



Characterization of macrocyclic peptide drug interactions with bile salts and biorelevant colloids in the context of oral delivery

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Oral peptide delivery – why?

My review confirmed that many kids, and even a lot of adults, struggle with needle phobia.

One study reported that up to a third of hospital workers put off their flu shots because of a fear of needles.



Patient Preference

Needle phobias – up to 2 in 3 children & 1 in 4 adults

Increased medication compliance

No requirement for specialized equipment or trained professionals

Manufacturing

Easier scale-up & manufacturing of solid oral dosage forms

Lower manufacturing costs

Oral semaglutide (Rybelsus®) example:

- 100-fold higher peptide dose & daily vs. weekly administration required for PO vs. SC drug products
- Additional costs for PO drug product are cost-effective given the greater QoL when taking a tablet vs. injection¹
- FDA label updates: Jan 2023 – Rybelsus® as first line Tx for T2DM & March 2025 – cardiovascular risk reduction (under review)^{2,3}

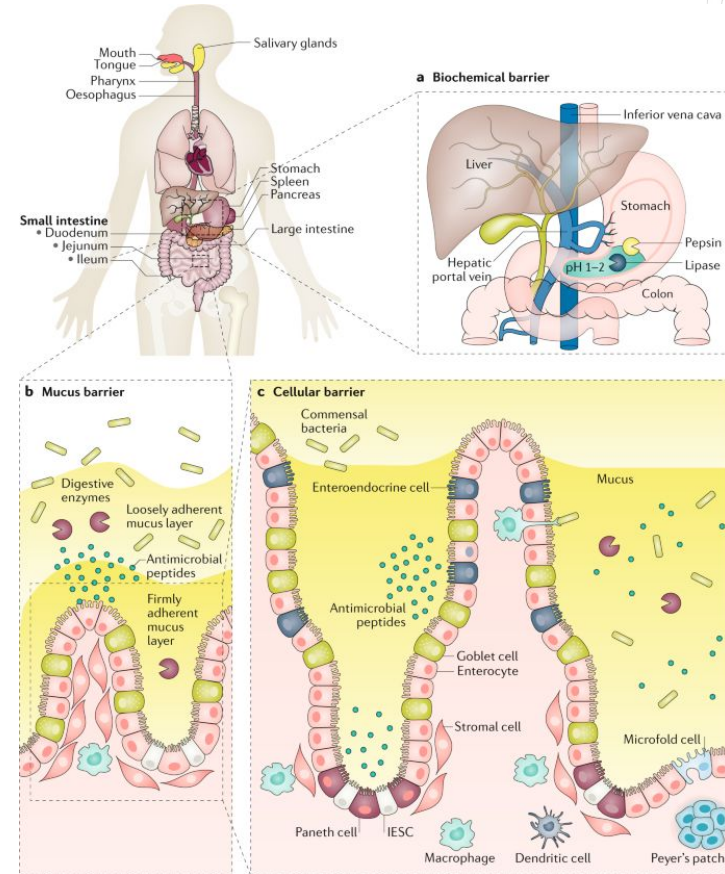
- 2024 annual sales \$3.4 billion USD³

[1] [Abramson et al. J Pharm Sci 2019; 108 pp. 3138-3145](https://www.pharmavoice.com/news/weight-loss-market-oral-glp1-novo-lilly/717148/); [2] <https://www.pharmavoice.com/news/weight-loss-market-oral-glp1-novo-lilly/717148/>; [3] <https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/fda-accepts-novo-nordisks-application-expand-label-oral-glp-1-rybelsus>

Oral peptide delivery – what are the major challenges?

- Peptides & small proteins violate Lipinski's Rule of 5:¹
 - **Molecular mass <500 Da**
 - **cLogP <5**
 - **HBD ≤5 & HBA ≤10**
- **Low membrane permeability** limits oral bioavailability, OR
- **Low aqueous solubility** limits oral bioavailability
- Susceptible to **proteolytic degradation** – pepsin, pancreatic enzymes, intestinal brush border enzymes
- Inter- & intra-individual variability in gastrointestinal physiology has an outsized impact on oral absorption = **high PK variability**

What is the impact of bile salt & phospholipid on oral peptide delivery?



Oral small molecule drug delivery – the impact of bile salts on solubility is well understood

- Endogenous bile salts/phospholipids in the gastrointestinal environment solubilize poorly water-soluble small molecule drugs & increase their oral absorption/bioavailability
- Drug solubility & formulation performance is routinely measured in commercially available human biorelevant media – FaSSIF & FeSSIF

FaSSIF



**PRANDIAL STATE
FASTED**

**FLUID SIMULATED
SMALL INTESTINAL**

pH 6.5

**DATE OF BIRTH
1998**

COMPOSITION

Component	Concentration (mM)
Taurocholate	3
Phospholipids	0.75
Sodium	148
Chloride	106
Phosphate	29

FeSSIF



**PRANDIAL STATE
FED**

**FLUID SIMULATED
SMALL INTESTINAL**

pH 5.0

**DATE OF BIRTH
2008**

COMPOSITION

Component	Concentration (mM)
Taurocholate	15
Phospholipids	3.75
Sodium	319
Chloride	203
Acetic acid	144



...are not small molecules...

...nor are they large molecules!

Peptides are a **unique modality**, and we should not consider them as “large” small molecules or “small” large molecules

In general, we **do not** have a good understanding of the **impact of bile salts on peptide drug absorption** & the preclinical/clinical translatability of this phenomena

[1] Miyake et al. Biol Pharm Bull 1999; [2] Balandraud-Pieri et al. Drug Met Dist 1997; [3] Lindholm et al. Br J Clin Pharmacol 1990

Octreotide (BCS Class III “like” peptide – high solubility/low permeability) & bile salts

Table 1 Pharmacokinetic parameters of octreotide after administration at different sites of rat small intestine

Administration site	AUC_{0-2h} ($ng\ h^{-1}\ ml^{-1}$)	C_{max} ($ng\ ml^{-1}$)	t_{max} (h)	Absorption efficiency (%)
Duodenum	4.39 ± 2.05	3.20 ± 1.54	0.5 ± 0.1	1.56
Proximal jejunum	8.89 ± 2.63	7.10 ± 1.75	0.4 ± 0.1	3.16
Ileum	0.52 ± 0.09	2.37 ± 1.17	0.7 ± 0.3	0.19
i.v. reference	14.04 ± 1.16	23.27 ± 1.31	0.1 ± 0.0	100

In anaesthetized rats after administration of $50\ \mu g$ octreotide in 0.5 ml saline at different sites in the small intestine; reference animals received an i.v. dose of $2.5\ \mu g$ octreotide (mean values $\pm$ s.d.; $n = 6$).

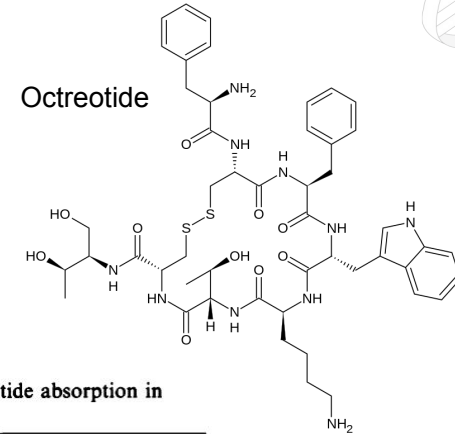


Table 2 Effect of bile on intestinal octreotide absorption in rats

Animal model	AUC_{0-2h} ($ng\ h^{-1}\ ml^{-1}$)	C_{max} ($ng\ ml^{-1}$)	t_{max} (h)
Control rats	2.26 ± 1.13	2.23 ± 1.34	1.2 ± 0.6
Sham operated	5.10 ± 6.17	4.14 ± 3.68	0.5 ± 0.2
Bile-duct cannulated	12.94 ± 4.66	8.73 ± 3.06	1.2 ± 0.5

In different rat models after administration of $50\ \mu g$ octreotide (mean values $\pm$ s.d.; $n = 6$).

Octreotide absorption increased 6-fold in the absence of bile = bile decreases oral absorption

Besides cyclosporine A research & the above 1992 study from Sandoz Pharma on octreotide, the impact of bile salts & bile salt-phospholipid mixed micelles on oral peptide drug delivery has not been reported in the literature

Bile salt & phospholipid concentrations *in vivo* – humans

- High inter- and intra-individual variability in bile salt levels in healthy volunteers¹
 - Median duodenal concentration = 3.3 mM (range 2.5-5.9 mM)²
 - Median jejunal concentration = 2.5 mM (range 1.5-5.5 mM)²
- Mean phospholipid concentration in fasted human intestinal fluid = 0.3 ± 0.5 mM (range 0.003-2.7 mM)¹
- Three main bile salts = taurocholate, glycocholate & glycodeoxycholate (glycine conjugates are predominant)

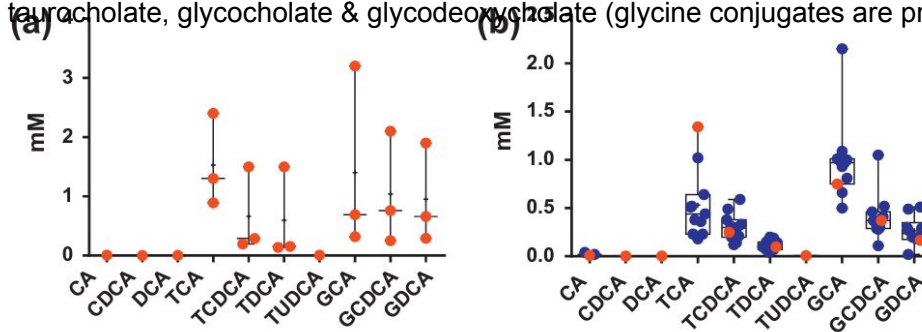


Fig. 5. Bile salt composition in human (a) duodenum and (b) jejunum. CA: cholic acid; CDCA: chenodeoxycholic acid; DCA: deoxycholic acid; TCA: taurocholic acid; TCDCA: taurochenodeoxycholic acid; TDCA: taurodeoxycholic acid; TUDCA: Tauroursodeoxycholic acid; GCA: glycocholic acid; GCDCA: glycochenodeoxycholic acid; GDCA: glycodeoxycholic acid. Box-whisker plots show minimum and maximum values, as well as 25, 50 and 75 percentile. The cross indicates the mean value. Each data point represents a group of participants ($n = 1-10$ colored red, $n = 11-20$ colored blue) reported in one publication. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

Bile salt & phospholipid concentrations *in vivo* – rats

- Rats have a continuous flow of bile – highest during the night and decreases sharply in the morning¹
- Bile flow in rodents is 2-20 times greater, per unit of liver weight, than in dogs and humans
- Glycine conjugates are predominant in humans; taurine conjugates are predominant in rats (and rats make muricholic acids i.e., hydroxylated at 6 β position)

Table 1

Overview of studies evaluating pH and levels of bile acids, phospholipids and osmolality in the GI tract of fasted rats. Human values as recently reviewed by Bergström et al. [14] are included for comparison.

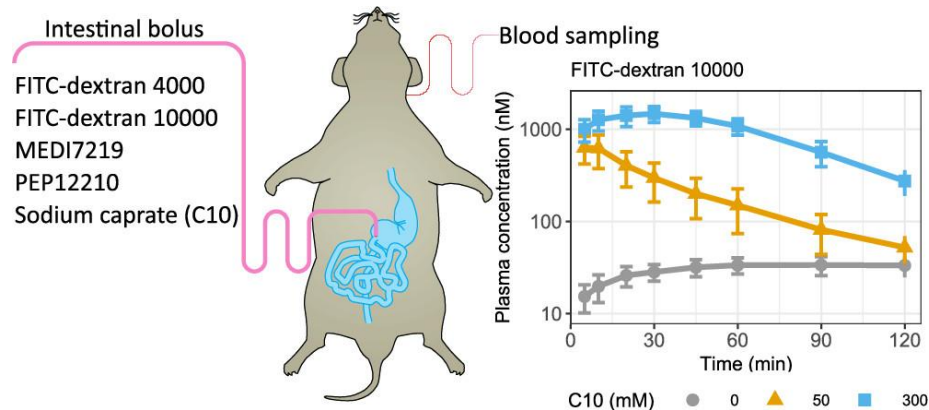
Parameter		Rat (fasted)	Human (fasted) ^d
pH	Stomach	1.4–1.9 ^a , 3.9 ^b , 4.3 (forestomach) ^c , 4.0 (glandular stomach) ^c , germ free rats: 3.8 (forestomach) ^c , 5.7 (glandular stomach) ^c .	1.7–3.3
	Proximal small intestine	6.7–7.0 ^a , 5.9–6.1 ^b , 7.1 ^c	5.6–7.8
	Distal small intestine	6.9–7.4 ^a , 5.9 ^b , 8.0 ^c	–
Bile acids (mM)	Stomach	< 5 ^a	0–0.8
	Proximal small intestine	51 ^a	1.4–5.9
	Distal small intestine	102 ^a	–
Phospholipids (mM)	Stomach	hardly detected ^a	0.029
	Proximal small intestine	1.5–5.5 ^a	0.1–0.6
	Distal small intestine	hardly detected ^a	–
Osmolality (mOsm/kg)	Stomach	–	119–221
	Proximal small intestine	–	137–300
	Distal small intestine	–	–

References: a: [15], b: [16], c: [17] and d: [14].

Preclinical rat PK models – to cannulate the bile duct or not?

Intraduodenal or intrajejunal route of administration commonly used to assess peptide + permeation enhancer (PE) absorption in rats

- Conscious vs unconscious rat models utilized
- Bile duct cannulation (BDC) employed by some institutions e.g., AstraZeneca papers¹
 - If bile has a **positive effect** on peptide absorption = BDC may **underestimate** peptide bioavailability
 - If bile has a **negative effect** on peptide absorption = BDC may **overestimate** peptide bioavailability



- Primary hypothesis: that water-soluble macrocyclic peptide (MCP) drugs will interact with bile salt micelles & bile salt-phospholipid mixed micelles in solution
- Secondary hypothesis: that hydrophobic interactions between aromatic amino acid residues and bile salts/phospholipids drive the interaction between octreotide & biorelevant colloids in solution

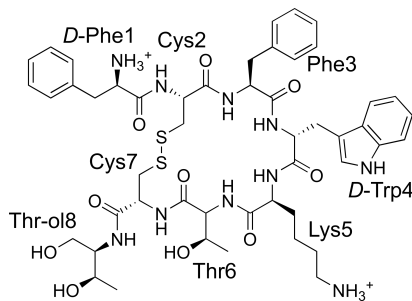
Octreotide

MW 1019 Da

Aqueous solubility >10 mg/mL

BCS Class III

Oral bioavailability ~0.7% (+ PE)



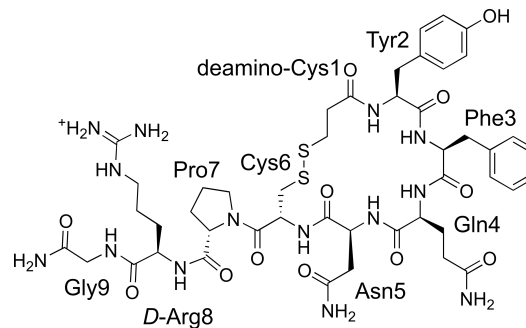
Desmopressin

MW 1069 Da

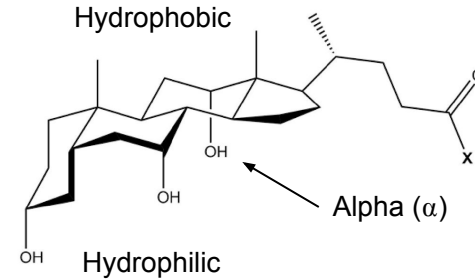
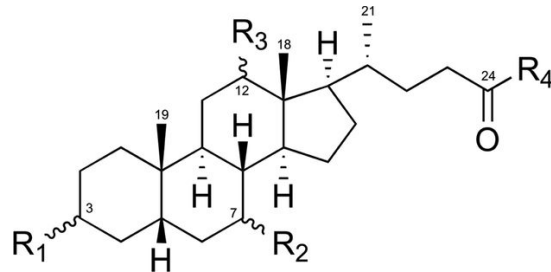
Aqueous solubility >50 mg/mL

BCS Class III

Oral bioavailability ~0.1% (no PE)

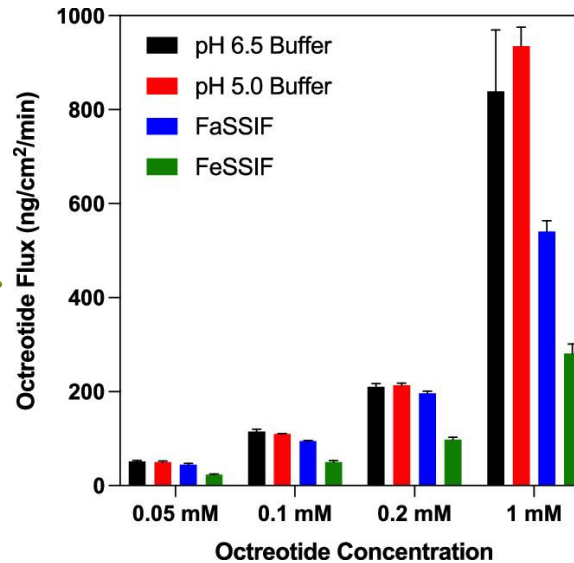
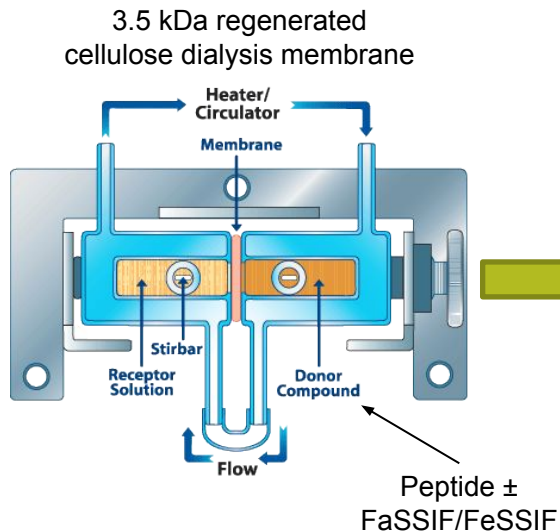


Biologically relevant bile salts



						Measured CMC (mM)
Cholate (NaC)	OH(α)	OH(α)	OH(α)	O ⁻	trace	10.3 ± 0.1
Taurocholate (NaTC)	OH(α)	OH(α)	OH(α)	NHCH ₂ CH ₂ SO ₃ ⁻	10	9.1 ± 0.4
Glycocholate (NaGC)	OH(α)	OH(α)	OH(α)	NHCH ₂ COO ⁻	30	9.8 ± 0.5
Taurodeoxycholate (NaTDC)	OH(α)	H	OH(α)	NHCH ₂ CH ₂ SO ₃ ⁻	10	1.5 ± 0.0
Glycodeoxycholate (NaGDC)	OH(α)	H	OH(α)	NHCH ₂ COO ⁻	15	1.8 ± 0.1
Taurochenodeoxycholate (NaTCDC)	OH(α)	OH(α)	H	NHCH ₂ CH ₂ SO ₃ ⁻	5	1.7 ± 0.0
Glycochenodeoxycholate (NaGCDC)	OH(α)	OH(α)	H	NHCH ₂ COO ⁻	30	2.1 ± 0.1

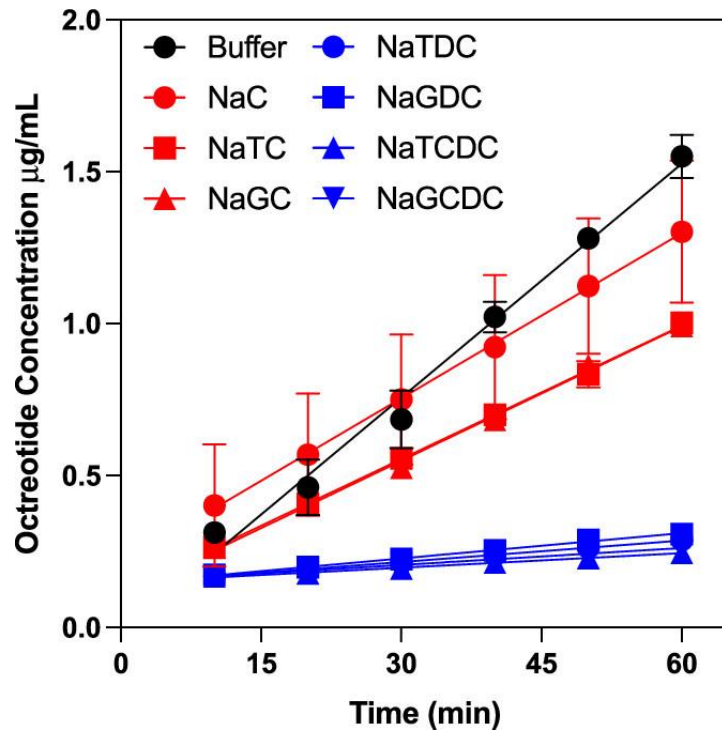
FaSSIF & FeSSIF bile salt-phospholipid mixed micelles decrease octreotide flux



FaSSIF, composed of 3 mM NaTC/0.75 mM PL in pH 6.5 phosphate buffer, decreased octreotide flux by 7-37%

FeSSIF, composed of 15 mM NaTC/3.75 mM PL in pH 5.0 acetate buffer, decreased octreotide flux by 53-70%

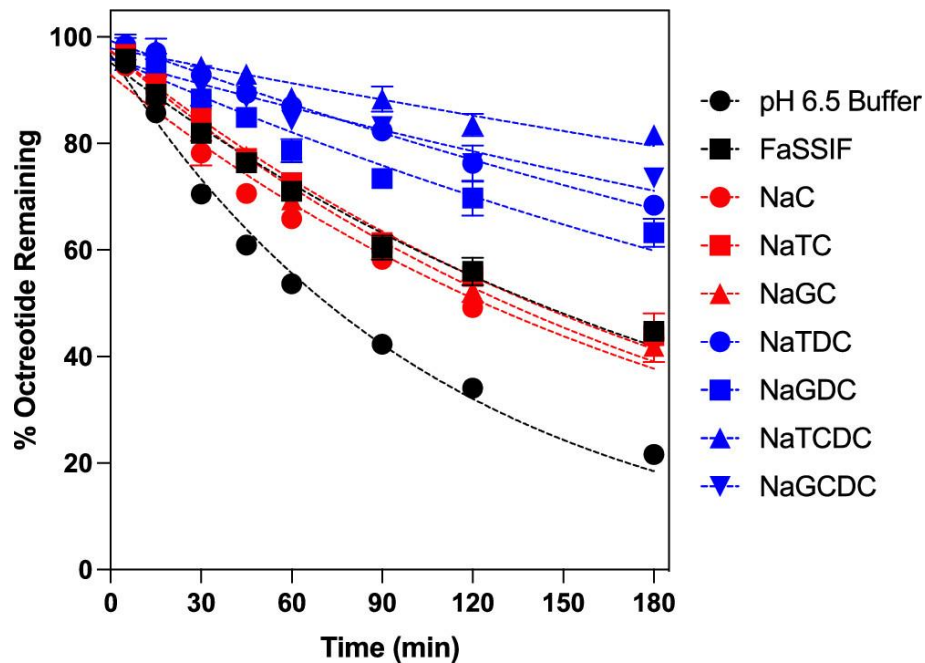
Pure bile salt micelles (15 mM) decrease octreotide flux



Trihydroxy bile salt (NaC, NaTC, NaGC) micelles decreased octreotide membrane flux by ~30-40%

Dihydroxy bile salt (NaTDC, NaGDC, NaTDCDC, NaGCDC) micelles decreased octreotide membrane flux by ~90%

Biorelevant colloids protect octreotide from enzymatic degradation

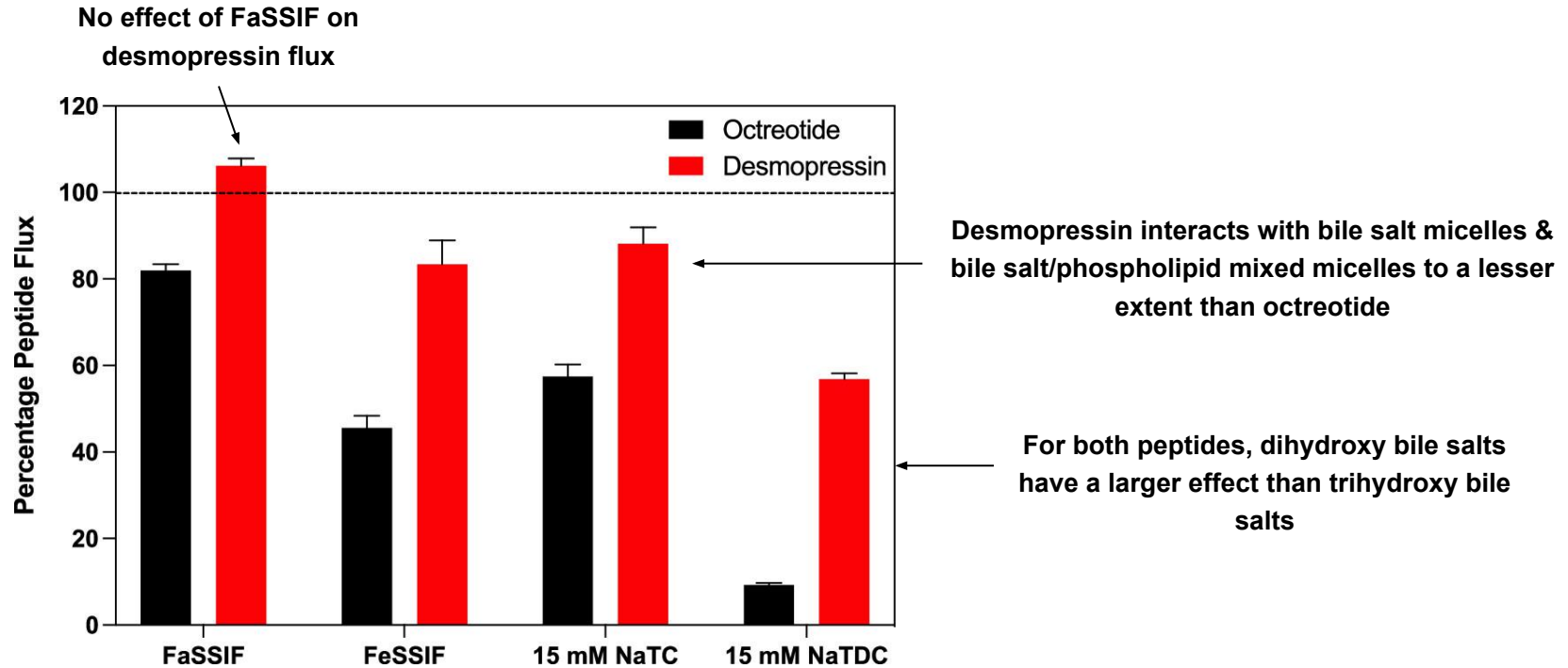


Dihydroxy bile salt (NaTDC, NaGDC, NaTCDC, NaGCDC) micelles increased octreotide $T_{1/2}$ to ~4-10 h

Trihydroxy bile salt (NaC, NaTC, NaGC) micelles increased octreotide $T_{1/2}$ to ~140 min e.g., similar to FaSSIF

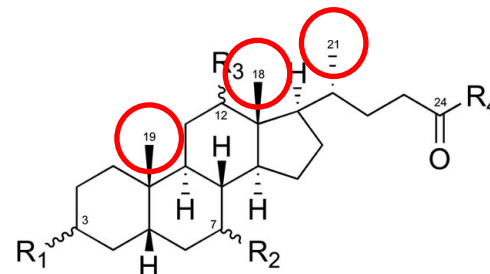
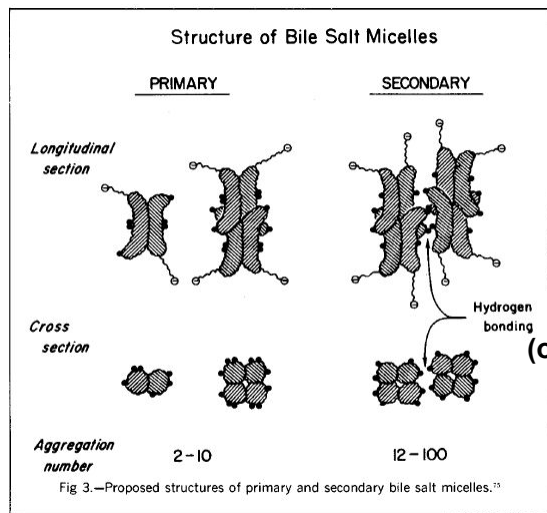
FaSSIF increased octreotide $T_{1/2}$ from 75 min (buffer) to 153 min in the presence of 10 mg/mL pancreatin

Bile salt micelles & bile salt-phospholipid mixed micelles also decrease desmopressin flux



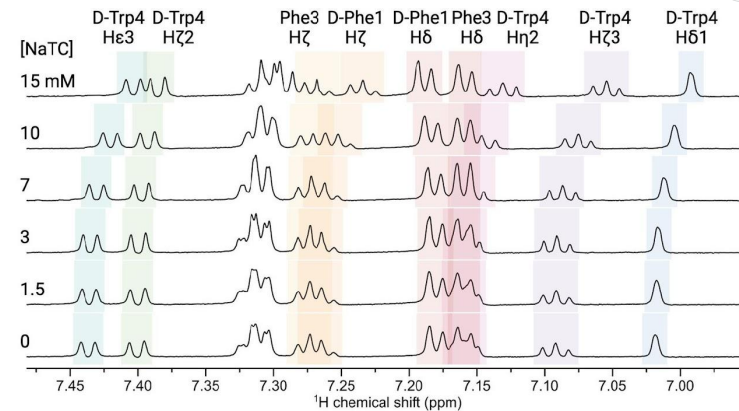
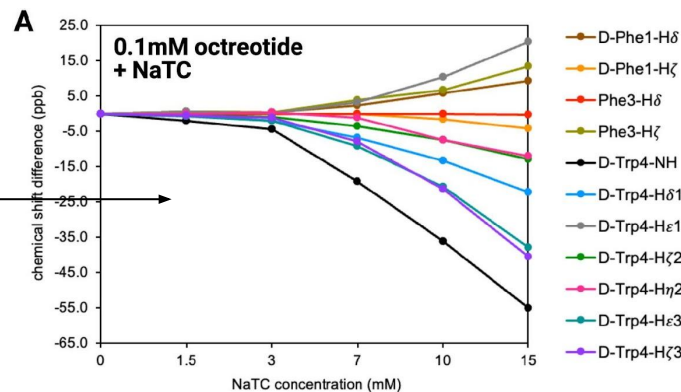
Characterizing trihydroxy vs. dihydroxy bile salt micelles – ^1H DOSY NMR

Dihydroxy bile salt micelles have a much larger effect on octreotide membrane flux & enzymatic stability than trihydroxy bile salt micelles – why?



Bile Salt	Diffusion Coefficient ($\times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^2/\text{s}$)	Hydrodynamic Radius (nm)	CMC (mM)
NaC	2.96 ± 0.04	0.8 ± 0.0	10.3 ± 0.1
NaTC	3.39 ± 0.05	0.7 ± 0.0	9.1 ± 0.4
NaGC	3.43 ± 0.04	0.7 ± 0.0	9.8 ± 0.5
NaTDC	1.79 ± 0.01	1.4 ± 0.0	1.5 ± 0.0
NaGDC	1.85 ± 0.01	1.3 ± 0.0	1.8 ± 0.1
NaTCDC	1.44 ± 0.03	1.7 ± 0.0	1.7 ± 0.0
NaGCDC	1.52 ± 0.01	1.6 ± 0.0	2.1 ± 0.1

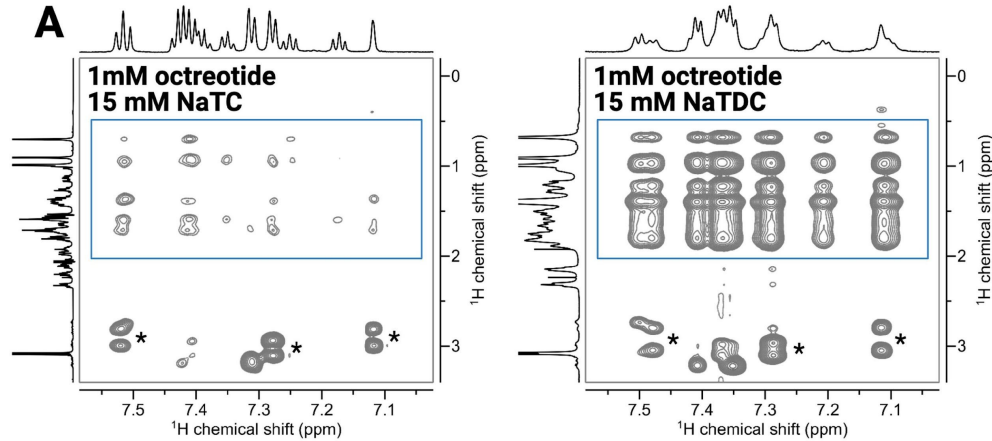
Interactions of octreotide's individual amino acid residues with bile salts – ^1H NMR



Individual aromatic protons
perturbed to different extent(s)

Peak broadening & larger
chemical shift perturbations in
the presence of dihydroxy bile
salts – consistent with flux
observations

Octreotide and desmopressin interaction with bile salts – ^1H NMR



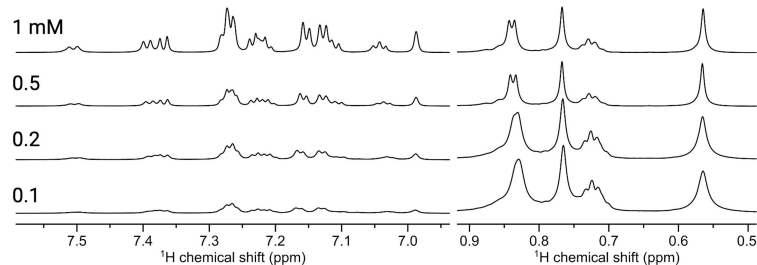
Significant cross-correlations between octreotide's aromatic protons & NaTDC protons (minor cross-correlations with NaTC protons)

Cross-correlations between desmopressin's aromatic protons & NaTDC (but not NaTC) protons; weaker relative to octreotide

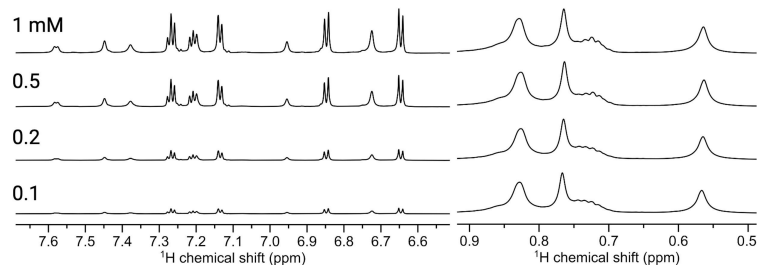
Octreotide & desmopressin interaction with FaSSIF colloids – ^1H NMR

Octreotide perturbs FaSSIF colloids & induces colloidal restructuring at increasing concentrations

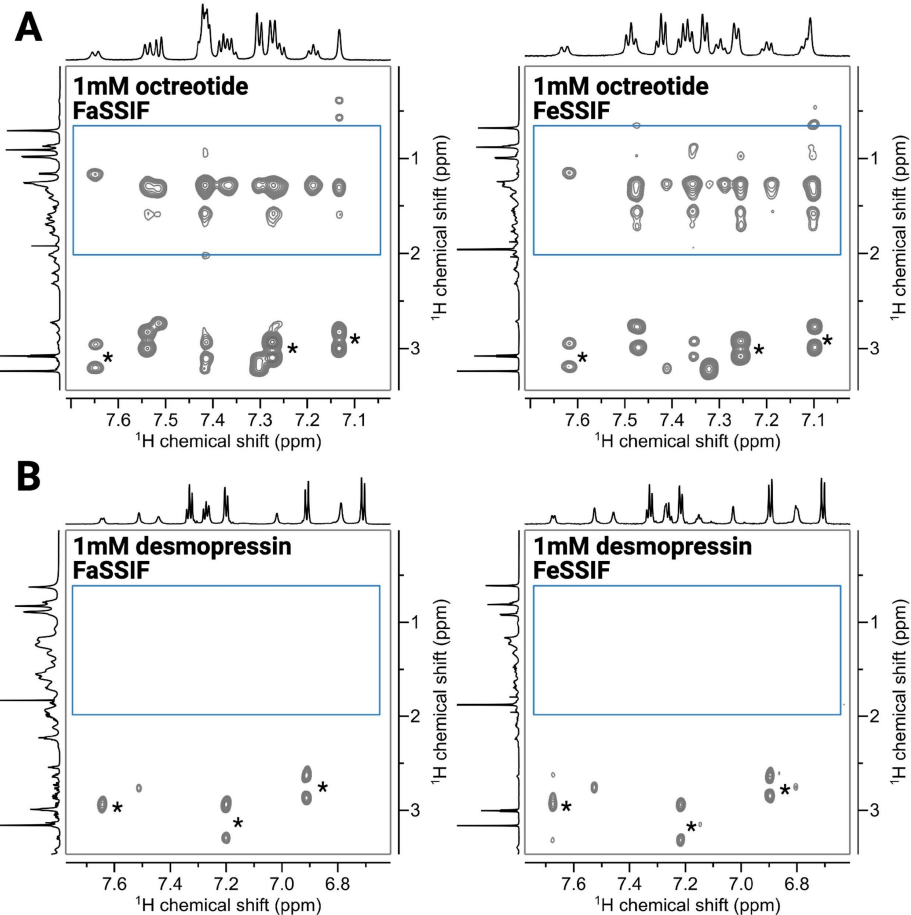
A octreotide in FaSSIF



B desmopressin in FaSSIF



Desmopressin does not interact with FaSSIF colloids – no spectral changes observed



Alanine scan of octreotide – can we get a better understanding of the contributions of each individual residue?

Table 2

Peptide sequences with single amino acid mutations indicated in bold. Cys2 and Cys7 residues are connected via a disulfide bond for all peptides, and unless otherwise indicated, all amino acids have L-configuration.

Peptide Name	Sequence	MW (Da)
Octreotide	D-Phe-Cys-Phe-D-Trp-Lys-Thr-Cys-Thr-ol	1019.2
[Ala1]	Ala -Cys-Phe-D-Trp-Lys-Thr-Cys-Thr-ol	943.2
[Ala3]	D-Phe-Cys- Ala -D-Trp-Lys-Thr-Cys-Thr-ol	943.2
[Ala4]	D-Phe-Cys-Phe- Ala -Lys-Thr-Cys-Thr-ol	904.1
[Leu4]	D-Phe-Cys-Phe- Leu -Lys-Thr-Cys-Thr-ol	946.2
[Phe4]	D-Phe-Cys-Phe- Phe -Lys-Thr-Cys-Thr-ol	980.2
[Ala5]	D-Phe-Cys-Phe-D-Trp- Ala -Thr-Cys-Thr-ol	962.2
[Ala6]	D-Phe-Cys-Phe-D-Trp-Lys- Ala -Cys-Thr-ol	989.2
[Ala8]	D-Phe-Cys-Phe-D-Trp-Lys-Thr-Cys- Ala -ol	989.2

D-Trp4 (hydrophobicity value = 97)
hypothesized to be a key residue:
mutated to Ala (41), Leu (97) & Phe (100)

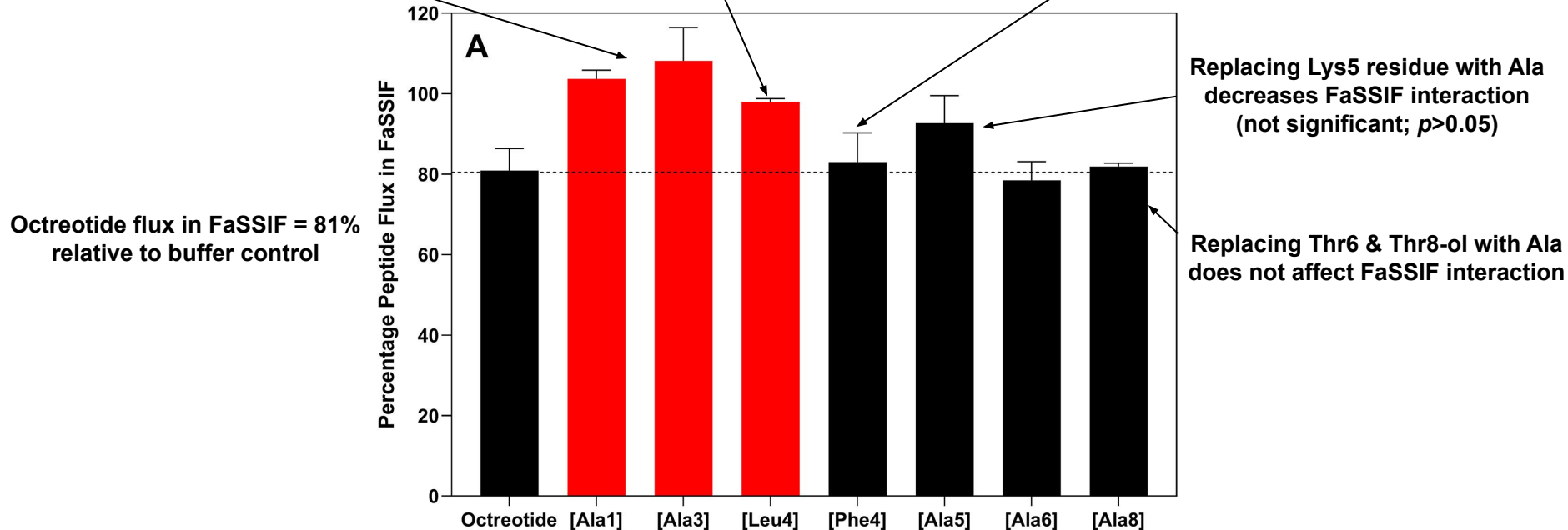
Alanine scan of octreotide – what is the contribution of each residue to the interaction with FaSSIF colloids?

D-Phe-Cys-Phe-D-Trp-Lys-Thr-Cys-Thr-ol

Replacing D-Phe1 or Phe3 residues with Ala decreases FaSSIF interaction

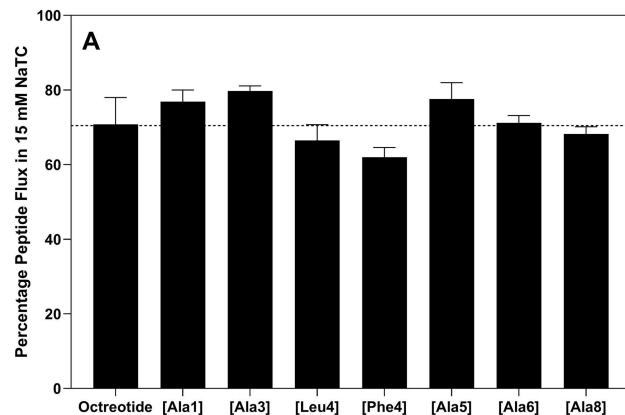
Replacing D-Trp4 residue with non-aromatic Leu decreases FaSSIF interaction

Replacing D-Trp4 residue with aromatic Phe does not affect FaSSIF interaction



Data supports that aromatic residues & Lys drive the interaction between octreotide and bile salt/phospholipid mixed micelles

Alanine scan of octreotide – what is the contribution of each residue to the interaction with bile salt micelles?



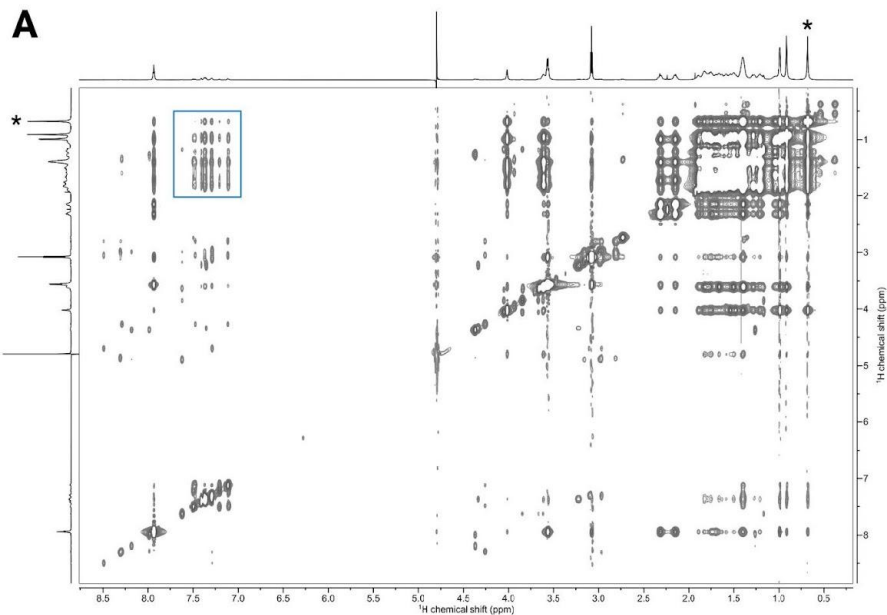
No significant difference in membrane flux between octreotide & each mutated peptide in 15 mM NaTC media – single amino acid mutations do not disrupt peptide-NaTC micelle interactions

Mutating aromatic or basic amino acid residues decreased the interaction with NaTDC micelles

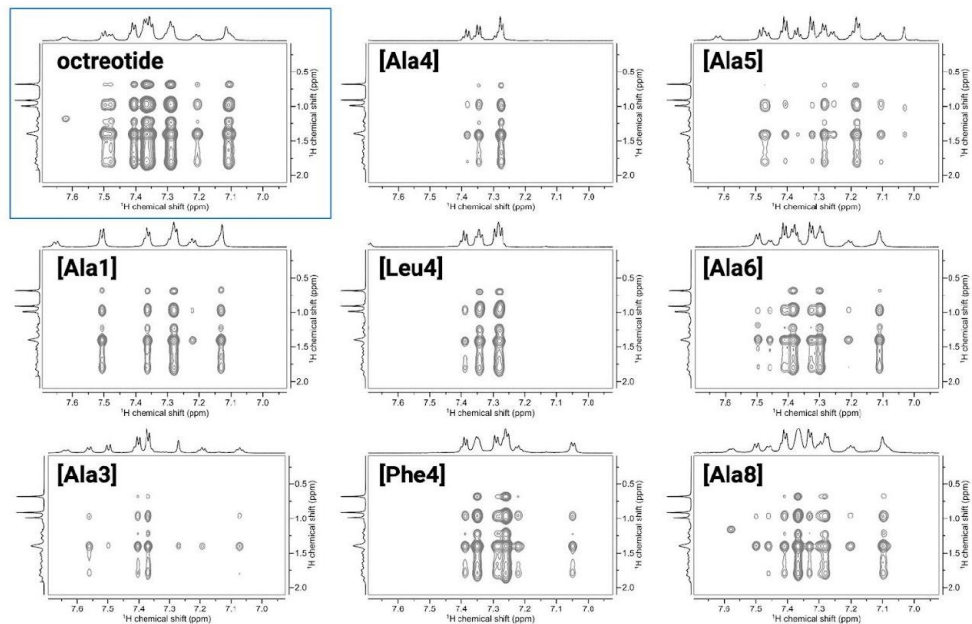
Interactions of individual amino acid residues with bile salts – ^1H NMR

All mutated peptides exhibited weaker cross-correlations with NaTDC compared to octreotide

A



B



To further complicate matters...bile salts also act as membrane PEs

Table 1 Absorption of octreotide in rats

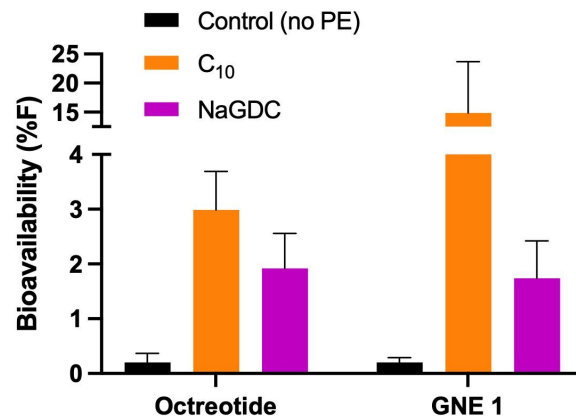
Substance/ composition	AUC 0–5 h (ng h ml ⁻¹)	C _{max} (ng ml ⁻¹)	Absorption efficiency (0–5 h) %
Octreotide i.v.	6.25 ± 1.25	5.84	100
Octreotide i.j.	0.82 ± 0.08	0.34	0.26
i.j. + 1% ursodeoxycholate	14.73 ± 7.21	9.78	4.71
i.j. + 1% chenodeoxycholate	63.19 ± 5.93	32.14	20.22
i.j. + 2% ursodeoxycholate	15.39 ± 1.63	9.56	4.92
i.j. + 2% chenodeoxycholate	56.72 ± 9.95	30.41	18.15

Data represent means ± s.e.mean; *n* = 5; i.v. = intrasentieric administration; i.j. = intrajejunal administration.

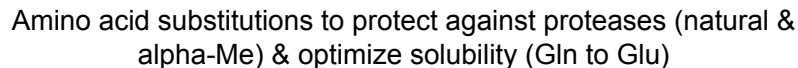
Table 2 Absorption of octreotide in human subjects

Composition	Octreotide (4 mg) + Na ⁺ -UDCA (100 mg) (p.o.)	Octreotide (4 mg) + Na ⁺ -CDCA (100 mg) (p.o.)	Octreotide (100 µg) (i.v.)
AUC (ng h ml ⁻¹)	0.63 ± 0.20	6.10 ± 2.69**	10.78 ± 0.92
F (%)	0.13 ± 0.03	1.26 ± 0.41	100 (reference)
C _{max} (ng ml ⁻¹)	0.13 ± 0.03	1.45 ± 0.64**	7.92 ± 0.59
T _{max} (h)	3.0 ± 0.47	2.7 ± 0.53	0.5 ± 0.00
t _{1/2} (h)			1.9 ± 0.16

Data represent mean ± s.e.mean; *n* = 10; p.o. = by mouth; i.v. = intravenous; AUC = area under the plasma concentration-time curve extrapolated to infinity; F = absolute bioavailability in percentage of the dose defined as: $F = (AUC_{p.o.} \times Dose_{i.v.}) / (AUC_{i.v.} \times Dose_{p.o.}) \times 100$; C_{max} = maximum plasma concentration; T_{max} = time of C_{max}; t_{1/2} = terminal half-life for elimination; Na⁺-UDCA = sodium ursodeoxycholate; Na⁺-CDCA = sodium chenodeoxycholate. Significantly different from Na⁺-UDCA-group, ***P* < 0.01, Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test.



a PE



0-15% F in dogs
achieved

Formulation	Permeation Enhancer Content (mg)	Peptide Content (mg)	Permeation Enhancer Ratio (Na CDC:PG)	Absolute Oral Bioavailability, F, (%)	PK Variability at C _{max} (%)
Cohort 1					
1	50	10	2:1	0.3	110
2	50	10	1:2	1.8	63
3	300	10	1:2	6.3	74
4	300	10	2:1	4.8	35
5	300	1	1:2	10.1	26
6	300	1	2:1	5.0	42
7	50	1	2:1	0.1	36
8	50	1	1:2	0.0	67
9	150	5	1:1	3.2	97
10	150	3	1:2	11.1	100
Cohort 2					
11	150	10	1:2	13.5	94
12	300	3	1:3	7.5	89
13	300	10	1:2	7.5	119
14	450	3	1:2	7.5	81
15	300	3	1:2	15.5	86
16	300	3	1:1	6.6	74

Key takeaways

- Water-soluble macrocyclic peptide drugs interact with endogenous bile salt $\pm$ phospholipid micelles in solution
- Aromatic amino acid residues play a key role in driving the interaction between octreotide and biorelevant colloids
- Desmopressin also interacts with biorelevant colloids, but to a lesser extent than octreotide (no Trp residue)
- Dihydroxy bile salt micelles have a much larger effect on peptide solution behavior than trihydroxy bile salt micelles – is commercial FaSSIF/FeSSIF media that only incorporates trihydroxy bile salt appropriate for peptide drugs?

What is the net impact of biorelevant colloids on oral peptide drug absorption and bioavailability?

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