

## Review article

# Classification of orally administered drugs on the World Health Organization Model list of Essential Medicines according to the biopharmaceutics classification system

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## Abstract

Since its inception in 1995, the biopharmaceutical classification system (BCS) has become an increasingly important tool for regulation of drug products world-wide. Until now, application of the BCS has been partially hindered by the lack of a freely available and accurate database summarising solubility and permeability characteristics of drug substances. In this report, orally administered drugs on the Model list of Essential Medicines of the World Health Organization (WHO) are assigned BCS classifications on the basis of data available in the public domain. Of the 130 orally administered drugs on the WHO list, 61 could be classified with certainty. Twenty-one (84%) of these belong to class I (highly soluble, highly permeable), 10 (17%) to class II (poorly soluble, highly permeable), 24 (39%) to class III (highly soluble, poorly permeable) and 6 (10%) to class IV (poorly soluble, poorly permeable). A further 28 drugs could be provisionally assigned, while for 41 drugs insufficient or conflicting data precluded assignment to a specific BCS class. A total of 32 class I drugs (either certain or provisional classification) were identified. These drugs can be further considered for biowaiver status (drug product approval based on dissolution tests rather than bioequivalence studies in humans).

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## 1. Introduction

Since the biopharmaceutics classification system (BCS) was introduced in 1995, it has had an increasing impact on regulatory practice. The BCS presented a new paradigm in bioequivalence, based on scientific principles. According to the tenets of the BCS, certain drug products can be considered for biowaivers, i.e. approving the product based on in vitro dissolution tests rather than requiring bioequivalence studies in human subjects. At first, biowaivers were only applied to Scale-Up and Postapproval Changes (SUPAC), but later the biowaiver principle was extended to the approval of new generic drug products. As a result, unnecessary human experiments can be avoided and the costs of developing generic products can be significantly lowered.

To classify a drug according to the BCS, the solubility, dose and permeability of the drug must be known. According to the FDA guidance for the industry ‘Waiver of in vivo bioavailability and bioequivalence studies for immediate-release solid oral dosage forms based on a biopharmaceutics classification system’ (August 2000), a biowaiver can currently be requested only for solid, orally administered immediate-release products (>85% release in 30 min), containing drugs with a high solubility over the pH range from 1 to 7.5 (dose/solubility ( $D : S$ ) ratio <250 ml) and a high permeability (fraction absorbed >90%). In addition, only excipients which do not affect the rate or extent of absorption may be used. Further restrictions are that drugs with a narrow therapeutic range and drug products designed to be absorbed in the oral cavity may not be considered for biowaivers.

The possibility of considering biowaivers for drugs assigned to BCS classes other than class I (high solubility/high permeability) is currently being discussed.

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Thus, the effect of the BCS on regulatory practices is likely to increase even more in the future.

The aim of this work was to search the public domain for all solubility and permeability data relevant to orally administered drugs belonging to the WHO model list of Essential Medicines. According to the quality and consistency of the data, drugs were then assigned to a BCS class (as defined by the FDA), given a provisional assignment or it was determined that data were too inconclusive to assign the drug to a specific BCS class.

## 2. Materials and methods

The basis for this study was the Essential Medicines WHO Model List, Core List, 12th edition (revised April 2002). The newest edition of the WHO list can be downloaded from the following website: <http://www.who.int/medicines/organization/par/edl/eml.shtml>. Research on the solubility and permeability of the drugs on the list that are orally administered was carried out using PubMed Central, the general pharmaceutical literature and information obtained from pharmaceutical firms and authorities. All of this information was freely available on the Internet or from other sources. The search in the PubMed Central was conducted using the following keywords in different combinations: absolute, absorption, aqueous, bioavailability, permeability, pharmacokinetics, solubility and the name of the drug.

Whenever possible, original literature was consulted in order to evaluate the quality of the data and to make the classification as transparent as possible. Data from secondary sources were included for completeness or when original literature could not be located.

All guidelines of the FDA, including the one for classification of drugs in the BCS, can be found at the following website: <http://www.fda.gov/cder/guidance/>. The three parameters needed for classification of drugs according to BCS are the dose, the solubility and the permeability.

According to the biowaiver guidance (August 2000), high solubility drugs are those with a ( $D : S$ ) ratio of  $< 250$  ml over the range of pH 1.0–7.5 at 37 °C. The FDA biowaiver guidance states further, that in the absence of evidence suggesting instability in the GI-tract, a drug substance is considered highly permeable when the extent of absorption (as measured by fraction of dose absorbed, rather than systemic bioavailability) in humans is determined to be 90% or more of an administered dose.

The three individual parameters were evaluated as follows.

### 2.1. Dose

The dose used for calculation of  $D : S$  ratio was the highest recommended dose (in mg) stated in the WHO list for that drug. This dose may differ from specifications given

in prescribing information, resulting in a different ( $D : S$ ) ratio for some drugs in some countries.

### 2.2. Solubility

Data for the solubility (in mg/ml) over the entire range pH value 1–7.5 at 37 °C were located whenever possible. In some cases, where only limited solubility data were available (e.g. solubility at just one pH value in this range), it was nonetheless clear that the solubility was too low at at least one relevant pH condition for the drug to fall into the ‘highly soluble’ category. In some cases, the pH-dependency of the solubility was determined by Prof. Dressman’s group at the University of Frankfurt and collaborators at Hoffmann-La Roche and Merck KGaA. The solubility experiments at the University of Frankfurt were carried out for aciclovir, allopurinol, aspirin, carbamazepine, chloroquine phosphate, doxycycline, diazepam, erythromycin, ibuprofen, mebendazole, metronidazole, potassium phenoxymethylpenicillin and rifampicin using the saturation shake-flask method. The solubility of saquinavir was determined with a similar method at Hoffmann-La Roche. The values for albendazole, glibenclamide, griseofulvin, levothyroxine T4, niclosamide and phenytoin were determined at Merck KGaA. These solubility experiments were typically conducted over 24 h at 37 °C in buffers at pH values of 1.2, 4.5 and 6.8 and in deionised water. In all cases, the samples were analysed by UV-spectroscopy or HPLC and values were determined in triplicate.

Dividing the dose (mg) by the solubility (mg/ml) yields a ratio with volumetric units (ml). This  $D : S$  ratio is then compared with the FDA criterion of 250 ml to establish whether the drug is highly soluble or not.

### 2.3. Permeability

For permeability determinations the FDA prefers pharmacokinetic data in humans, human perfusion data, data from in vivo or in situ animal models or results in validated cell-culture monolayers [1]. To date, computational methods (e.g. based on polar surface area or log  $P$  of the molecule) have not been accepted by the FDA as sufficiently reliable for this purpose.

In this work, fraction absorbed data in human studies was the primary source for permeability data. In some cases where data from Caco-2 cells experiments as well as in humans were available (cimetidine, ciprofloxacin, furosemide, phenoxymethylpenicillin, phenytoin and propranolol), these were also taken into consideration as additional evidence. In a few exceptional cases, animal data was also utilised (acetazolamide, benznidazole, furosemide, sulfadiazine).

Data in humans was taken from papers using the following experimental designs:

- Oral vs. i.v. application,
- urinary recovery,
- radioactive-labelled drugs, or
- human perfusion studies.

The fraction absorbed was located if possible, otherwise the absolute bioavailability was recorded. In some cases, it was apparent that the bioavailability of the drug was compromised by degradation in the GI-tract or due to a first-pass effect. These drugs are marked with an asterisk in the tables.

For poorly soluble drugs, it was not always possible to determine whether bioavailabilities of <90% were due exclusively to solubility problems or whether poor permeability characteristics also played a role. In some cases, the higher bioavailability of the drug when administered with food was taken as an indication that the reason for <90% absorption in the fasted state was primarily a solubility problem rather than a permeability problem [2].

On the basis of these data, the drugs were then classified according to the guidelines given in the FDA biowaiver guidance [1].

### 3. Results

For better comprehension, the list has been divided in three parts.

#### 3.1. Drugs with reliable solubility and permeability data

Table 1 includes all drugs with sufficient data for both solubility and permeability to predict the BCS classification with certainty. Sixty-four of the 130 drugs (49%) of the WHO 'Essential drug list' could be assigned to a specific BCS class with certainty.

#### 3.2. Drugs for which complete solubility and/or permeability data are lacking

Table 2 contains drugs for which either the solubility or permeability data (or both) were not completely satisfactory. For example, if specific solubility data in the required pH range could not be found or if bioavailability data were only available from a secondary source. Also, in some cases, the type of data generated was not appropriate for a definitive classification (e.g. urinary excretion data from oral administration without i.v. comparison). In all cases, however, it was possible to provisionally assign the drug to a specific BCS class. Twenty-five of the drugs (20%) could be provisionally assigned to one of the BCS classes.

#### 3.3. Drugs with inconclusive data

Table 3 includes drugs which could not be assigned to a specific BCS class based on the data available, e.g. class II/

IV drugs where bioavailability was <90%, but the low bioavailability could be the result of either low solubility or poor permeability or both. Another case would be contradictory data from different sources (e.g. for the solubility of verapamil).

For drugs shown in Table 3, we found conflicting or insufficient data for either solubility or permeability or both. Assignment to a specific BCS class was not possible, but the decision could be narrowed to one of two classes. This was the case for 41 (32%) of the orally administered drugs on the WHO list.

### 4. Discussion

As stated in Section 1, assignment of a drug to a particular BCS class is an important parameter for biopharmaceutical questions. The availability of high quality data for solubility and permeability is very important to avoid wrong classifications and wasting resources on performing unnecessary human studies to establish bioequivalence. Finding suitable information about solubility and permeability data proved to be a lot more cumbersome than expected. The authors of most articles reviewed here did not, of course, have the suitability of their articles for BCS classification in mind at the time of writing, so a good deal of the data is only partially helpful.

#### 4.1. Dose

According to the FDA biowaiver guidance, the highest dose administered must be used to determine the ( $D:S$ ) ratio in the BCS. For the classifications in our tables, we used the highest doses recommended in the WHO list. This recommendation may differ from the one given by the manufacturers. For example, in the case of aspirin, the WHO list indicates a range of 100–500 mg as a single dose, but in German prescribing information values of up to 1000 mg are found. Obviously, the choice of the maximum recommended dose has an impact on the calculation of the  $D:S$  ratio and, for some drugs, may shift the classification from 'highly' soluble to 'not highly' soluble.

#### 4.2. Solubility

To our knowledge no database available in the public domain with solubility data suitably reported for BCS purposes exist. The data found in articles usually consists of data measured at 25 °C and often at only one pH-value. As the FDA guidance demands that the solubility of a drug has to be determined at 37 °C over the pH range 1–7.5, the information found is therefore often not sufficient for a conclusive classification. This applies particularly to ionisable drugs whose solubility can change dramatically depending on pH. Further, it was not always clear whether

Table 1

Classification of orally administered drugs on the WHO model list of Essential Medicines according to the BCS: *Drugs with reliable solubility and permeability data*

Drug	Solubility	Permeability	Dose (mg)	BCS class <sup>a</sup>	References
<b>Abacavir antiretroviral</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>300 (sulfate)</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>[4–7]</b>
<b>Acetylsalicylic acid pain relief</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>100–500</b>	<b>III*/**</b>	<b>[8–18]</b>
<b>Aciclovir antiviral</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>[12,19–25]</b>
<b>Allopurinol gout</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>[12,16,25–31]</b>
Aluminium hydroxide gastro-intestinal agent	Low	Low	500	IV	[30,32–34]
<i>Amiloride diuretic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>5 (hydrochloride)</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,16,30,35,36]
<b>Ascorbic acid vitamin</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>50 (– 1000)</b>	<b>III<sup>#</sup></b>	<b>[12,16,37]</b>
Atenolol $\beta$ -blocker	High	Low	50; 100	III	[1,12,16,38–42]
Captopril antihypertensive	High	Low	25	III	[12,16,43,44]
Carbamazepin antiepileptic	Low	High	100; 200	II	[1,25,45,46]
<b>Chloramphenicol antibiotic</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>[12,16,47,48]</b>
<i>Chloroquine antimalarial agent</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>100 (Phosphate) 150 (Sulfate)</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,23,25,49]
Cimetidine H <sub>2</sub> -receptor antagonist	High	Low	200	III	[12,16,38,50–56]
Sodium Cloxacillin antibiotic	High	Low	500; 1000 (Na-salz)	III	[12,16,57,58]
<b>Codeine phosphate antitussive/analgetic</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>[12,16,59,60]</b>
Colchicine antigout agent	High	Low	0.5	III	[12,61–63]
<i>Cyclophosphamide antineoplastic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,64–66]
Dapsone antirheumatic/leprosy	Low	High	25; 50; 100	II	[12,16,23,30,67,68]
<i>Diazepam Benzodiazepine</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>2; 5</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,16,25,69–72]
<i>Digoxine cardiac glycoside</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>0.625; 0.25</i>	<i>I<sup>#</sup></i>	[69,73–81]
<i>Doxycycline antibiotic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>100 (Hydrochlorid)</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,23,25,82]
Ergotamine Tartrate migraine	High	Low	1 (tartrate)	III*	[12,16,83–86]
<i>Fluconazole antifungal</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>I</i>	[16,91–95]
Furosemide diuretic	Low	Low	40	IV*	[12,38,42,56,70,96–102]
Griseofulvin antifungal	Low	High	125; 250	II	[25,79,103–105]
Hydralazine antihypertensive	High	Low	25; 50 (hydrochloride)	III*	[4,12,16,106,107]
Hydrochlorothiazide diuretic	High	Low	25	III	[1,12,16,23,30,102]
Ibuprofen pain relief	Low	High	200; 400	II	[12,25,108–110]
Indinavir antiviral	Low	Low	200; 300; 400 (Sulfat)	IV*	[4,16,30,111–113,284]
<i>Levodopa + (Carbidopa) Parkinson's disease</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>100 + 10; 250 + 25</i>	<i>I*</i>	[12,16,30,42,114,115]
<i>Levonorgestrel hormone</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>0.15 (+ 0.03 Ethinylestradiol)</i> <i>0.25 (+ 0.05 Ethinylestradiol)</i> <i>0.75 (pack of two) + D43</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,16,116,117]
Levothyroxine thyroid	High	Low	0.05; 0.1 (Sodium salt)	III	[12,25,118–120]
Metformine antidiabetic	High	Low	500 (hydrochloride)	III <sup>#</sup>	[12,16,38,121–123]
Methyldopa antihypertensive	High	Low	250	III*/ <sup>#</sup>	[1,12,30,124,125]
<i>Metronidazole antibiotic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>200–500</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,25,126–128]
Nelfinavir antiviral	Low	Low	250 (mesilate)	IV*	[30,33,112,129,284]
Nifedipine Ca-channel blocker	Low	High	10	II*	[12,16,38,130–132]
Nitrofurantoin antibacterial	Low	High	100	II	[12,16,30,133]
<b>Paracetamol (Acetaminophen) pain relief</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>100–500</b>	<b>III*</b>	<b>[12,16,38,69,134–137]</b>
Penicillamine Chron. Polyarthritits	High	Low	250	III	[12,16,138–140]
<i>Phenobarbital barbiturate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>15–100</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,16,23,30,141]
<i>Phenoxy-methylpenicillin antibiotic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>250 (Potassium salt)</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,25,142,143]
Phenytoin antiepileptic	Low	High	25; 50; 100	II	[12,23,25,56,144–146]
<i>Prednisolone glucocorticoid</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>I</i>	[16,69,147–149]
<i>Primaquine antimalarial</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>7.5; 15 (diphosphate)</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,150]
<b>Promethazine antihistamine</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>10; 25 (hydrochloride)</b>	<b>III*</b>	<b>[12,16,151,152]</b>
<i>Propranolol <math>\beta</math>-blocker</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>20; 40 (hydrochloride)</i>	<i>I*</i>	[1,12,38,153–155]
<b>Propylthiouracil cystostatic</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>[12,16,30,156,157]</b>
<i>Pyrazinamide tuberculotisis</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>I</i>	[12,16,158]
Pyridostigmine Myasthenia gravis	High	Low	60 (bromide)	III	[12,159–161]
<i>Riboflavin vitamin</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>I<sup>#</sup></i>	[12,16,162]
Ritonavir antiviral	Low	Low	100	IV*	[4,165,284]
<i>Salbutamol <math>\beta</math>-sympathomimetic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>4 (sulfate)</i>	<i>I*</i>	[12,166–168]
Saquinavir antiviral	Low	Low	200, available as mesylate (hard gelatine capsule) or as free base (soft gelatine capsule)	IV (mesylate)/IV (free base)*	[25,30,33,112,169,284]
<i>Stavudine antiviral</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>15; 20; 30; 40</i>	<i>I</i>	[170–172]
Sulfamethoxazole antibiotic	Low	High	100; 400	II	[12,16,173–175]

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Drug	Solubility	Permeability	Dose (mg)	BCS class <sup>a</sup>	References
<i>Theophylline antiasthmatic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	100; 200; 300	<i>I</i>	[1,12,16,176–178]
Thiamine vitamin	High	Low	50 (hydrochloride)	III <sup>#</sup>	[12,16,33,179]
Trimethoprim antibiotic	Low	High	100; 200	II	[12,16,173–175]
Valproic acid antiepileptic	Low	High	200; 500 (sodium salt)	II	[12,16,23,180]
<i>Zidovudine antiviral</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	300 (tablet); 100; 250 (capsule)	<i>I*</i>	[7,12,16,21,181,182]

<sup>a</sup> Italics denotes class I drugs according to the FDA criteria; bold text denotes class III drugs with permeabilities corresponding to at least 80% absorption.

\* First pass effect; \*\* Degradation in the GI-Tract; # active transport.

the experiment was done in a buffer solution or if the pH was only adjusted with acid or base, and if the pH was checked before and after the experiment was conducted. Moreover, the comparison of different experiments is often difficult because of a lack of standard deviation values and statistical calculations. Some articles, however, did provide appropriate data for the BCS classification, e.g. where the intrinsic solubility of drugs (where the solubility is the lowest) was provided. If this intrinsic solubility lies between pH 1 and 7.5, the classification of the solubility of the drug can be made with the help of its  $pK_a$  and the Hendersson–Hasselbalch equation.

#### 4.3. Permeability

Permeability data from humans is also not easy to find. As with solubility data, a database with freely available, reliable permeability data useful for BCS purposes was not found. The most common type of studies found were bioavailability studies. Since first-pass effects, degradation in the intestine and solubility-limited absorption can all influence the bioavailability, these studies can usually give at most a general indication of the permeability of the drug. The best and safest way to classify a drug as highly permeable is an absolute bioavailability study with a

Table 2

Classification of orally administered drugs on the WHO model list of Essential Medicines according to the BCS: *Drugs for which complete solubility and/or permeability data are lacking*

Drug	Solubility	Permeability	Dose (mg)	BCS class <sup>a</sup>	References
Acetazolamide diuretic	Low	Low	250	IV	[16,183]
<i>Amoxicillin antibiotic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	250; 500 (anhydrous)	<i>I</i> <sup>#</sup>	[1,12,16,23,30,36]
Azathioprine immunosuppressive	Low	Low	50	IV	[12,16,23,184]
<i>Benznidazole antiprotozoal agent</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	100	<i>I</i>	[30,185]
Biperiden antimuscarinic agent	High	Low	2 (hydrochloride)	III*	[12,186]
Didanosine antiviral	High	Low	25; 50; 100; 150; 200 (buff. chew., disp tablet)	III**	[16,21,187–189]
<i>Diethylcarbamazine anthelmintic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	50; 100 (Citrat)	<i>I</i>	[12,165]
<i>DL-Methionine chelating agent antidote</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	250	<i>I</i> <sup>#</sup>	[12,30,33]
<b>Ergocalciferol vitamin</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>[12,33]</b>
Ergometrine postpartum haemorrhage	High	Low	0.2 (hydrogen maleate)	III	[12,190,191]
Erythromycin antibiotic	High	Low	250 (Stearat od. Ethylsuccinat)	III*/**	[12,25,33,87–90]
<b>Ethambutol hydrochloride tuberculosis</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>100–400 (Hydrochlorid)</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>[12,16,23,33]</b>
<i>Ethosuximide antiepileptic</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	250	<i>I</i>	[12,23,192,193]
Iopanoic acid contrast medium	Low	High	500	II	[12,16,30]
<i>Isoniazid tuberculosis</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	100–300	<i>I*</i>	[12,16,23,194]
<i>Lithium carbonate antidepressant</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	300	<i>I</i>	[12,16,23,30]
Methotrexate antirheumatic/antineoplastic	High	Low	2.5 (sodium salt)	III <sup>#</sup>	[12,195–198]
Nalidixic acid antibacterial agent	Low	High	250; 500	II	[12,30]
Neostigmine Myasthenia gravis	High	Low	15 (bromide)	III	[12,23,160]
Nevirapine antiviral	Low	High	200	II	[30,199]
<i>Nicotinamide vitamin</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	50	<i>I</i>	[12,16,33]
<b>Nifurtimox antiprotozoal agent</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>30; 120; 250</b>	<b>III*</b>	<b>[12,200]</b>
<i>Norethisterone hormone</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	1 (+0.035 Ethinylestradiol)	<i>I*</i>	[12,165]
	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	5	<i>I*</i>	
Praziquantel antihelminthic	Low	High	150; 600	II*	[12,16,30]
<i>Proguanil antimalarial</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	100 (hydrochloride)	<i>I*</i>	[12,165]
<i>Pyridoxine vitamin</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	25 (hydrochloride)	<i>I</i>	[12,16,201]
Reserpine antihypertensive	High	Low	0.1; 0.25	III	[12,16]
Rifampicin antituberculous	Low	High	150; 300	II*	[12,25,68,163,164]

<sup>a</sup> Italics denotes class I drugs according to the FDA criteria; bold text denotes class III drugs with permeabilities corresponding to at least 80% absorption.

\* First pass effect; \*\* Degradation in the GI-Tract; # active transport.



Table 3

Classification of orally administered drugs on the WHO model list of Essential Medicines according to the BCS: drugs with inconclusive data

Drug	Solubility	Permeability	Dose (mg)	BCS class <sup>a</sup>	References
Albendazole antiparasitic	Low	Low/High	400	II/IV*	[25,202–206]
Amitriptyline antidepressive	Low/High	High	25 (hydrochloride)	I/II*	[12,16,24,207–209]
Artemether + Lumefantrine antimalarial agents	Low	Low/High	20 + 120	II/IV*	[12,30,33,210–213]
Atropine Sulphate parasympatholytic	High	Low/High	1	I/III*	[12,16,23,32,70,214]
Chlorpheniramine antihistamine	High	Low/High	4 (Hydrogenmaleat)	I/III*	[12,16,41,151,215]
Chlorpromazine antidepressive	Low	Low/High	100 (hydrochloride)	II/IV*	[12,16,24,216,217]
Ciprofloxacin antibiotic	Low	Low/High	250 (Hydrochlorid)	II/IV*	[12,17,24,218–222]
Clofazimine antibacterial agent	Low	Low/High	50; 100	II/IV	[69,223,224]
Clomiphene hormone	High	?	50 (citrate)	I/III	[12,16]
Clomipramine antidepressive	High	Low/High	10; 25 (hydrochloride)	I/III*	[12,225,226]
Dexamethasone glucocorticoide	High	Low/High	0.5; 4	I/III*	[12,16,69,227–230]
Diloxanide antiprotozoal agent	Low	Low/High	500 (furoate)	II/IV**	[12,16,231]
Efavirenz antiviral	Low	Low/High	50; 100; 200	II/IV	[31,33,232]
Ethinylestradiol hormone	High	Low/High	0.03 (+0.15 Levonorgestrel) 0.05 (+0.25 Levonorgestrel) 0.01; 0.05;	I/III*	[12,116,233]
Folic acid	Low	Low/High	1; 5	II/IV	[12,30,234,235]
Glibenclamide antidiabetic	Low	Low/High	2.5; 5	II/IV	[12,25,38,236]
Glyceril Trinitrate Angina pectoris	High	Low/High	0.5	I/III*	[12,237,238]
Haloperidol neuroleptic	Low	Low/High	2; 5	II/IV*	[12,16,30,70,239–243]
Isosorbide dinitrate Angina pectoris	High	Low/High	5	I/III	[16,30,244,245]
Ivermectin anthelmintic	Low	Low/High	3; 6	II/IV	[12,16,30]
Lamivudin antiviral	High	Low/High	150	I/III	[7,246–248]
Levamisole anthelmintic	High	Low/High	50; 150 (Hydrochlorid)	I/III	[202,249–251]
Lopinavir antiviral	Low	Low/High	133.3 (+33.3 Ritonavir)	II/IV*	[30,252]
Mebendazole anthelmintic	Low	Low/High	100; 500	II/IV	[25,253,254]
Mefloquine antimalarial	Low	Low/High	250 (hydrochloride)	II/IV	[16,255]
Metoclopramide prokinetic agent	High	Low/High	10 (hydrochloride)	I/III*	[12,256–260]
Morphine sulfate pain relief	High	Low/High	10	I/III*	[12,16,261–264]
Niclosamide anthelmintic	Low	Low/High	500	II/IV	[12,265]
Nystatin antifungal	Low/High	Low	100 000 IU; 500 000 IU (~5000 IU = 1 mg) - > ~20–100 mg	III/IV	[12,30,33]
Pyrantel anthelmintic	Low	Low/High	250 (embonate)	II/V	[12,165]
Pyrimethamine Toxoplasmosis	Low	Low/High	25	II/IV	[12,266,267]
Quinine antimalarial	High	Low/High	300 (bisulfate or sulfate)	I/III	[12,176,268,269]
Retinol vitamin	Low	Low/High	10 000 IU (palmitate) (5.5 mg) 200 000 IU (palmitate) (110 mg)	II/IV <sup>#</sup>	[12,270,271]
Senna laxative	?	?	7.5 (sennosides)		[12]
Sodium iodide iodine deficiency	High	???	60	I/III	[12]
Spirolactone diuretic	Low	Low/High	25	II/IV*	[12,16,35,272,273]
Sulfadiazine antibacterial agent	Low	Low/High	500	II/IV	[12,23,274,275]
Sulfasalazine Colitis Ulcerosa/Morbus Crohn	Low	Low/High	500	II/IV	[12,16,276,277]
Triclabendazole anthelmintic	Low	Low/High	250	II/IV	[32,278]
Verapamil hydrochloride Ca-channel blocker	Low/High	High	40; 80 (hydrochloride)	I/II*	[1,12,16,38,70,131,221,279–282]
Warfarin Sodium anticoagulant	Low/High	High	1; 2; 5 (sodium salt)	I/II	[12,16,41,46,221,283]

<sup>a</sup> First pass effect; \*\* Degradation in the GI-Tract; <sup>#</sup> active transport.

bioavailability greater than 90%. In cases where the bioavailability was lower than 90%, the influence of the above-mentioned factors has to be taken into account. Where low bioavailability (<90%) could be attributed with certainty to degradation in the GI-tract or because of a first-pass effect, these findings have been marked in the tables with asterisks. Data based on experiments where the amount of drug was measured by urinary excretion sometimes lacked i.v. comparison or determination of metabolites, both

of which are necessary for a sure classification of the permeability characteristics.

Good data was found in papers using the intestinal perfusion technique in humans, as these provided direct permeability data. Data from experiments with cell culture monolayers (mostly Caco-2 cells) were often available. However, absolute values reported can vary by orders of magnitude among laboratories [3] and unless the methodology is validated according to the FDA biowaiver

guidance, it is difficult to assign the drug to ‘high’ or ‘low’ permeability with certainty. Therefore, Caco-2 cell data was considered in most cases as supplementary rather than primary information.

Of the 130 orally administered drugs found in the WHO list, 61 could be classified reliably (49%). Twenty-one of these 61 (34%) were classified as class I drugs, 10 as class II drugs (17%), 24 as class III drugs (39%) and 6 as class IV drugs (10%). Taking into account drugs with provisional classification (Table 2) as well as certain (Table 1) classification, a total of 89 drugs could be classified. Thirty-two of these are class I drugs (36%), 15 class II drugs (17%), 34 class III drugs (38%) and 8 are class IV drugs (9%).

A considerable number of the orally administered drugs were classified as class I drugs, namely 32. These are highlighted in italics in the tables. These are potential candidates for consideration of a biowaiver for solid, orally administered dosage forms. Of the 34 drugs assigned to class III in Tables 1 and 2, 13 had a permeability consistent with >80% oral absorption and therefore might be additionally considered as potential candidates for biowaivers. These are highlighted in bold in the tables.

The information provided here should help pharmaceutical manufacturers of generic drug products to lower the cost of bringing a product onto the market. This is of particular interest in countries with highly restricted health care budgets. Of course, to be considered for a biowaiver other drug product characteristics, such as the therapeutic index of the drug and the potential influence of the excipients on the rate or extent of absorption, have to be considered as well.

Further research on the provisionally or indecisively classified drugs should be encouraged to increase the quality and certainty of the data. In fact, an ongoing and thorough analysis of the literature for every drug should be conducted and the findings carefully evaluated by specialists in the pertinent field. This will enable a detailed risk analysis and lead to recommendations as to whether a specific drug/drug product can be considered for a biowaiver or not. Coordination of WHO activities with those of the special interest group ‘Bioavailability/Bioequivalence’ of the International Pharmaceutical Federation on the field application of the BCS, as well as general issues of bioequivalence, has been initiated.

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The opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the decisions or stated policy of the World Health Organization.

## Note added in proof

A review of the data and additional information revealed that, for three compounds, the certainty of the classification did not justify inclusion in Table 1. These compounds have been moved to Table 2. Further, for two additional compounds, the classification of either the permeability or solubility was reevaluated. These changes are reflected in the current tables.

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