethanol solvent was then removed as was possible (pipette) - for Raney nickel this was simple since the catalyst gathered around the stirrer bar. The apparatus was then attached via the "cut-off" tap (C) to the tritiation line. The catalyst was heated (heat-gun) and the vessel evacuated. After some heating, there was a rapid pressure increase to ~30kPa, and the apparatus then quickly pumped down to the reaction pressure. The apparatus was pumped by turbomolecular pump to a reaction pressure of ~2-3kPa, with a leak-rate of < 0.4kPa/min. Hydrogen gas was then admitted to a pressure of 100kPa, and the tritiation line isolated. The side-arm tube (A) was opened (pressure dropped to 85kPa), the reaction mixture was stirred at R.T., and the uptake of gas was monitored. After the reaction the substrate was frozen (liquid N2) and the residual T2 pumped away, with any residual dissolved T2 being removed by repeated N2 flushing and several freeze-pump-thaw cycles. The catalyst was then removed by filtering the mixture through a shortened Pasteur pipette containing glass wool, and an aliquot of the filtrate was dissolved in C6D6 for NMR study.

![Figure 1. Reaction Apparatus for Tritiation Experiments.](image-url)

**Radio-Gas Chromatography:**

Reaction products were first analysed for total radioactivity by liquid scintillation counting. A small aliquot (1-10μL) was added to n-hexane (1-5mL) and 1μl of this solution counted in Opti-
Fluor™ (Packard) scintillant on a Packard 1500 Tri-Carb liquid scintillation analyzer. The diluted samples were then analyzed by radio-GLC on a Varian 3700 GC, with a Carbowax column. The diluted sample (0.5-5μL, containing 100-200kBq) was co-injected into the chromatograph with cold standard. A radioactivity peak of 100Bq was considered significant, with a background of 50Bq, and injected radioactivity was detected with an overall efficiency of 8%.

**NMR Spectroscopy:**

Reaction product (50-150μL, 37-2,500MBq) was diluted with C₆D₆ to a final volume of 200μL in teflon tubes (Wilmad, #6005), which were then placed inside 5mm glass NMR tubes having a screw-cap (Wilmad, 507-TR-8”). NMR spectroscopy was carried out on an IBM Instruments Inc. AF-300 spectrometer (²H at 320 MHz, ¹H at 300 MHz), using a ³H/¹H 5mm dual probe. Tritium spectra were acquired over a spectral width of 3400Hz, with 8K data points, an excitation pulse of 3.6 μsec, recycle time of 5 sec., and all spectra were acquired at 297K with the sample spinning. Similar parameters were used for proton NMR spectroscopy. Referencing of chemical shifts was achieved as previously described (ref. 7).

**RESULTS and DISCUSSION**

The results of the exchange reactions with tritium gas at R.T. over either Raney nickel, heterogeneous platinum or palladium catalysts are given in Table 1. Products had specific activities in the 3.7-555GBq/m mole range, and many had >95% radiochemical purity.

In aromatic hydrocarbons highly specific labelling was observed, with toluene, m-xylene, n-pentylbenzene and s-butylbenzene labelled almost exclusively in the α-CH positions. This is in agreement with results already in the literature, and is thought to occur by way of a π-allyl mechanism (ref. 13). Close scrutiny of the ³H NMR spectra for the toluene samples labelled with 100% T₂ (Figure 2a) shows that hydrogenation (to give methyl cyclohexane) is a significant reaction over platinum. In addition, inspection of the expanded methyl pattern (Figure 2b) shows a large proportion of CT₃ species over the platinum catalyst. This suggests that the substrate is very strongly adsorbed on platinum, allowing multiple exchange reactions to predominate. On nickel and palladium catalysts the exchange patterns reflect a much higher predominance of one hydrogen replacement per visit to the catalyst. Over nickel and platinum the aromatic centres are labelled predominantly in the meta and para positions. The likely mechanism for aromatic exchange is the dissociative π-complex mechanism due to Garnett (ref. 13). Over palladium catalyst the aromatic centre of toluene was more heavily labelled in the ortho position than either meta or para. This orientation was not observed at higher temperatures for a similar reaction (ref. 9), and this anomaly could explain the proposal of conflicting exchange mechanisms in the literature in the 1960's, where the associative mechanism was favoured by workers studying exchange over metal films at low temperature.

Hydrocarbons containing functional groups (anisole, nitrobenzene, fluorobenzene) and naphthalene were not cleanly labelled, and a major competing reaction appeared to be ring saturation or reduction of the functional group. This preparation of Raney nickel is known to give saturation and reduction products in good yield under only slightly more stringent conditions (ref. 10). In particular, at 40-50°C and 280-410kPa of hydrogen gas, β-naphthol gave 5,6,7,8-
tetrahydronaphthol in 83% chemical yield, phenol gave cyclohexanol (92%), and heptaldehyde gave 1-heptanol (90%).

Alkanes (n-heptane, methyl cyclohexane) were labelled only slightly, and did not give high radiochemical purity. The specific activities obtained were comparable to other reported results, and mechanisms for isomerisation have been proposed (ref. 5, 6).

In general much higher specific activities have been reported here than are generally obtained through many exchange labelling processes. One advantage of the technique discussed here is the mild experimental conditions. An apparent problem is the destruction of functional groups on several of the substrates under study. These experiments show the power of using combined analytical techniques such as radio-GLC and 3H NMR spectroscopy for the characterization of labelling methods.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The authors are supported by the Biotechnology Resources Program, Division of Research Resources, U.S. National Institutes of Health under Grant P41 RR01237-06, and by the U.S. Department of Energy under Contract DE-AC03-76SF0098.

REFERENCES

### Table 1 - Exchange Reactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substrate</th>
<th>$R_\text{x}$</th>
<th>%T</th>
<th>Specific Activity*</th>
<th>GLC</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>GBq/mL GBq/mM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICKEL:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toluene</td>
<td>6h 52' 5%</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Almost exclusively methyl exchange. Some methyl cyclohexane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methyl Cyclohexane</td>
<td>7h 16' 5%</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toluene</td>
<td>6h 15' 100%</td>
<td>approx. 3700</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Almost exclusively methyl exchange. Some methyl cyclohexane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methyl Cyclohexane Toluene</td>
<td>4h 45' 100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m-Xylene</td>
<td>4h 05' 10%</td>
<td>511.0</td>
<td>54.32 2.13,97.87</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>All methyl exchange. m/p in the ring. Oxygen in the System??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s-Butylbenzene</td>
<td>4h 10' 10%</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>1.26,4.50,8.20,1.30,0.02,12.72%</td>
<td>All methyl exchange. Anisole is 10.8% by NMR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m-Xylene</td>
<td>4h 20' 10%</td>
<td>178.0</td>
<td>19.34 4.7,95.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Entirely 2,6 exchange. Aniline, other amine??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anisole</td>
<td>4h 35' 10%</td>
<td>132.5</td>
<td>14.38 33.0,30.7,15.7,16.8%</td>
<td>All methyl exchange. Benzene was one impurity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyridine</td>
<td>4h 05' 10%</td>
<td>108.0</td>
<td>8.71</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Some saturated products(?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitrobenzene</td>
<td>4h 05' 10%</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>84.3,15.7,0.0%</td>
<td>All methyl exchange. Anisole is 10.8% by NMR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluorobenzene</td>
<td>4h 00' 10%</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>22.0,76.1,1.8%</td>
<td>Benzene was one impurity. Some saturated products(?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methyl Cyclohexane</td>
<td>4h 00' 10%</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>3.9,96.1%</td>
<td>n-Heptane 36.9% by NMR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-Heptane</td>
<td>4h 10' 10%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>38.17,40.50,16.18,5.14</td>
<td>Nearly all $\alpha$-CH$_2$ exchange. $\beta &gt; \alpha$ by NMR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-Pentylbenzene</td>
<td>4h 15' 10%</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>13.06 3.6,94.8,1.6%</td>
<td>6.7,86.8,6.8</td>
<td>More than 95% methyl exchange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naphthalene</td>
<td>4h 20' 10%</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>73.7,2.6,23.7%</td>
<td>Impurities 74.5% by NMR. Mostly methyl cyclohexane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLATINUM:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-Pentylbenzene</td>
<td>4h 00' 5%</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>8.36</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Lots of T$_3$ methyl species. Bulk methyl cyclohexane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toluene</td>
<td>5h 10' 100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methyl Cyclohexane</td>
<td>3h 50' 100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toluene</td>
<td>4h 05' 10%</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>73.7,2.6,23.7%</td>
<td>Mostly methyl cyclohexane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALLADIUM:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toluene</td>
<td>3h 50' 100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>&gt;95% methyl exchange. Ring $\alpha &gt; \text{m.p}!!$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methyl Cyclohexane</td>
<td>5h 38' 100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toluene</td>
<td>4h 20' 10%</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.1,98.9</td>
<td>Confirms 100% result.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - Calculated assuming radiochemically pure product.
Figure 2. 320 MHz $^3$H NMR spectra of toluene.

a). Comparison of the full spectrum for products of labelling by Ni, Pt and Pd catalysts.

b). Comparison of the aromatic and methyl portions of the spectra.