Electrochemistry On-Line with Electrospray Mass Spectrometry: Insights into Oxidative Metabolism of Tamoxifen

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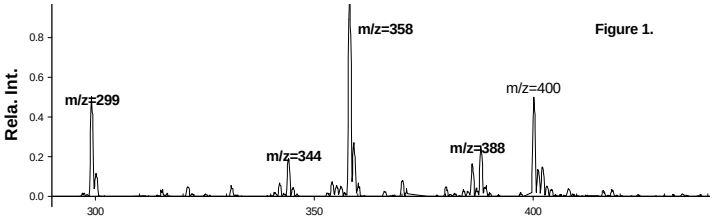
Introduction. A technique coupling an electrochemical flow cell on-line with electrospray mass spectrometry (EC/ES-MS) was established and used to investigate biological redox reactions. Using the oxidation of dopamine as the model system, we have characterized this EC/ESMS system. Studies of the oxidation of tamoxifen show that this technique in combination with MS/MS and on-line HPLC separations is a powerful tool in studying the redox chemistry of biologically important molecules.

Experimental. The thin layer flow cell (BAS, total cell volume ~ 1.1 µL) used a 16 µM spacing gasket to separate the glassy carbon working electrode from the Pt counter electrode. The cell was controlled by an PAR Model 173 potentiostat, and the potential and current readouts from potentiostat were directed to the mass spectrometer computer system by a dual channel PE Nelson Model 970A A/D interface. All EC/ES-MS on-line experiments were performed on an PE SCIEX API165 single quadrupole and API365 triple quadrupole mass spectrometer

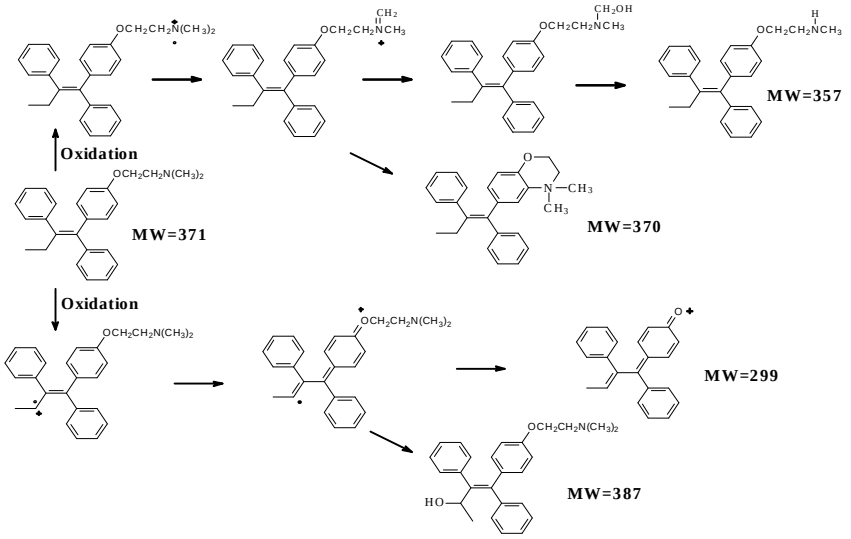
Results and Discussion. Dopamine is an important neurotransmitter and its electrochemical oxidation has been well studied. The major oxidation product of dopamine is dopamine quinone confirmed by CID. Using this reaction as the model system, we found that the electrolysis efficiency decreases with the solvent flow rates. At the typical flow rate for electrospray (30 µl/min), the electrolysis efficiency reaches 75% and the response time, i.e., the time for an electrochemically generated product to travel from the cell to the mass spectrometer is 5.2 second. Nucleophilic reactions of dopamine quinone with nucleotides, cysteine, glutathione, aniline, and PhSH were also investigated that demonstrates this experimental set-up is a powerful means to study biologically relevant chemical followup reactions.

The antiestrogen tamoxifen (TMX) is a widely used drug for breast cancer prevention and treatment. The meta

(1/1 v/v) have same m/z ratios (observed as $(M+H)^+$) as those metabolic activation products of TMX, e.g., 344, 358, and 388 as shown in Fig.1.



CID mass spectrum of the oxidation product of TMX at *m/z* 358 shows that it comes from demethylation of TMX. In comparison with CID spectrum of the phenanthrene derivative, formed by photoactivation of TMX, we found that the electrochemical oxidation product of TMX at *m/z* 370 is a mixture of the structural isomers. CID mass spectrum of the oxidation product of TMX at *m/z* 388 shows the major fragment at *m/z* 72. However, CID mass spectra of "-OH TMX and 4-OH TMX display a similar dissociation pattern. In order to determine the structures of the oxidation products of TMX at *m/z* 388, bulk electrolysis of TMX (100 µM in water with 50mM NH_4Ac and 7.5% HAc) was carried out at 1.2 V vs Ag/AgCl for two hours. The electrolysis products were separated using a PGC column. By comparison with the retention time of "-OH TMX and 4-OH TMX in same mobile phase, we have found that the major oxidation product of TMX at *m/z* 388 appears to be "-OH TMX. By monitoring the major oxidation products of TMX with the scanning of the electrode potential, we found that demethylation occurs at the lower potential than hydroxylation. The ratios of the demethylation and hydroxylation products are significantly different in alcoholic and aqueous solution which indicates there are two oxidation intermediates. Because the major products from electrochemical oxidation and from metabolic activation of tamoxifen are the same, these two oxidation processes may produce the same reactive intermediates. Based on results from this work and the previous work on TMX and amides [2-3], the oxidation mechanisms of TMX are proposed as shown below.



[1] Wang, J., et al., Talanta **1997**, 45, 273. [2] Kochi, J. K., et al., J. Am. Chem. Soc. **1998**, 120, 6931. [3] Hanzlik, R. P., et al., J. Org. Chem. **1989**, 54, 2446.

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