(NOR) task. In the 5C-SRTT, cotinine attenuated MK-801-related impairments of accuracy, and it reduced impulsive-like behaviors (elevated premature responses) when the demands of the task were increased (i.e., by varying the stimulus durations and administering MK-801). Cotinine also improved the discrimination ratio in 48 hr retention sessions in the NOR task. Studies are currently underway to evaluate chronic cotinine for its ability to attenuate MK-801-related impairments of NOR. These data suggest that cotinine may have therapeutic potential for neuropsychiatric disorders, especially in conditions where sustained attention and recognition memory are impaired.

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2.18

In Vitro neuroprotective effects of ABT-779, a positive allosteric modulator of α7 nAChRs

Min Hu*, Jinhe Li, John Malysz, Timothy A. Esbenshade, Chih-Hung Lee, Murali Gopalakrishnan

Abbott, Neuroscience Research, Abbott Park, IL, USA

ABT-779 is a novel positive allosteric modulator (PAM) of α7 nAChRs that selectively potentiates responses to acetylcholine at recombinant and native α7 nAChRs with a type II profile. ABT-779 itself did not show any intrinsic effects at the α7 nAChRs, but selectively potentiated responses to both choline or acetylcholine at human and rodent α7 nAChRs in a concentration-dependent manner. Acute administration of ABT-779 in mice increased dose-dependent phosphorylation of the downstream signaling protein, CREB (see Kohlhaas et al., abstract 2.19). Since α7 agonists have been previously shown to have in vitro neuroprotective effects following various insults, we examined whether a PAM could exhibit such effects. The effect of ABT-779 was examined *in vitro* in a cellular model (NGF-differentiated PC12 cells) where increased p-tau levels were trigged by application of the toxic $A\beta_{1-42}$ peptide. In this model, ABT-779 prevented tau phosphorylation induced by $A\beta_{1-42}$ in a concentration-dependent manner with maximal inhibition (~60%) comparable to that of α7 NNR agonists and GSK3β inhibitors. ABT-779 also attenuated NGF-withdrawal induced loss of neuron numbers and neurite outgrowth in differentiated PC12 with maximal 70% and 36% protection effects, respectively. It is likely that the effects of ABT-779 could be mediated via amplification of α7 nAChR responses to choline present in cell culture media, although additional studies to further elucidate this remain to be been conducted. ABT-779 did not show any cytotoxic effects at any of the concentrations tested. Our studies demonstrate that ABT-779, like other α7 agonists, could activate biochemical pathways important for cognitive and neuroprotective processes in vitro.

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2.19

α7 NNR allosteric modulation in behavioral models of cognition

Kathy L. Kohlhaas[1,*], Holly Robb[1], Victoria Roderwald[1], Stella Markosyan[1], Katherine Salte[1], Robert S. Bitner[1], Eric Mohler[1], Alvin V. Terry[2], Jerry Buccafusco[2], Lynne E. Rueter[1], Lance Lee[1], Murali Gopalakrishnan[1]

[1] *Abbott, Neuroscience Research, Abbott Park, IL, USA*
[2] *Georgia Health Sciences University, Augusta, GA, USA*

Targeting α7 nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (α7 nAChRs) through orthosteric agonism has demonstrated a potential for enhancement of cognitive function in psychiatric and neurological diseases such as schizophrenia and Alzheimer's disease. Another way to target α7 nAChR function is by enhancing effects of the endogenous neurotransmitter acetylcholine via positive allosteric modulation. In the present study, we utilized ABT-779, a selective α7 nAChR positive allosteric modulator (PAM) (see abstracts 2.18 and 1.20) to improve preclinical behavioral measures in various animal models to address multiple cognitive domains across different species. In DBA2 mouse N40 auditory sensory gating, a model of pre-attention, ABT-779 was efficacious in the dose range of 0.001–0.01 μmol/kg i.p. Using 24-h recall inhibitory avoidance in CD-1 mice as a model of memory consolidation and recall, ABT-779 showed efficacy at the same dose range of 0.001–0.1 μmol/kg i.p. In rat social recognition, a model of short-term recognition memory, significant efficacy was seen for ABT-779 at 0.01 and 0.1 μmol/kg. Similar efficacy was retained using a rat lesion model of cholinergic hypofunction. Studies in Rhesus monkey using delayed-matching-to-sample (DMTS) as a measure of working memory, showed an effect for ABT-779 in long-delay performance in a dose range of 0.001–0.1 μmol/kg. Immunohistochemistry evaluation showed ABT-779 enhanced the phosphorylation of CREB, an important biochemical event in memory processes at behaviorally effective dose range. Taken together, these results suggest that positive allosteric modulation of the α7 nAChR with ABT-779 has the potential to improve aspects of cognitive function, including those deficiencies that may underlie various neurological and neuropsychiatric disorders.

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2.20

The α7 nicotinic acetylcholine receptor (nAChR) allosteric modulator UCI-40083 differentially increases dopamine (DA) and norepinephrine (NE) release in adolescent rat brain

E. Carboni[1,*], M. Ibba[1], R. Cadeddu[1], D. Hogenkamp[2], T. Johnstone[2], K.W. Gee[2]

[1] *Univ. Cagliari, Cagliari, Italy*
[2] *Univ. California Irvine, Irvine, CA, USA*

The selective α7 nAChR positive allosteric modulator UCI-40083 (N-(4-chlorophenyl)-α-[[(4-chlorophenyl)amino]methylene]-3-methyl-5-isoxazolacet-amide), has been shown to evoke robust positive modulation of agonist-induced currents at α7 nAChRs. In order to evaluate its pharmacological potential in cognition disorders such as the attention deficit with hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), we assessed the effect of systemic UCI-40083 administration on DA and NE release in the medial prefrontal cortex (PFC) of adolescent spontaneous hypertensive (SHR) and Sprague Dawley (SD) rats, by using a microdialysis technique in freely moving animals. We also assessed the effect on DA and NE release in the nucleus accumbens (NAcc) shell to gain insight into potential motivational properties of UCI-40083. Our results show that UCI-40083 (1 mg/kg i.p.) increases NE and DA in the PFC of both SD and SHR rats. This effect yielded an optimum dose as the effect of 3 mg/kg was not significantly different (NE) or was lower (DA) when compared to 1 mg/kg in both strains. In addition, our results show that UCI-40083 significantly increased DA and NE output in the NAcc shell of both SD and SHR rats. The stimulant effect on DA and NE levels in the PFC was blocked by the selective α7 nAChR antagonist methyllycaconitine (MLA) at 3 mg/kg i.p. In summary our results suggest that UCI-40083 has the potential of modulating catecholamine transmission in the PFC and in the NAcc shell and thus may possess cognitive and motivational properties, features that are shown also by stimulant drugs currently used in ADHD therapy such as amphetamine and methylphenidate.