The global Alzheimer's Association round robin study on plasma amyloid β methods

Josef Pannee  
*University of Gothenburg*

Kwasi G Mawuenyega  
*Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis*

Vitaliy Ovod  
*Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis*

James Bollinger  
*Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis*

Randall J Bateman  
*Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis*

See next page for additional authors

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The global Alzheimer’s Association round robin study on plasma amyloid β methods

Josef Pannee1,2 | Leslie M. Shaw3 | Magdalena Korecka3 | Teresa Waligorska3 | Charlotte E. Teunissen4 | Erik Stoops5 | Hugo M. J. Vanderstichele6 | Kimberley Mauroo5 | Inge M. W. Verberk4 | Ashvini Keshavan7 | Pedro Pesini8 | Leticia Sarasa8 | Maria Pascual-Lucas8 | Noelia Fandos8 | José-Antonio Allué8 | Erik Portelius1,2 | Ulf Andreasson1,2 | Ritsuko Yoda9 | Akinori Nakamura10 | Naoki Kaneko9 | Shieh-Yueh Yang11 | Huei-Chun Liu11 | Stefan Palme12 | Tobias Bittner13 | Kwasi G. Mawuenyega14 | Vitaliy Ovod14 | James Bollinger14 | Randall J. Bateman14 | Yan Li14 | Jeffrey L. Dage15 | Erik Stomrud16,17 | Oskar Hansson16,17 | Jonathan M. Schott7 | Kaj Blennow1,2 | Henrik Zetterberg1,2,18,19

1 Department of Psychiatry and Neurochemistry, Institute of Neuroscience and Physiology, The Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Mölndal, Sweden
2 Clinical Neurochemistry Lab, Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Mölndal, Sweden
3 Perelman School of Medicine, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
4 Neurochemistry Laboratory, Department of Clinical Chemistry, Amsterdam Neuroscience, Amsterdam UMC, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
5 ADx NeuroSciences, Ghent, Belgium
6 Biomarkable, Ghent, Belgium
7 Dementia Research Centre, UCL Queen Square Institute of Neurology, London, UK
8 Araclon Biotech, Zaragoza, Spain
9 Koichi Tanaka Mass Spectrometry Research Laboratory, Shimadzu Corporation, Kyoto, Japan
10 Department of Biomarker Research, National Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology, Obu, Aichi, Japan
11 MagQu Co., Ltd., New Taipei City, Taiwan
12 Roche Diagnostics GmbH, Penzberg, Germany
13 F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd, Basel, Switzerland
14 Department of Neurology, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, Missouri, USA
15 Eli Lilly and Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA
16 Clinical Memory Research Unit, Faculty of Medicine, Lund University, Lund, Sweden
17 Memory Clinic, Skåne University Hospital, Malmö, Sweden
18 Department of Neurodegenerative Disease, UCL Queen Square Institute of Neurology, London, UK
19 UK Dementia Research Institute, London, UK

Correspondence
Josef Pannee, Clinical Neurochemistry Lab, Mölndal Hospital, Biskopsborgatan 27, Building V3, floor 2, SE-43180 Mölndal, Sweden.
E-mail: josef.pannee@gu.se

Abstract

Introduction: Blood-based assays to measure brain amyloid beta (Aβ) deposition are an attractive alternative to the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF)–based assays currently used in clinical settings. In this study, we examined different blood-based assays to measure Aβ and how they compare among centers and assays.
1 | INTRODUCTION

In Alzheimer’s disease (AD), amyloid beta (Aβ) deposition in the brain is detectable using the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) biomarkers Aβ42 or Aβ42/40 ratio and by using amyloid positron emission tomography (PET).1 Because CSF sampling is mainly performed at memory clinics and other specialized centers and amyloid PET is costly with limited availability, blood-based assays have long been an attractive alternative, especially in the primary care setting. The ability to reliably distinguish AD dementia from controls using Aβ in plasma has until 2016 showed poor performance and partially conflicting results.2 However, newly developed highly sensitive immunoassays, as well as mass spectrometry (MS) methods, have shown a better and higher concordance of Aβ in plasma with Aβ-PET or CSF amyloid status.3–7

The aim of this study was to examine how different methods that measure plasma Aβ42 and Aβ40 levels compare, and whether results correlate linearly. Ten centers participated in this study, which included seven immunological assays and four MS methods, each analyzing aliquots of 81 unique ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA)–plasma samples.

2 | METHODS

Individual de-identified EDTA–plasma samples (n = 81) were measured from the prospective and longitudinal Swedish BioFINDER (Biomarkers for Identifying Neurodegenerative Disorders Early and Reliably) cohort (n = 48); the prospective University College London Dementia Research Centre CSF cohort (n = 24); and the Clinical Neurochemistry Laboratory at the Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Mölndal, Sweden (n = 9). Varied sampling and processing procedures were used across these centers, and for this study the samples were prepared in 250 μL aliquots, so each underwent one freeze–thaw cycle prior to distribution. These aliquots were kept at −80°C pending distribution to participating centers. The plasma samples were selected based on known matched CSF Aβ42 concentrations previously measured in the original cohorts, to theoretically include samples with a wide range of plasma Aβ levels. Across the 10 participating centers (Table 1), seven immunological assays and four MS methods were used in this study. All methods measured Aβ40 and Aβ42 but varied in whether the full-length Aβ1–40 and Aβ1–42 forms were measured (for simplicity, the terms Aβ40 and Aβ42 are used throughout), and two methods also measured the APP69-711 form. Methods were compared using Passing-Bablok regression8 and Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient (rS).

3 | RESULTS

The correlations for pair-wise method comparison (Figure 1) for Aβ42 were generally weak to moderate with a median rS value of 0.24 and highest rS value of 0.72. The correlations for Aβ40 were stronger with a median rS value of 0.67 and highest rS value of 0.89. Interestingly, using the ratio Aβ42/Aβ40 did not improve the correlations (Figure 2) and showed weak correlations (similar to Aβ42) with a median rS value of 0.25 and highest rS value of 0.65. See supporting information for full correlation plots between all methods for Aβ40, Aβ42, and the Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio.

4 | DISCUSSION

The results in this multicenter study showed acceptable correlations for plasma Aβ40, while there were poor correlations for plasma Aβ42, as well as for the Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio. The moderate correlations between the MS assays support comparable measurements but correlations are not ideal (generally < 0.7).

The MagQu method, which uses one antibody to capture Aβ40 and Aβ42 and immunomagnetic reduction to quantify the protein, does not correlate with the other methods, thus it may measure other forms of
### TABLE 1  Participating centers, assay platform, and measured Aβ species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Technology platform</th>
<th>Aβ species</th>
<th>Capture antibody</th>
<th>Detection antibody</th>
<th>Calibrant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Simoa (commercial)</td>
<td>Aβ42, Aβ40</td>
<td>H31121, 12F4</td>
<td>6E10, 6E10</td>
<td>AnaSpec #24236 &amp; #20276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADx/Euroimmun</td>
<td>ELISA</td>
<td>Aβ1-42, Aβ1-40</td>
<td>21F12, 2G3</td>
<td>3D6, 3D6</td>
<td>rPeptide, rPeptide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam UMC/ADx</td>
<td>Simoa (in-house)</td>
<td>Aβ1-42, Aβ1-40</td>
<td>21F12, 2G3</td>
<td>3D6, 3D6</td>
<td>rPeptide, rPeptide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Araclon Biotech</td>
<td>LC-MS</td>
<td>Aβ1-42, Aβ1-40</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>rPeptide Uniformly labeled 15N, recombinant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shimadzu Corporation</td>
<td>MALDI-TOF MS</td>
<td>Aβ1-42, Aβ1-40, APP669-711</td>
<td>6E10 (BioLegend)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>AnaSpec, AnaSpec PEPTIDE INSTITUTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MagQu Taiwan</td>
<td>IMR</td>
<td>Aβ42, Aβ40</td>
<td>Abcam (ab34376), BAM-10</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>rPeptide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roche Diagnostics</td>
<td>Elecsys</td>
<td>Aβ1-42, Aβ1-40</td>
<td>21F12 &amp; 23C2</td>
<td>3D6</td>
<td>Synthetic peptide in artificial matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Gothenburg</td>
<td>IP-LC-MS</td>
<td>Aβ1-42, Aβ1-40, APP669-711</td>
<td>Biolegend Aβ, 17-24 (4G8) &amp; 1-16 (6E10)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>rPeptide Uniformly labeled 15N, recombinant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington University</td>
<td>IP-LC-MS</td>
<td>Aβ42, Aβ40</td>
<td>HJ5.1</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>rPeptide Uniformly labeled 15N, recombinant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli Lilly</td>
<td>Simoa (in-house)</td>
<td>Aβ1-42, Aβ1-40</td>
<td>3D6</td>
<td>2G3–Aβ1-40, 21F12–Aβ1-42</td>
<td>Eli Lilly reference standard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations: Aβ, amyloid β; ADNI, Alzheimer’s Disease Neuroimaging Initiative; ELISA, enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay; IMR, ImmunoMagnetic Reduction; IP-LC-MS, immunoprecipitation (IP) coupled to liquid chromatography mass spectrometry (LC-MS); MALDI-TOF-MS, matrix-assisted laser desorption–ionization-time of flight mass spectrometry; Simoa, single molecule array.
FIGURE 1  Amyloid beta (Aβ1-40) (top), Aβ1-42 (middle), and Aβ1-42/Aβ1-40 (bottom) correlations (Spearman) between the different centers and methods

FIGURE 2  Examples of amyloid beta (Aβ)1-42/Aβ1-40 correlation plots between different centers. The solid line represents the Passing-Bablok regression line and the dashed line denotes the unity line (y = x). See supporting information for complete set of plots for all centers
RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

1. Systematic review: The authors reviewed the literature using PubMed and conference presentations. While blood-based assays until recently have shown conflicting results in the ability to distinguish Alzheimer’s disease from controls compared to cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) biomarker profiles (amyloid beta [Aβ] and tau) and amyloid positron emission tomography (PET), newly developed methods to measure Aβ in plasma have shown results with improved diagnostic performance for specific applications. Citations directly relevant to the included assays and their contexts are cited.

2. Interpretation: The findings in this study show correlations among 11 methods that measured ethylene-diaminetetraacetic acid–plasma Aβ42 and Aβ40. Further standardization, qualification, and validation work is needed to obtain a more harmonized outcome among detection methods.

3. Future directions: Since completion of this study, many of the methods have undergone additional refinement by the vendors. Future method comparison studies will show if this will result in higher correlations between the methods or improved clinical performance; if not, an in-depth analysis of method differences needs to be undertaken.

Aβ, which might explain the increased (not decreased) levels of Aβ42 and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio in plasma of AD patients compared to controls. Based on previous studies, this method may require special sample preparation procedures to obtain consistent results.

There might be several potential explanations for the discrepancies between the measurements obtained by the different methods used in this study. First, plasma is a much more complex matrix compared to CSF, with very high levels of albumin, immunoglobulin G, and other plasma proteins (approximately 200 times higher in plasma than in CSF), and also lipoprotein particles containing apolipoprotein E (apoE) and other apolipoproteins that may form complexes with Aβ. This makes plasma a difficult matrix for Aβ measurements. These proteins may block the binding of antibodies to their respective analytes in the assays. In contrast, CSF has a less complicated matrix, and round robin studies on CSF Aβ42 and Aβ40 show very tight correlations across different assays, with a median correlation coefficient of 0.98. It is also possible that different methods measure different pools of plasma Aβ42 but these may still show diagnostic utility as reported by different groups and, as exemplified also by the inverse correlations for the MagQu assay. Different methods might also be differentially sensitive to method-specific pre-analytical sample handling in the local analysis laboratories, which might have been different in the originating cohorts, but aliquots distributed to the different centers were identical in the present study. Specificity of the used antibodies, cross-reactivity with other Aβ isoforms, sample dilution before analysis, additives, and pre-incubation procedures are other factors that might influence the sensitivities. In addition, Aβ42 concentrations are still at or close to the lower limit of quantification of most methods in plasma samples, which also may explain the higher correlations between assays for the more abundant Aβ40 compared to Aβ42. Furthermore, several studies reported similar findings comparing enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays and Simoa platforms for plasma Aβ40 and Aβ42, Spearman coefficients were 0.68 and 0.71 for, respectively, Aβ40 and Aβ42, which corroborates the findings in this article for the same assays. Since completion of this study, many of the methods have undergone additional refinement and new method comparison studies are underway. We hypothesize that greater correlations will now be seen; if not, an in-depth analysis of method differences will need to be undertaken.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST
OH has acquired research support (for the institution) from Avid Radiopharmaceuticals, Biogen, Eli Lilly, Eisai, GE Healthcare, Pfizer, and Roche. In the past 2 years, he has received consultancy/speaker fees from AC Immune, Alzpath, Biogen, Cerveau, and Roche. SP is a full-time employee of Roche Diagnostics GmbH and holds shares in Roche. TB is a full-time employee of and owns stock in F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd. KB has served as a consultant, on advisory boards, or on data monitoring committees for Abcam, Axon, Biogen, JOMDD/Shimadzu, Julius Clinical, Lilly, MagQu, Novartis, Prothena, Roche Diagnostics, and Siemens Healthineers, and is a co-founder of Brain Biomarker Solutions in Gothenburg AB (BBS), which is a part of the GU Ventures Incubator Program. HZ has served on scientific advisory boards for Alector, Eisai, Denali, Roche Diagnostics, Wave, Samumed, Siemens Healthineers, Pinteer Therapeutics, Nervgen, AZTHERAPIES and CogRx. JLD is an employee and stockholder of Eli Lilly and Company. ELECSYS is a trademark of Roche. E Stoops and KM are full-time paid employees of ADx NeuroSciences. JMS has received research funding from Avid Radiopharmaceuticals (a wholly owned subsidiary of Eli Lilly and Company); has consulted for Roche Pharmaceuticals, Biogen, Merck, and Eli Lilly; given educational lectures sponsored by GE Healthcare, Eli Lilly, and Biogen; and serves on a Data Safety Monitoring Committee for Axon Neurosciences SE. RJB cofounded C2N Diagnostics. Washington University and Dr. Bateman have equity ownership interest in C2N Diagnostics and receive royalty income based on technology (stable isotope labeling kinetics and blood plasma assay) licensed by Washington University to C2N Diagnostics. He receives income from C2N Diagnostics for serving on the scientific advisory board. Washington University, with RJB as co-inventor, has submitted the US provisional patent application “Plasma Based Methods for Detecting CNS Amyloid Deposition.” He has received consultant fees from Roche, C2N Diagnostics, Genentech, AbbVie, Pfizer, Boehringer-Ingelheim, Eisai, AC Immune, Janssen, and Merck. He serves as principal investigator of the DIAN-TU, which is supported by the Alzheimer’s Association, GHR Foundation, Eisai, an anonymous organization, and the DIAN-TU.
Pharma Consortium. HV is a founder of Biomarkable and a co-founder of ADx NeuroSciences. RY and NK are full-time employees of Shimadzu Corporation. NK holds stock in Shimadzu Corporation and has received payment for manuscript writing from Rinsho houshasen. CET has a collaboration contract with ADx Neurosciences and Quarterix; performed contract research or received grants from AC-Immune, Axon Neurosciences, Biogen, Brainstorm Therapeutics, Celgene, EIP Pharma, Eisai, PeopleBio, Roche, Toyama, Vivoryon; received honoraria from Medidact Neurologie. LMS has received honorarium from Biogen for teaching. LS and JA have submitted patents for “Methods for quantification of amyloid beta peptides in plasma by mass spectrometry.” AN received honoraria from The Educational Program for Dementia Experts in Hokuriku (NINPRO), The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), Translational Research Center for Medical Innovation (TRI), Eisai Co. Ltd. SY is an employee and shareholder of MagQu Co., Ltd. KGM, VO, and JB have submitted patent application “Plasma Based Methods for Detecting CNS Amyloid Deposition” and may receive royalties based on blood plasma assay technology licensed to C2N Diagnostics. ES has received payment (to institution) from Roche Diagnostics for medical writing.

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REFERENCES


**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of the article at the publisher’s website.

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