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A generic ⁸⁹Zr labeling method to quantify the *in vivo* pharmacokinetics of liposomal nanoparticles and personalize their dose titration with PET

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L iposomal nanoparticles are versatile drug delivery vehicles that show great promise in cancer therapy. In an effort to quantitatively measure their *in vivo* pharmacokinetics and personalize dose titration, we have developed a highly efficient ⁸⁹Zr liposome labeling method based on a rapid ligand exchange reaction between the membrane permeable ⁸⁹Zr(8-hydroxyquinolinate)4 complex and the hydrophilic liposomal cavity encapsulated deferoxamine (DFO). This novel ⁸⁹Zr labeling strategy allowed us to prepare radiolabeled forms of a folic acid (FA) decorated active targeting ⁸⁹Zr-FA-DFO-liposome, a thermosensitive ⁸⁹Zr-DFO-liposome, and a renal avid ⁸⁹Zr-PEG-DFO-liposome at room temperature with near-quantitative isolated radiochemical yields of 98±1% (n=6), 98±2% (n=5), and 97±1% (n=3), respectively. These ⁸⁹Zr labeled liposomal nanoparticles showed remarkable stability in PBS and serum at 37°C without leakage of radioactivity for 48 h. The uptake of ⁸⁹Zr-FA-DFO-liposome by the folate receptor-overexpressing KB cells was almost 15 fold higher than the ⁸⁹Zr-DFO-liposome *in vitro*. Positron Emission Tomography (PET) imaging and ex *vivo* biodistribution studies enabled us to observe the heterogeneous distribution of the ⁸⁹Zr-FA-DFO-liposome and ⁸⁹Zr-DFO-liposome, and the different metabolic fate of the free and liposome-encapsulated ⁸⁹Zr-DFO. Thus, this technically simple ⁸⁹Zr labeling method would find widespread use to guide the development and clinical applications of novel liposomal nanomedicines.

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