

In our first installment, let's introduce some pharmacology concepts and buzzwords to build on for future Pharmacology Corner articles. Figure 1 below shows a cartoon of the two major sub-disciplines in pharmacology, pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics, and some common terms that are associated with each discipline.

Generally, pharmacodynamics (PD) can be defined as "what a drug does to the body." PD studies topics such as the mechanism of action of a drug (How does the aspirin get rid of your headache?), the target of the drug (Where does the aspirin go to relieve your headache?), and how much of the drug is needed to produce desired results (How many aspirin should you take to relieve the headache but not make your stomach upset or cause other adverse effects?).

Pharmacokinetics (PK) is broadly defined as "what the body does to a drug." PK focuses on the movement of drugs into, through, and out of the body. For example, PK assesses drug administration (Is it better to take the drug orally or to inject it?), drug distribution (How does the antibiotic I just took know to go to the infection in my toe?), drug metabolism (How does the body change a drug in an attempt to remove it?), and drug excretion (It has to get out, doesn't it?).

Now that we have introduced pharmacology, in upcoming articles, we will take a more detailed look at each of the terms in the figure below and understand more about them. Next up: metabolism, get excited!

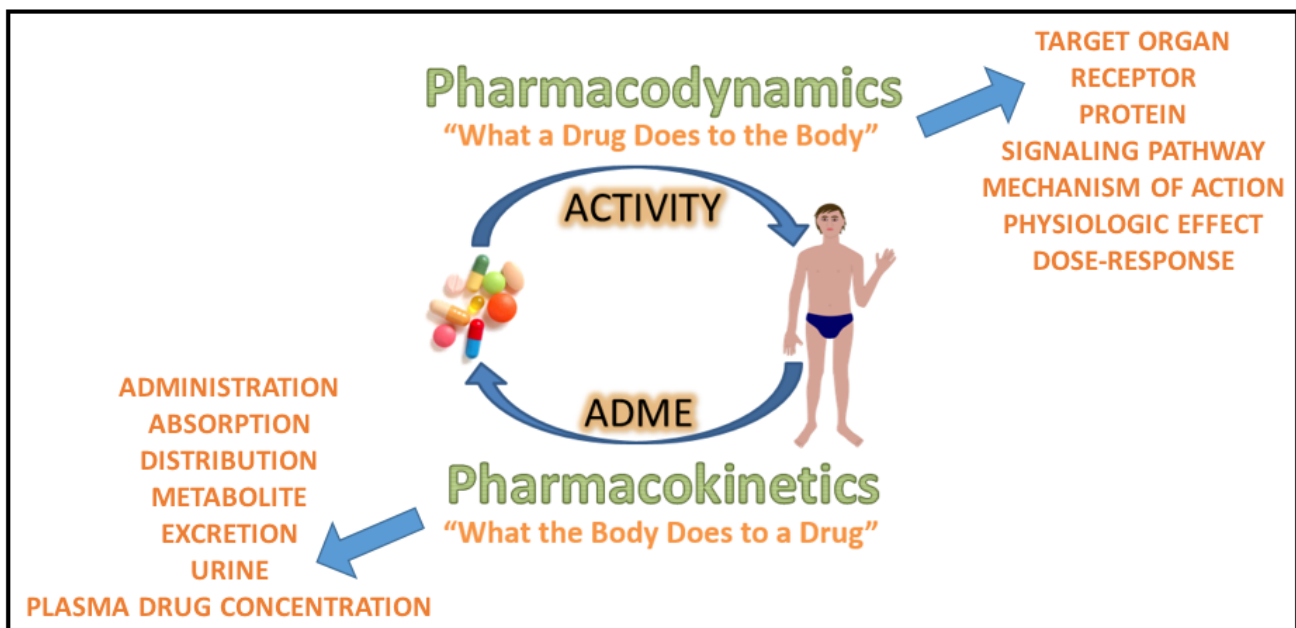


Figure 1. Cartoon comparing pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics and common words associated with each. We will discuss each of the words in detail in later Pharmacology Corner articles.

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