A Crystal Clear View On Insulin

The Effects of Microgravity on Humalog Insulin Crystallization

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Teacher Facilitator: Laura Smith

Proposal Summary

Our experiment is about diabetes and Humalog synthetic insulin crystallization in a microgravity environment. We feel like this is a good experiment to design because we could find out if there is a way to prevent crystallization of insulin, especially if we understand how it happens in microgravity. When insulin crystallizes, the bacteria that usually makes it viable stops working. This would cause it to be ineffective for patients in dire need of this medication. To complete this experiment we are going to keep the insulin in a type 1 Fluid Mixture Inclosure (FME) at the International space station (ISS) at above 65℉ to see if it crystallizes within a certain amount time.

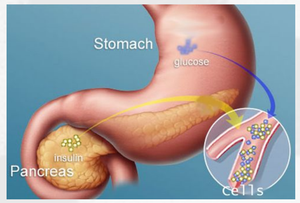
We will keep the experiment refrigerated at or below 40℉ during transportation to the ISS and again on arrival back to Earth's gravity. Refrigeration slows the crystallization growth and this is how it is stored on Earth. Keeping our experiment refrigerated during transportation is an important step because the insulin crystallization growth should only be measured while in microgravity. We will be conducting the same experiment, using the same time frame and refrigeration needs before and after, for our earth bound experiment.

Experiment Importance

Why is this experiment/ investigation important for humankind?

This experiment can help people with type 1 diabetes get insulin that doesn't crystallize. It could also possibly help develop a stronger insulin for type 2 diabetes. We are researching the rate at which Humalog Insulin crystals.

The reason synthetic insulin crystallizes is that when the insulin reaches a certain temperature the bacteria cells die and it makes crystals.

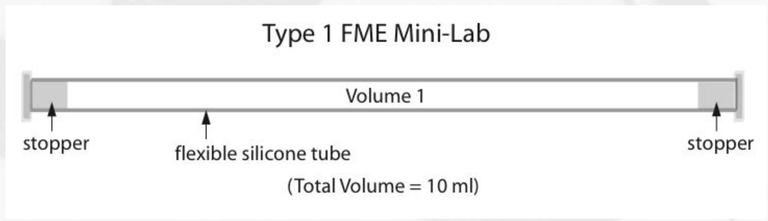


The Reason

Alex Ferguson, one of the investigators' dad, is a Type 1 diabetic and takes humalog insulin. When coming up with an idea of what to do for our SSEP project, Alex remembered that one day his dad mentioned that "if insulin stays out of refrigeration it will crystallize." We decided to go with that idea and worked really hard on it. We ended up being in the top three finalists out of 240 teams. We are so excited to have been invited to the TCU Student Research Symposium this year.

Our research team being recognized for being in the top three finalists along with our science teacher/facilitator, Laura Smith and BISD Superintendent, Dr. Bret Jimerson

Student designed Mission 12 patch that will fly with our experiment this June

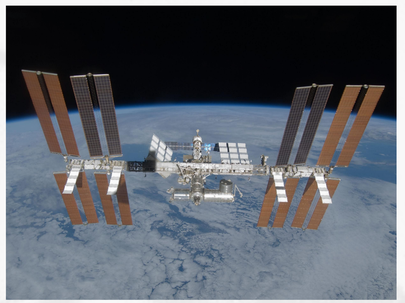


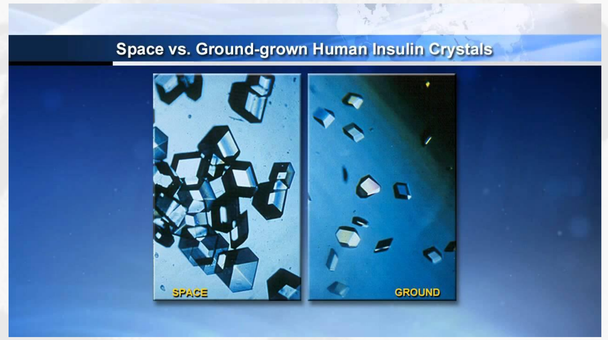
What is the FME tube? An FME tube is a experiment housing that is airtight and can have three variations. It can have no clips, one clip, or two clips. Our experiment requires a Type 1, which has zero clips.

Special Handling Requirements During Transportation

FME will need to be refrigerated from Burleson TX. to NASA with a temperature of at least 40℉ or below in order for the experiment to work. It will also need to be refrigerated on its return to Burleson TX from NASA to stop the experiment crystallization.

Travel	Location and destination	Refrigeration	Ambient Condition
PRE-FLIGHT	Shipping from your Community to NanoRacks in Houston	X	
	At NanoRacks until Handover to NASA	X	
FLIGHT	Handover to NASA Until Arrival at ISS	**X (required)**	
	Onboard ISS		**X (required)**
POST-FLIGHT	From ISS until Arrival at NanoRacks		**X (required)**
	At NanoRacks through Return Shipping to Community	X	





Proposed Results

In our earthbound test of unrefrigerated insulin, we noticed that the crystals have formed in a lattice structure moving up. We hypothesize the the same will happen in a microgravity environment. We feel that the crystals will grow surrounding the tube instead of in the liquid itself as well.

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We think that this test will change our understanding of insulin crystallization because it will show us how it will act in microgravity. By completing this experiment, the results will help us understand how insulin crystallizes in space and by using this information we can learn about other ways insulin can crystallize. The results could help type I diabetics by developing an insulin that does not crystallize at all. It may also help type II diabetics by possibly creating an alternative Insulin that lowers type II diabetics blood sugar. We may ultimately be able to help find a way for astronauts who have diabetes get to do the job they love without as many health concerns.

References

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