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EVALUATION OF EQUIPMENT AND REAGENTS FOR
ENDOCRINOLOGY LABORATORIES

by
Dr J. Fiet
Central Laboratory of Biochemistry
Saint Louis Hospital
Paris, France



The evaluation of equipment and reagents for an endocrinology laboratory depends partly on the views one has of such an establishment in 1980.

Should testing be carried out only in plasma using radioimmunological, radioenzymatic methods, or should urine analysis also be undertaken, using spectrophotometry, fluorometry gas chromatography or even HPLC?

Urine tests are not normally based on isotopes; they are less costly and still have their proponents. They complement and in our opinion make up a homogenous group with plasma analysis; consequently the materials and reagents they require must be considered together with those required for plasma analysis.

Hormonological analysis usually takes longer than regular clinical biochemistry testing - although some evaluations must be carried out urgently, and so appropriate materials, methods and reagents are required.

Large series of evaluations may require automatization, which generally also gives better results.

As in any clinical testing laboratory, it is desirable to use appropriate computer methods for repetitive tasks in control of series of evaluations, processing of results according to test or patient, invoicing, and laboratory management. Subsequent application of useful results is thereby facilitated.

Apart from the requirements of routine hormonology, including peak requirements, which must be met by an endocrinology laboratory, a dynamic establishment must develop new techniques, many of which are based on the use of radioimmunology and involve the preparation of immune sera not yet available commercially. Thus there is also the problem of protein extraction and/or organic synthesis of immunogens and the problem of immunization of animals for which appropriate facilities are required.

Consideration must also be given to problems of safety in using both radioactive isotopes and volatile and inflammable organic solvents (used for steroid extraction).

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