

Potential Neurosteroid Replacement Therapy Following Premature Birth and Fetal Growth Restriction

by

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DECLARATION

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STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION TO JOINT PUBLICATIONS

I attest that I, Meredith Kelleher, have made a primary and original contribution to the publications, and manuscripts awaiting publication, included in this thesis, as detailed below and endorsed by my supervisors.

Chapter	Title	Status	Contribution
3	Sex-Dependent Effect of a Low Neurosteroid Environment and Intrauterine Growth Restriction on Fetal Guinea Pig Brain Development	Published	Experimental design and procedures Data analysis Manuscript preparation
4	Changes in neuroactive steroid concentrations after preterm delivery in the guinea pig	Submitted and under review	Experimental design and procedures Data analysis Manuscript preparation
5	Neuroactive Steroids in preterm guinea pigs following postnatal progesterone therapy	In preparation for submission	Experimental design and procedures Data analysis Manuscript preparation

Signed (Candidate): _____ *Date:* _____

Signed (Supervisor): _____ *Date:* _____

Signed (Supervisor): _____ *Date:* _____

*This thesis is dedicated to
Elizabeth Jane Mullier (1918-2010)
a great woman and the most steadfast, loving
and proud grandma, who is truly missed.*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	xi
List of Figures & Tables	xiii
List of Publications	xv
List of Conference Abstracts	xvi
List of Abbreviations	xix
 <i>Chapter One</i>	
Introduction	25
1.1 Preterm Birth	26
1.1.1 Rates of Preterm Birth	27
1.1.2 Causes of Preterm Birth	28
1.1.3 Risk Factors for Preterm Birth	31
1.1.5 Postnatal Preterm Outcomes	33
1.2 Intra-Uterine Growth Restriction	35
1.2.1 IUGR & Low Birth-Weight	36
1.2.2 Pathophysiology of IUGR	38
1.2.3 Risk Factors and Causes of IUGR	40
1.2.4 IUGR and Preterm Birth	42
1.2.5 Postnatal Outcomes of IUGR Infants	43
1.3 Perinatal Brain Injury.....	45
1.3.1 Excitotoxicity	46
1.3.2 Oxidative Stress	49
1.3.3 Inflammation	50
1.3.4 Apoptosis	51
1.3.5 Preterm Brain Injury and Periventricular Leukomalacia	52
1.3.6 Term Brain Injury	56
1.4 Neurodevelopmental Sequelae	57
1.4.1 Sensory-Motor Disorders	58
1.4.2 Cognitive, Learning and Behavioural Disorders	59
1.4.3 Neurological Disorders	60
1.5 Neuroprotective Strategies	61
1.6 Progesterone	63
1.6.1 Progesterone Synthesis	64
1.6.2 Progesterone Receptors & Signalling	67
1.6.3 Progesterone Functions & Concentrations During Gestation	67
1.6.4 Progesterone Effects on Neurodevelopment	70
1.6.5 Neuroprotection by Progesterone	72
1.7 Neuroactive Steroids	75
1.7.1 GABA _A Receptor	78
1.7.2 Pregnanolone Isomers	82
1.8 Allopregnanolone.....	84
1.8.1 Allopregnanolone Synthesis	86

1.8.3 Allopregnanolone Actions	91
1.8.4 Allopregnanolone Actions in the Perinatal Brain	94
1.9 Rationale, Hypothesis & Aims.....	96
1.9.1 The Guinea Pig as an Animal Model for the Study of Neurosteroid Actions in the Immature Brain	97
1.9.2 Hypotheses and Specific Aims	100

Chapter Two

Materials & Methods	103
2.1 Animal Ethics	103
2.2 Animal Housing	103
2.3 IUGR Surgery	104
2.3.1 Surgical Preparation	104
2.3.2 Surgical Procedure	105
2.3.3 Sham Surgery	107
2.3.4 Post-Surgery Recovery	107
2.4 Finasteride Treatment	107
2.5 Preterm Neonatal Model	108
2.5.1 Experimental Groups	108
2.5.2 C-Section Deliveries	109
2.5.3 Neonatal Resuscitation	110
2.5.4 Neonatal Care and Monitoring	111
2.5.5 Feeding	112
2.5.6 Drug Treatments	112
2.5.7 Behavioural Testing	113
2.6 Tissue Collection	114
2.7 Measurement of Allopregnanolone	115
2.7.1 Steroid Extraction	116
2.7.2 Allopregnanolone Radio-Immunoassay	118
2.8 Steroid immunoassays	121
2.8.1 Salivary Progesterone Enzyme Immunoassay	121
2.8.2 Plasma Progesterone & Cortisol Enzyme Immunoassays	122
2.9 Protein Western Blot Immunodetection	122
2.9.1 Protein Extraction	123
2.9.2 Estimation of Protein Concentration	123
2.9.3 Electrophoresis	124
2.9.4 Western Blot Transfer	124
2.9.5 Immunodetection	124
2.9.6 Western Blot Controls	125
2.10 Brain Immunohistochemistry	126
2.10.1 Fixation & Embedding	126
2.10.2 Tissue Preparation	126
2.10.3 Immunodetection	127
2.11 Statistical Analyses	130

Chapter Three

Sex-Specific Effect of Inhibition of Neurosteroid Synthesis and Intra-Uterine Growth Restriction on Fetal Guinea Pig Brain Development.....132

3.1 Abstract.....	132
3.2 Introduction	133
3.3 Materials and Methods.....	136
3.3.1 Animals	136
3.3.2 Tissue Collection	137
3.3.3 Radio-Immunoassay	138
3.3.4 Western Blot Analysis	138
3.3.5 Immunohistochemistry	140
3.3.6 Statistical Analyses	141
3.4 Results	141
3.4.1 Fetal Characteristics	141
3.4.2 Fetal Brain Allopregnanolone Concentrations	142
3.4.3 Brain 5 α -Reductase Enzyme Expression	144
3.4.4 GFAP Expression	144
3.4.5 MBP Expression	146
3.4.6 Activated Caspase-3 Expression	148
3.5 Discussion	150

Chapter Four

Changes in Neuroactive Steroid Concentrations after Preterm Delivery in the Guinea Pig.....155

4.1 Abstract.....	155
4.2 Introduction	156
4.3 Materials and Methods.....	158
4.3.1 Animals	158
4.3.2 Preterm and Term C-Section Delivery	159
4.3.3 Progesterone Treatment	160
4.3.4 Tissue and Plasma Collection	160
4.3.5 Western Blot Analysis	160
4.3.6 Immunohistochemistry	161
4.3.7 Steroid Radioimmunoassay and Enzyme Immunoassay	162
4.3.8 Statistical Analyses	163
4.4 Results	163
4.4.1 Neonatal Animals	163
4.4.2 MBP Expression	165
4.4.3 GFAP Expression	167
4.4.4 MAP-2 Expression	167
4.4.5 Plasma Steroid Concentrations	167
4.4.6 Allopregnanolone Concentrations in the Brain	170
4.4.7 Brain 5 α -reductase Expression	171
4.5 Discussion	173

Chapter Five

Neuroactive Steroids in Preterm Guinea Pigs Following Postnatal

Progesterone Therapy.....	179
5.1 Abstract.....	179
5.2 Introduction	181
5.3 Materials and Methods.....	184
5.3.1 Animals.....	184
5.3.2 Preterm C-section Delivery.....	184
5.3.3 Treatment Groups.....	185
5.3.4 Neonatal Scoring & Behavioural Testing.....	186
5.3.5 Plasma, Brain & Salivary Steroid Analysis.....	186
5.3.6 Protein Analysis.....	188
5.3.7 Immunohistochemistry.....	188
5.3.8 Statistical Analysis.....	189
5.4 Results	190
5.4.1 Neonatal Animals, Survival & Scoring.....	190
5.4.2 Salivary Progesterone.....	193
5.4.3 Plasma Steroids.....	195
5.4.4 Brain Allopregnanolone.....	197
5.4.5 Hippocampal 5 α -Reductase Enzyme Expression.....	197
5.4.6 Immunohistochemistry.....	197
5.4.7 Behavioural Analysis.....	200
5.5 Discussion	203

Chapter Six

Cerebellar Development in the Neonatal Guinea Pig following Preterm

Birth & Progesterone Replacement Therapy.....	212
6.1 Abstract.....	212
6.2 Introduction	213
6.3 Methods	216
6.3.1 Tissue Collection.....	216
6.3.2 Determination of Cerebellar Lobule Thickness.....	218
6.3.3 MBP Staining of Cerebellar White Matter Tracts.....	218
6.3.4 Calbindin Staining for Purkinje Cell Measurements.....	218
6.4 Results	219
6.4.1 Cerebellar Growth and External Granular Layer Thickness.....	219
6.4.2 MBP in Cerebellar White Matter Tracts.....	219
6.4.3 Purkinje Cells.....	222
6.5 Discussion	222

Chapter Seven

Discussion & Conclusions	228
7.1 Discussion	228
7.1.1 Allopregnanolone in the Late Gestation Fetal and Preterm Neonatal Guinea Pig	229
7.1.2 Progesterone and Allopregnanolone Replacement in Preterm Guinea Pigs	234
7.1.3 Neurosteroids and Perinatal Myelination in the Guinea Pig	241
7.1.4 Neurosteroids, Neuropathology and Behaviour in the Perinatal Guinea Pig	243
7.2 Conclusions	248
References	250
Appendix A	
Plasma Allopregnanolone Concentrations in Fetal Guinea Pigs with IUGR and Finasteride Treatment	302
Appendix B	
Preterm and Term Guinea Pig Lungs	303
Appendix C	
Rights and Permissions	304

ABSTRACT

Events during gestation and changes in the intrauterine environment contribute to abnormal development and injury in the immature brain, influencing health and disease throughout life. Progesterone and its neuroactive steroid metabolite, allopregnanolone, are present in high concentrations during pregnancy. Allopregnanolone signalling at the GABA_A receptor has important trophic and neuroprotective effects. The disruption of neuroactive steroid concentrations due to complications such as intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR) or preterm birth may therefore adversely affect brain development and increase perinatal brain injury.

Inhibition of allopregnanolone synthesis was assessed in fetal guinea pigs after surgery to induce IUGR. Both fetal brain and plasma allopregnanolone concentrations were reduced by finasteride treatment. Finasteride treatment and IUGR were associated with reduced myelination and IUGR with increased astrocyte activation in the brain.

A model of premature birth (0.87 gestation) was developed in the guinea pig to assess the effect of preterm postnatal changes in neuroactive steroid concentrations on the developing brain. Preterm guinea pigs exhibited less activity, higher mortality rates, reduced allopregnanolone concentrations and lower expression of steroid synthetic enzymes. Myelination in the hippocampus and cerebellum was also suppressed.

The potential of postnatal replacement of neuroactive steroids by progesterone treatment was examined in preterm neonates. Following progesterone therapy, cortisol levels were elevated, with implications for development. Sex differences were noted in plasma neuroactive steroid concentrations. Brain allopregnanolone concentrations in preterm neonates were increased at postnatal days 1 and 8 by progesterone administration. Exploratory behaviours were altered in progesterone treated preterm animals, demonstrating changes in brain function associated with treatment.

This thesis identifies changes in the perinatal guinea pig brain associated with altered neuroactive steroid concentrations and establishes the efficacy of progesterone replacement therapy in augmenting the endogenous synthesis of allopregnanolone in the preterm brain. Long-term studies to establish the developmental outcomes of postnatal progesterone/neuroactive steroid replacement after preterm birth and in combination with complications such as IUGR, hypoxic insults and infection are needed to identify new, safe and effective treatment options.

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1.1	Mechanisms of Cell Death in Perinatal Brain Injury.....	47
Figure 1.2	Pathways of Steroid and Neuroactive Steroid Synthesis from Cholesterol	66
Figure 1.3	Mechanisms of Progesterone and Allopregnanolone Signalling	68
Figure 1.4	Pregnane Isomer Synthesis and Structure	85
Figure 1.5	Schematic Diagram of Specific Aims	102
Figure 2.1	Uterine Blood Supply in the Guinea Pig and Site of Radial Artery Ablation for IUGR Surgery.....	106
Table 2.1	Neonatal Scoring.....	111
Table 2.2	Cross Reactivity of Sheep Allopregnanolone Antisera with Related Steroid Compounds	120
Figure 3.1	Fetal Brain Allopregnanolone Concentrations	143
Table 3.1	Fetal Animal Body and Organ Weights	143
Figure 3.2	Fetal Brain 5 α - Reductase Enzyme Expression.....	145
Figure 3.3	GFAP Immunostaining in the Fetal Guinea Pig Brain	147
Figure 3.4	MBP Immunostaining in the Fetal Guinea Pig Brain	149
Table 4.1	Animal Characteristics and Organ Weights of Preterm and Term Neonatal Guinea Pigs.....	164
Figure 4.1	Myelin Basic Protein Expression in Neonatal Guinea Pigs	166
Figure 4.2	Glial Fibrillary Acidic Protein in Neonatal Guinea Pig Brains .	168
Figure 4.3	Plasma Steroid Concentrations in Fetal and Neonatal Guinea Pigs.....	170
Figure 4.4	Fetal and Neonatal Brain Allopregnanolone Concentrations ..	171
Figure 4.5	Expression of 5 α -reductase in Fetal and Neonatal Guinea Pig Brains.....	172

Table 5.1	Animal Characteristics and Organ Weights of Preterm and Progesterone Treated Neonatal Guinea Pigs.....	192
Figure 5.1	Daily Condition Scores in Preterm Guinea Pigs with Postnatal Progesterone Treatment	193
Figure 5.2	Neonatal Salivary Progesterone Concentrations in Preterm Guinea Pigs with Postnatal Progesterone Treatment	194
Figure 5.3	Plasma Steroid Concentrations in Preterm Guinea Pigs following Postnatal Progesterone Treatment	196
Figure 5.4	Brain Allopregnanolone Concentrations in Preterm Guinea Pigs following Postnatal Progesterone Treatment	198
Figure 5.5	Hippocampal 5 α -Reductase Enzyme Expression in Preterm Guinea Pigs following Postnatal Progesterone Treatment	198
Figure 5.6	Myelin Basic Protein Immunoreactivity in Preterm Guinea Pig Brains following Postnatal Progesterone Treatment.....	199
Figure 5.7	Glial Fibrillary Acidic Protein Expression in Preterm Neonatal Guinea Pig Brains following Postnatal Progesterone Treatment	201
Figure 5.8	Microtubule Associated Protein 2 Expression in Preterm Neonatal Guinea Pig Brains following Postnatal Progesterone Treatment	201
Table 5.2	Open Field Activity and Novel Object Recognition in Preterm Neonates with Progesterone Treatment.....	202
Figure 5.9	Novel Object Recognition by Preterm Progesterone Treated Neonates	202
Figure 6.1	- Lobules and Layers in the Guinea Pig Cerebellum	217
Figure 6.2	- Cerebellar Lobule Development and Extracellular Granular Layer Thickness in Preterm and Progesterone Treated Preterm Guinea Pigs	220
Figure 6.3	- Myelin Basic Protein (MBP) Immunoreactivity in Cerebella of Preterm and Progesterone Treated Preterm Guinea Pigs	221
Figure 6.4	- Calbindin Staining in Purkinje Cells in Cerebella of Preterm and Progesterone Treated Preterm Guinea Pigs.....	223
Figure A.1	- Fetal Plasma Allopregnanolone Concentrations.....	302
Figure B.1	- Term and Preterm Neonatal Guinea Pig Lung Sections.....	303

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Hirst JJ (2011) Sex and progesterone: Improving preterm survival? 38th *Annual Meeting of The Fetal and Neonatal Physiological Society, Palm Cove, Queensland, Australia. Abstract 040*

Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Hirst JJ (2011). Neurosteroid replacement therapy in the preterm neonate. 38th *Annual Meeting of The Fetal and Neonatal Physiological Society, Palm Cove, Queensland, Australia. Abstract 133*

Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Hirst JJ (2011) Progesterone replacement therapy & brain development in the preterm neonate. *Australian Society for Medical Research, 19th Annual NSW Scientific Meeting, Sydney, Australia.*

Abstract O3.5

Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Hirst JJ (2011) A guinea pig model for the study of neuroactive steroid replacement in the preterm neonatal brain. *Annual Meeting of the Society for Gynecologic Investigation, Miami, USA. Abstract S-241*

Dyson RM, Palliser HK, Kelleher MA, Hirst JJ, Wright IMR (2010) The guinea pig as an animal model for studying microvascular function in the preterm neonate in early extrauterine life. *9th World Congress for Microcirculation, Paris, France.*

Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Hirst JJ (2010) Premature birth results in ex utero brain development in a low neuroprotective steroid environment. *Annual Scientific Meeting of The Endocrine Society of Australia, Sydney, Australia. Abstract 477*

Dyson RM, Palliser HK, Kelleher MA, Hirst JJ, Wright IMR (2010) Preterm birth and intrauterine growth restriction: effect on microvascular function in the neonatal guinea pig. *Annual Scientific Meeting of The Endocrine Society of Australia, Sydney, Australia. Abstract 475*

Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Walker DW, Hirst JJ (2010) Neuroprotective deficits in the preterm guinea pig brain. *37th Annual Fetal and Neonatal Physiological Society Meeting, University of Winchester, UK. Abstract O47*

Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Hirst JJ (2010) Compromised neurosteroid biosynthesis in the preterm neonate. *Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Annual Scientific Meeting, Wellington, New Zealand. Abstract A027*

Dyson RM, Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Wright IM (2010) The guinea pig as an animal model for perinatal vascular changes? *Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Annual Scientific Meeting, Wellington, New Zealand. Abstract A088*

Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Walker DW, Hirst JJ (2009) Effect of intrauterine growth restriction and pharmacologic inhibition of 5 α -reductase on enzyme expression in the fetal cerebellum. *Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Annual Scientific Meeting, Darwin, Australia*. **Abstract P067**

Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Yates DM, Sullivan RKP, Walker DW, Hirst JJ (2008) Effect of 5 α -reductase inhibition on apoptotic brain cell death and the expression of neurosteroidogenic enzymes in the fetal and neonatal guinea pig. *Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Annual Scientific Meeting, Gold Coast, Australia*. **Abstract A13**

Kelleher MA, Palliser HK, Yates DM, Sullivan RKP, Walker DW, Hirst JJ (2008) Effect of inhibition of 5 α -reduced steroid synthesis on apoptotic brain cell death and neurosteroidogenic enzyme expression in the fetal and neonatal guinea pig. *Annual Meeting of the Society for Gynecologic Investigation, San Diego, USA*. **Abstract 227**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3 α ,5 α -THP	3 α ,5 α -tetrahydroprogesterone; allopregnanolone
3 β -HSD	3 β -hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase
5 α -DHP	5 α -dihydroprogesterone
5 α R	5 α -reductase enzyme
5 α R1	5 α -reductase enzyme type 1
5 α R2	5 α -reductase enzyme type 2
AC	adenylate cyclase
ADHD	attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder
AMPA	2-amino-3-(5-methyl-3-oxo-1,2-oxazol-4-yl) propanoic acid
ANOVA	analysis of variance
ATP	adenosine triphosphate
B ₀	tracer-antiserum binding
Bax	Bcl-2-associated X protein
BBB	blood-brain barrier
Bcl-2	B-cell lymphoma 2 protein
BDNF	brain-derived neurotrophic factor
BLR	brain to liver weight ratio
BSA	bovine serum albumin
CA1	cornu ammonis area 1 of the hippocampus
Ca ²⁺	calcium ion
cAMP	cyclic adenosine monophosphate
Cl ⁻	chloride ion
CNS	central nervous system
CP	cerebral palsy
CPAP	continuous positive airway pressure
CSF	cerebrospinal fluid
CRH	corticotropin-releasing hormone

Cu^{2+}	copper ion
DAB	3,3'-diaminobenzidine
DHEA	dehydroepiandrosterone
DHEAS	dehydroepiandrosterone sulfate
DHT	dihydrotestosterone
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
ECL	enhanced chemiluminescence
EDTA	ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
EGL	external granular cell layer
EIA	enzyme immunoassay
ERK	extracellular signal-regulated kinase
FGR	fetal growth restriction
Fin	finasteride
GA	gestational age
GABA	γ -amino-butyric acid
GABA _A	γ -amino-butyric acid type A receptor
GFAP	glial fibrillary acidic protein
H ₂ O	water
hCG	human chorionic gonadotropin
HCl	hydrogen chloride
HRP	horseradish peroxidase
IgG	immunoglobulin G
IGL	internal granular cell layer
IL	interleukin
i.p.	intraperitoneal
IQ	intelligence quotient
IUGR	intrauterine growth restriction
IVH	intraventricular haemorrhage
K ⁺	potassium ion
KCC2	potassium chloride co-transporter 2

KMnO ₄	potassium permanganate
LPS	lipopolysaccharide; endotoxin
MAP-2	microtubule-associated protein 2
MAPK	mitogen-activated protein kinase
MBP	myelin basic protein
ML	molecular layer
MMP	matrix metalloproteinase
MOPS	3-(N-morpholino)propanesulfonic acid
mPR	membrane progesterone receptor
MRI	magnetic resonance imaging
Na ²⁺	sodium ion
NaCl	sodium chloride
NaN ₃	sodium azide
NAPDH	nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate
NICU	neonatal intensive care unit
NKCC1	sodium potassium chloride co-transporter 1
NMDA	N-methyl-D-aspartate
NORT	novel object recognition test
NOS-2	nitric oxide synthase enzyme 2
NSB	non-specific binding
O ₂	oxygen
OF	open field
OFR	oxygen free radical
P450 _{scc}	cholesterol side-chain cleavage enzyme
PAGE	polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
PB	phosphate buffer
PBS	phosphate buffered saline
PEEP	positive end expiratory pressure
PFA	paraformaldehyde
PG	prostaglandin

PGRMC1	progesterone receptor membrane component 1
PI3K/Akt	phosphoinositide 3-kinase/protein kinase B
PIP	peak inspiratory pressure
PKA	protein kinase A
PKG	protein kinase G
PND	postnatal day
PPROM	preterm premature rupture of membranes
PR	progesterone receptor
PRE	progesterone response element
Pre-T	preterm postnatal day 1
Pre-T8	preterm postnatal day 8
+Prog	preterm postnatal day 1 with progesterone treatment
+Prog8	preterm postnatal day 8 with progesterone treatment
PVDF	polyvinylidene fluoride
PVL	periventricular leukomalacia
RDS	respiratory distress syndrome
RIA	radio-immunoassay
ROP	retinopathy of prematurity
RU486	mifepristone; progesterone receptor antagonist
$\sigma 1$	sigma 1 receptor
s.c.	subcutaneous
SDS	sodium dodecyl sulfate
SEM	standard error of the mean
SGA	small for gestational age.
SIDS	sudden infant death syndrome
T1	novel object recognition test, trial 1 (familiarisation)
T2	novel object recognition test, trial 2 (recognition)
TBPS	t-butylbicyclophosphorothionate
TBS-T	tris-buffered saline with tween
TC	total counts

THDOC	tetrahydrodeoxycorticosterone
TNF- α	tumour necrosis factor- α
UCO	umbilical cord occlusion
WHO	World Health Organisation

<	less than
=	equal to
>	greater than
\pm	plus or minus
\sim	approximately
$^{\circ}\text{C}$	degrees celsius
/	per
%	per cent
v/v	volume per volume
w/v	weight per volume

cm	centimetre
g	gram
hr	hour
kDa	kilodalton
kg	kilogram
L	litre
cpm	counts per minute
mA	milliamp
mg	milligram
mL	millilitre
mm	millimetre
mM	millimolar
mmol	millimole

ng	nanogram
nm	nanometre
nmol	nanomole
pH	scale of hydrogen ion activity
pmol	picomole
rpm	revolutions per minute
sec	second
V	volts
W	watts
μg	microgram
μL	microlitre
μm	micrometre
μmol	micromole