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# **Oxygen consumption of bovine granulosa cells *in vitro***

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Engineering

in

Biotechnology

at Massey University, Palmerston North,

New Zealand

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2012



## Abstract

The oxygen consumption rate of granulosa cells is considered to be a key determinant of oocyte oxygenation in follicles. The oxygen status of the oocyte potentially dictates its developmental competence. However, quantitative information on the oxygen consumption rate of granulosa cells in literature is scarce. This limitation has hindered further investigation into the oocyte oxygenation, which could potentially be used as an indicator for selecting high quality oocytes for producing high quality embryos. This could ultimately contribute to improvement of the success rates of human In-Vitro Fertilisation.

In light of this issue, this work developed a method for measuring the oxygen consumption rate of granulosa cells *in vitro*. This included techniques related to granulosa cell harvest from cows, suspending/culturing granulosa cells in culture medium and development of a competent respirometer. Each measurement run on the oxygen consumption rate of granulosa cells was conducted by suspending the granulosa cell culture in the respirometer, in which an optical-based oxygen sensor probe was employed to continuously monitor the oxygen partial pressure change in the cell suspension.

Five separate sets of respirometer data were collected and used to calculate the oxygen consumption rate, giving a range of  $2.1$  to  $3.3 \times 10^{-16} \text{mol.cell}^{-1}.\text{s}^{-1}$  /  $0.16$  to  $0.25 \text{mol.m}^{-3}.\text{s}^{-1}$ . These rates were comparable with but higher than other animal cell oxygen consumption rates reported by the literature. They were approximately 5 times higher than the oxygen consumption rate of granulosa cells harvested from sheep (Gosden & Byatt-Smith 1986).

The implications of the measured oxygen consumption rate were then examined in the context of oxygen transport in large bovine preantral follicles via an existing mathematical model. The resulting predicted oxygen profiles in large bovine follicles were consistent with the study of Redding *et al.* (2007), which showed that as a preantral follicle grew the oxygen transport across the follicle was increasingly strained, resulting in subsequent decrease in oocyte oxygenation. By applying the bovine specific parameter estimates to the model, this work predicted that the largest follicle radius for the oxygen transport in bovine preantral follicle was  $134\mu\text{m}$ , beyond which the oxygen could not reach oocyte. Since the experimentally reported sizes of the large bovine preantral follicles ranged of  $58$  to  $145\mu\text{m}$  in radius (see Section 7.1.2), this work proposed that the oxygen transport was capable of oxygenating the oocytes in all but the largest preantral follicles. If bovine preantral follicles were to grow larger than they are experimentally observed to do so, all oocytes contained within such follicles would be in a hypoxic state. This is a result consistent with other work.

Furthermore, based on the use of bovine and ovine specific parameter estimates in the model, this work found that oxygen transport in follicles was likely to be the result of a unique combination of parameters for a particular species. Specifically the oxygen consumption rate and fluid voidage of follicles of a given species would be the key determinants in oxygen levels across the follicle. This work also found that the fluid voidage range across large bovine preantral follicles was reasonably wide ( $0.34$  to  $0.65$ ) and the value increases with the follicle size. This suggested that the use of fluid voidage for investigating the oxygen levels across

preantral follicles must be follicle size specific. Finally, this work presented a nomograph which described the relationship among fluid voidage, follicle radius and oxygen levels at oocyte surface. The nomograph can be used as a tool for further research to study the oxygen status of the oocyte during the growth of a large bovine preantral follicle and may be generalised to describe non-species specific follicle oxygenation in growing follicles.

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to my supervisors, Dr. Gabe Redding and Dr. John Bronlund. Gabe, thank you for teaching me logical thinking and spending considerable amount of time editing my thesis. Your wise idea and correction on my thesis really help me a lot. Thank you for taking me to the abattoir and show me how to cut ovaries from cows post mortem. John, thank you for letting me do this project in spite of that trouble I caused at the lab. Thank you for teaching me oxygen uptake kinetics and how to use Excel to analyse the data. Thank you for solving the crisis, in which I was almost forced to leave New Zealand. Thanks also to Colin Brown for enlightening the respirometer design.

Many thanks to Affco New Zealand Ltd. Thanks for allowing us to collect ovaries.

Many thanks to all staff in Institutes of Technology & Engineering Micro Suite. Ann-Marie Jackson, thank you for your help and tolerance.

Dad, Mum, thank you for your support.

# Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2. Literature review.....	3
2.1 Ovaries and follicles .....	3
2.2 Development of the follicle and its follicular cells in each follicular stage.....	5
2.2.1 Primordial follicles.....	5
2.2.2 Primary follicles .....	6
2.2.3 Early preantral follicles.....	6
2.2.4 Late preantral follicles .....	7
2.2.5 Early antral follicle .....	8
2.2.6 Antral follicle.....	8
2.2.7 Dominant follicle .....	9
2.3 Vascularisation and oxygen transport in follicles .....	9
2.4 Effect of intrafollicular factors on granulosa cells .....	10
2.5 The techniques of granulosa cell harvest .....	11
2.5.1 Ovary transportation and treatment .....	11
2.5.2 Isolation of follicles.....	12
2.5.3 Granulosa cell harvest.....	12
2.5.4 Granulosa cell culture .....	13
2.5.4.1 Granulosa cell culture medium and temperature .....	13
2.5.4.2 Granulosa cell quantity and viability assessment .....	14
2.6 Conclusion.....	14
Chapter 3. Preliminary respirometer design .....	15
3.1 Specific culture conditions suitable for the measurement of granulosa cell oxygen consumption rate .....	15
3.2 Review on the methodology for assesseing/monitoring dissolved oxygen content in aqueous solutions and measuring the oxygen consumption rate of mammalian cells .....	16
3.2.1 Titrimetric analysis .....	16
3.2.2 Manometric technique .....	17
3.2.3 Amperometric technique.....	18
3.2.3.1 Clark electrode.....	18
3.2.3.2 Galvanic electrode.....	20
3.2.4 Optical techniques.....	20

<b>3.2.4.1 Background knowledge and theoretical application of optical techniques to assess oxygen levels</b> .....	21
<b>3.2.4.2 Practical application of optical techniques</b> .....	22
3.2.4.2.1 Solid-state oxygen sensor .....	22
3.2.4.2.2 Water-soluble oxygen sensor .....	25
<b>3.2.5 Conclusion and discussion</b> .....	25
<b>3.3 Optical-based preliminary respirometer</b> .....	26
<b>3.3.1 Review on amperometric-based respirometers</b> .....	26
<b>3.3.2 Design of the preliminary respirometer</b> .....	27
<b>3.3.3 Preliminary respirometer design and build</b> .....	28
<b>3.3.4 The optical device</b> .....	30
<b>3.4 Resiprometer testing</b> .....	31
<b>3.5 Problems with the measurement</b> .....	32
<b>3.5.1 The granulosa cells in the respirometer</b> .....	33
<b>3.5.2 Respirometer oxygen profiles</b> .....	34
<b>3.6 Conclusion</b> .....	35
<b>Chapter 4. A new respirometer</b> .....	37
<b>4.1 Review of an existing respirometer (developed by Brown 2011)</b> .....	37
<b>4.2 A new respirometer proposal</b> .....	39
<b>4.3 Gas chromatography sampling (GCMS) vials</b> .....	40
<b>4.4 The new respirometer</b> .....	41
<b>4.5 Air tight testing of the new respirometer</b> .....	43
<b>4.6 Conclusion</b> .....	44
<b>Chapter 5. Methodology for granulosa cell harvest</b> .....	45
<b>5.1 Examination of the previous methodology for granulosa cell harvest</b> .....	45
<b>5.1.1 Ovarian collection</b> .....	45
<b>5.1.2 Approaches for granulosa cell harvest</b> .....	47
<b>5.1.3 Issues associated with each approach to granulosa cell harvest</b> .....	47
<b>5.2 New methodology development for granulosa cell harvest</b> .....	48
<b>5.2.1 New requirements and proposal for the new methods</b> .....	48
<b>5.2.2 Review of granulosa cell dispersion and prevention of granulosa clump formation</b> .....	48
<b>5.2.3 New methodology for granulosa cell harvest</b> .....	49
<b>5.3 Conclusion and discussion</b> .....	50
<b>Chapter 6. Experimental study of the oxygen consumption rate of granulosa cells</b> .....	51

6.1 Methodology .....	51
6.2 Results and discussion .....	53
6.3 The oxygen concentration in granulosa cell suspension.....	57
6.4 The oxygen consumption rate of granulosa cells and comparison with oxygen concentration rate of other animal cells .....	57
6.5 Conclusion.....	58
<b>Chapter 7. Oxygen transportation in bovine follicles .....</b>	<b>60</b>
7.1 Methodology .....	61
7.1.1 Mathematical model .....	61
7.1.2 Parameter estimates .....	62
7.1.2.1 <i>Oxygen concentration at the follicle surface (<math>C_o</math>)</i> .....	62
7.1.2.2 <i>Fluid voidage (<math>\epsilon</math>)</i> .....	62
7.1.2.3 <i>Effective diffusion coefficient of oxygen in the follicle (<math>D_{eff}</math>)</i> .....	64
7.1.2.4 <i>The oxygen consumption rate of granulosa cells</i> .....	64
7.2 Results and discussion .....	65
7.2.1 <b>Bovine specific parameter estimates required by the model for predicting the oxygen levels across large preantral follicles.</b> .....	65
7.2.2 <b>Oxygen profiles across large preantral follicles</b> .....	65
7.2.3 <b>Maximum follicle size and oocyte oxygenation</b> .....	70
7.3 Conclusion.....	72
<b>Chapter 8. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Chapter 9. Reference .....</b>	<b>74</b>