

Diagnostic Value of 14c Urea Breath Test for Helicobacter pylori Detection in Indonesian Dyspeptic Patients

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31 **ABSTRACT**

32 **Introduction:** Histopathology method is often used as a gold standard diagnostic for *H.*
33 *pylori* infection in Indonesia. However, it requires an endoscopic procedure which is
34 limited in Indonesia. A non-invasive method, such as ¹⁴C Urea Breath Test (UBT) is more
35 favorable; however, this particular method has not been validated yet.

36 **Methods:** A total of 55 dyspeptic patients underwent gastroscopy and ¹⁴C-UBT test. We
37 used Heliprobe[®] UBT for UBT test. As for the histology, May-Giemsa staining of two
38 gastric biopsies (from the antrum and corpus) were evaluated following the Updated
39 Sydney System.

40 **Results:** The Receiver Operating Characteristics analysis showed that the optimum cut-
41 off value was 57 with excellence Area under Curve = 0.955 (95% CI = 0.861-1.000). By
42 applying the optimum cut-off value, Heliprobe[®] UBT showed 92.31% for sensitivity,
43 97.62% for specificity, 92.31% for positive predictive value, 97.62% for negative
44 predictive value, 38.77 for positive likelihood ratio, 0.0788 for negative likelihood ratio,
45 and 96.36% for the accuracy.

46 **Conclusion:** The ¹⁴C-UBT is an accurate test for *H. pylori* diagnosis with excellent
47 sensitivity, specificity, and accuracy. The different optimum cut-off points suggested a
48 validation is absolutely necessary for new test prior application to the new population.

49

50 **INTRODUCTION**

51 *Helicobacter pylori* have infected approximately ¹³ 50% of the worldwide population, with a
52 higher prevalence in developing countries (1). This bacterium can induce progressive
53 gastric mucosal inflammation leading to several cascades in gastric diseases starting with
54 chronic gastritis, atrophic gastritis until the end phase is gastric adenocarcinoma (2, 3). One
55 of the gold standard methods to diagnose *H. pylori* infection in Indonesia is histopathology
56 examination, which endoscopy examination is necessary to collect the gastric biopsy (4).
57 Unfortunately, there are only less than 400 hospitals with endoscopy system in Indonesia
58 and mostly located in big cities in Java Island (5, 6). This number is not sufficient
59 considering the total population of Indonesia is approximately 250 million. Ideally, 2500
60 consultant gastroenterologists are needed, but in recent years only 10 gastrointestinal
61 endoscopy training centers were established (5). Thus, the use of histopathology
62 examination for *H. pylori* detection is still a challenge in Indonesia. Thus, the non-invasive
63 method for *H. pylori* detection is more favorable to cover all Indonesian populations.

64 ¹⁴ Urea Breath Test (UBT) is a non-invasive diagnostic method that widely used to
65 diagnose *H. pylori* infection. This test is based on the mechanism that ingested “labeled
66 carbon-containing urea” can be broken down to carbon dioxide (CO₂) and ammonia (NH₄-
67 OH) by *H. pylori* as ³ the urease-producing microorganism in the gastric mucosa (7). The
68 tagged carbon within CO₂ will be detected in exhaled breath patients (8, 9). There are two
69 carbon isotopes (¹³C and ¹⁴C), which are used for the UBT. The ¹³C isotope need more
70 complex equipment, including a mass spectrophotometer, that makes difficult for
71 conducting the test compare to ¹⁴C isotope that only required a portable compact beta-
72 scintillation counter (8). Thus, it is more convenient to perform UBT using ¹⁴C isotope. In

73 addition, compared to other non-invasive diagnostic methods, UBT has advantages on the
74 less time required to perform the test, quick result, and less technical handling.

75 Based on national consensus, ^{13}C -UBT still becomes one of the recommended
76 diagnostic tests for *H. pylori* infection (4, 10). Previous studies reported that ^{13}C -UBT
77 method has 99% sensitivity and 98% specificity respectively (4, 10). In contrast, studies in
78 other Asian countries showed that ^{13}C -UBT could have lower sensitivity (64.2%) and lower
79 specificity (89.1%) (11, 12). Despite many publications had assessed the diagnostic value
80 of ^{13}C -UBT, studies about ^{14}C -UBT remain scarce. Furthermore, to our knowledge, ^{14}C -
81 UBT has not yet been validated in the Indonesian population. A validation study is
82 necessary to get information regarding the diagnostic value of ^{14}C -UBT in Indonesia, so
83 the practitioners can apply this test as an alternative method rather than the invasive
84 methods. Here, we conducted a prospective study to validate ^{14}C -UBT as an alternative *H.*
85 *pylori* diagnostic method in Indonesia.

86

87 **METHODS**

88 **Study population**

89 We conducted a cross-sectional study and recruited patients for endoscopic examination
90 from November 2018 to April 2019 in Surabaya, Indonesia. A total of 55 dyspeptic patients
91 with endoscopy indications were included. Among all participants, none had received
92 antibiotics and bismuth drugs for 4 weeks and 2 weeks before the procedure, respectively.
93 In addition, none of these patients had a history of gastric surgery, endoscopy
94 contraindication, and bleeding gastrointestinal tract 4 weeks prior to the procedure. Patients
95 were fasting before endoscopy and UBT. Before the UBT test, patients were interviewed
96 with a standard questionnaire to obtain demographic data. One day after the UBT test,
97 upper-endoscopy was performed by experienced endoscopists. During the endoscopic
98 examination procedure, the endoscopist diagnosed the patients based on the endoscopic
99 observation. In addition, we obtained two gastric specimens (one from the lesser curvature
100 of the antrum, approximately 3 cm from the gastric pyloric ring, and one more from the
101 greater curvature of the corpus). Those two specimens were used for the histological
102 examination by professional histopathologist. This study was approved by Dr. Soetomo
103 General Hospital Ethics Committee and written informed consent obtained from all
104 patients.

105

106 **Histology evaluation of *H. pylori* infection**

107 The *H. pylori* status was based on histopathological examination by May-Giemsa staining
108 as the reference standard to classify the *H. pylori*-positive and the *H. pylori*-negative groups
109 (13). Briefly, all biopsy materials for histological examination were fixed in 10% buffered
110 formalin and embedded inside paraffin. Serial sections were stained with May-Giemsa

111 stain. The stained specimens then were evaluated using the Updated Sydney System (14).

112 Samples with bacterial load score ≥ 1 would be considered as positive for *H. pylori*.

113

114 ⁴**¹⁴C-Urea Breath Test (UBT)**

115 Patients had to avoid smoking and sparkling water or soft drinks on the day of the test and

116 fast at least 4 hours before the test. For the UBT examination, we used Heliprobe[®] ¹⁴C-

117 UBT (Heliprobe, Stockholm, Sweden), and all the procedures we followed the

118 manufacturer's instructions. The patient swallowed a HeliCap[®] capsule containing ¹⁴C urea

119 (1 μ Ci) and wait 10 minutes before exhaling into Heliprobe[®] Breath Card where the

120 reactivity filters absorb the CO₂. The indicator changes color from orange to yellow to

121 indicate when the reactivity filters are saturated and sampling completed. Then the

122 Heliprobe[®] Breath Card were inserted to the Heliprobe[®] Analyzer to obtain the

123 measurement value.

124

125 ⁵**Statistical analysis**

126 Discrete variables were tested using Pearson's chi-squared test. The normality of the

127 continuous variables was analyzed by the Shapiro–Wilk normality test. Receiver-operating

128 characteristic (ROC) curves were determined to calculate the best cut-off values, including

129 the area under the curve for discriminating *H. pylori* positivity. The statistical analysis was

130 performed by R. Studio (R. Studio, Inc., Boston, USA) and SPSS statistical software

131 ¹⁷version 23.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) to calculate diagnostic test value: sensitivity,

132 specificity, ⁶positive predictive value, negative predictive value, positive likelihood ratio,

133 negative likelihood ratio, as well as their accuracy.

134

135

136 **RESULTS**

137 **Patients characteristic**

138 We included 55 subjects, consisted of 36 males (65.5%) and 19 females (34.5%) with a
139 mean age of 48.27 ± 11.4 years old. The majority of the patients were age more than 40
140 years old with age group between 40-49 years old became the predominant age group
141 (17/55, 27.3%). Most of the patients were Javanese (38/55, 69.0%) because the patients
142 were from Surabaya city that is located on Java island.

143

144 **Diagnostic value of ^{14}C -UBT and cut-off determination**

145 The manufacture cut-off recommendation for the ^{14}C U BT was 50. The analysis using this
146 cut-off showed the value of sensitivity, specificity, positive predictive value, negative
147 predictive value, and accuracy of 92.31%, 95.24%, 85.71%, 85.71%, and 94.54%
148 respectively. The value of positive possibility ratio and negative possibility ratio were
149 19.380 and 0.079, respectively.

150 Following the recommendation for validating the new diagnostic modality for a new
151 population (8, 15), we investigated the best cut-off value for the Indonesia population. The
152 ROC analysis showed the area under the curve of the ^{14}C -UBT was 0.955 (95% CI=0.861-
153 1.000). The optimum cut-off value was 57, with sensitivity, specificity, positive predictive
154 value, negative predictive value, and accuracy values of 92.31%, 97.62%, 92.31%, 97.62%,
155 and 96.36% respectively (Table 1). The value of positive likelihood ratio and negative
156 likelihood ratio were 38.770 and 0.0788, respectively. We could obtain similar sensitivity
157 but slightly higher specificity by applying a new cut-off point of 57, suggesting the cut-off
158 value of 57 is more suitable to be applied in the Indonesian population. Therefore, further
159 analysis in this study was using cut-off 57.

160 **Table 1. The diagnostic value between two different cut-offs**

Diagnostic parameter	Diagnostic value	
	Cut-off 50	Cut-off 57
Sensitivity	92.31%	92.31%
Specificity	95.24%	97.62%
PPV	85.71%	92.31%
NPV	97.56%	97.62%
Accuracy	94.54%	96.36%

161

162 **Diagnostic test results and patients' demographic data**

163 We compared the prevalence of *H. pylori* infection by using ¹⁴C-UBT with a new cut-off
 164 57 and histopathology analysis (Table 2). A similar prevalence of *H. pylori* (13/55, 23.6%)
 165 was observed between these methods. The characteristic of sex and age were similar
 166 between these methods. The number of males (7/13, 53.8%) was more than female (6/13,
 167 46.2%) in the *H. pylori*-positive patients' group. The predominant age group of *H. pylori*-
 168 positive patients was 40-49 years old (5/13, 38.5%). In addition, Javanese people become
 169 the most dominant in the positive case of the *H. pylori* group between these methods.

170 **Table 2. Diagnostic test results and patients' demographic data**

Characteristics	¹⁴ C-UBT *		Histology	
	Hp Positive (%)	Hp Negative (%)	Hp Positive (%)	Hp Negative (%)
Total patients	13 (23.6)	42 (76.4)	13 (23.6)	42 (76.4)
Sex				
Male	7 (53.8)	29 (69.0)	7 (53.8)	29 (69.0)
Female	6 (46.2)	13 (31.0)	6 (46.2)	13 (31.0)
Age				
<29	0 (0.0)	4 (9.5)	0 (0.0)	4 (9.5)
30-39	0 (0.0)	7 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	7 (16.7)
40-49	5 (38.5)	12 (28.6)	5 (38.5)	12 (28.6)
50-59	3 (23.1)	12 (28.6)	3 (23.1)	12 (28.6)
>60	5 (38.5)	7 (16.7)	5 (38.5)	7 (16.7)
Ethnic				
Ambon	0 (0.0)	2 (4.8)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.8)
Bugis	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)
Javanese	11 (84.6)	27 (64.3)	10 (76.9)	28 (66.7)
Dayak	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)
Madura	1 (7.7)	5 (11.9)	2 (15.4)	4 (9.5)

Sunda	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)
Chinese	1 (7.7)	5 (11.9)	1 (7.7)	5 (11.9)

171 *Diagnosis based on UBT was using the cut-off value of 57

172

173 **Endoscopy finding among *H. pylori*-infected patients**

174 The endoscopy finding revealed that among *H. pylori*-uninfected patients (Table 3), the
 175 most predominant observation was superficial gastritis (52.4%), followed by gastro-
 176 duodenitis (23.8%) and erosive gastritis (19.0%). Meanwhile, among *H. pylori*-infected
 177 patients, erosive gastritis was predominant (46.2%), followed by peptic ulcer (30.8%) and
 178 superficial gastritis (15.4%).

179 Table 3. Endoscopy results among *H. pylori*-infected patients

Endoscopic finding	<i>H. pylori</i> -negative (%)	<i>H. pylori</i> -positive (%)
	N = 42	N = 13
Normal	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)
Superficial gastritis	22 (52.4)	2 (15.4)
Erosive Gastritis	8 (19.0)	6 (46.2)
Gastroduodenitis	10 (23.8)	1 (7.7)
Peptic Ulcer	1 (2.4)	4 (30.8)

180

181 **DISCUSSION**

182 This is the first study to determine the diagnostic performance of ¹⁴C-UBT in the
183 Indonesian population. The standard measurement according to the manufacturer
184 recommendation had yielded a good value of sensitivity, specificity, ⁶ positive predictive
185 value, negative predictive value, positive possibility ratio, negative possibility ratio, and
186 accuracy compared to gold standard histopathology. However, even in this state a
187 validation of new test prior application to the new population is necessary. Our ROC
188 analysis resulted in the optimum cut-off point was 57, which is slightly higher than the
189 manufacturer recommendation. By applying this new cut-off point we could get similar
190 sensitivity, but slightly better specificity, suggesting the ability to determine the true
191 negative patients is increasing. Our result was in line with a systematic review study that
192 insisted all results of UBT have to be adjusted for cut-off value for a new population (8,
193 15). The adjustment of cut-off value may increase the performance of the diagnostic test
194 (15). A review study revealed that overall the specificity and sensitivity of the UBT are
195 mostly more than 95% and better than when using higher cut-off (16). In addition, a study
196 from Iran and Europe showed a better diagnostic performance was obtained when applied
197 a higher cut-off point (8, 17), suggesting this method combining with higher cut-off value
198 would give ¹² accurate, reliable, and useful for the diagnosis of *H. pylori* infection in routine
199 clinical practice. The higher Heliprobe[®] cut-off value should depend on the population,
200 because different population has different prevalence of *H. pylori* due to many factors such
201 as ethnics and life style. Therefore, different population has different optimum cut-off
202 value. Further study is interesting to do because Indonesia has many kinds of population
203 with different characteristic and variety of *H. pylori* prevalence.

204 The new cut-off application of ¹⁴C-UBT and histopathology method yielded the
205 same positive and negative results in diagnosing *H. pylori* infection. A previous study
206 showed that around 20% to 30% of the *H. pylori*-infected individuals may develop peptic
207 ulcer disease, and then end-stage of the infection might be developed to gastric cancer (2,
208 3). Endoscopy following by histopathology method has been widely performed for
209 gastrointestinal disorders and become a pivotal approach for *H. pylori* infection diagnosis
210 (16), but this method still becomes a challenge in Indonesia because the gastroenterology
211 and endoscopic facilities remain limited and not enough to cover total population (5, 6).
212 Moreover, this invasive method also spends a relatively long time, higher cost, and more
213 inconvenient compare to the non-invasive method. In addition, our UBT validation result
214 showed an excellent AUC value of 0.955, suggesting only less than 5% case was no
215 concordance between test and gold standard diagnostic method. This value was greater
216 than other diagnostic methods that had been validated in Indonesia, such as serology anti-
217 IgG (AUC = 0.913) (18). Compared to RAPIRUN[®], the overall accuracy of Heliprobe[®] in
218 Indonesia showed better performance (19). These results confirmed that UBT is an
219 excellent non-invasive *H. pylori* infection diagnostic method, even compared to other non-
220 invasive modalities.

221 In this study, we found that the most case found from *H. pylori*-uninfected patients
222 was superficial gastritis. Meanwhile, erosive gastritis was predominant in the *H. pylori*-
223 infected patients. Comparison between these two groups showed that the prevalence of
224 superficial gastritis and gastroduodenitis were more dominant in *H. pylori*-uninfected
225 patients than *H. pylori*-infected patients, while the more severe condition that is a peptic
226 ulcer, was more dominant in *H. pylori*-infected patients. This result can be explained form
227 *H. pylori* infection pathogenesis. *H. pylori* can make inflammation and further damage that

228 create erosive gastritis (20). If this condition continues, erosive gastritis might become a
229 gastric ulcer, gastric atrophy, and even develop into gastric adenocarcinoma (21).

230 There were several limitations to this study. The sample number of this study might
231 be not enough to represent the country needed due to data only take from one city.
232 Therefore, further study with a higher number of samples collected from several different
233 locations in Indonesia might be needed. In addition, the subjects only taken from dyspepsia
234 patients that underwent endoscopy in the hospital. This could not fully represent *H. pylori*
235 infection prevalence because infected patients also can be asymptomatic.

236

237 CONCLUSION

238 The ³¹⁴C-UBT is an accurate test for *H. pylori* diagnosis with excellent sensitivity,
239 specificity, and accuracy. The different optimum cut-off points applied in Indonesian
240 samples suggested that validation is absolutely necessary for new test prior application to
241 the new population.**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

242 No competing interests declared.

243

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