

Commentary

I have read with interest the paper of V.F. Fairbanks *BCMD* 22(15):169-186, 1996, who suggests using ^{125}I -albumin exclusively for blood volume examinations, i.e., measuring of plasma volume and deducing the red cell volume with a corrected hematocrit.

One argument for Fairbanks' choice of albumin is the cost of reagents (see his table 6). However, the published data do not agree with ours.

I calculate that in France (and I assume it is of the same order in the USA) ^{125}I -albumin is twice as expensive as ^{51}Cr . We perform about 30 blood volume measurements each month, buy a flask of ^{51}Cr -chromate (5 mCi) every other month at a price of 1,870 French francs (310 US dollars), and buy eight flasks of ^{125}I -albumin every month at a price of 1,570 francs (300 US dollars). The price of reagents for each measurement of both plasma and red cell volume is 30 francs (6 US dollars) for the ^{51}Cr red cell volume and 52 francs (10 US dollars) for the plasma volume. These prices are very different from those shown by Fairbanks (respectively, \$223 and \$85).

I agree that red cell volume measurement is more complicated and time consuming than plasma volume. My technicians, however, perform four double volume measurements in one half-day (4-5 hours) and I do not think they could, in the same time, perform eight plasma volume studies.

My estimation of technician cost is 100 francs (20 dollars) for one double measurement and perhaps less (about 15 dollars) if we only perform a plasma volume. Nevertheless, the estimated cost of technician-time is not as high as published by Fairbanks.

In conclusion, my double volume measurement does cost 36 dollars against a cost of 25 dollars for a single plasma volume. These data are very different from those given by Fairbanks (\$406 and \$114, respectively).

Professor Yves Najean
Hôpital Saint-Louis
1, av Claude Vellefaux
75 475 Paris Cédex 10