

(12) PATENT
(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE

(11) Application No. **AU 200034816 B2**
(10) Patent No. **775904**

(54) Title
Stable non-aqueous single phase viscous vehicles and
formulations utilizing such vehicles

(51)⁶ International Patent Classification(s)
A61K 009/10

(21) Application No: 200034816 (22) Application Date: 2000.02.02

(87) WIPO No: W000/45790

(30) Priority Data

(31) Number	(32) Date	(33) Country
60/119170	1999.02.08	US

(43) Publication Date : 2000.08.25

(43) Publication Journal Date : 2000.10.26

(44) Accepted Journal Date : 2004.08.19

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(56) Related Art
US 5071642
WO 1998/027962
WO 1998/027963

PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

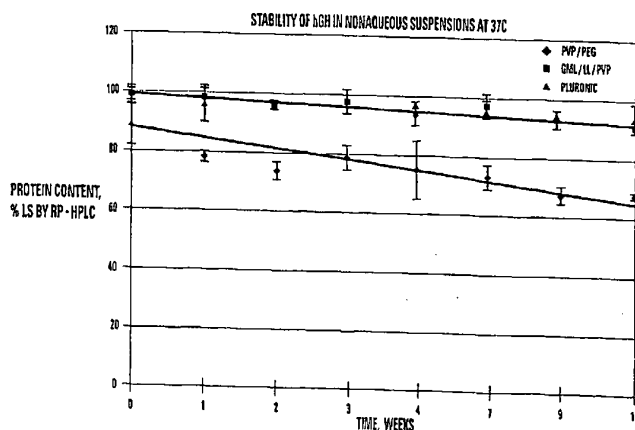


27810/00

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁷ : A61K 9/10		A2	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/45790
		(43) International Publication Date: 10 August 2000 (10.08.00)	
(21) International Application Number: PCT/US00/02772		(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).	
(22) International Filing Date: 2 February 2000 (02.02.00)		<p>Published</p> <p><i>Without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report.</i></p>	
(30) Priority Data: 60/119,170 8 February 1999 (08.02.99) US			
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(54) Title: STABLE NON-AQUEOUS SINGLE PHASE VISCOUS VEHICLES AND FORMULATIONS UTILIZING SUCH VEHICLES



(57) Abstract

This invention relates to stable non-aqueous single phase viscous vehicles and to formulations utilizing such vehicles. The formulations comprise at least one beneficial agent uniformly suspended in the vehicle. The formulation is capable of being stored at temperatures ranging from cold to body temperature for long periods of time. The formulations are capable of being uniformly delivered from drug delivery systems at an exit shear rate of between about 1 to 1×10^7 reciprocal second.

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19. Brooks, et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,352,662 (1994).
20. Geller, L., U.S. Patent No. 3,869,549 (1975).
21. Larsen, et al., PCT Publication No. WO95/34285 (1995).
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23. U.S. Patent 5,614,221
24. U.S. Patent 4,594,108
25. U.S. Patent 5,300,302
26. U.S. Patent 4,588,614
- 10 27. U.S. Patent 4,310,516
28. U.S. Patent 5,635,213
29. EP 379,147

Background of the Invention

Any discussion of the prior art throughout the specification should in no way be
15 considered as an admission that such prior art is widely known or forms part of common
general knowledge in the field.

Peptides, polypeptides, proteins and other proteinaceous substances (e.g., viruses,
antibodies) collectively referred to herein as proteins, have great utility as
pharmaceuticals in the prevention, treatment and diagnosis of disease. Proteins are
20 naturally active in aqueous environments, thus the preferred formulations of proteins
have been in aqueous solutions. However, proteins are only marginally stable in
aqueous solutions. Thus, protein pharmaceuticals often have short shelf-lives under
ambient conditions or require refrigeration. Further, many proteins have only limited
solubility in aqueous solutions. Even when they are soluble at high concentrations, they
25 are prone to aggregation and precipitation.

Because proteins can easily degrade, the standard method for delivering such compounds has been daily injections. Proteins can degrade via a number of mechanisms, including deamidations of asparagine and glutamine; oxidation of methionine and, to a lesser degree, tryptophan, tyrosine and histidine; hydrolysis of peptide bonds; disulfide interchange; and racemization of chiral amino acid residues [1-7]. Water is a reactant in nearly

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all of these degradation pathways. Further, water acts as a plasticizer, which facilitates unfolding and irreversible aggregation of proteins. Since water is a participant in almost all protein degradation pathways, reduction of aqueous protein solution to a dry powder provides an alternative formulation

5 methodology to enhance the stability of protein pharmaceuticals.

One approach to stabilizing proteins is to dry them using various techniques, including freeze-drying, spray-drying, lyophilization, and desiccation. Dried proteins are stored as dry powders until their use is required.

10 A serious drawback to drying of proteins is that often one would like to use proteins in some sort of flowable form. Parenteral injection and the use of drug delivery devices for sustained delivery of drug are two examples of the applications where one would like to use proteins in a flowable form. For injection, dried proteins must be reconstituted, adding additional steps which
15 are time-consuming and where contamination may occur, and exposing the protein to potentially destabilizing conditions [7]. For drug delivery devices the protein formulations must be stable for extended periods of time at body temperature and maintain their flowability for the expected life of the device.

Solution formulations of proteins/peptides in non-aqueous polar aprotic
20 solvents such as DMSO and DMF have been shown to be stable at elevated temperatures for long periods of time [8]. However, such solvent based formulations will not be useable for all proteins since many proteins have low solubility in these solvents. The lower the solubility of the protein in the formulation, the more solvent would have to be used for delivery of a specific
25 amount of protein. Low concentration solutions may be useful for injections, but may not be useful for long term delivery at low flow rates.

Proteins have been formulated for delivery using perfluorodecalin [9, 10], methoxyflurane [9], high concentrations in water [11], polyethylene glycol [12], PLGA [13, 14], ethylenevinylacetate/polyvinylpyrrolidone mixtures [15],
30 PEG400/povidone [16]. However, these formulations were not shown to

retain a uniform suspension of protein in viscous vehicle over long periods of time.

Many biologically active compounds degrade over time in aqueous solution. Carriers in which proteins do not dissolve but rather are suspended, can often offer improved chemical stability. Furthermore, it can be beneficial to suspend the beneficial agent in a carrier when the agent exhibits low solubility in the desired vehicle. However, suspensions can have poor physical stability due to settling and agglomeration of the suspended beneficial agent. The problems with non-aqueous carriers tend to be exacerbated as the concentration of the active compound is increased.

Dispersing powdered proteins or peptides in lipid vehicles to yield parenteral sustained release formulations has been investigated [17-21]. The vehicles used were either various vegetable (sesame, soy, peanut, etc.) or synthetic oils (e.g., Miglyol) gelled with aluminum fatty acid esters such as aluminum stearates (mono-, di- or tri-), or with a polyglycerol ester. Although theoretically these vehicles might preclude solution denaturation and protect the drug from aqueous chemical degradation, the vehicles themselves are unstable at higher temperatures. The storage of liquid vegetable oils at body temperatures results in the formation of reactive species such as free fatty acids and peroxides (a process which is accelerated by the presence of traces of various metal ions such as copper or iron which can leach from some implantable devices). These peroxides not only adversely affect protein stability [22] but would be toxic when delivered directly to, for example, the central nervous system of a human or animal.

The sustained delivery of drugs has many advantages. Use of implantable devices assures patient compliance, since the delivery device is tamper-proof. With one insertion of a device, rather than daily injections, there is reduced site irritation, fewer occupational hazards for practitioners improved cost effectiveness through decreased costs of equipment for repeated injections, reduced hazards of waste disposal, and enhanced

efficacy through controlled release as compared with depot injection. The use of implantable devices for sustained delivery of a wide variety of drugs or other beneficial agents is well known in the art. Typical devices are described, for example, in U.S. Patents Nos. 5,034,229; 5,057,318; 5,110,596; and 5,782,396. The disclosure of each of these patents is incorporated herein by reference.

For drug delivering implants, dosing durations of up to one year are not unusual. Beneficial agents which have low therapeutic delivery rates are prime candidates for use in implants. When the device is implanted or stored, settling of the beneficial agent in a liquid formulation can occur. This heterogeneity can adversely affect the concentration of the beneficial agent dispensed. Compounding this problem is the size of the implanted beneficial agent reservoir. Implant reservoirs are generally on the order of 25-250 μ l, but can be up to 25 ml.

Viscous formulations have been prepared using two separate components to be mixed with drug at use [23], thickening agents added to aqueous compositions [24], gelling agents added to aqueous drug solutions [25], porous textile sheet material [26], thickening agents with oleaginous material [27], viscous aqueous carrier for limited solubility drug [28], and extrudable elastic gels [29]. However, these formulations are mixed at use, contain aqueous components, use sheet matrices, or are delivered topically, orally, or intraduodenally.

Stability of formulations can be enhanced by freeze-drying, lyophilizing or spray-drying the active ingredient. The process of drying the active ingredient includes further advantages such as compounds which are relatively unstable in aqueous solution can be processed and filled into dosage containers, dried without elevated temperatures, and then stored in the dry state in which there are relatively few stability problems.

Pharmaceutical formulations, particularly parenteral products, should be sterilized after being sealed in the final container and within as short a time

as possible after the filling and sealing have been completed. (See, for example Remington, Pharmaceutical Sciences, 15th ed. (1975)). Examples of sterilization techniques include thermal or dry-heat, aseptic, and ionized radiation. Combinations of these sterilization procedures may also be used to
5 produce a sterile product.

There is a need to be able to deliver protein compositions to the body which are stable at body temperatures over extended periods of time to enable long term delivery of the protein. There is a need to be able to deliver concentrations of proteins that are efficacious. There is a need for a novel
10 non-aqueous formulation capable of homogeneously suspending proteins and dispensing such agents at body temperatures and low flow rates over extended periods of time.

Summary of the Invention

15 The present invention provides stable single phase non-aqueous biocompatible viscous vehicles capable of forming uniform suspensions with proteins. The components of the viscous vehicle comprise at least two of polymer, surfactant, and solvent. The ratios of the components will vary depending on the molecular weight of the components and the desired
20 viscosity of the final vehicle. Presently preferred component ratios are: polymer, about 5% to about 60%; solvent, about 30% to about 50%; and surfactant, about 5% to about 20%.

The present invention also provides stable formulations in which beneficial agents are uniformly suspended in stable single phase non-
25 aqueous biocompatible viscous vehicles. In particular, the beneficial agents are formulated in the viscous vehicles at concentrations of at least about 0.1%, depending upon the potency of the beneficial agent. These stable formulations may be stored at the temperature appropriate for the beneficial agent, ranging from cold, to body temperature (about 37°C) for long periods of
30 time (1 month to 1 year or more). In a preferred embodiment the formulation

comprises about 0.1 to 50% (w/w) of beneficial agent, depending on the potency of the beneficial agent, the duration of treatment, and the rate of release for the drug delivery system.

These formulations are especially useful in implantable delivery devices for long term delivery (e.g., 1 to 12 months or longer) of beneficial agent at body temperature, preferably about 37°C. Thus, the present invention also provides for the delivery of said proteins to the body over extended period of time to enable long term delivery of the protein at low flow rates of about 0.3 to 100 $\mu\text{l/day}$, preferably about 0.3 to 4 $\mu\text{l/day}$ for about a 6 month delivery period and preferably 5 to 8 $\mu\text{l/day}$ for about a 3 month delivery period.

In another aspect, the invention provides methods for preparing stable non-aqueous biocompatible formulations of a beneficial agent in a single phase viscous vehicle. Preferred formulations comprise about 0.1 to 50% (w/w) beneficial agent depending on the potency of the beneficial agent, the duration of treatment, and the rate of release from the delivery system.

In yet a further aspect, the invention provides methods for treating a subject suffering from a condition which may be alleviated by administration of a beneficial agent, said methods comprising administering to said subject an effective amount of a stable non-aqueous formulation comprising at least one beneficial agent uniformly suspended in a single phase viscous vehicle.

A further aspect of the invention is that non-aqueous single phase viscous vehicles containing beneficial agents are chemically and physically stable over a broad temperature range for long periods of time. The beneficial agents in the viscous vehicles are also chemically and physically stable over a broad temperature range for long periods of time. Thus, these formulations are advantageous in that they may be shipped and stored at temperatures below, at, or above room temperature for long period of time. They are also suitable for use in implantable delivery devices in which the formulation must be stable at body temperature for extended periods of time.

The formulations of the present invention also remain stable when delivered from implantable drug delivery systems. The beneficial agents have been shown to exhibit zero order release rates when delivered from implantable drug delivery systems at very low flow rates over extended periods of time.

5 According to a first aspect of the invention, there is provided a stable non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle capable of suspending beneficial agents and homogeneously dispensing said beneficial agent over an extended period of time at body temperature and at low flow rates, wherein the vehicle comprises at least two components selected from the group consisting of a solvent, a surfactant and a
10 polymer, wherein the at least two components are not of the same type, and wherein the solvent comprises lauryl lactate

 According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a stable non-aqueous viscous protein formulation comprising:

- 15 a) at least one beneficial agent, and
 b) a non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle, which formulation is capable of being uniformly dispensed over an extended period of time at a low flow rate, wherein the vehicle comprises at least two components selected from the group consisting of a solvent, a surfactant and a polymer, wherein the at least two components are not of
20 the same type, and wherein the solvent comprises lauryl lactate.

 According to a third aspect of the invention, there is provided a non-aqueous formulation comprising at least one beneficial agent uniformly suspended in a non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle, which formulation can be delivered from an implantable drug delivery system such that the exit shear rate of the formulation
25 is between about 1 and 1×10^{-7} reciprocal second, wherein the vehicle comprises at least

two components selected from the group consisting of a solvent, a surfactant and a polymer, wherein the at least two components are not of the same type and wherein the solvent comprises lauryl lactate.

According to a fourth aspect of the invention, there is provided a method
5 for preparing a stable single phase viscous vehicle of claim 1, comprising the steps of (1) blending the ingredients at elevated temperature under dry conditions to allow them to liquify, and (2) allowing the liquid from step (1) to cool to room temperature.

According to a fifth aspect of the invention, there is provided a method for preparing the stable formulation of the third aspect, comprising combining the single
10 phase viscous vehicle and beneficial agent under dry conditions and blending then under vacuum at elevated temperature to uniformly disperse the beneficial agent in the vehicle, and allowing the formulation to cool to room temperature.

According to a sixth aspect of the invention, there is provided a method for treating a subject suffering from a condition which may be alleviated by administration
15 of a beneficial agent comprising administering to said subject a therapeutically effective amount of a formulation of the second aspect.

According to a seventh aspect of the invention, there is provided use of a therapeutically effective amount of the formulation of the second aspect, for treating a subject suffering from a condition, which may be alleviated by administration of a
20 beneficial agent.

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, throughout the description and the claims, the words 'comprise', 'comprising', and the like are to be construed in an inclusive sense as opposed to an exclusive or exhaustive sense; that is to say, in the sense of "including, but not limited to".

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 shows the stability of hGH formulations of the present invention as determined at 37°C by reverse phase HPLC.

Figure 2 shows the stability of hGH formulations of the present invention as
5 determined at 37°C by size exclusion chromatography.

Figure 3 shows the average release rate ($\mu\text{l/day}$) of 10% (w/w) spray-dried lysozyme in formulations of the present invention.

Figure 4 shows the average release rate ($\mu\text{l/day}$) of 10% (w/w) spray-dried hGH in a glycerol monolaurate/lauryl lactate/polyvinylpyrrolidone vehicle.

10 Figure 5 shows the average release rate ($\mu\text{l/day}$) of 10% lysozyme in a lauryl alcohol/polyvinylpyrrolidone vehicle.

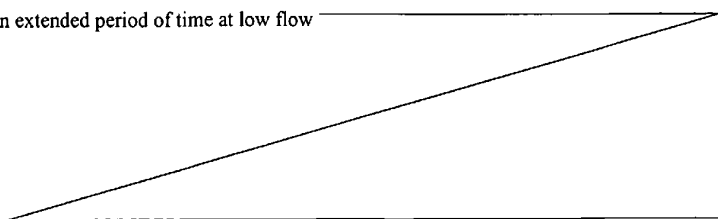
Figure 6 shows the average release rate ($\mu\text{g/day}$) of 25% lysozyme in a glycerol monolaurate/lauryl lactate/polyvinylpyrrolidone vehicle.

15 Figure 7 shows the average release rate ($\mu\text{g/day}$) of 33% lysozyme in a glycerol monolaurate/lauryl lactate/polyvinylpyrrolidone vehicle.

Figure 8 shows the average release rate ($\mu\text{g/day}$) of 45% lysozyme in a glycerol monolaurate/lauryl lactate/polyvinylpyrrolidone vehicle.

Detailed Description of the Invention

The present invention is drawn to the unexpected discovery that uniformly
20 suspending beneficial agents in non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicles results in stable formulations which can be delivered at body temperature over an extended period of time at low flow



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rates. Previously known formulations of beneficial agents which are buffered aqueous or non-aqueous solutions which may or may not contain excipients do not provide formulations which can be uniformly dispensed at body temperatures at low flow rates over an extended period of time without exhibiting unacceptable amounts of aggregation or degradation of the formulation. The presently claimed formulations stabilize beneficial agents and can be stored at the temperature appropriate for the beneficial agent. The temperatures can range from cold (not exceeding 8°C) to body temperature (about 37°C) for long periods of time. These formulations are especially useful in implantable delivery devices for long term delivery (e.g., 1 to 12 months or longer) of drug at low flow rates and at body temperature, preferably about 37°C.

Standard beneficial agent formulations consist of dilute aqueous or non-aqueous solutions or suspensions. Drug stability is usually achieved by varying one or more of the following: pH, buffer type, ionic strength, excipients (EDTA, ascorbic acid, etc.) For these formulations, degradation pathways requiring water (hydrolysis, deamidation, racemization) cannot be fully stabilized. In the present invention, beneficial agents formulated in non-aqueous biocompatible single phase viscous vehicles containing for example, polyvinylpyrrolidone, vinyl acetate, and/or polyoxyethylenepolyoxypropylene block copolymers were shown to be chemically and physically stable. The viscosity of the formulation will depend upon a number of criteria, including the beneficial agent potency and concentration, and the process by which the formulation is prepared. The viscosity of the formulation can be chosen so that the desired amount of beneficial agent is delivered over the desired period of time.

The invention also consists of non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicles capable of uniformly suspending beneficial agents and formulations containing at least one beneficial agent uniformly suspended in said viscous vehicle. The invention also consists of formulations containing at

least one beneficial agent uniformly suspended in a non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle, which formulations are stable for an extended period of time at body temperatures, and capable of delivering said beneficial agents uniformly at low flow rates. The discovery consists of the realization that stable non-aqueous viscous vehicles improve the stability of beneficial agents in a wide range of formulation conditions including concentration, elevated temperatures and duration of stable formulation, thus making possible the delivery of beneficial agents in long term implantable devices that would not otherwise be feasible.

Definitions

As used herein, the following terms have the following meanings:

The term "chemical stability" means that an acceptable percentage of degradation products produced by chemical pathways such as oxidation, deamidation, or hydrolysis is formed. In particular, a formulation is considered chemically stable if no more than about 35% breakdown products are formed after 2 months at 37°C.

The term "physical stability" means that an acceptable percentage of aggregates (e.g., dimers, trimers and larger forms) are formed by the beneficial agent. For the formulation (viscous vehicle and beneficial agent) this term means that the formulation retains stability, flowability, and the ability to uniformly dispense the beneficial agent. In particular, a formulation is considered physically stable if no more than about 15% aggregates are formed after two months at 37°C.

The term "stable formulation" means that at least about 65% chemically and physically stable beneficial agent remains after two months at 37°C (or equivalent conditions at an elevated temperature). Particularly preferred formulations are those which retain at least about 80% chemically and physically stable beneficial agent under these conditions. Especially preferred

stable formulations are those which do not exhibit degradation after sterilizing irradiation (e.g., gamma, beta or electron beam).

The term "beneficial agent" means peptides, proteins, nucleotides, hormones, viruses, antibodies, etc. that comprise polymers of amino acid or nucleic acid residues. These beneficial agents are generally degradable in water and generally stable as a dry powder at elevated temperatures. Synthetically produced, naturally derived or recombinantly produced moieties are included in this term. The term also includes lipoproteins and post translationally modified forms, e.g., glycosylated proteins. Analogs, derivatives, agonists, antagonists and pharmaceutically acceptable salts of any of these are included in this term. The term also includes proteins and/or protein substances which have D-amino acids, modified, derivatized or non-naturally occurring amino acids in the D- or L- configuration and/or peptomimetic units as part of their structure. The term protein will be used in the present invention. The term also means that the beneficial agent is present in the solid state, e.g., powder or crystalline.

The term "excipient" means a more or less inert substance in a formulation that is added as a diluent or vehicle or to give form or consistency. Excipients are distinguished from solvents such as ETOH, which are used to dissolve drugs in formulations. Excipients include non-ionic surfactants such as polysorbates, which are used to solubilize drugs in formulations; preservatives such as benzyl alcohols or methyl or propyl parabens, which are used to prevent or inhibit microbial growth; chelating agents; flavoring agents; and other pharmaceutically acceptable formulation aides.

The term "viscous vehicle" means a vehicle with a viscosity in the range of about 1,000 to 10,000,000 poise. The term includes Newtonian and non-Newtonian materials. Preferred are vehicles with a viscosity of about 10,000 to 250,000 poise. The formulations of this invention can uniformly expel beneficial agents suspended in the viscous vehicle from implantable drug delivery devices. The formulations exhibit a shear rate at the exit of said

devices of 1 to 1×10^{-7} reciprocal second, preferably an exit shear rate of 1×10^{-2} to 1×10^{-5} reciprocal second.

The term "single phase" means a solid, semi-solid, or liquid homogeneous system that is both physically and chemically uniform throughout as determined by differential scanning calorimetry (DSC). The DSC scan should show one peak indicative of a single phase.

The term "biocompatible" means a property or characteristic of a viscous vehicle to disintegrate or break down, over a prolonged period of time, in response to the biological environment in the patient, by one or more physical or chemical degradative processes, for example by enzymatic action, oxidation or reduction, hydrolysis (proteolysis), displacement, e.g. ion exchange, or dissolution by solubilization, emulsion or micelle formation, and which material is then absorbed by the body and surrounding tissue, or otherwise dissipated thereby.

The term "polymer" includes polyesters such as PLA (polylactic acid) [having an inherent viscosity in the range of about 0.5 to 2.0 i.v.] and PLGA (polylactidepolyglycolic acid) [having an inherent viscosity in the range of about 0.5 to 2.0 i.v.], pyrrolidones such as polyvinylpyrrolidone (having a molecular weight range of about 2,000 to 1,000,000), esters or ethers of unsaturated alcohols such as vinyl acetate, and polyoxyethylenepolyoxypropylene block copolymers (exhibiting a high viscosity at 37°C) such as Pluronic 105. Currently preferred polymer is polyvinylpyrrolidone.

The term "solvent" includes carboxylic acid esters such as lauryl lactate, polyhydric alcohols such as glycerin, polymers of polyhydric alcohols such as polyethylene glycol (having a molecular weight of about 200 to 600), fatty acids such as oleic acid and octanoic acid, oils such as castor oil, propylene carbonate, lauryl alcohol, or esters of polyhydric alcohols such as triacetin acetate. Currently preferred is lauryl lactate.

The term "surfactant" includes esters of polyhydric alcohols such as glycerol monolaurate, ethoxylated castor oil, polysorbates, esters or ethers of

saturated alcohols such as myristyl lactate (Ceraphyl 50), and polyoxyethylenepolyoxypropylene block copolymers such as Pluronic. Currently preferred are glycerol monolaurate and polysorbates.

The term "antioxidant" means a pharmaceutically acceptable aid for stabilization of the beneficial agent against degradation such as oxidation. Antioxidants include, but are not limited to, tocopherol (vitamin E), ascorbic acid, ascorbyl palmitate, butylated hydroxyanisole, butylated hydroxytoluene, and propyl gallate. A preferred antioxidant depends on solubility and the efficiency of the antioxidant for protecting against degradation or chemical change of the beneficial agent in the preferred vehicle. Currently preferred is ascorbyl palmitate.

Preparation of Formulations

The present invention is drawn to stable non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicles capable of suspending beneficial agents and uniformly dispensing said beneficial agents at body temperatures at low flow rates over an extended period of time. The present invention is also directed to formulations containing beneficial agents uniformly suspended in said single phase biocompatible viscous vehicles which are stable for prolonged periods of time at body temperatures.

Examples of beneficial agents that may be formulated using the present invention include those peptides or proteins that have biological activity or that may be used to treat a disease or other pathological condition. They include, but are not limited to, adrenocorticotrophic hormone, angiotensin I and II, atrial natriuretic peptide, bombesin, bradykinin, calcitonin, cerebellin, dynorphin N, alpha and beta endorphin, endothelin, enkephalin, epidermal growth factor, fertirelin, follicular gonadotropin releasing peptide, galanin, glucagon, GLP-1, gonadorelin, gonadotropin, goserelin, growth hormone releasing peptide, histrelin, human growth hormone, insulin, interferons, leuprolide, LHRH, motilin, nafarelin, neurotensin, oxytocin, relaxin,

somatostatin, substance P, tumor necrosis factor, triptorelin, vasopressin, growth hormone, nerve growth factor, blood clotting factors, ribozymes, and antisense oligonucleotides. Analogs, derivatives, antagonists agonists and pharmaceutically acceptable salts of the above may also be used.

5 The beneficial agents useful in the formulations and methods of the present invention can be used in the form of a salt, preferably a pharmaceutically acceptable salt. Useful salts are known to those of skill in the art and include salts with inorganic acids, organic acids, inorganic bases, or organic bases.

10 Beneficial agents that are not readily soluble in non-aqueous solvents are preferred for use in the present invention. One of skill in the art can easily determine which compounds will be useful on the basis of their solubility. The amount of beneficial agent may vary depending on the potency of the compound, the condition to be treated, the solubility of the compound,
15 the expected dose and the duration of administration. (See, for example, Gilman, et. al, The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics, 7th ed. (1990) and Remington, Pharmacological Sciences, 18th ed. (1990), the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.)

20 It has been unexpectedly found that using a stable non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle increases the stability of the beneficial agent. For example, as seen in Figures 1 and 2, human growth hormone (hGH) was found to be stable at 37°C over 12 weeks in formulations of polyvinylpyrrolidone/PEG; Pluronic; and glycerol monolaurate/lauryl lactate/ polyvinylpyrrolidone. Figure 1 shows stability results using reverse phase
25 HPLC. Figure 2 shows stability results using size exclusion chromatography.

30 Generally, stable non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicles may be prepared by combining the dry (low moisture content) ingredients in a dry box or under other dry conditions and blending them at elevated temperature, preferably about 40 to about 70°C, to allow them to liquify. The liquid vehicle is allowed to cool to room temperature. Differential

scanning calorimetry was used to verify that the vehicle was single phase.
The final moisture content of the viscous vehicle was <2%.

Generally, the stable formulations of the present invention may be prepared by combining the vehicle and beneficial agent under dry conditions and blending them under vacuum at elevated temperature, preferably about 40 to about 70°C, to disperse the beneficial agent uniformly throughout the vehicle. The formulation is allowed to cool to room temperature.

It has been found that drying the beneficial agent prior to formulation enhances the stability of the formulation.

It has also been found that adding antioxidants, such as tocopherol, ascorbic acid, ascorbyl palmitate, butylated hydroxyanisole, butylated hydroxytoluene, and propyl gallate reduces the formation of degradation products (e.g., unstable chemical intermediates) during sterilization.

Methodology

We have found that stable non-aqueous beneficial agent formulations utilizing viscous vehicles may be prepared by combining the ingredients for the viscous vehicle under dry conditions and blending them at elevated temperature to allow them to liquify and form a single phase. Once a single phase viscous vehicle is formed, the vehicle is allowed to cool to room temperature. Beneficial agent is added with mixing at elevated temperature under vacuum to uniformly disperse it in the viscous vehicle.

We have tested these beneficial agent formulations, for example formulations of hGH, for stability by subjecting them to accelerated aging tests. Results show that these formulations remained stable over extended periods of time.

We have tested beneficial agent formulations, for example human growth hormone and lysozyme, for stability by suspending them in a variety of non-aqueous single phase viscous vehicles prepared according to the present invention, then subjecting them to accelerated aging at elevated

temperatures. The stability of the formulations was measured. Results of these studies demonstrate that these formulations were stable at conditions that approximate or exceed storage for one year at 37°C.

We have also tested beneficial agent formulations prepared as described herein for stability after 2.5 megarads gamma irradiation. Results show that these formulations remained chemically and physically stable after such irradiation.

Methods

The following methods were used to perform the studies in the Examples that follow.

1. Preparing Protein powders

Human Growth Hormone (obtained for example, from BresaGen Limited, Adelaide, Australia)

The active agent was reconstituted in deionized water. The solution containing the active agent was buffer exchanged using an Amicon Diaflo® Ultrafiltration membrane (molecular weight cut-off 10,000).

The diafiltrated active agent solution was spray dried using a Yamato mini-spray dryer. Powder was collected in a collection vessel through a cyclone trap. All handling of the spray dried powder took place in a dry box evacuated with nitrogen. The generated powder was analyzed for particle size and distribution, moisture content, protein content and stability by size exclusion and reverse-phase chromatography.

It is known that the conformation of some proteins can be stabilized by the addition of a sugar (such as sucrose or mannitol) or a polyol (such as ethylene glycol, glycerol, glucose, and dextran.)

2. Preparation of Viscous Vehicles

We have found that stable single phase biocompatible viscous vehicles may be prepared by combining the ingredients and blending them at elevated temperatures to allow them to liquify and form a single phase. A differential

scanning calorimetry scan showed one peak, indicative of a single phase. The mixing was completed under vacuum to remove trapped air bubbles produced from the powders. The mixer was a dual helix blade mixer (D.I.T.) which runs at a speed around 40 rpm. Higher speeds can be used but are not required.

If a three component viscous vehicle is prepared, the solvent portion of the vehicle was added to the heated bowl of the mixer first, followed by the surfactant. The polymer was added last, and the ingredients were mixed until a solution (single phase) resulted. Vacuum was applied during mixing to remove air bubbles. The solution was dispensed from the bowl while at elevated temperature, and allowed to cool to room temperature. On cooling the vehicle exhibited increased viscosity. Two and single component gels were made using the same process.

15 3. Preparation of beneficial agent formulations

To prepare the formulation, the single phase viscous vehicle was heated and then blended under vacuum with a weighed amount of beneficial agent. The beneficial agent and the single phase viscous vehicle were blended in the same manner as the vehicle was prepared, using a dual helix blade mixer (or other similar mixer). Mixing speed was between 40 and 120 rpm for approximately 15 minutes or until a uniform dispersion was attained. The resulting mixture was removed from the mixer, sealed in a dry container, and allowed to cool to room temperature.

25 4. Preparation of reservoirs

The reservoirs of implantable drug delivery devices (as disclosed in U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/595,761, incorporated herein by reference) were filled with the appropriate hGH formulation. The formulation was filled into titanium reservoirs with a polymer plug blocking each end. The filled reservoir was then sealed in a polyfoil bag and placed in a stability testing oven.

It should be noted that the formulations in the reservoirs of these devices are completely isolated from the outside environment.

5. Reverse Phase-HPLC (RP-HPLC)

5 All stability samples of hGH were assayed for protein content and chemical stability by reverse phase chromatography (RP-HPLC). Analyses were performed on a Hewlett Packard HP-1090 system with a refrigerated autosampler (4°C). The chromatographic conditions used are listed below.

10
TABLE 1
RP-HPLC Chromatographic Conditions

Description	Parameter		
Column	J.T. Baker-C18, 4.6x250 mm		
Flow Rate	1.0 mL/min		
15 Detection	214 nm		
Mobile Phase	A: 0.1% TFA in water B: 0.1% TFA in acetonitrile		
Gradient	<u>time</u>	<u>%A</u>	<u>%B</u>
	0	65	35
20	5	50	50
	45	35	65
	50	30	70
	55	65	35

25 An hGH reference standard solution was prepared and its protein content calculated from the absorbance measurement at 280 nm. Three dilutions of this solution, representing 80%, 100%, and 120% of the expected concentration of hGH in the samples were run in duplicate at the beginning and the end of each run and used to calculate total protein content of the
30 samples.

6. Size Exclusion Chromatography (SEC)

All stability samples of hGH were assayed for protein content and high molecular weight degradation products by size exclusion chromatography. Analyses were performed on a Hewlett Packard HP-1090 system with a refrigerated autosampler (4°C). The chromatographic conditions used are listed below

TABLE 2
SEC Chromatographic Conditions

Description	Parameter
Column	TSK-2000SWXL
Flow Rate	0.5 ml/ min
Detection	214 nm
Mobile Phase	25 mM sodium phosphate, 100 mM sodium chloride, pH 7.0

A hGH reference standard solution was prepared and its protein content calculated from the absorbance measurement at 280 nm. Three dilutions of this solution, representing 80%, 100%, and 120% of the expected concentration of hGH in the samples were run in duplicate at the beginning and the end of each run and used to calculate total protein content of the samples. The amount of high molecular weight degradation products was calculated by area normalization.

The following examples are offered to illustrate this invention and are not meant to be construed in any way as limiting the scope of this invention.

EXAMPLE 1

Preparation of Non-aqueous Single Phase Viscous Vehicles

The non-aqueous single phase viscous vehicles can be prepared as follows and shown in the below table

- A. Glycerol monolaurate (Danisco Ingredients, New Century, Kansas) (25 g) was dissolved in lauryl lactate (ISP Van Dyk Inc., Belleville, NJ) (35 g) at 65°C. Polyvinylpyrrolidone C30 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (40 g) was added and the mixture blended at about 40 rpm in a dual helix blade mixer (D.I.T.) until a single phase was achieved. Trapped air bubbles were removed by applying vacuum to the mixing chamber. The single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.
- B. Glycerol monolaurate (Danisco Ingredients, New Century, Kansas) (25 g) was dissolved in lauryl lactate (ISP Van Dyk Inc., Belleville, NJ) (35 g) at 65°C. Polyvinylpyrrolidone C17 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (40 g) was added and the mixture blended at about 40 rpm in a dual helix blade mixer (D.I.T.) until a single phase was achieved. Trapped air bubbles were removed by applying vacuum to the mixing chamber. The single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.
- C. Polyvinylpyrrolidone C30 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (50 g) was dissolved in polyethylene glycol 400 (Union Carbide) (50 g) at approximately 65°C until a single phase solution was formed. The single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.
- D. Polyvinylpyrrolidone C17 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (50 g) was dissolved in polyethylene glycol 400 (Union Carbide) (50 g) at approximately 65°C until a single phase solution was formed. The

single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.

- E. Polyvinylpyrrolidone C17 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (50 g) was dissolved in castor oil (Spectrum, Gardena, CA) (50 g) at approximately 65°C until a single phase solution was formed. The single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.
- F. Polyvinylpyrrolidone C17 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (50 g) was dissolved in octanoic acid (Spectrum, Gardena, CA) at approximately 65°C until a single phase solution was formed. The single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.
- G. Polyvinylpyrrolidone C17 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (50 g) was dissolved in oleic acid (Spectrum, Gardena, CA) at approximately 65°C until a single phase solution was formed. The single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.
- H. Polyvinylpyrrolidone C17 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (35%) was dissolved in glycerin (Baker, NJ) (65%) at approximately 65°C until a single phase solution was formed. The single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.
- I. Cremophor EL (ethoxylated castor oil) (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (5%) was dissolved in castor oil (Spectrum, Gardena, CA) (70%), and polyvinylpyrrolidone C17 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) (25%) was added and dissolved by mixing at approximately 40 rpm to form a single phase vehicle. The single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.
- J. Pluronic 105 (BASF, Mount Olive, NJ) was heated to approximately 65°C with mixing until melted. The single phase vehicle was dispensed from the mixer, and allowed to cool to room temperature.

Table 3
Component Ratios

	Polymer	Component		Ratio	Viscosity at Low
		Surfactant	Solvent		Shear Rate (Poise)
5	PVP	GML	LL	53:5:42	25,000
	PVP	GML	LL	55:10:35	50,000
	PVP	GML	LL	50:15:35	7,000
	PVP	----	LA	60:40	
	PVP	Ceraphyl 50	LA	60:10:30	
10	PVP	----	oleic acid	50:50	30,000
	PVP	----	octanoic acid	55:45	7,000
	PVP	polysorbate 80	----	50:50	
	PVP	----	PEG 400	50:50	
	PVP	castor oil	----	50:50	
15	----	Pluronic 105	----	100	1,000,000
	PVP	----	glycerin	50:50	5,000

Wherein:

GML = glycerol monolaurate

20 LL = lauryl lactate

PVP = polyvinylpyrrolidone C30

LA = lauryl alcohol

PEG = polyethyleneglycol 400

25 EXAMPLE 2

Preparation of hGH

A. Preparation by spray drying

Lyophilized hGH (BresaGen Limited, Adelaide, Australia) was
30 reconstituted in 150 ml of deionized water. This stock solution contained

1050 mg of hGH. Buffer exchange was accomplished using an Amicon Diaflo® Ultrafiltration membrane (molecular weight cut-off 10,000). The ultrafiltration cell was connected to an auxiliary reservoir containing 5mM phosphate buffer (pH 7). The cell's fluid volume, as well as the hGH concentration, remained constant as excipients were replaced by phosphate buffer.

The diafiltrated protein solution (protein concentration in the solution approximately 2%) was spray dried using a Yamato mini-spray dryer. Settings on the spray dryer were as follows: aspiration pressure constantly adjusted to 1.3 kgf/cm², inlet temperature 120°C, solution flow rate 2.5 (approximately 3 ml/min). Powder was collected in a collection vessel through a cyclone trap. All handling of the spray dried powder took place in a dry box evacuated with nitrogen (% RH: 1-4%). The water content of the suspending vehicles is shown in the below table.

TABLE 4
WATER CONTENT OF SUSPENDING VEHICLES

Vehicle	Water Content of Vehicle at T 0 % w/w	Water Content of Vehicle in 12 wks. At 37°C % w/w
Pluronic 105	0.25	0.4
GML/LL/PVP	1.5	1.3
PVP/PEG	2.0	2.0

Wherein:

GML = glycerol monolaurate

LL = lauryl lactate

PVP = polyvinylpyrrolidone C30

PEG = polyethyleneglycol 400

EXAMPLE 3

Preparation of hGH Formulation

A portion of the single phase viscous vehicle was weighed (9 g) and
 5 heated to 60°C. hGH (BresaGen Limited, Adelaide, Australia) (1 g) was
 added to the vehicle and mixed for 15 minutes. The mixing was completed
 under vacuum to remove air bubbles added from the powder.

Approximately 10 mg of the spray-dried hGH powder were weighed out
 (content of hGH in the powder was recalculated based on the determined
 10 water and salt content) and mixed with 100 µl of the vehicle at 55-65°C (3
 samples per each vehicle). Special care was taken while mixing powder in
 the suspending vehicle to achieve maximum particle uniform dispersion in the
 vehicle. All steps were done in a dry box.

The resulting suspension was dissolved with 10 ml of release rate
 15 buffer and analyzed by size exclusion and reverse-phase chromatography.
 Spray dried hGH powder was used as a control.

TABLE 5

20 STABILITY OF hGH SUSPENSIONS AT 37°C AS MEASURED BY
 SIZE EXCLUSION CHROMATOGRAPHY

Time Weeks	Spray-dried Powder -80°C %LS	PVP/PEG 400 suspension %LS	GML/LL/PVP suspension %LS	Pluronic 105 suspension %LS
25 0	96±1	88±6	92±2	87±7
1	99±8	81±2	94±3	93±3
2	99±3	83±1	97±1	94±1
3	97±1	84±2	95±2	95±3
30 4	95±2	82±8	94±4	93±5
7	95±4	76±3	93±4	88±2
12	97±4	79±3	97±1	95±6

Each data point represents the mean \pm relative standard deviation of three individual samples taken from three separate vials.

TABLE 6
STABILITY OF hGH SUSPENSIONS at 37°C AS MEASURED BY
REVERSE PHASE CHROMATOGRAPHY

Time Weeks	spray-dried Powder -80°C %LS	PVP/PEG 400 suspension %LS	GML/LL/PVP suspension %LS	Pluronic 105 suspension %LS
0	104 \pm 1	99 \pm 3	99 \pm 2	89 \pm 7
1	104 \pm 8	78 \pm 2	98 \pm 3	96 \pm 6
2	104 \pm 4	73 \pm 3	95 \pm 1	96 \pm 1
3	104 \pm 2	78 \pm 4	97 \pm 3	97 \pm 4
4	100 \pm 2	74 \pm 10	93 \pm 4	96 \pm 4
7	108 \pm 5	72 \pm 4	96 \pm 2	94 \pm 2
9	102 \pm 3	66 \pm 3	92 \pm 3	93 \pm 2
12	101 \pm 2	66 \pm 1	89 \pm 2	92 \pm 5

Each data point represents the mean \pm relative standard deviation of three individual samples taken from three separate vials.

EXAMPLE 4

Preparation of Reservoirs

Release Rate Profiles

Titanium reservoir systems of implantable drug delivery devices (as disclosed in U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/595,761, incorporated herein by reference) were each assembled with an osmotic engine, piston, and rate controlling membrane. The reservoirs were filled with the appropriate amount of viscous vehicle formulation and capped with a flow

plug. The systems were placed in a water bath at 37°C, and allowed to release formulation for an extended period of time. Released material was sampled twice per week. Assays for released material were completed using reverse phase HPLC. The resulting concentrations of beneficial agent for each system were converted to released amount per day. The beneficial agent was found to have a zero order release from the implantable drug delivery device. As shown in Figures 3 through 8.

EXAMPLE 5

Stability of hGH in Non-aqueous Viscous Vehicle Formulations

Formulations of 10% w/w hGH in vehicle were prepared as described above and placed in vials. The formulations were subjected to accelerated aging by storing them at elevated temperatures and times shown in the below table in a controlled temperature oven.

TABLE 7

<u>Vehicle</u>	<u>Time(hrs)</u>	<u>Temperature</u>	<u>%LS by SEC</u>	<u>%LS by RP-HPLC</u>
Pluronic 105	0	50°C	98±3	101±3
Pluronic 105	1	50°C	98±3	101±4
Pluronic 105	2	50°C	100±1	102±3
Pluronic 105	4	50°C	101±3	105±3
GML/LL/PVP	0	65°C	99±3	101±3
GML/LL/PVP	1	65°C	93±6	97±6
GML/LL/PVP	2	65°C	91±5	95±5
GML/LL/PVP	4	65°C	95±3	98±3

Each data point represents the mean ± relative standard deviation of three individual samples taken from three separate vials.

Results, presented in the following table, demonstrate that these formulations were able to maintain the stability of the hGH in each case. In each case, at least 70% hGH was retained.

5
TABLE 8
RECOVERY OF hGH FROM NONAQUEOUS SUSPENSIONS

	Vehicle	%LS by RP-HPLC	%LS by Size-exclusion HPLC
	PVP/PEG 400	99±3%	88±6%
10	GML/LL/PVP	99±2%	92±2%
	Pluronic 105	89±7%	87±7%

Each data point represents the mean ± relative standard deviation of three individual samples taken from three separate vials.

15 %LS or % label strength = (measured protein content + theoretical protein content) x 100%

Modification of the above-described modes of carrying out various embodiments of this invention will be apparent to those of skill in the art following the teachings of this invention as set forth herein. The examples
20 described above are not limiting, but are merely exemplary of this invention, the scope of which is defined by the following claims.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:-

1. A stable non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle capable of suspending beneficial agents and homogeneously dispensing said beneficial agent over
5 an extended period of time at body temperature and at low flow rates, wherein the vehicle comprises at least two components selected from the group consisting of a solvent, a surfactant and a polymer, wherein the at least two components are not of the same type, and wherein the solvent comprises lauryl lactate.
2. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein said surfactant is selected from the group
10 consisting of esters of polyhydric alcohols, ethoxylated castor oil, polysorbates, esters or ethers of saturated alcohols, and polyoxyethylenepolyoxypropylene block copolymers.
3. The vehicle of claim 1 or 2, wherein said polymer is selected from the group consisting of polyesters, pyrrolidones, esters or ethers of unsaturated alcohols, and polyoxyethylenepolyoxypropylene block copolymers.
- 15 4. The vehicle of any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the ratios of the components are in the range of 40:60 to 60:40.
5. The vehicle of any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the ratios of the components are in the range of about 30% to about 50% for solvent, about 5% to about 20% for the surfactant, and about 5% to about 60% for the polymer.
- 20 6. The vehicle of any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the polymer is polyvinylpyrrolidone and the surfactant is gml.
7. The vehicle of any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the polymer is polyvinylpyrrolidone and the surfactant is polysorbate.
8. The vehicle of any one of claims 1 to 7, which comprises an antioxidant.

9. The vehicle of claim 8, wherein said antioxidant is selected from the group consisting of tocopherol, ascorbic acid, ascorbyl palmitate, butylated hydroxyanisole, butylated hydroxytoluene, and propyl gallate.
10. A stable non-aqueous viscous protein formulation comprising:
- 5 a) at least one beneficial agent, and
- b) a non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle, which formulation is capable of being uniformly dispensed over an extended period of time at a low flow rate, wherein the vehicle comprises at least two components selected from the group consisting of a solvent, a
- 10 surfactant and a polymer, wherein the at least two components are not of the same type, and wherein the solvent comprises lauryl lactate.
11. A non-aqueous formulation comprising at least one beneficial agent uniformly suspended in a non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle, which formulation can be delivered from an implantable drug delivery system such that the exit
- 15 shear rate of the formulation is between about 1 and 1×10^{-7} reciprocal second, wherein the vehicle comprises at least two components selected from the group consisting of a solvent, a surfactant and a polymer, wherein the at least two components are not of the same type and wherein the solvent comprises lauryl lactate.
12. The formulation of claim 10, wherein said formulation is stable at body
- 20 temperature for extended periods of time.
13. The formulation of claim 10, which comprises at least about 0.1% (w/w) of the beneficial agent.
14. The formulation of claim 10, which comprises at least about 10% (w/w) of the beneficial agent.

15. The formulation of claim 10, wherein said beneficial agent is selected from the group consisting of peptide, protein, nucleotide, hormone, virus, or antibody.
16. The formulation of claim 15, wherein said beneficial agent is a protein.
17. The formulation of claim 10, which is stable at 65°C for at least about 2 months.
- 5 18. The formulation of claim 10, which is stable at 37°C for at least about 3 months.
19. The formulation of claim 10, which is stable at 37°C for at least about 1 year.
20. The formulation of claim 10, which is adapted for use in an implantable drug delivery device.
21. The formulation of claim 10, wherein said vehicle comprises an antioxidant.
- 10 22. The formulation of claim 10, comprising a beneficial agent which has been dried to a low moisture content prior to incorporation in said formulation.
23. The formulation of claim 10, which is stable after sterilization.
24. A method for preparing a stable single phase viscous vehicle of claim 1, comprising the steps of (1) blending the ingredients at elevated temperature under dry
- 15 conditions to allow them to liquify, and (2) allowing the liquid from step (1) to cool to room temperature.
25. A method for preparing the stable formulation of claim 10, comprising combining the single phase viscous vehicle and beneficial agent under dry conditions and blending then under vacuum at elevated temperature to uniformly disperse the
- 20 beneficial agent in the vehicle, and allowing the formulation to cool to room temperature.
26. The method of claim 25, wherein at least about 0.1% (w/w) beneficial agent is suspended in said vehicle.
27. The method of claim 25, wherein at least about 10% (w/w) beneficial agent is
- 25 suspended in said vehicle.

28. A method for treating a subject suffering from a condition which may be alleviated by administration of a beneficial agent comprising administering to said subject a therapeutically effective amount of a formulation of Claim 10.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein said administration is parenteral administration.

5 30. The method of claim 28, wherein said administration is long-term continuous administration.

31. The method of claim 28, wherein said administration is accomplished by use of an implantable drug delivery system.

32. The method of claim 28, wherein said daily administration continues for a period
10 selected from the group consisting of about 3 months, about 6 months, and about 12 months.

33. The method of claim 28, wherein said daily administration is accomplished using an implantable drug delivery system.

34. Use of a therapeutically effective amount of a formulation of claim 10, for the
15 manufacture of a medicament for treating a subject suffering from a condition which may be alleviated by administration of a beneficial agent.

35. Use according to claim 34, wherein said administration is parenteral administration.

36. Use according to claim 34, wherein said administration is long-term continuous
20 administration.

37. Use according to claim 34, wherein said administration is accomplished by use of an implantable drug delivery system.

38. Use according to claim 34, wherein said daily administration continuous for a
period selected from the group consisting of about 3 months, about 6 months and about
25 12 months.

39. Use according to claim 34, wherein said daily administration is accomplished using an implantable drug delivery system.

40. A stable, non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle, substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the Examples.

5 41. A stable, non-aqueous viscous protein formulation, substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the Examples.

42. A non-aqueous formulation comprising at least one beneficial agent uniformly suspended in a non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle, substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the Examples.

10 43. A method for preparing a stable, non-aqueous single phase biocompatible viscous vehicle, substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the Example.

44. A method for treating a subject suffering from a condition which may be alleviated by administration of a beneficial agent, substantially as herein described with
15 reference to any one of the Examples.

45. Use of a therapeutically effective amount of a stable, non-aqueous viscous protein formulation, substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the Examples.

20 DATED this 30th day of June 2004
BALDWIN SHELSTON WATERS
Attorneys for: ALZA CORPORATION

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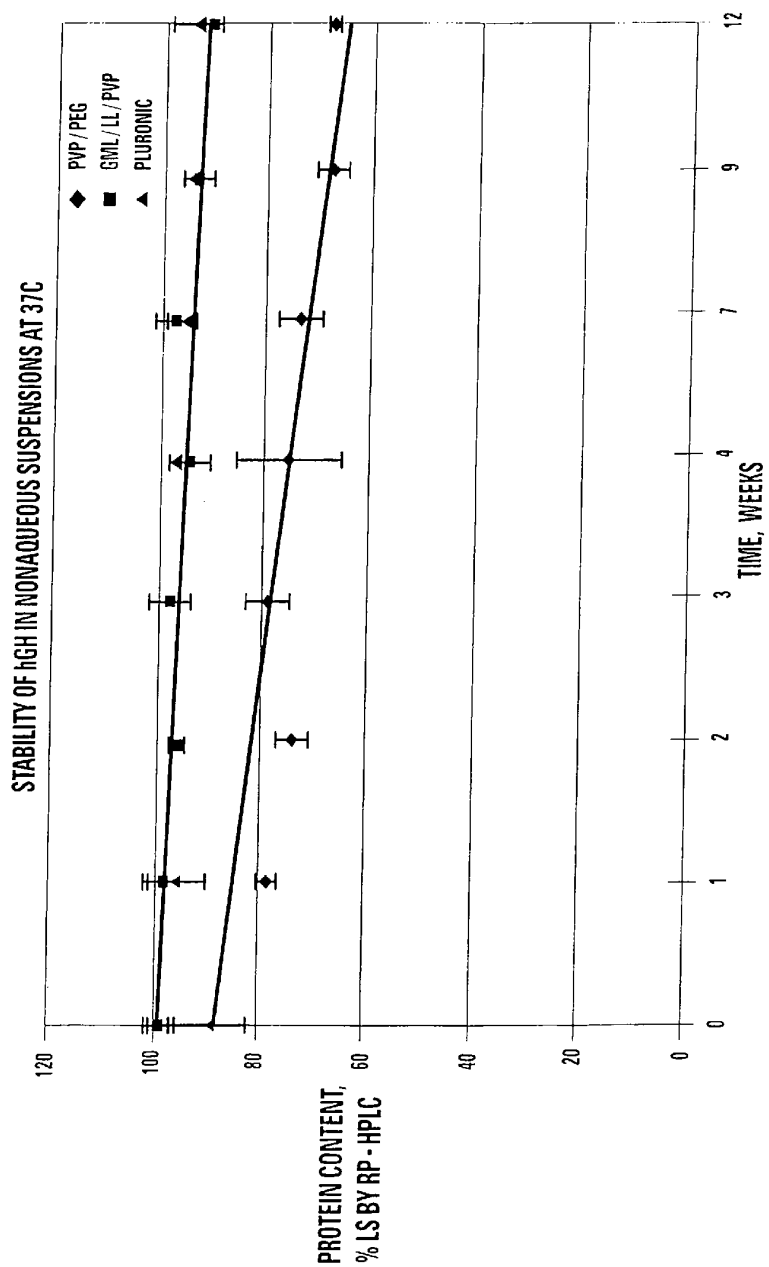


FIGURE 1

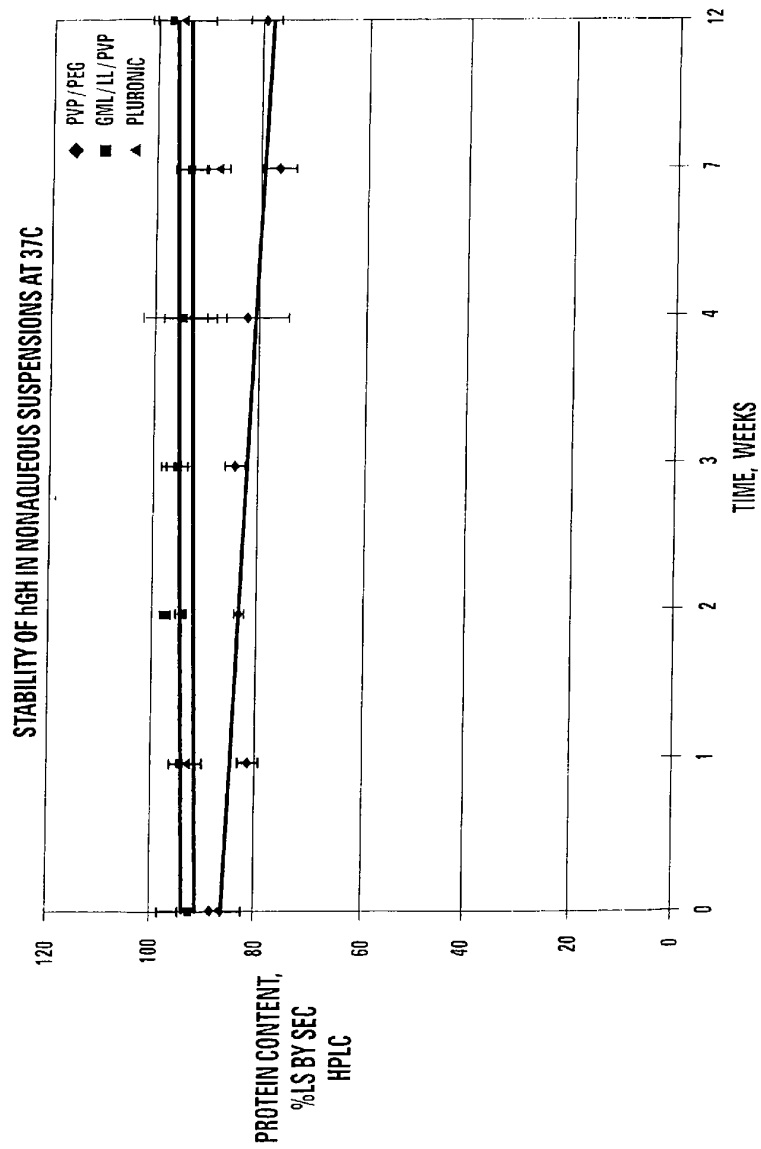
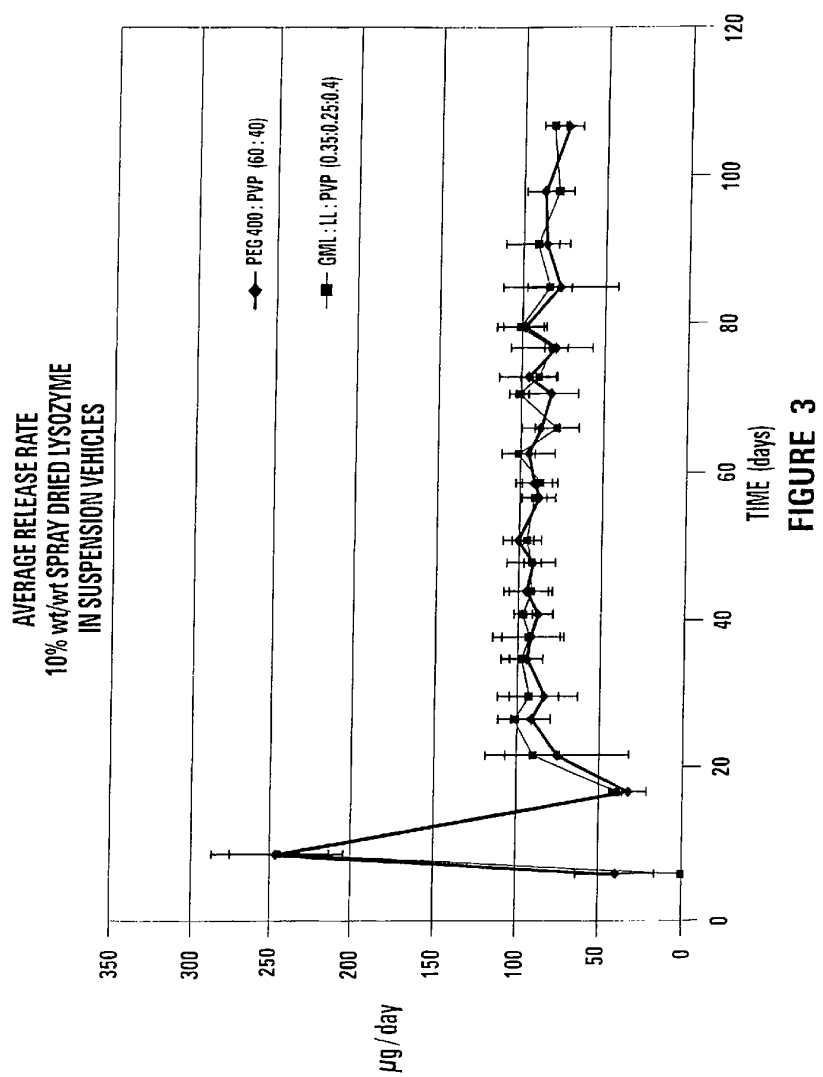


FIGURE 2

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**FIGURE 3**

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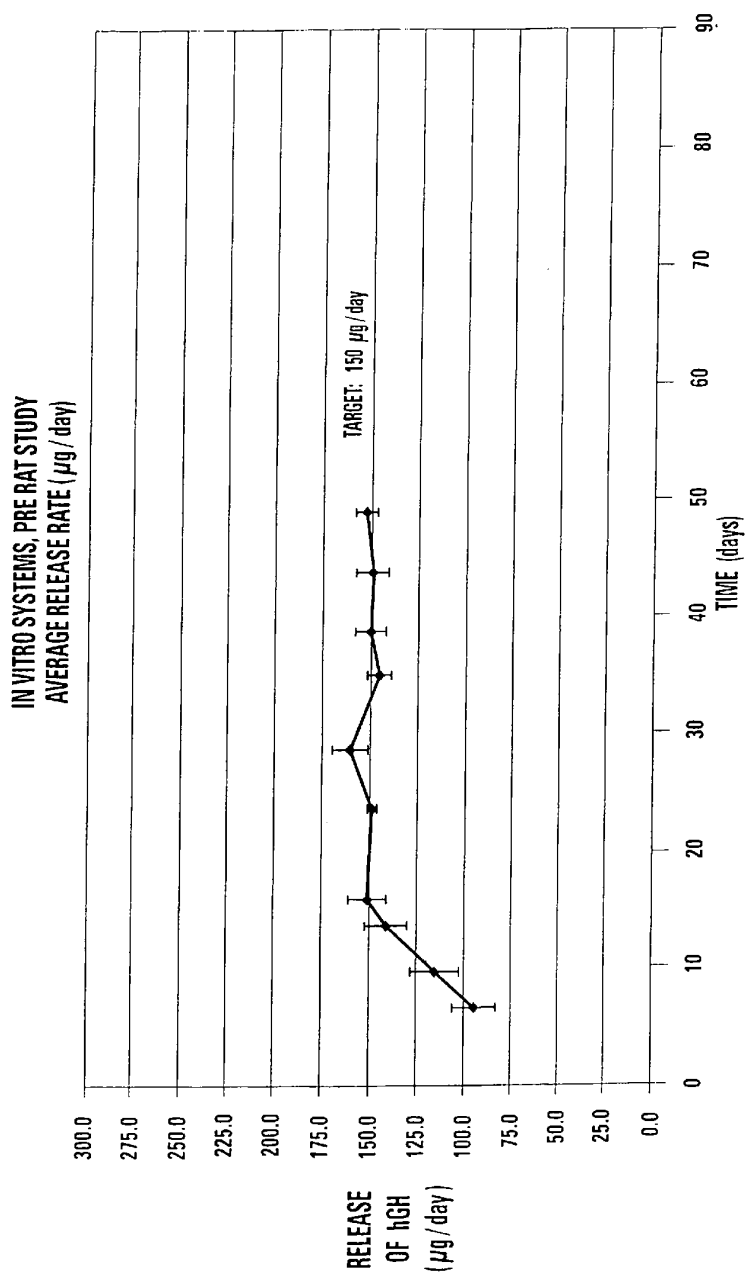


FIGURE 4

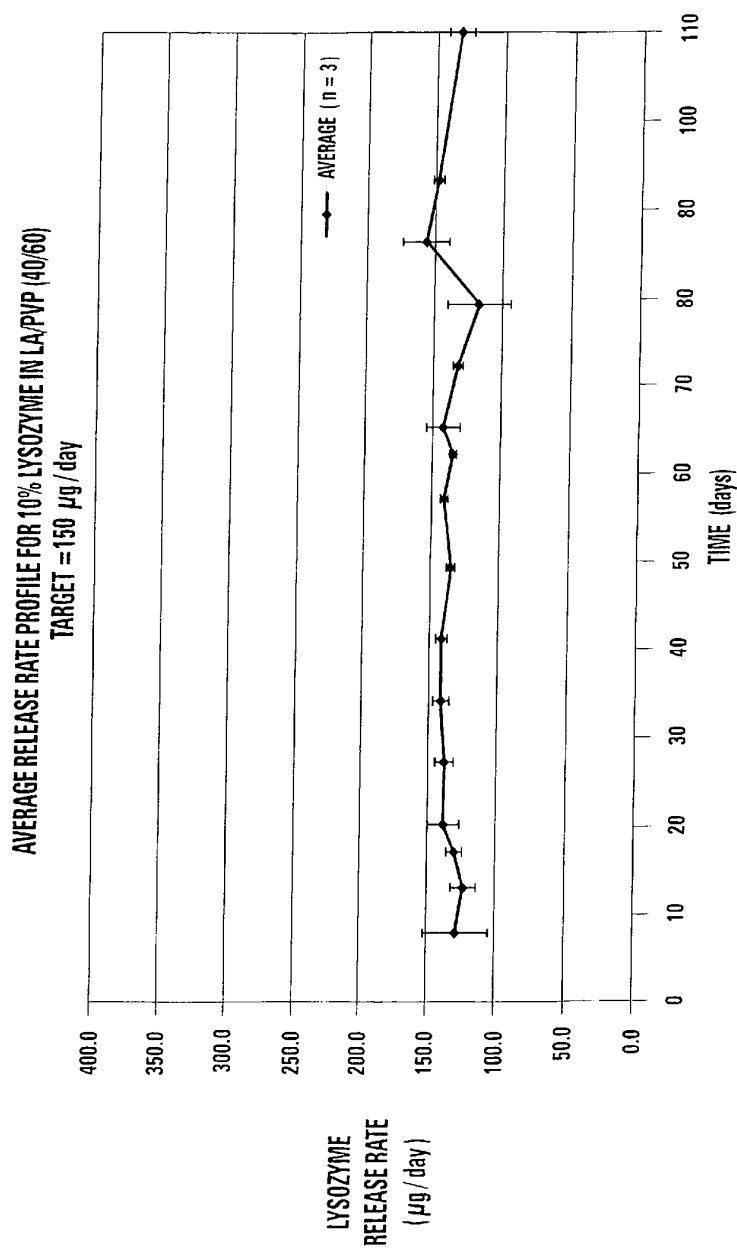


FIGURE 5

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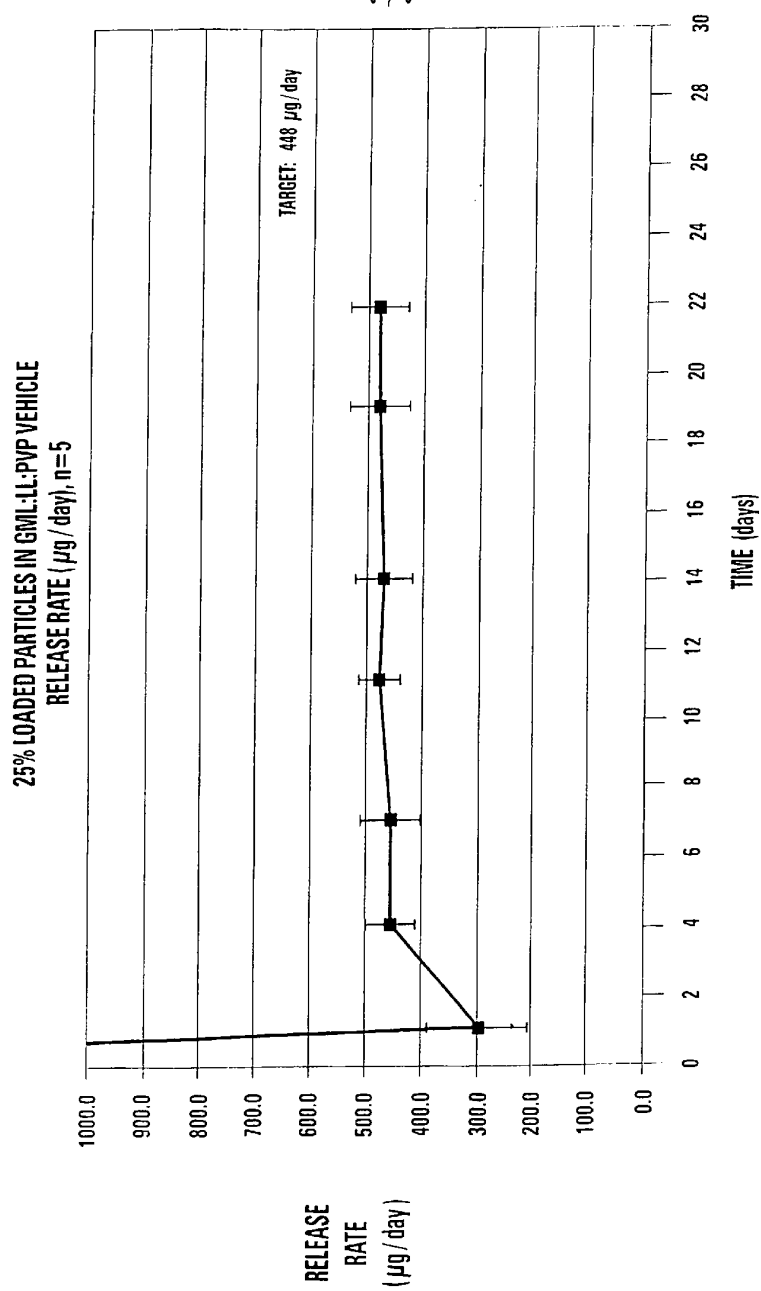


FIGURE 6

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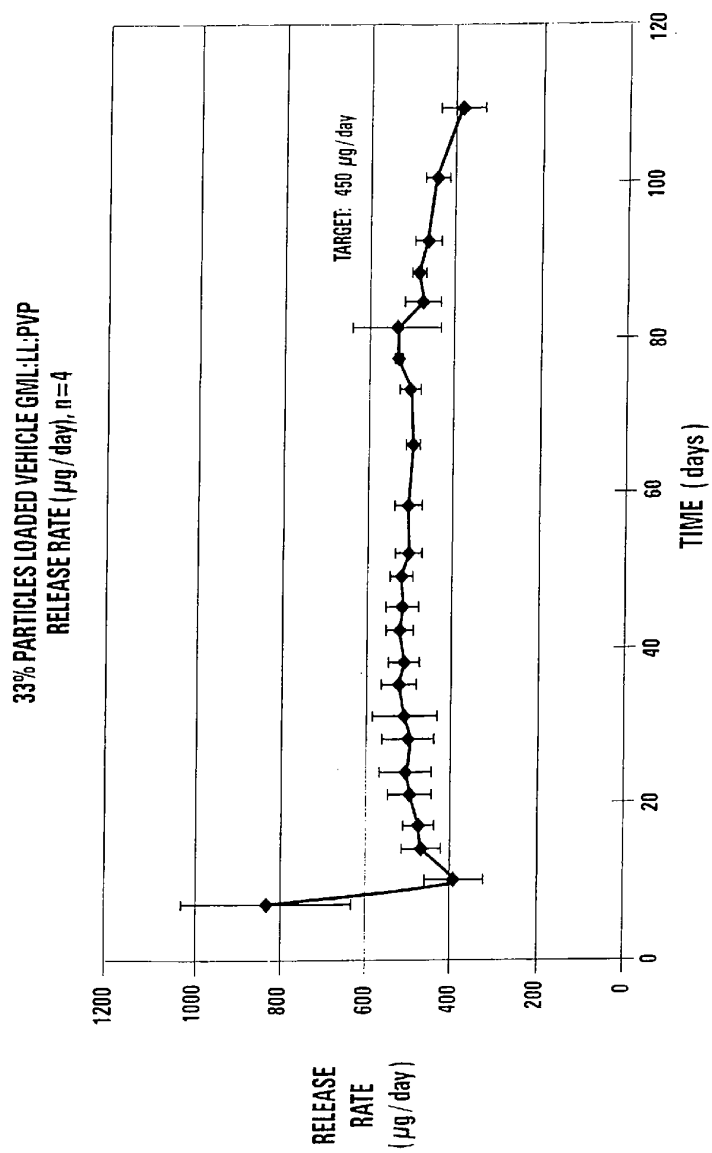


FIGURE 7

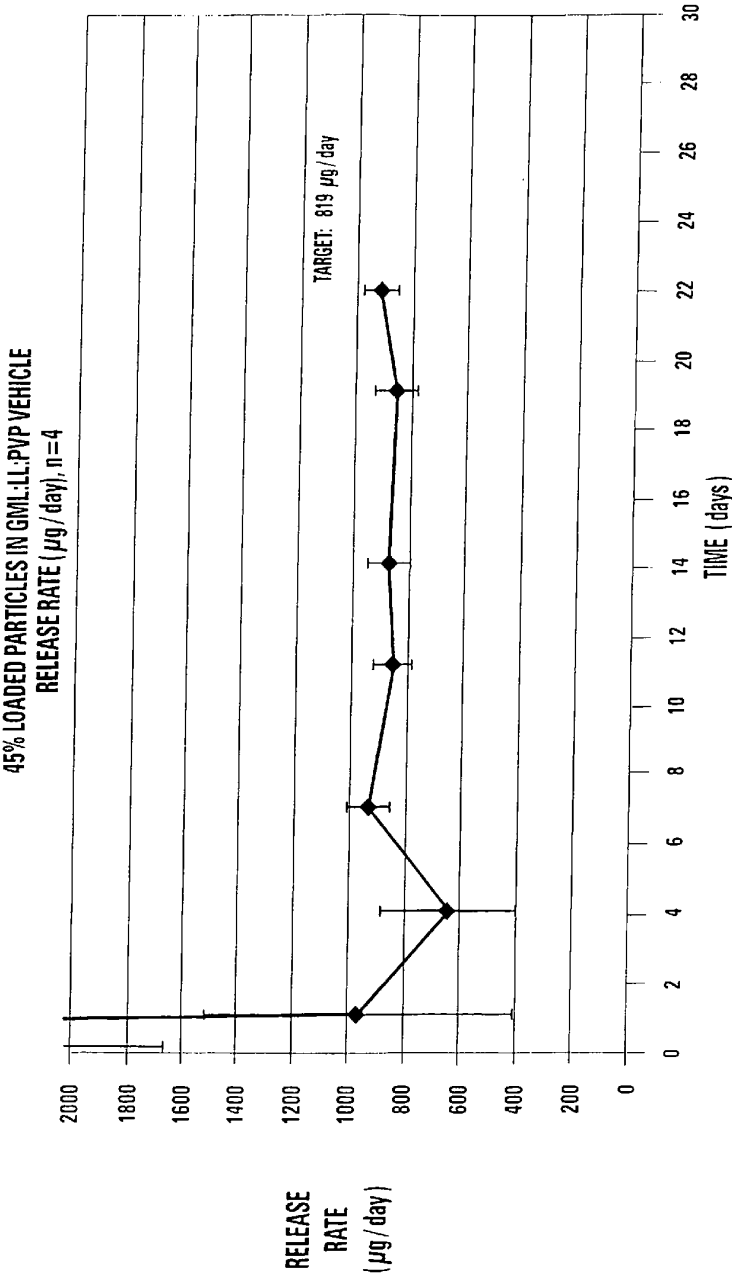


FIGURE 8