

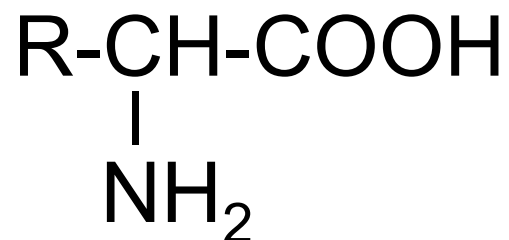
# *Organic acidurias*

Jörn Oliver Sass / Diana Ballhausen

# Selective Screening

- **Newborn screening** covers a general pattern of target diseases for every newborn.
- **Selective screening** searches only for selected diseases in individuals suspected to have a metabolic disease based on clinical, basic laboratory or family history data.
- **Analysis of urinary organic acids:**  
One of the most frequently applied tests in selective screening, often combined with acylcarnitines and amino acids, in particular, if an intoxication-type disease or energy deficiency is suspected.

# Amino Acids



Chemically, amino acids are organic acids

**What is the difference?**

# Amino Acids *versus* Organic Acids

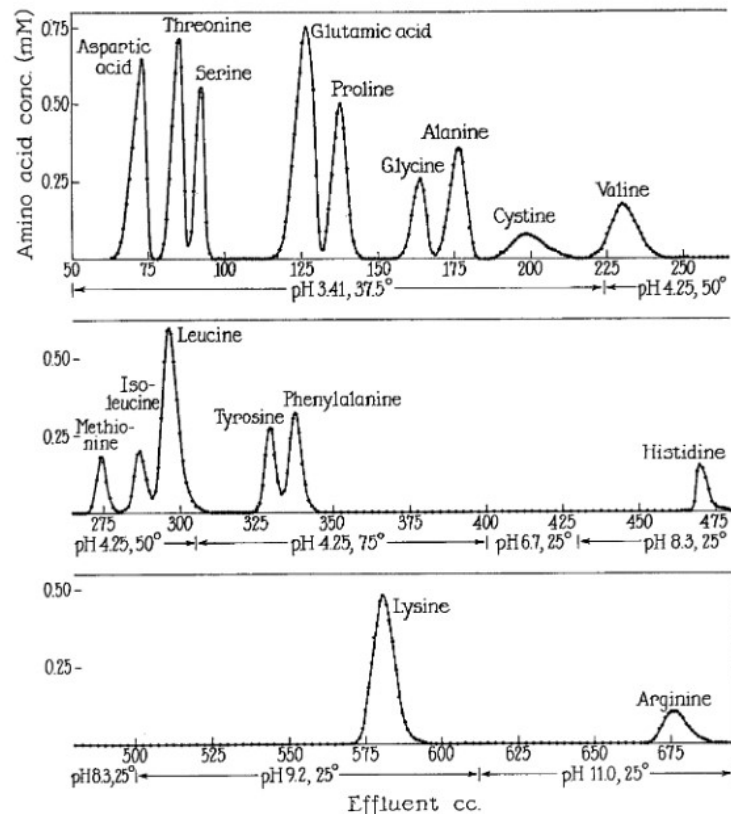
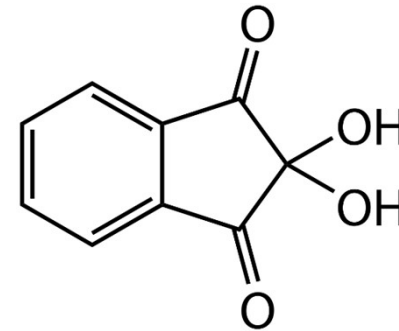


FIG. 1. Separation of amino acids from a synthetic mixture simulating the composition of a protein hydrolysate. The column of Dowex-50, 0.9 × 100 cm., was operated in the sodium form, with buffers of the pH and temperature indicated as eluants. A sample of about 6 mg. of amino acids (see Table II) was chromatographed. The position of an amino acid peak is reproducible, on the average, to better than 5 per cent.

## Historic differentiation



Ninhydrin

### CHROMATOGRAPHY OF AMINO ACIDS ON SULFONATED POLYSTYRENE RESINS

BY STANFORD MOORE AND WILLIAM H. STEIN

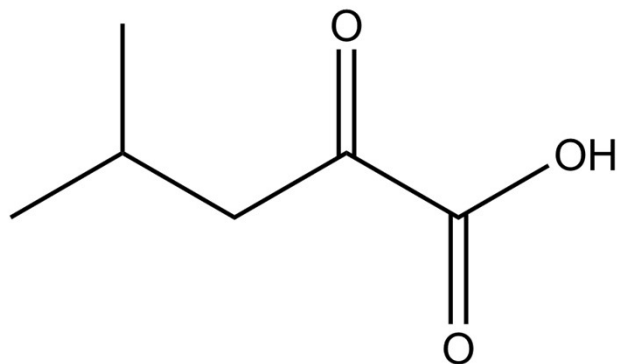
(From the Laboratories of The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, New York, New York)

(Received for publication, May 17, 1951)

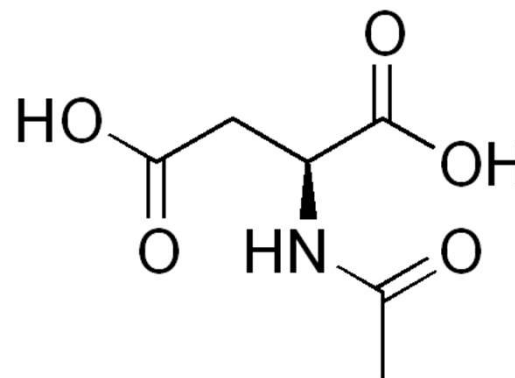
J Biol Chem. 1951;192:663-81.

# Organic Acids

Amino acid metabolites after transamination or *N*-acylation



alpha-ketoisocaproic acid



*N*-acetylaspartic acid

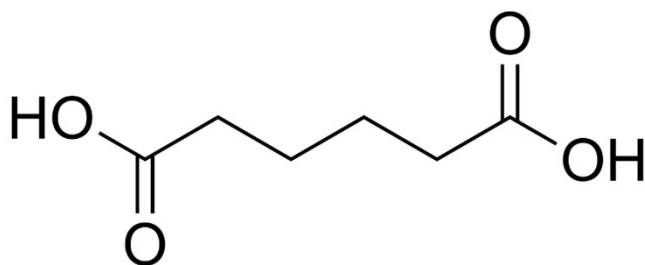
No primary amino group

⇒ no reaction with ninhydrin

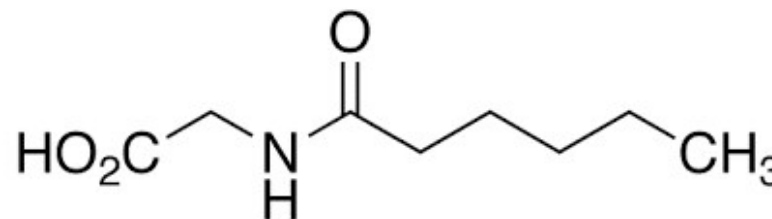
# Organic Acids

Fatty acid metabolites

e.g., dicarboxylic acids and *N*-glycine conjugates



adipic acid



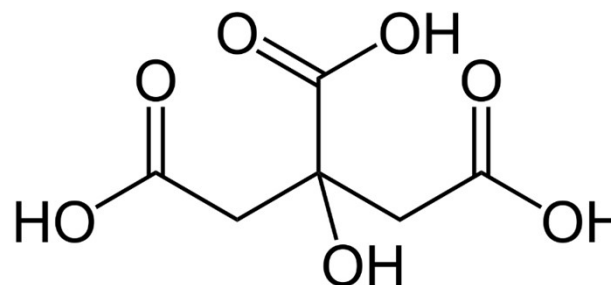
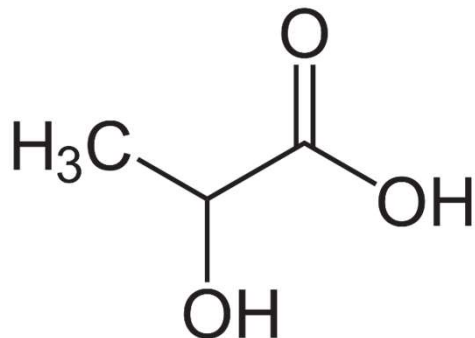
*N*-hexanoylglycine

No primary amino group  
 ⇒ no reaction with ninhydrin

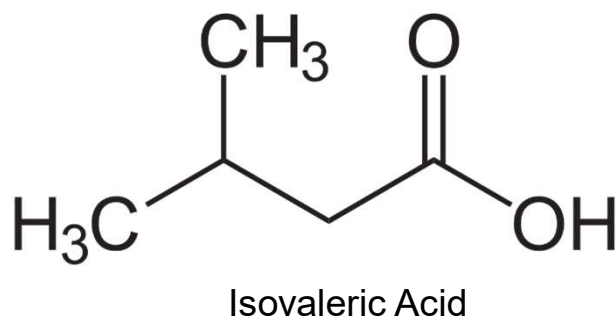
# Organic Acids

Lactate, TCA cycle metabolites, carbohydrate derivatives,  
somes purines/ pyrimidines

and many more compounds...



# Early Organic Acid Analysis



*ISOVALERIC ACIDEMIA: A NEW GENETIC DEFECT OF  
LEUCINE METABOLISM\**

By K. TANAKA, M. A. BUDD, M. L. EFRON, AND K. J. ISSELBACHER

DEPARTMENTS OF MEDICINE AND NEUROLOGY, HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL AND  
MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL, BOSTON

*Communicated by Herman M. Kalckar, May 19, 1966*

Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 1966;56:236-42

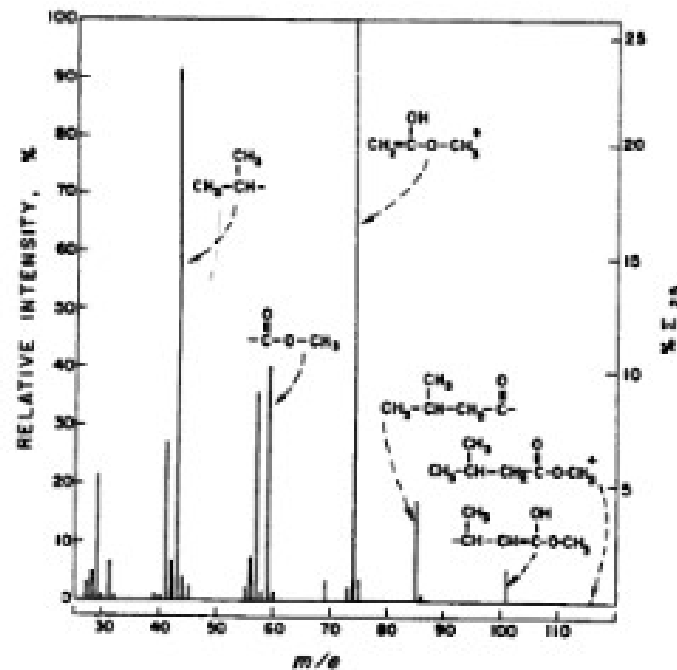


FIG. 2.—Mass spectrum of methyl ester of the “unknown” peak from B. A.’s urine. Experimental conditions and the interpretation are described in the text.



# Organic Acids in Urine



- If an organic aciduria is suspected in a critically ill patient, urine should be collected immediately (bag, consider catheter).
- Urine obtained during a metabolic crisis may be of particular value for organic acids analysis (sensitivity). Often therapy needs to be initiated while lab diagnostics are still running.
- For selective screening, the first morning urine sample is the best (high concentration). Very diluted urine may give incorrect results as results are normalized to creatinine.

# Organic Acids in Urine

- Consider temporary storage in refrigerator/ freezer (needs to be documented).
- Only in exceptional cases (e.g., if no other material available after death) organic acids will be determined in other body fluids than urine.
- Creatinine quantitation for normalization; dip-stick test for pre-assessment of the sample.

# Analysis of Urinary Organic Acids (classical approach)

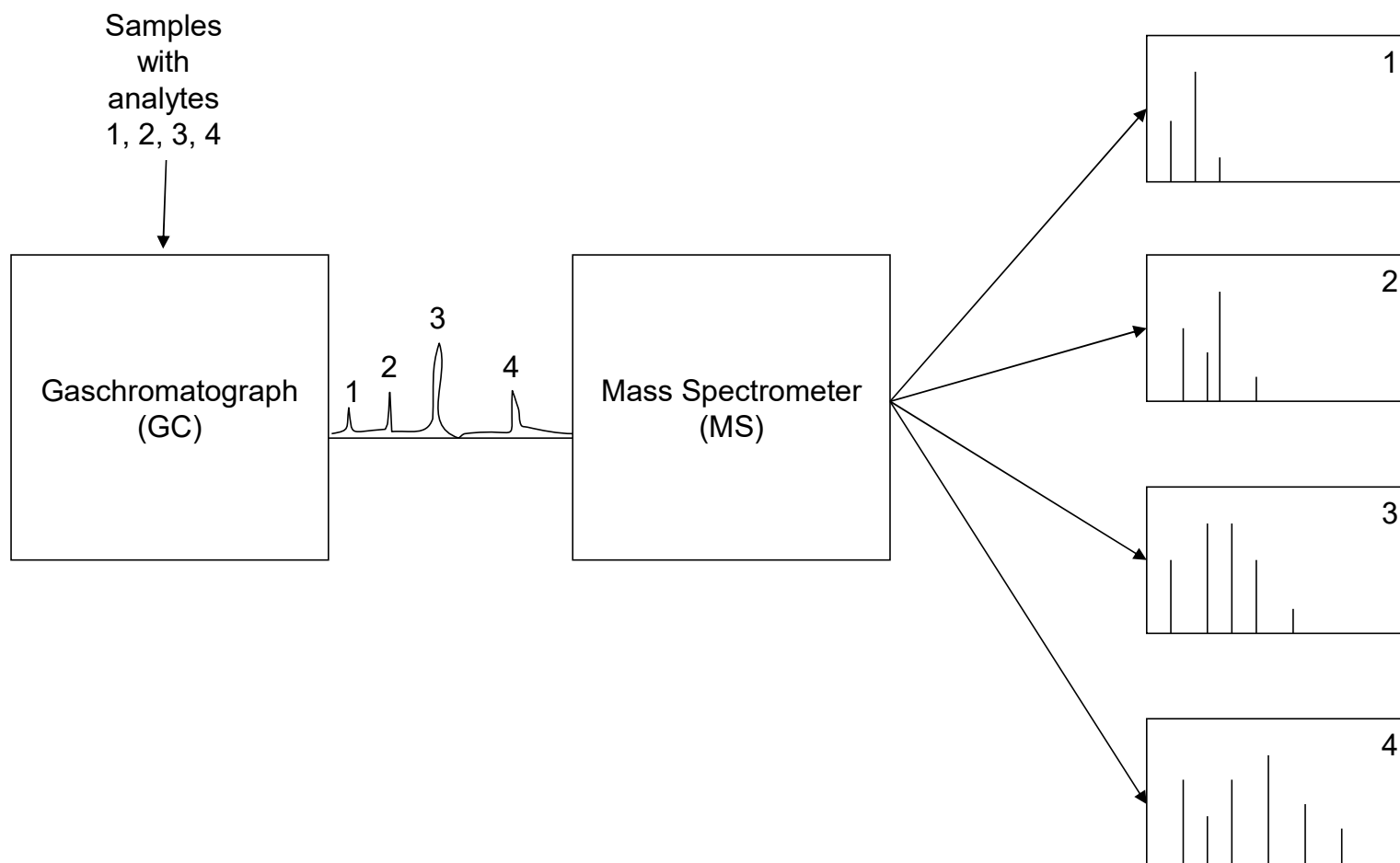
- GC-MS analysis of organic acids extracted from urine
- As organic acids are polar, thermally unstable, and have low volatility, it is necessary for GC analysis to convert them into nonpolar, volatile, and thermally stable derivatives and to separate them from all the inorganic salts etc. in urine
- First, internal standard(s) need(s) to be added
- Urine is acidified to obtain the organic acids in non-dissociated, rather non-polar form
- Extraction with liquid solvent(s), possible also using solid phase extraction
- Drying and (almost) evaporation of the organic phase

# Analysis of Urinary Organic Acids (classical approach)

Esterification of the extracted organic acids:

- Derivatives can then be diluted and injected into the GC-MS instrument
  - mostly by trimethylsilylation with *N,O*-bis(trimethylsilyl)trifluoroacetamide (BSTFA) containing 1% trimethylchlorosilane  
(often with prior stabilization of oxoacids by formation of an oxime [using hydroxylamine or a substituted derivative] prior to the esterification)
  - alternatively methylation with diazomethane is possible
- Derivatives can then be diluted and injected into the GC-MS instrument

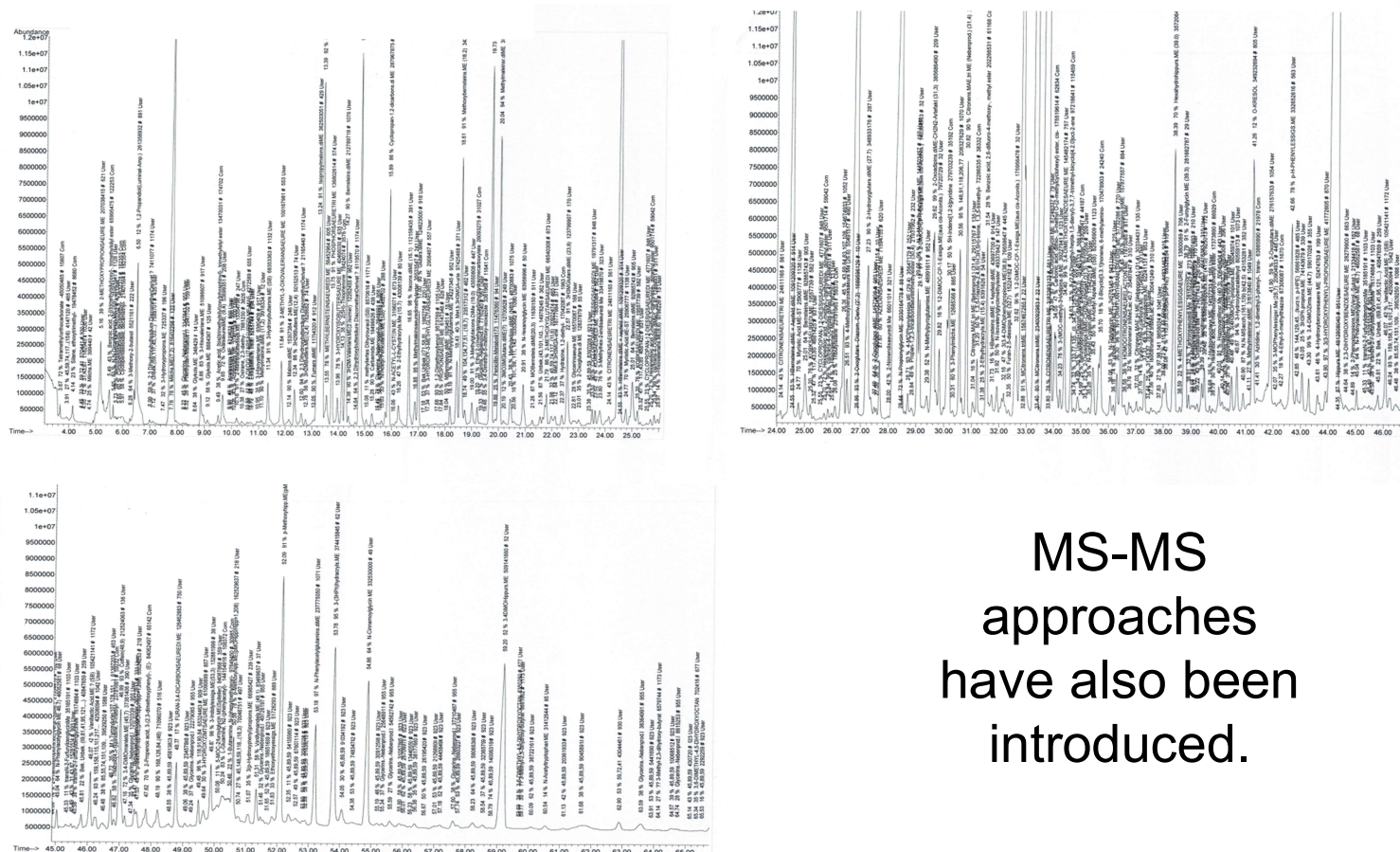
# Organic Acid Analysis by GC-MS



Adapted from Sass J Lab Med 2011;35:1-4

Mass spectra obtained after chromatographic separation of derivatized metabolites.

# Urinary Organic Acids



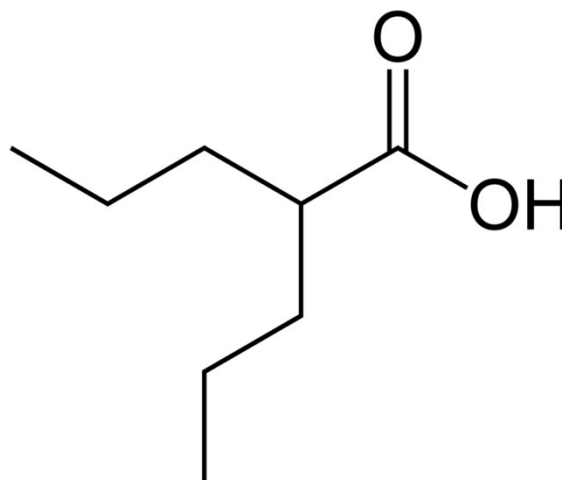
MS-MS  
approaches  
have also been  
introduced.

Complex metabolite profiles, which may comprise with hundreds of signals, may be assessed with the help of mass spectra libraries.

# Urinary Organic Acids: Pitfalls

- Bacterial degradation processes  
e.g., Citrate ↓, Lactate/3-OH-Propionate/Succinate/Uracil ↑;  
2-OH-Glutarate ↑
- Dietary effects  
e.g., aromatic compounds ↑ or epoxidicarboxylic acids ↑
- Impairment by putative preservatives such thymol,  
acetic acid, boric acid

# Urinary Organic Acids: influence of drugs



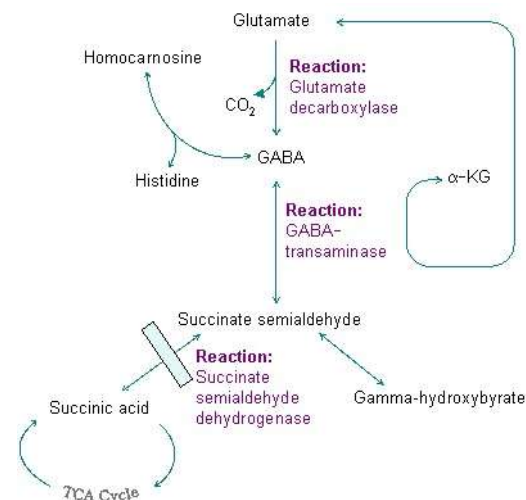
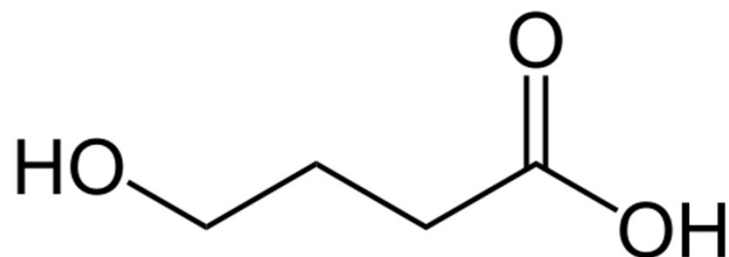
Valproate (Dipropylpentanoate)  
⇒ many interfering signals



# Urinary Organic Acids: influence of drugs

## 4-hydroxy-butyrate (GHB)

Sedativum and illegal drug



Pearl et al. Gene Reviews 2016;  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK1195/>

⇒ May mimic  
succinic semialdehyde dehydrogenase deficiency

# Urinary Organic Acids: influence of drugs

- Chloral hydrate
- Ampicillin, Penicillamine
- (Acetyl-)Salicylic acid
- Paracetamol (acetaminophen)
- Phenobarbital (phenobarbitone)
- and many other drugs/ xenobiotics

This does not necessarily make organic acid interpretation impossible, but may make it more difficult.

It is very important to **communicate medication, dietary particularities and basic clinical information to the laboratory.**

# Urinary Organic Acids analysis: Conclusions



Analyses of organic acids, amino acids and acylcarnitines complement each other.

- several aminoacidopathies (e.g. PKU, MSUD) can also be identified by the organic acids pattern
- But: many downstream metabolites of amino acids can only be identified in the organic acids pattern
- acylcarnitine analysis reveals only those organic acidurias that are associated with alterations in coenzyme A patterns, while organic acid analysis may also identify others.

## Presentation of Organic Acidurias

- Most become apparent by **acute decompensation** during newborn period or early infancy (**early onset**)
- Newborns: life-threatening episode of metabolic acidosis after initial period of well-being (**free interval**), might be mistaken for **sepsis**
- Risk for increased mortality and morbidity, if not recognized
- Milder forms: presentation in childhood, adolescence, adulthood or not at all (**late onset**)
- **Chronic manifestations** without decompensation

## Triggers for Decompensation

- **Catabolism** due to: infections, poor feeding (postnatal), prolonged fasting, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, prolonged or intense physical exercise, psychological stress, surgery and/or general anesthesia
- **Excessive protein intake**
- **Medication**: e.g., chemotherapy, high dose glucocorticoids

## Lab Findings in Decompensation

- Metabolic acidosis with high anion gap
- Lactic acidemia and/or lactic aciduria
- Ketosis and ketonuria
- Other possible findings:
  - hypoglycemia
  - hyperammonemia
  - electrolyte alterations
  - anemia, neutropenia, thrombocytopenia

## Initial Treatment in Decompensation

- **Stop protein intake** (24h - 48h)
- Start high-dose iv glucose (+insulin)
- Treat hyperammonemia (Carbaglu)
- Administer:
  - 100 mg/kg L-carnitine slowly iv
  - 1 mg/d hydroxocobalamin iv/im
  - 10 mg biotin iv/po
- Collect samples for diagnostics

**Diagnosis within the first 24-48 h is vital  
and can prevent chronic sequels!**

# Classification of Organic Acidurias

## **Classical organic acidurias**

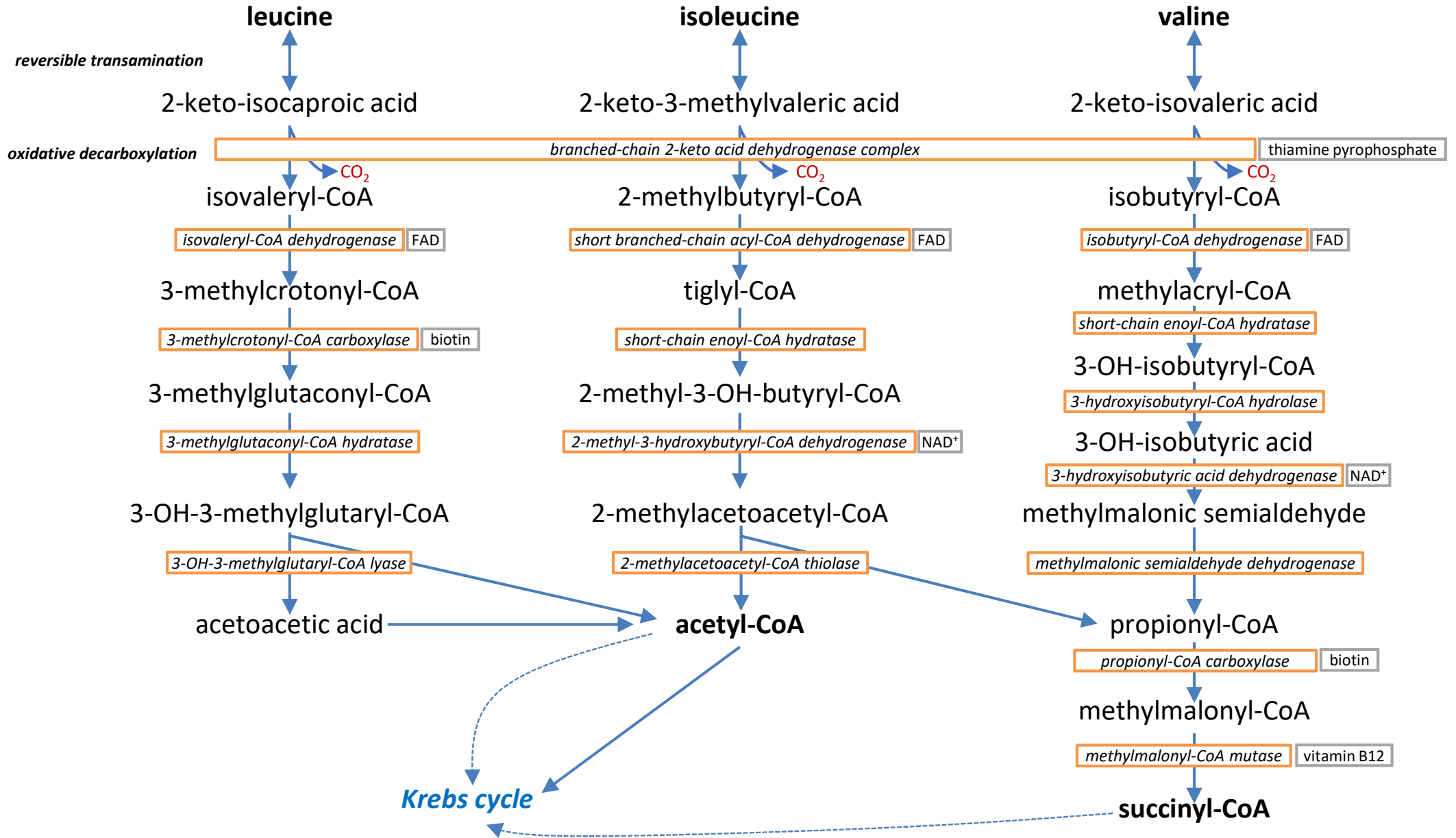
MMA, PA, (IVA)

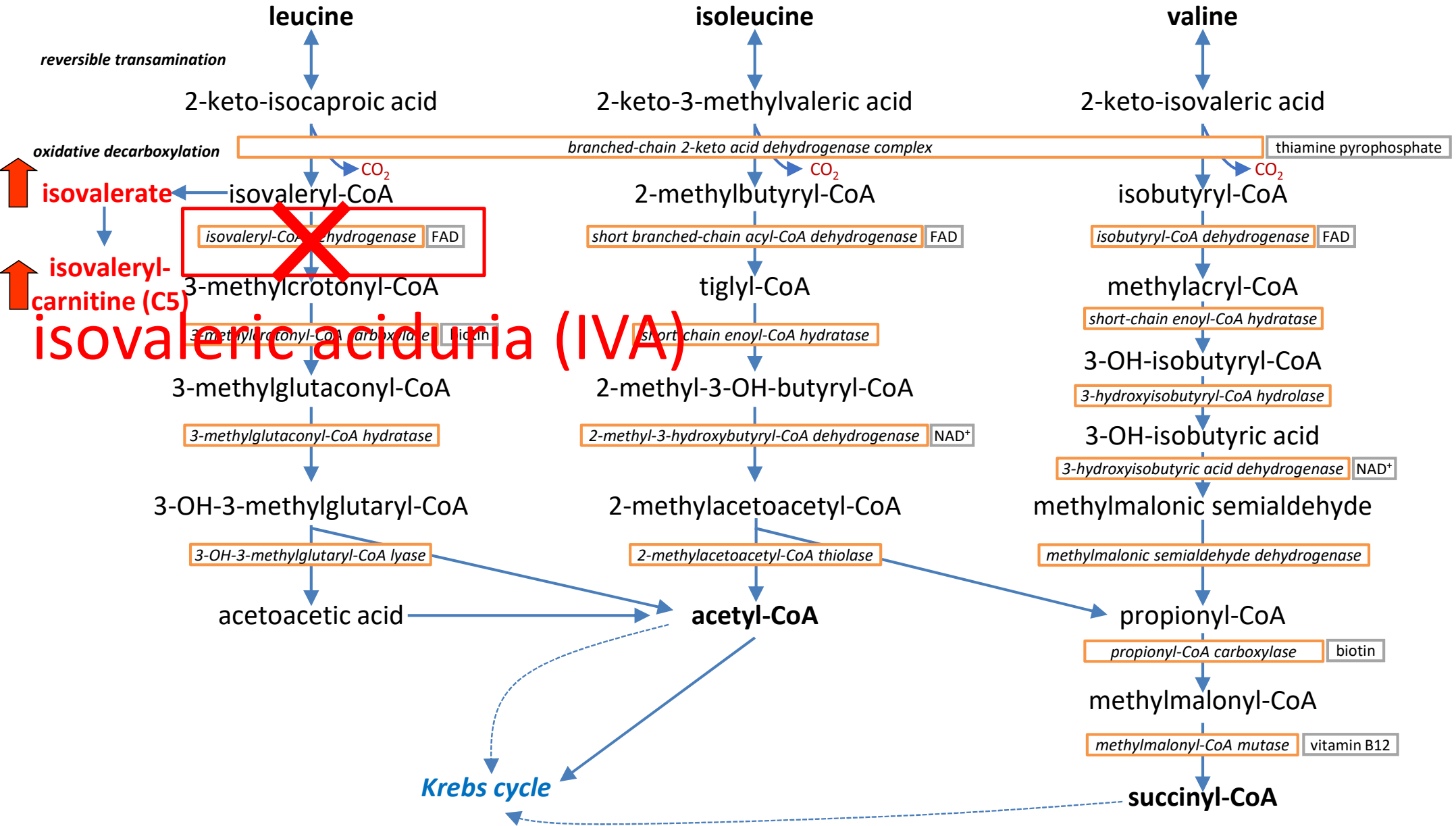
## **“Cerebral” organic acidurias**

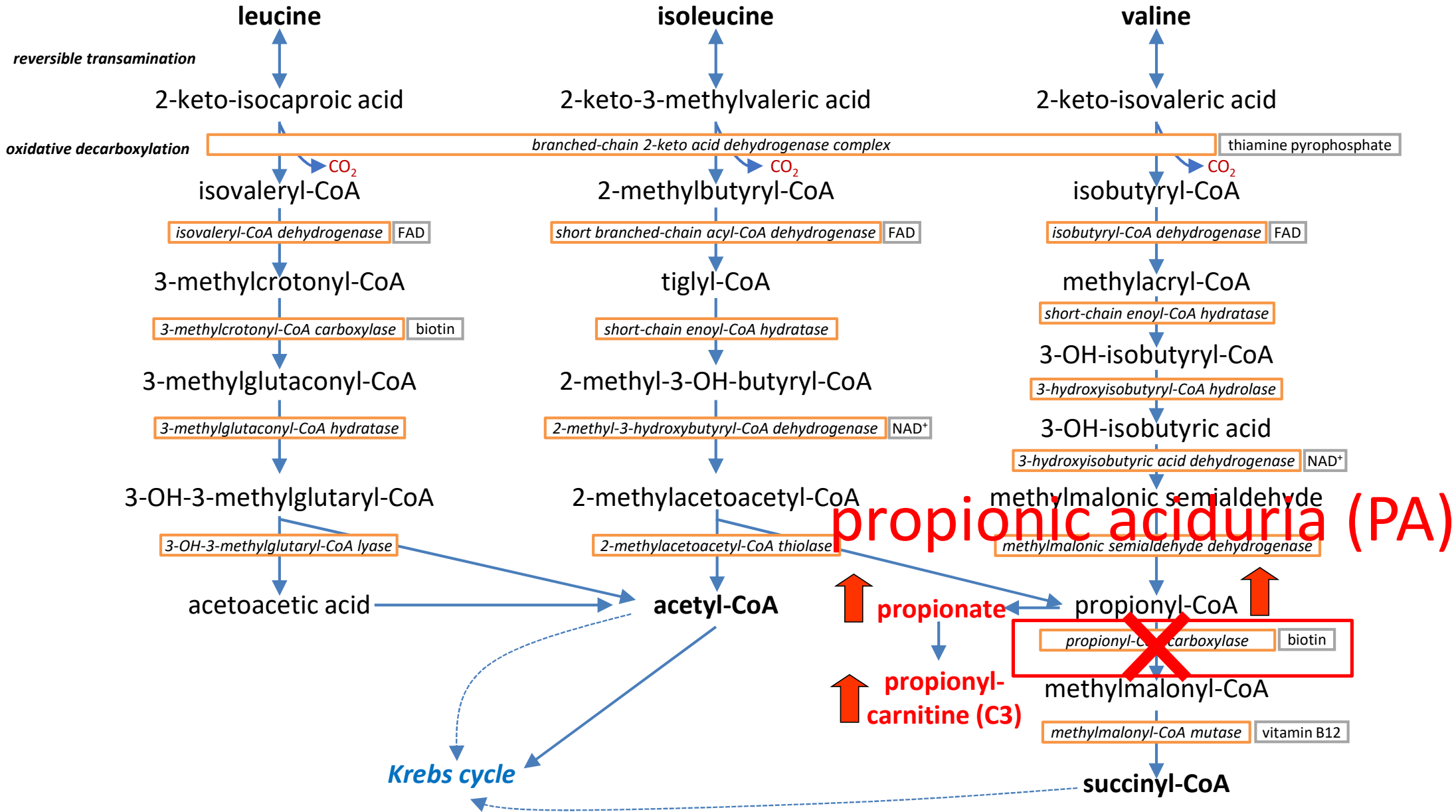
- GA 1
- Canavan disease,  
D- and L-2-hydroxyglutaric acidurias,  
4-hydroxybutyric aciduria etc.

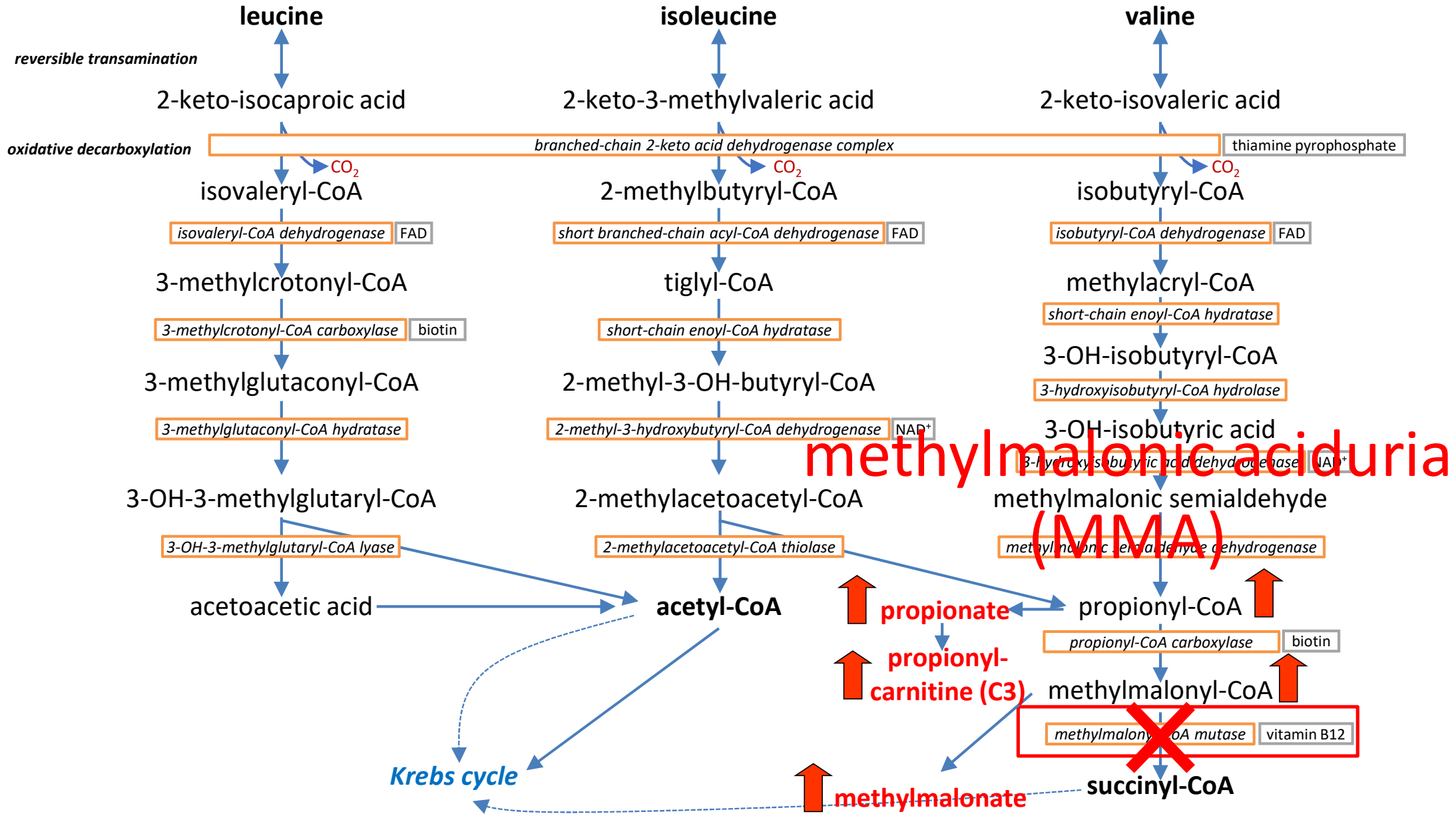
## **Ketone body synthesis & utilization defects**



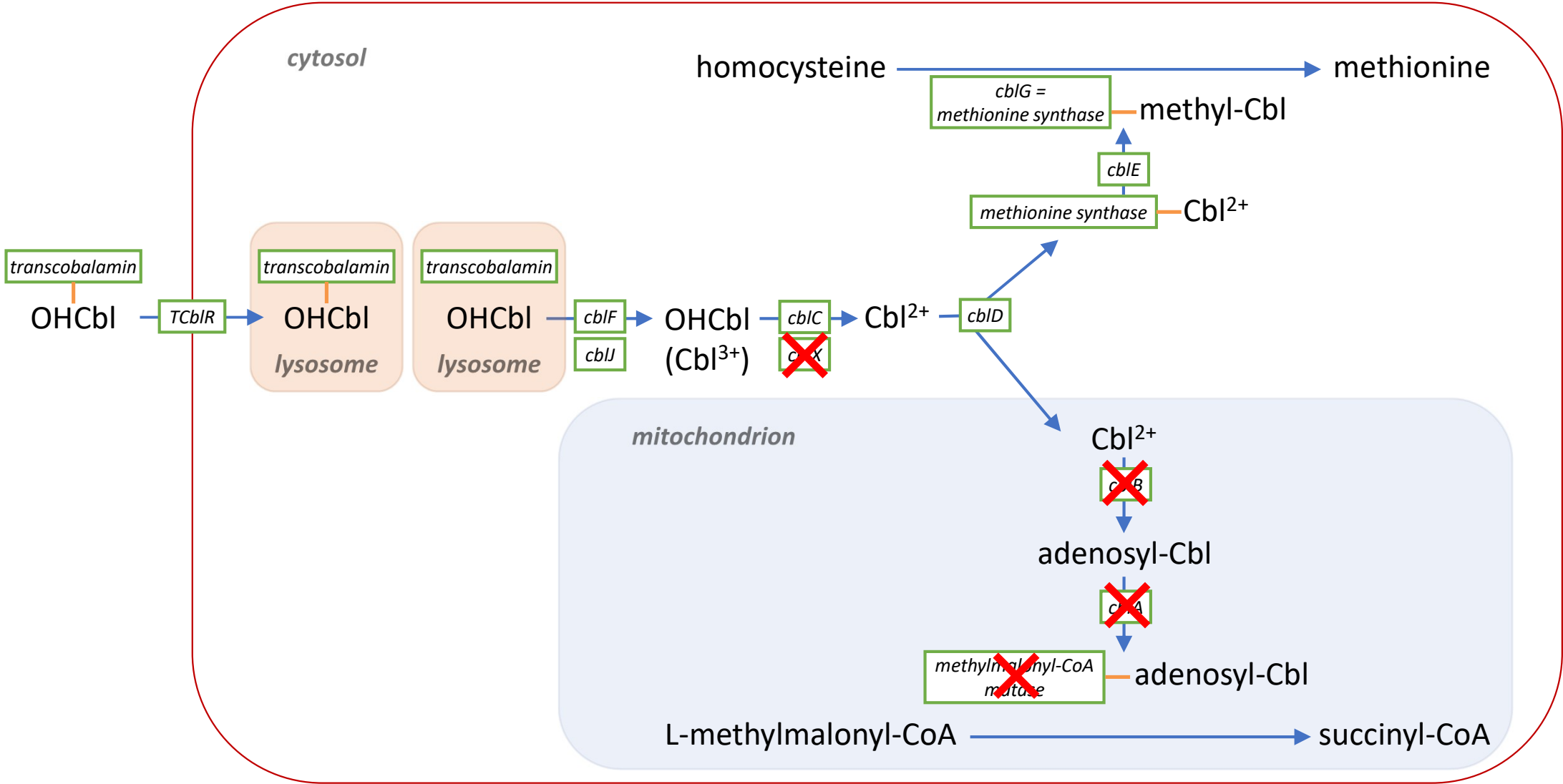




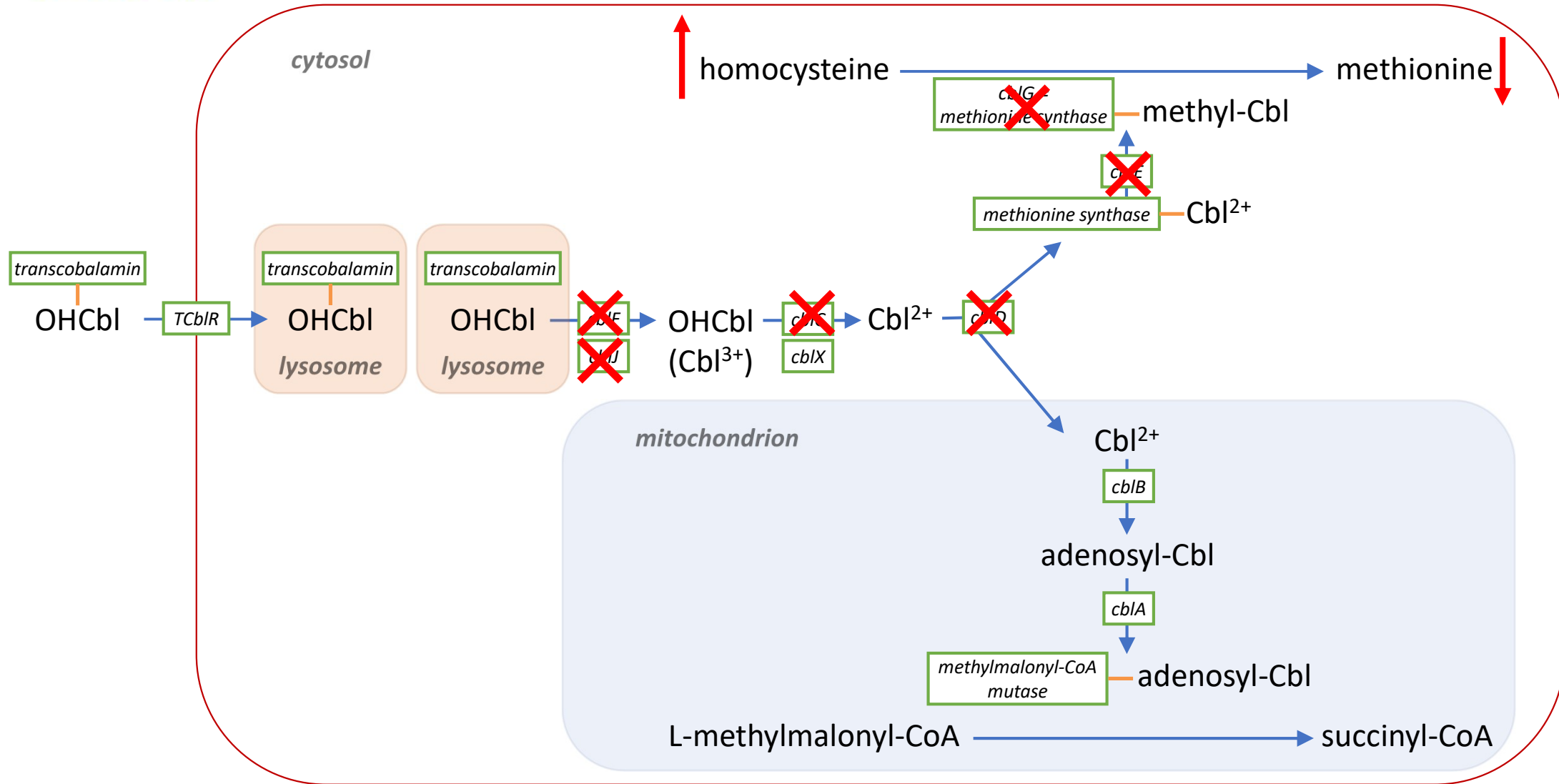




# MMAuria without hyperhomocysteinemia



# MMAuria with hyperhomocysteinemia



## Neonatal Onset: History

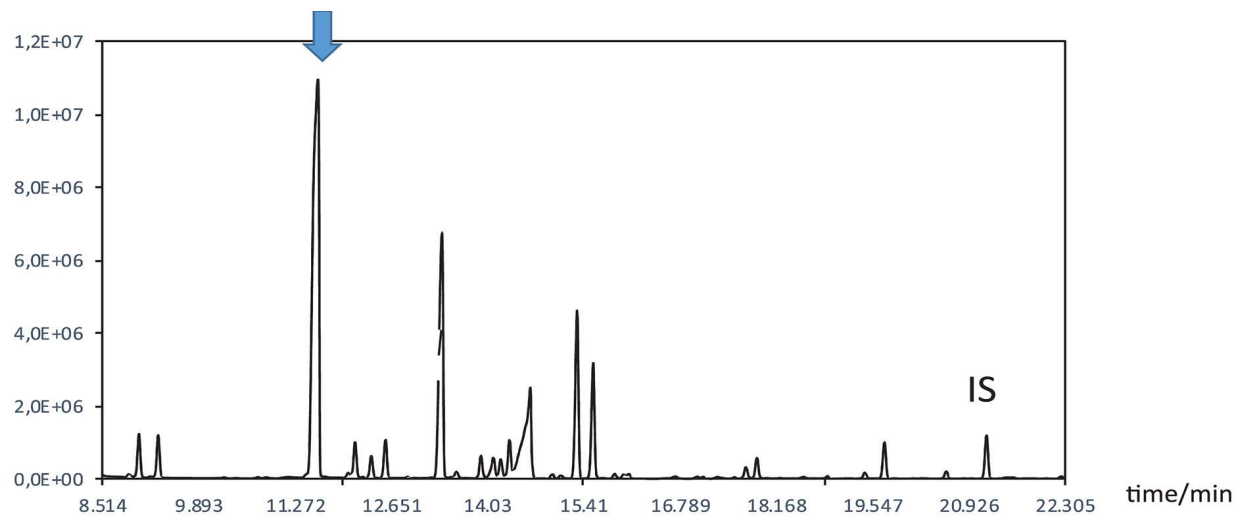
- Poor feeding, vomiting, decreasing consciousness
- Deterioration after initial period of health
  - 8-36 hrs in MMA, PA, (IVA)
- Family history / Parental consanguinity

## Neonatal Onset: Examination

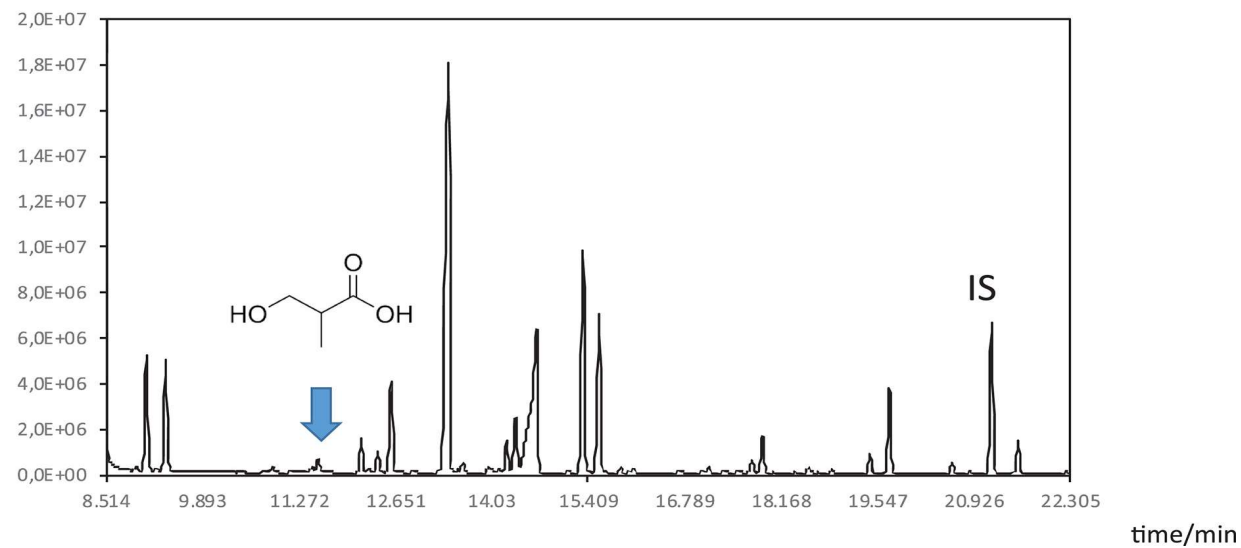
- Reduced consciousness
- Abnormal movements/tone
- Kussmaul's respiration
- ± Hepatomegaly
- ± Dehydration
- ± Temperature instability
- ± Epileptic seizures
- ± Cardiomyopathy
- ± Odour: sweaty feet in IVA



patient

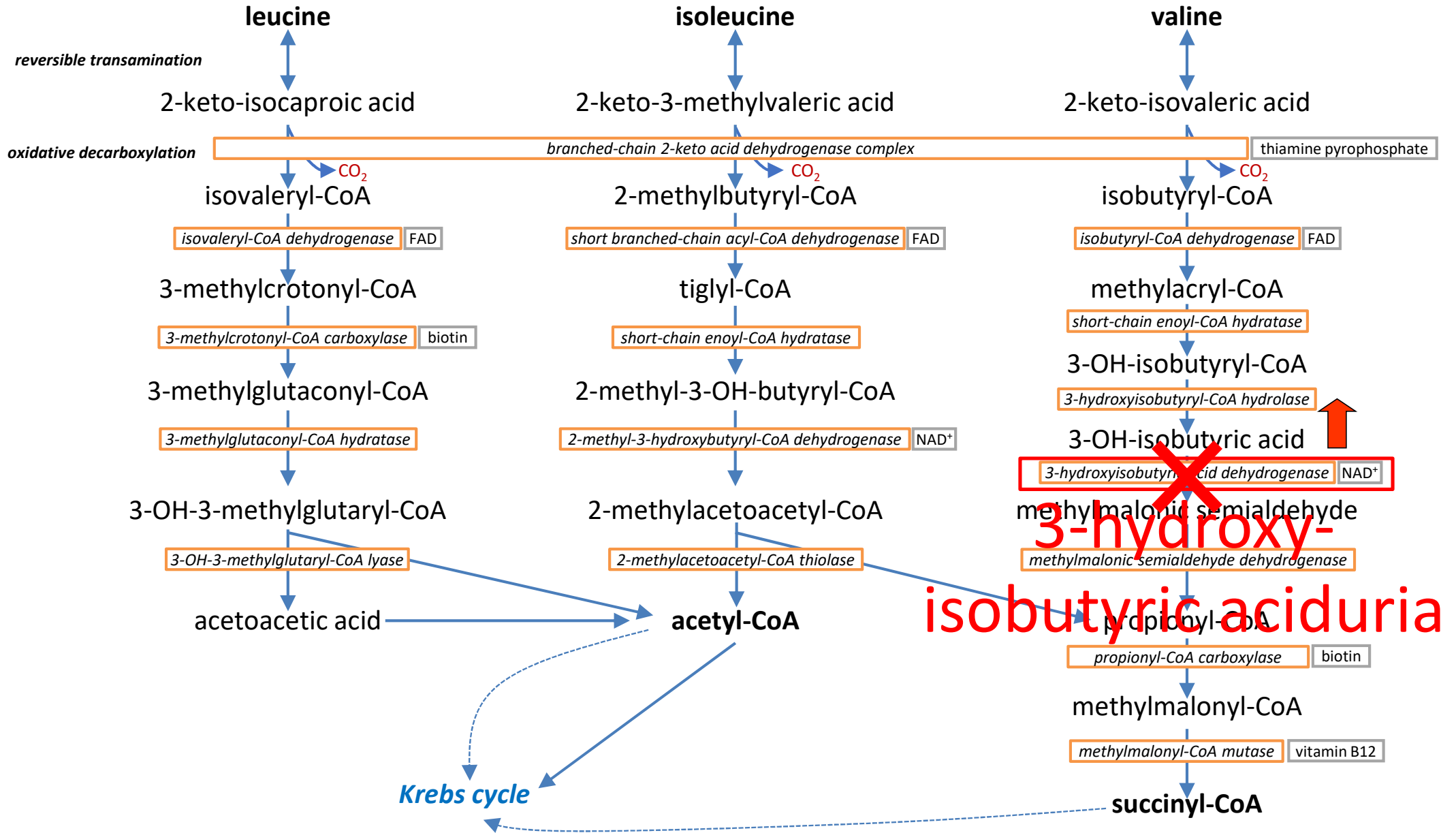


control



Recently discovered  
organic aciduria

Meyer *et al.* J Inherit Metab Dis 2021;22:1323-9



**TABLE 1** Summary of findings in HIBADII deficiency

	<b>Patient 1</b>	<b>Patient 2</b>	<b>Patient 3</b>	<b>Patient 4 (Meyer et al.<sup>2)</sup>)</b>	<b>Patient 5 (Meyer et al.<sup>2)</sup>)</b>
<b>Family history</b>					
Ethnicity	Persian	Italian	Italian (Sibling of Patient 2)	Syrian	Syrian (Sibling of Patient 4)
Consanguinity	Yes	No <sup>a</sup>	No <sup>a</sup>	Yes	Yes
<b>Clinical findings</b>					
Feeding	Poor suck, feeding difficulties in infancy	Poor suck, vomiting and diarrhea in infancy	—	—	—
Growth	Failure to thrive in infancy	Failure to thrive in infancy	—	—	—
Development	Delayed speech, developmental coordination disorder	Delayed speech; normal intellect	Motor delay; normal intellect	Psychomotor delay; low IQ; speech unclear and muffled, clumsy movements	—
Other	Behavioral insomnia, astigmatism	Recurrent respiratory infections in infancy; alopecia (resolved)	Headaches, bicuspid aortic valve	Hypomimia	Asymptomatic

Sasarman *et al.* J Inherit Metab Dis 2022; 45: 445-55

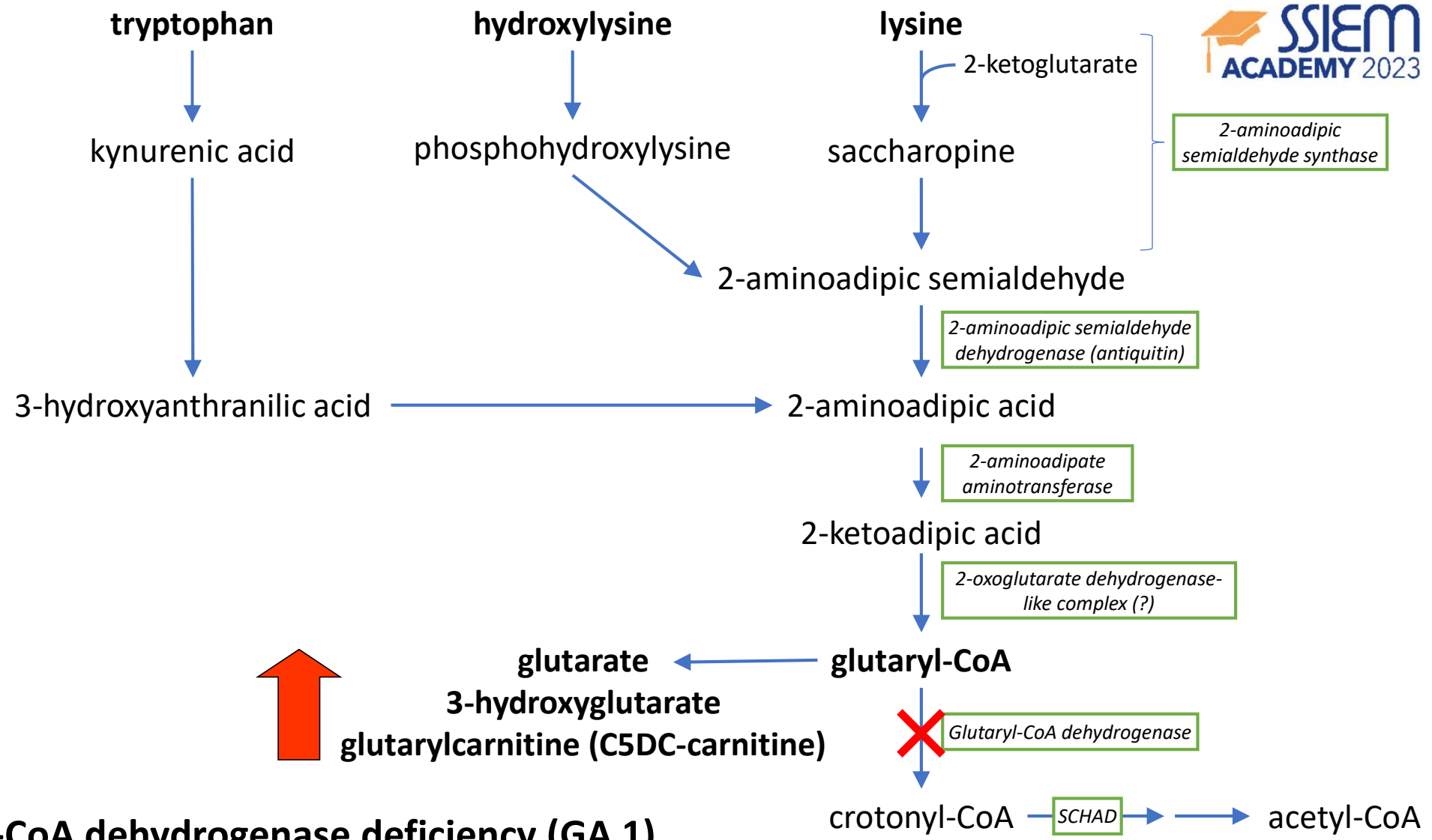
# Classification of Organic Acidurias

**Classical organic acidurias** MMA,  
PA (,IVA)

**“Cerebral” organic acidurias**

- GA 1
- Canavan disease, D&L-2-Hydroxyglutaric acidurias, 4-hydroxybutyric aciduria etc.

**Ketone body synthesis &  
utilization defects**



# Glutaryl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency (GA 1)

## Manifestations of GA 1

### Acute presentation

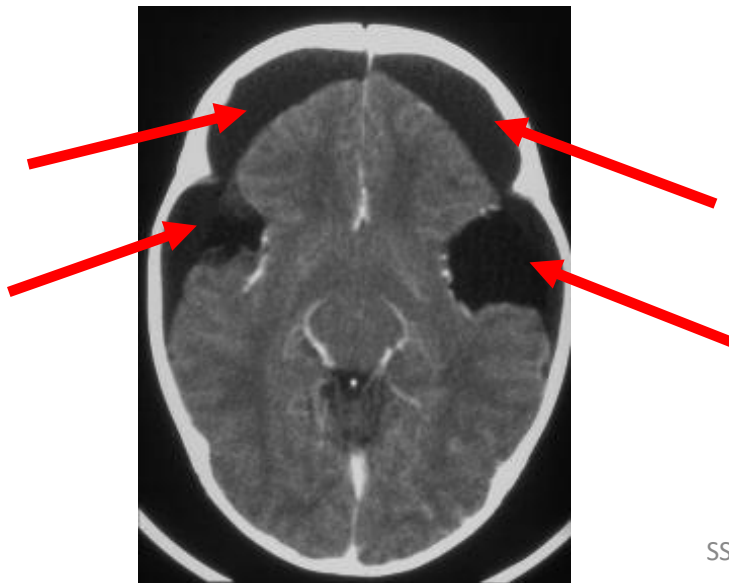
- Acute encephalopathy with hypotonia  $\pm$  seizures
- Triggered by minor illness (3 m to 2.5 y)
- Subsequent severe extrapyramidal movement disorder
- IQ relatively preserved but communication difficult
- Tube feeding often required

### Other forms

- Chronic progressive dystonia (**insidious onset**), adult-onset & asymptomatic

# Cerebral Imaging in GA 1

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- **Macrocephaly**
- **Frontotemporal atrophy**  
(highly suggestive)  $\pm$  subdural  
and/or retinal bleeds (DD  
shaken baby)
- White matter changes
- Basal ganglia damage after  
acute encephalopathy

# False-negative NBS results for GA 1








International Journal of  
*Neonatal Screening*



*Article*

## Glutaric Aciduria Type I Missed by Newborn Screening: Report of Four Cases from Three Families

Johannes Spenger <sup>1</sup>, Esther M. Maier <sup>2</sup>, Katharina Wechselberger <sup>3</sup>, Florian Bauder <sup>3</sup>, Melanie Kocher <sup>4</sup>, Wolfgang Sperl <sup>1</sup>, Martin Preisel <sup>1</sup>, Katharina A. Schiergens <sup>2</sup>, Vassiliki Konstantopoulou <sup>5</sup>, Wulf Röschinger <sup>6</sup>, Johannes Häberle <sup>7</sup>, Thomas Schmitt-Mechelke <sup>3</sup>, Saskia B. Wortmann <sup>1</sup> and Ralph Fingerhut <sup>7,8,\*</sup>

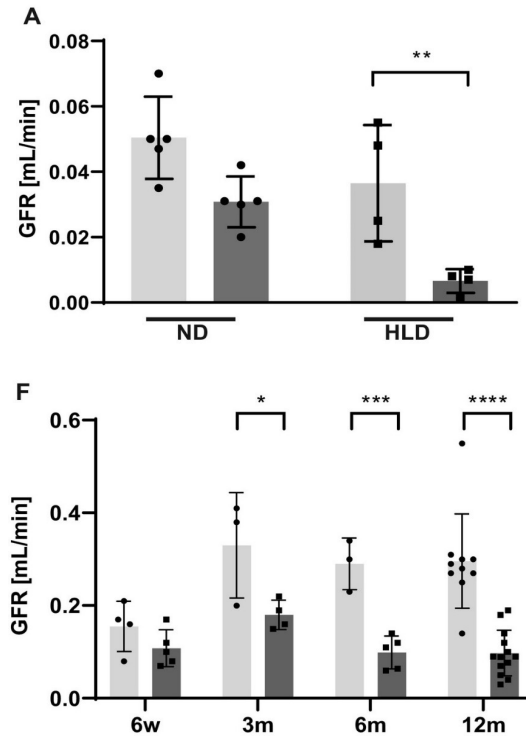
*Int. J. Neonatal Screen.* **2021**, *7*(2), 32; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijns7020032>

1 patient with acute crisis, 3 with insidious onset  
Not a technical problem!

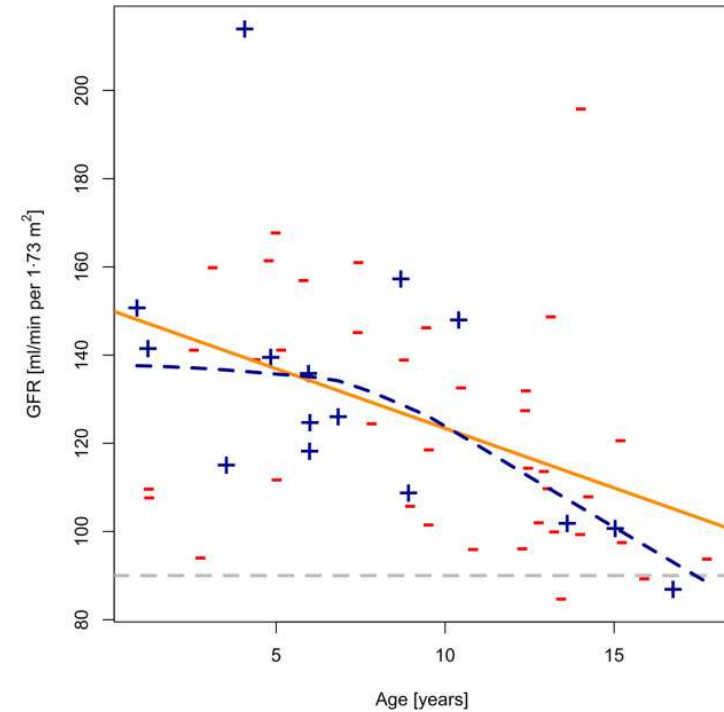


GA 1, a cerebral  
organic aciduria?

# Decline of Renal Function in GA 1

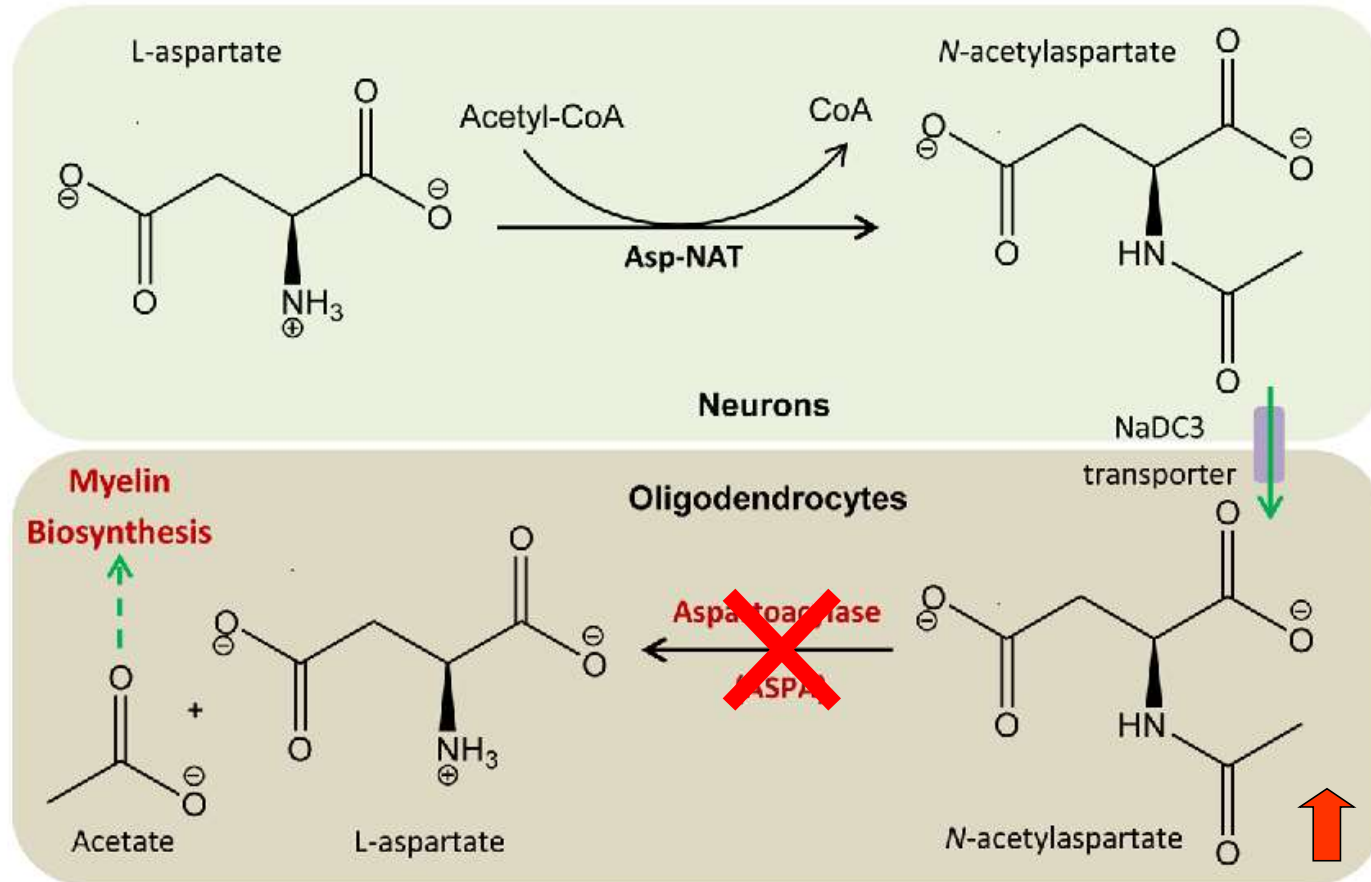


Decreased GFR in 6-week-old *Gcdh<sup>ki/ki</sup>* rats under HLD and progressive GFR decline in aging *Gcdh<sup>ki/ki</sup>* rats under ND (Gonzalez Melo *et al.* Mol Genet Metab 2021;34: 287-300)



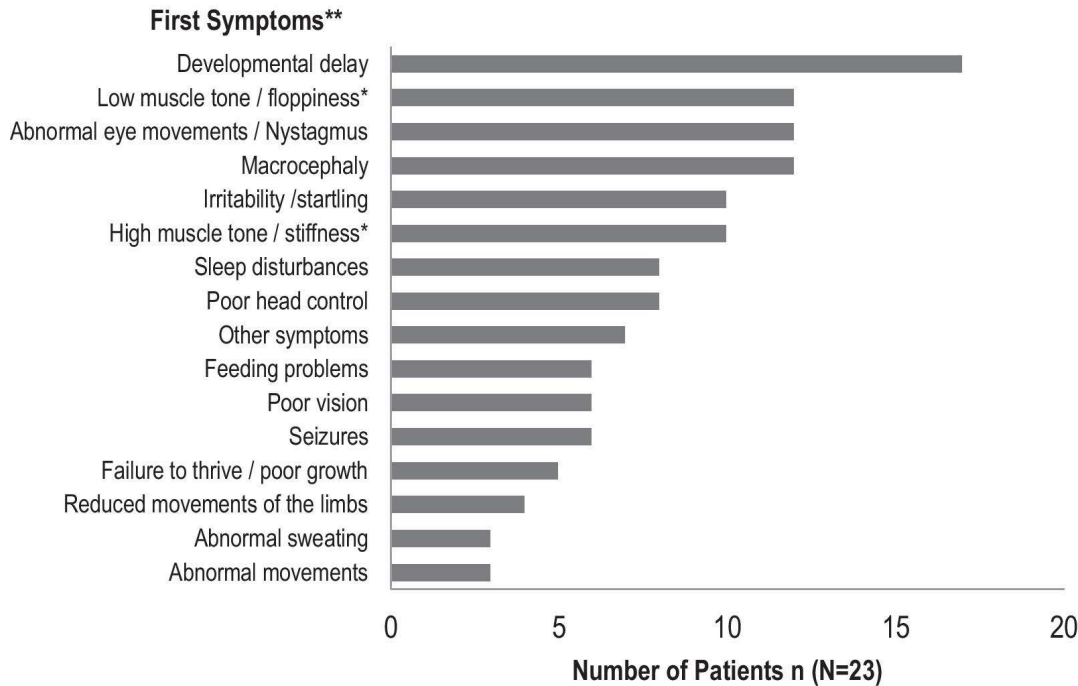
GFR estimated by Schwartz formula of 54 GA 1 patients from the German cohort at last visit (Boy *et al.* Ann Neurol 2018, 83:970-9)

# Canavan Disease

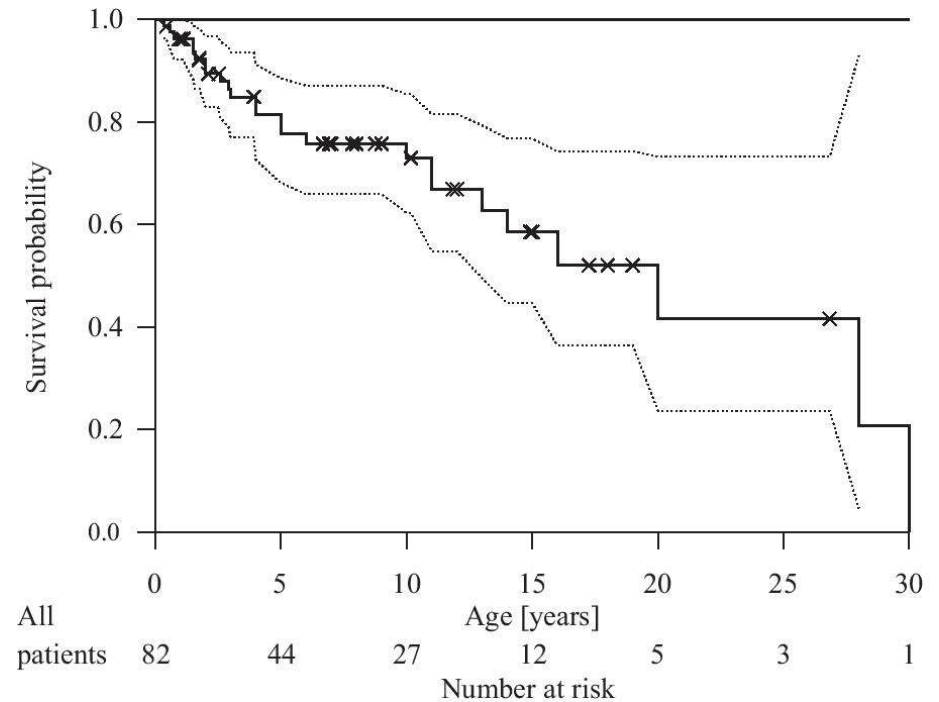


Modified from Wijayasinghe *et al.*, *Biochemistry* 2014;53:4970-8

# Canavan Disease



All patients showed symptoms within the first 6 months of life



About 75% of patients reach the age of 10 years

## Canavan Disease: Diagnosis

OA: *N*-acetylaspartate (NAA)

MRI: leukodystrophy

MRS: increased NAA peak

Enzymatics: Aspartoacylase Activity

Genetics: gene *ASPA*

## Canavan Disease: Treatment

- Only symptomatic treatment
- Muscle relaxants & tube feeding can help

## CAVEAT

- Canavan disease
- ACY1 deficiency
- 2-OH-glutaric acidurias
- 4-hydroxybutyric aciduria

**can only be diagnosed  
by organic acid analysis!**

# Classification of Organic Acidurias

## Classical organic acidurias (COA)

- MMA, PA, (IVA)

## “Cerebral” organic acidurias

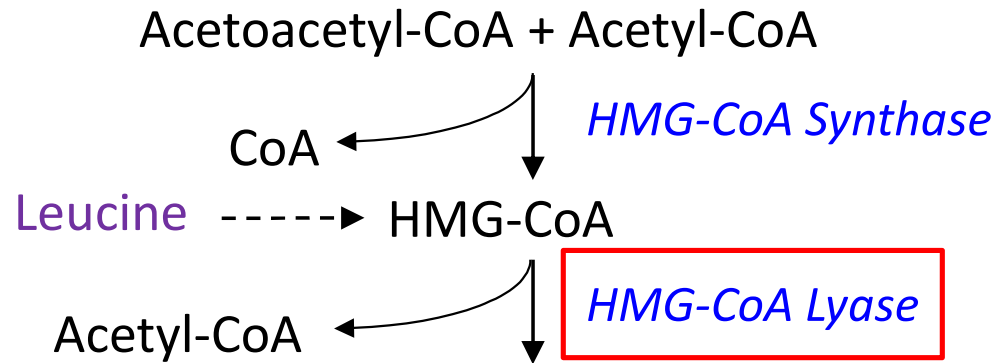
- GA 1
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## Ketone body synthesis & utilization defects

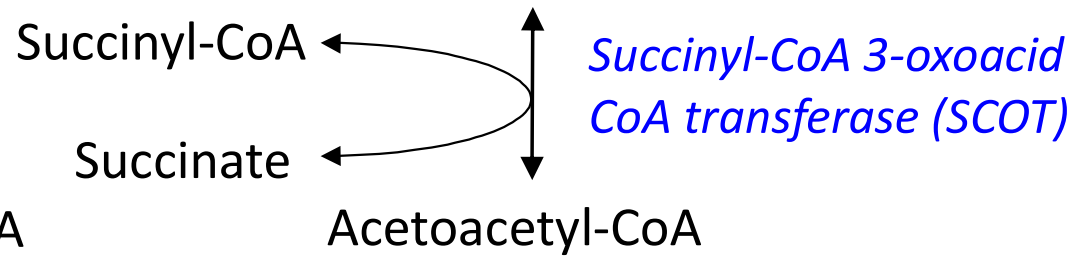
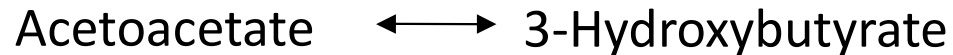


# Ketone Body Synthesis and Utilization

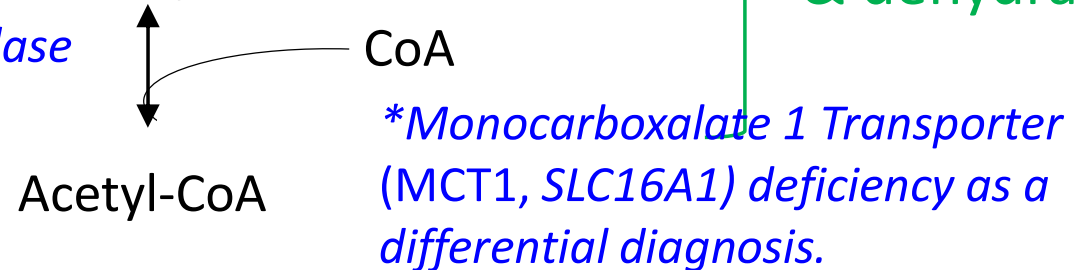
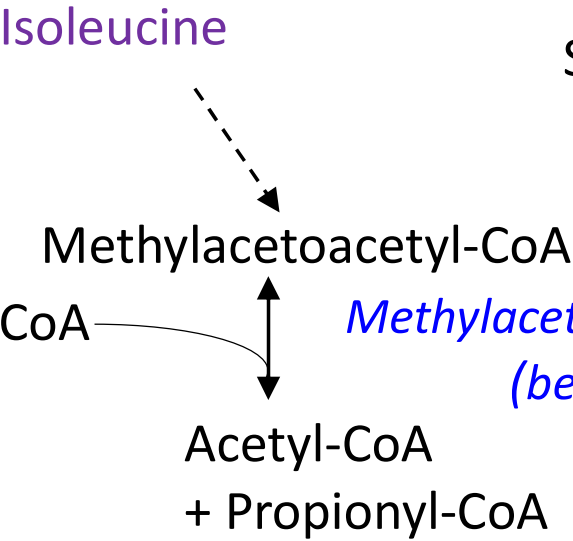
Defects cause:



Hypoketotic hypoglycemia



Ketoacidosis & dehydration



## HMG-CoA Lyase Deficiency

- Poor feeding, vomiting, decreasing consciousness
- 42 % in neonatal period after free interval
- More than 80% during 1<sup>st</sup> year, often triggered by an infection, about 16 % deceased
- Hypoglycemia, often moderate hyperammonemia
- **Lactic acidosis, no or low ketosis** (caveat: acetoacetate as artefact following methylation)
- OA: 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaric, 3-methylglutaric, and 3-hydroxyisovaleric acids

Grünert & Sass Orphanet J Rare Dis 2020;15:48

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Grünert & Sass Orphanet J Rare Dis 2020;15:48

## HMG-CoA Lyase Deficiency: Complications

- Neurological sequelae, pancreatitis, cardiomyopathy
- Abnormal cerebral white matter (asymptomatic)
- High risk pregnancies

# Organic acidurias: Conclusions

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- A still evolving heterogeneous group of diseases
- A majority manifests early in life, but late onset and possibly asymptomatic forms exist
- Most (but not all) show acute presentations, in several presymptomatic treatment might substantially improve the prognosis
- Check which ones are included in the newborn screening program of your country (CAVE: false negative results might exist)
- The historical classification is amended by the discovery of new manifestations in longer surviving patients

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A. Bley *et al.*: The natural history of [Canavan disease](#): 23 new cases and comparison with patients from literature. Orphanet Journal of Rare Diseases 2021;16;227.  
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J.O. Sass *et al.*: Inborn Errors of [Ketone Body Metabolism and Transport](#): An Update for the Clinic and for Clinical Laboratories. Journal of Inborn Errors of Metabolism and Screening. 2018;6.  
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