

The in vitro studies broadly categorized as radioimmunoassays, including those performed by saturation analysis or competitive binding techniques, have gone through a period of startling growth even in comparison with the rapid expansion of other nuclear medicine procedures. There are now commercially available either kits or components for assay of more than two dozen substances of clinical significance in several important areas, including cardiology, endocrinology, metabolic disease, reproduction, hematology, gastroenterology, oncology, and drug abuse. The potential usefulness for such assays is probably much greater than is presently realized, as methodology for additional compounds discovered to be of clinical interest is developed.

The problem of providing an adequate interface between laboratory and ward or clinic in the indications for and the interpretation of these procedures has not been solved. Can the busy clinician, concerned with the patient's overall problems, familiarize himself with the physiological influences and other qualifying factors which bear on these measurements, usually made at one moment in time in a kinetic situation? Can the laboratory worker find the time to be conversant with all the clinical areas in which these determinations are of value?

The answer would seem to lie in a team approach, with the nuclear medicine physician or scientist providing the communication link-up, in consultation, that seems to be required for the maximum clinical benefit to be derived from these powerful laboratory tools. This would under present circumstances limit the development of knowledge and understanding to well-staffed nuclear medicine services in support of a large catchment area, whether in hospital or clinics. Considerable attention must be given to appropriate administrative procedures to make such a system work.

All men are mortal, but some appear to be more so than others, to paraphrase a socioeconomic aphorism concerning equality. To reduce this differential wherever possible is a complex and demanding task. The radioimmunoassay component of the nuclear medicine field promises to offer much in this undertaking. To quote Heinrich Heine, "I wish for the stupid a little understanding and for the understanding a little poetry. I wish a heart for the rich and a little bread for the poor. But above all I wish that during the days ahead, we may blackguard each other as little as possible."

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