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NET Cl^- FLUX IN SHORT-CIRCUITED SKIN OF *RANA PIPIENS*: OUABAIN SENSITIVITY AND Na^+ + K^+ DEPENDENCE

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SUMMARY

Skin of *Rana pipiens*, like many other species, is considered to actively transport only Na^+ when bathed in Ringer's solution on both sides. However, net Cl^- influx was previously described by us in short-circuited skin of *Rana pipiens*, in the summer season. The skins were of low PD (5–30 mV) and high Cl^- conductance. Comparison of these findings with other series indicated inverse seasonal variation between PD and Cl^- conductance. It was postulated that active Cl^- transport exists at all Cl^- -conductance levels but at higher PD is too small to be easily detected. This report evaluates Cl^- transport across skins of higher PD (and lower conductance) in winter and further characterizes the system. Net Cl^- influx was demonstrated over a wide PD range under short-circuit conditions and was inversely related to the magnitude of the open-circuit PD. It was inhibited by ouabain and dependent upon Na^+ in the outside medium and K^+ in the inside medium. It is concluded that this is the same system present in skin of *Leptodactylus ocellatus* and may not be unique to these two species. It appears to be distinctly different from the acetazolamide-sensitive influx system seen in "low- Cl^- " solutions in skins of numerous species. The findings are discussed in terms of (1) parallel Na^+ and Cl^- active transport mechanisms and (2) a neutral NaCl-pump model, recently proposed by Rehm.

INTRODUCTION

Ussing and coworkers [1–3] and Linderholm [4] first presented evidence in isolated skin of *Rana temporaria* and *Rana esculenta* that Na^+ is actively transported and Cl^- transported passively. The following findings were presented as proof of passive transport of Cl^- : (1) The flux ratio of Cl^- approximated that expected for a given electrochemical gradient across the skin; (2) The short-circuit current, i.e. the electrical current across the skin in the absence of an electrical gradient and with

Abbreviation: s.c.c., short-circuit current.

equal concentrations of ions on both sides of the skin, was equivalent to the net Na^+ flux or Na^+ current. The assumption has generally been made, for the species *Rana pipiens*, that Cl^- transport is also passive since equivalence between short-circuit current (s.c.c.) and net Na^+ flux has been repeatedly demonstrated in isolated skin.

However, experiments in this laboratory, in living anesthetized *R. pipiens* with a wide range of spontaneous open-circuit potential difference (PD), demonstrated that the short-circuit current was clearly less than net Na^+ flux in skins with PD values below 20–30 mV [5]. Active inward Cl^- transport across the skins of low PD was postulated to explain this discrepancy. In an extension of these studies in a series of unselected isolated skins of *R. pipiens* in summer, with a mean potential difference (PD) of 13 mV (5–30 mV), the short-circuit current equivalent was found to be significantly less than net Na^+ flux [6]. No discrepancy was found in absence of Cl^- (skins bathed in sulfate Ringers'). Net Cl^- influx was demonstrated in Cl^- -containing Ringers' solution and was of appropriate magnitude to explain the discrepancy.

Comparison of these findings with small series of unidirectional flux measurements performed at other seasons suggested (1) that passive Cl^- conductance is high in summer, decreases in fall and winter and increases again in spring and (2) that an inverse seasonal relationship between PD and Cl^- conductance also existed. It was postulated that active Cl^- transport exists at all Cl^- conductance levels but at higher PD values is too small to be easily detected by the short-circuit current technique.

This study evaluates Cl^- transport across frog skin at higher PD's in the winter season and further characterizes the system. Net Cl^- influx was demonstrated over a wide PD range under short-circuit conditions and was inversely related to the magnitude of the open circuit PD. It was inhibited by ouabain and dependent upon Na^+ in the outside medium and K^+ in the inside medium.

METHODS

Unfed 40–60 g male and female frogs (*R. pipiens*) that were kept in large bins with running water were used. Abdominal skin pairs were dissected from decapitated frogs and mounted between Lucite hemichambers. The volume of the compartments on each side of the skin was 8 ml and the skin area was 1.33 cm². The experimental system is described in more detail elsewhere [6]. The electrolyte solution bathing the skin, in most experiments, had the following composition in mmol/l: NaCl, 113; KCl, 3.0; NaH_2PO_4 , 2.0. The solution was adjusted to pH 7.40. Na^+ -free solution contained arginine chloride 115, KCl 1.0 and KH_2PO_4 2.0 mM. K^+ -free solution was the same as the Na^+ -containing solution except for replacement of KCl by 3 mM arginine chloride.

The skin was continuously short-circuited except for open-circuit state 30 s of every 6 min. The PD and s.c.c. in Tables I and II are the values taken at the mid-point of the 1-h flux period in question. The d.c. conductance (G) was estimated from the equation $G = \text{s.c.c.}/\text{PD}$. Marked quantitative variation in Cl^- flux from skin to skin presents a problem in attempts to demonstrate net Cl^- influx [6]. Even unidirectional Cl^- flux in the same direction in skin pairs can be quite different in magnitude [7]. This difference may be due to variable skin tension or edge damage

in mounting and/or mosaic behavior of the skin. However, Cl^- conductance or flux appears to roughly correlate with PD in an inverse manner [1, 6, 8]. Therefore, PD was used as a criterion to improve matching. Skin pairs were not used if the lower PD of the pair was less than 50 % of the higher measurement. This rather lenient range of PD within pairs was arbitrarily allowed because PD is not just a function of Cl^- conductance [8]. It is, at least, a function of active Na^{++} transport as well.

At the beginning of each experiment, $^{36}\text{Cl}^-$ was added to the inside or outside solutions of one of each pair to perform simultaneous influx and outflux determinations. Flux measurements were begun 1 h after mounting. $^{36}\text{Cl}^-$ was counted in a liquid scintillation spectrometer using a liquid scintillator in naphthalene-dioxane.

RESULTS

Table IA presents the results of Cl^- flux and electrical measurements on two unselected series of skin pairs performed in January and March, respectively. In each case a significant net Cl^- influx was demonstrated under short-circuit conditions. Grouping of all experiments from the two series according to PD range (Table IB) reveals net Cl^- influx at low and high PD values. The net influx was significant in the series below 30 mV (mean of 19 mV) and above 49 mV (mean of 64 mV). Mean influx, outflux, net flux and G were all less in the higher PD range. This inverse relationship of Cl^- flux to PD is even more evident when the values in this study are compared to control values in Table IIB and with those of the previous series [6] which had a mean PD of 13 mV. In the latter series the influx, outflux and net flux were 4.71, 3.75 and $0.96 \mu\text{equiv} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$, respectively. Also, the average s.c.c. within the two series was greater at higher average PD values, as previously noted for the single series of measurements in vivo [5]. Correction of the s.c.c. for the model Cl^- current demonstrated does not account for this latter correlation so that the Na^+ transport must indeed be higher at higher PD, within a series.

The response of the net Cl^- transport system to ouabain and Na^+ - and K^+ -free solutions is shown in Table II. Ouabain (Table IIA), 0.1 mM, was placed on the skin inside at the end of the 1st hour flux period in 13 of the skins pairs studies in March 1974 (Table IA). A subsequent 1-h flux period was performed. The net Cl^- flux was reduced to insignificant levels. This was accomplished by an increase in Cl^- outflux (See Discussion).

The series assessing electrolyte dependence of Cl^- flux were performed in May and June 1974 (Table IIB). The control influx, outflux and net flux are all substantially greater than these values in the series in Table I. This seasonal variation is expected [6]. With Na^+ -free solution on the skin outside, net Cl^- flux was minimal compared to the control series. Both influx and outflux were significantly less (46 and 40 %, $P < 0.005$ and < 0.01 , respectively). Similarly, with K^+ -free medium bathing the skin inside, net Cl^- flux was not significantly different from zero. However, only Cl^- influx was significantly lower than in the control series ($P < 0.05$). Short-circuit current was significantly lower than control, both in the presence of Na^+ -free solution on the outside and K^+ -free solution on the inside. ($P < 0.001$ and < 0.005 , respectively).

TABLE 1

Cl⁻ FLUX AND ELECTRICAL MEASUREMENTS IN ISOLATED SHORT-CIRCUITED FROG SKIN PAIRS

Cl⁻ influx and outflux were performed on skin pairs and net flux calculated for each pair. *P* refers to Student's *t* test of net flux treating in and outflux as paired data. *G* refers to d.c. conductance. All values represent mean \pm S.E. Electrical measurements were averaged for each skin pair and then mean values calculated from the pair average for each series (See Methods).

	<i>N</i>	Influx	Outflux (μ equiv \cdot cm ⁻² \cdot h ⁻¹)	Net flux	<i>P</i>	s.c.c. (μ A \cdot cm ⁻²)	PD (mV)	<i>G</i> (k Ω ⁻¹ \cdot cm ⁻²)
A. According to experimental data								
Jan. '74	36	0.705 \pm 0.071	0.466 \pm 0.044	0.239 \pm 0.066	<0.001	31.0 \pm 2.68	37.4 \pm 2.79	0.88 \pm 0.049
Mar. '74	22	0.783 \pm 0.15	0.525 \pm 0.093	0.261 \pm 0.076	<0.005	44.5 \pm 4.09	48.1 \pm 4.79	1.08 \pm 0.097
B. According to PD range								
< 30 mV	18	1.050 \pm 0.170	0.650 \pm 0.099	0.400 \pm 0.088	<0.001	20.1 \pm 1.70	19.4 \pm 1.50	1.13 \pm 0.099
30-49 mV	21	0.693 \pm 0.102	0.510 \pm 0.070	0.183 \pm 0.099	<0.10	35.6 \pm 3.66	39.6 \pm 1.25	0.99 \pm 0.084
> 49 mV	19	0.482 \pm 0.060	0.309 \pm 0.031	0.173 \pm 0.016	<0.001	52.1 \pm 3.24	64.4 \pm 2.66	0.82 \pm 0.048

TABLE II

EFFECT OF OUABAIN AND Na^+ AND K^+ REPLACEMENT ON Cl^- FLUX IN SHORT-CIRCUITED SKIN PAIRS

Cl^- influx and outflux were performed on skin pairs and net flux calculated for each pair. P refers to Student's t test of net flux treating in and outflux as paired data. All values represent mean \pm S.E. In Series A, electrical measurements were averaged for each skin pair and then mean values calculated from the pair average for each series (See Methods). In Series B mean \pm S.E. was not calculated from the pair averages but for the total number of skins studied e.g. for the control series, $N = 50$ for PD and s.c.c.

Conditions	N	Influx	Outflux ($\mu\text{equiv} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2} \cdot \text{h}^{-1}$)	Net flux	P	s.c.c. ($\mu\text{A} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$)	PD (mV)
A. Effects of 0.1 mM ouabain							
Before ouabain	13	0.804 ± 0.252	0.507 ± 0.142	0.297 ± 0.119	< 0.05	40.3 ± 5.36	49.2 ± 7.33
After ouabain	13	0.864 ± 0.194	0.823 ± 0.158	0.041 ± 0.081	N.S.	16.5 ± 2.02	16.5 ± 2.02
B. Na^+ and K^+ replacement							
Control	25	2.50 ± 0.347	1.92 ± 0.214	0.58 ± 0.225	< 0.02	29.9 ± 2.07	18.2 ± 1.86
Na^+ -free solution outside	22	1.34 ± 0.167	1.16 ± 0.176	0.18 ± 0.176	N.S.	14.2 ± 1.06	12.9 ± 1.15
K^+ -free solution inside	19	1.66 ± 0.246	1.69 ± 0.251	0.03 ± 0.253	N.S.	21.0 ± 1.97	15.2 ± 1.40

DISCUSSION

The experiments here reported indicate net Cl^- flux inward under short-circuit conditions in isolated skin of *R. pipiens* in winter season and at high PD and low Cl^- conductance or permeability. As originally speculated, from studies in summer on skin of low PD and relatively high Cl^- conductance [6], the net flux is on average inversely related to the PD and of small enough magnitude to be difficult to detect. For instance, in the two series performed in January and March (Table I) the average Cl^- current was approximately $4 \mu\text{A} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$ compared to average s.c.c. at midpoint of the flux periods of 46 and $31 \mu\text{A} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$, respectively. This approximate 10 % contribution of net Cl^- flux to s.c.c. could go unobserved if Cl^- flux determinations of small number were made or if inference of absence of net Cl^- flux was based on equivalence between s.c.c. and net Na^+ flux. This small contribution would more easily be over-looked should there be selection of skins of relatively high PD for experimental purposes. For instance, the average Cl^- current as percent of s.c.c. in the groupings above 29 mV were only 8 and 5 %, for the ranges 30–49 mV and > 49 mV, respectively. Thus, approximate equivalence between s.c.c. and net Na^+ flux would be present.

In all flux measurements the skins were under open-circuit conditions for 30 s of every 6 min. Thus, 8 % of the time a potential gradient favorable for net Cl^- influx was present. Conceivably, this gradient could account for part or all of the net Cl^- influx since the flux ratios for Cl^- are relatively small. This possibility was tested using the Goldman-Hodgkin-Katz equation as applied to unidirectional fluxes [9]. The expected flux ratio (J_i/J_o), assuming a completely passive behavior for Cl^- (influx = outflux) 92 % of the time and an electrical field across the skin 8 % of the time, was calculated for all the mean PD values in Table I. In every case the calculated ratio was substantially less than the ratio found. For instance, for PD values of 19.4 and 64.4 mV (Table IB) the calculated J_i/J_o values were 1.06 and 1.22, respectively. The experimental J_i/J_o values were 1.62 and 1.56, respectively. Thus, the brief periods of open-circuit state do not account for most of the net Cl^- influx, within the limitations of the assumptions inherent in the Goldman-Hodgkin-Katz equation. We conclude that active Cl^- transport inward does exist.

The inhibition of net Cl^- influx produced by ouabain (Table IIA) deserves some discussion. Outflux of Cl^- increased, but little change in influx occurred. The increase in Cl^- outflux is similar to effects of ouabain on Na^+ outflux in frog skin [10]. We conclude that active Cl^- influx was indeed depressed while passive Cl^- influx increased, thus producing little over-all change in influx. However, it could be argued that ouabain did not alter active Cl^- transport inward, but affected outward movement of Cl^- alone. Against the latter argument is our subsequent finding that ouabain often decreases Cl^- influx in skins with higher influx values (to be published elsewhere). This suggests that in the presence of a larger component of active Cl^- influx the inhibitory effect of ouabain is no longer completely masked by an increase in passive flux.

In skins bathed in K^+ -free solution on the inside (Table IIB), net Cl^- flux was not detectable. This effect was the result of a decrease in Cl^- influx. Thus, net Cl^- influx resembles active Na^+ transport not only in being ouabain sensitive but also in dependence upon K^+ [11, 12]. A similar or identical ATPase could be responsible

for transport of the two ions. (See below).

In the presence of Na^+ -free solution on the skin outside, net Cl^- influx was markedly reduced (Table IIB). However, in contrast to results in K^+ -free solution, both Cl^- influx and outflux were significantly less than in control skins. Macey and Myers [13] found a 45 % decrease in Cl^- influx in isolated skin of *R. pipiens* upon complete replacement of Na^+ with K^+ in the outside bathing solution compared to a 46 % difference in this study. They did not determine Cl^- outflux. Both Cl^- influx and outflux were approximately 80 % less in isolated short-circuited skin of *Leptodactylus ocellatus* [14], bathed on both sides by Na^+ -free choline-containing Ringers' solution, compared to skins in Na^+ -containing Ringers' solution. Dependence of Cl^- influx and net flux on presence of Na^+ in the outer medium could be explained by coupling of the two ions in entry to transporting cells (as postulated for small intestine [15]) or coupled active transport [16] (see below). However, neither mechanism explains dependence of Cl^- outflux upon presence of Na^+ outside. Possibly, removal of outside Na^+ alters characteristics of a major barrier(s) to Cl^- movement in either direction.

Upon replacement with a K^+ -free solution inside (Table IIB) a substantial residual s.c.c. of $21 \mu\text{A} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$ was present. Certainly, there is some K^+ available for local recycling to support a residual of active Na^+ transport. This K^+ would originate from leakage out of epidermal cells. The residual s.c.c. in the presence of Na^+ -free arginine chloride solution outside is more difficult to explain. Positive current inward could be the result of an arginine diffusion current, active arginine transport or a combination of these. Pinschmidt, et al. [17] found essentially no s.c.c. in skins of *R. pipiens* bathed in arginine chloride solution on the outside. Their experiments were performed between October and March when electrical conductance is relatively low. It may be that substantial active or passive flux of arginine chloride occurs only in spring and summer i.e. periods of high conductance.

This net Cl^- -transport system appears similar to that reported in the species *L. ocellatus* as the two share the property of ouabain sensitivity [18] and dependence on Na^+ [14]. Also the magnitude of unidirectional Cl^- flux and net flux in our original demonstration of net Cl^- flux in summer [6] was similar to the finding in *L. ocellatus* [18] as was the PD range (5–30 and 10–40 mV, respectively). Thus, net Cl^- flux in "high"- Cl^- Ringer's solution is not unique to the South American frog, but may be present in frogs of all or many species but most easily demonstrable only when Cl^- permeability is relatively high. It appears distinct from the acetazolamide sensitive net Cl^- transport inward which is demonstrable in skin bathed in low Cl^- solution (1–3 mM) in several species, including *R. pipiens* [19]. Kristensen [20] has demonstrated absence of ouabain sensitivity and independence of presence of Na^+ in the bathing medium in this latter system in skins of *R. temporaria*. In contrast, we have found no effect of high concentration of acetazolamide on the ouabain sensitive system reported here (studies to be published elsewhere).

One possible explanation of this apparent active Cl^- transport which is ouabain sensitive and dependant upon Na^+ in the outside medium and K^+ in the inside medium is the coexistence of parallel Na^+ and Cl^- pumps, each coupled to metabolism by a $(\text{Na}^+ \rightarrow \text{K}^+)$ -dependant, ouabain-sensitive ATPase. The magnitude of active Cl^- transport would be expected to be dependent on Cl^- entry from the outer medium. Thus, under conditions of high Cl^- permeability the contribution of

Cl^- current to net ion transport would be significant. The net active Cl^- transport would be lower at lower permeability or conductance, the latter conditions existent at higher PD [1, 8].

Another possible explanation of this phenomenon has been suggested by Rehm et al. [16] utilizing a model containing a neutral NaCl pump. This double membrane model has parallel Na^+ - and Cl^- -conductive pathways, only, in the outside membrane and parallel K^+ and Cl^- conductive pathways, only, in the inner membrane. These assumptions are qualitatively in keeping with findings in frog skin [21, 22]. The neutral NaCl pump is placed on the inner membrane with active transport directed inward. When NaCl transport occurs under open-circuit conditions at steady state, all Cl^- actively moved through the neutral NaCl pump must originate in the outside solution. Under short-circuit conditions the Na^+ for active transport must still enter from the outside solution as the inner membrane is relatively impermeable to this ion. However, the neutral pump may now receive Cl^- from both outside and inside bathing solutions. The latter Cl^- is non-isotopic in influx determination and simply recycles from medium to cell interior to pump and back to inside solution, and is not noted in transepithelial flux measurements. The fraction of Cl^- passing through the pump from outside and inside respectively becomes a function of the relative conductance for Cl^- of the two membranes. Thus, when the conductance of the outer membrane is much less than the conductance of the inner membrane, net Cl^- current is present but insignificant compared to the Na^+ current and most of the Cl^- for the pump arises from the inner bathing medium. In other words, under the artifice of short-circuit conditions, little transepithelial net Cl^- flux is present despite the fact that neutral NaCl is being actively transported. This would be analogous to the condition of skins of high PD and low Cl^- conductance (Table I). At higher relative Cl^- conductance of outer to inner membrane more of the pump Cl^- originates in the outer medium and the net Cl^- flux or current increases to significantly contribute to the s.c.c., as found in summer frogs of high Cl^- conductance and low PD [6].

Since the model predicts much or most of the pump Cl^- arising from the inner solution, under short-circuit conditions, dependence of active Na^+ transport upon the nature of the anion present on the skin inside is expected, unless the outer membrane Cl^- permeability is quite high relative to inside. Huf [23] has demonstrated a marked reduction in s.c.c., Na^+ influx and net Na^+ flux when Cl^- inside is replaced with SO_4^{2-} , an anion of very low permeability. The s.c.c. is partially reduced when Cl^- inside is replaced by other less permeant monovalent anions, HCO_3^- or NO_3^- . Indeed, recycling of Cl^- coupled with active Na^+ transport has been suggested by Pinschmidt et al. [17] as a possible explanation of the Cl^- dependence of catecholamine stimulated active Na^+ transport [17].

The neutral NaCl pump model of Rehm et al. is appealing because it accounts for the following, utilizing one active transport mechanism: (a) active Na^+ and Cl^- transport which is $\text{Na}^+ + \text{K}^+$ dependant and ouabain sensitive; (b) variation of net Cl^- flux with Cl^- conductance, under short-circuit conditions; and (c) dependence of Na^+ transport inward upon the nature of anions in the inner solution, under short-circuit conditions. Neutral active NaCl transport does not necessarily deny K^+ participation in the energy transduction step with ATP and is thus compatible with this requirement of active transport. A neutral active NaCl transport certainly cannot

account for all Na^+ transport. Residual active Na^+ transport has repeatedly been shown in skins bathed in sulfate Ringers' solution on both sides (cf refs 6 and 23).

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