

# The $\beta_3$ -Adrenoceptor Agonist 4-[[[(Hexylamino)carbonyl]amino]-N-[4-[2-[[[(2S)-2-hydroxy-3-(4-hydroxyphenoxy)propyl]amino]ethyl]-phenyl]-benzenesulfonamide (L755507) and Antagonist (S)-N-[4-[2-[[[3-(Acetamidomethyl)phenoxy]-2-hydroxypropyl]amino]-ethyl]phenyl]benzenesulfonamide (L748337) Activate Different Signaling Pathways in Chinese Hamster Ovary-K1 Cells Stably Expressing the Human $\beta_3$ -Adrenoceptor

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## ABSTRACT

This study identifies signaling pathways activated by the  $\beta_2$ -/ $\beta_3$ -adrenoceptor (AR) agonist zinterol, the selective  $\beta_3$ -AR agonist L755507, and the selective  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist L748337 in CHO-K1 cells expressing human  $\beta_3$ -adrenoceptors. Zinterol and L755507 caused a robust concentration-dependent increase in cAMP accumulation (pEC<sub>50</sub> values of 8.5 and 12.3, respectively), whereas L748337 had low efficacy. Maximal cAMP accumulation with zinterol and L755507 was increased after pretreatment with pertussis toxin, indicating that the human  $\beta_3$ -AR couples to G<sub>i</sub> and to G<sub>s</sub>. In contrast to cAMP, zinterol, L755507 and L748337 increased phosphorylation of extracellular signal-regulated kinase 1/2 (Erk1/2) with very high potency (pEC<sub>50</sub> values of 10.9, 11.7, and 11.6). These compounds also stimulated phosphorylation of p38 mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) but with much lower potency than Erk1/2 (pEC<sub>50</sub> values of 5.9, 5.5, and 5.7, respectively). Pertussis toxin completely blocked Erk1/2 and p38 MAPK

phosphorylation in response to L748337, demonstrating a requirement for G<sub>i/o</sub> coupling, whereas L755507-stimulated p38 MAPK phosphorylation was not inhibited by pertussis toxin, and Erk1/2 phosphorylation was inhibited by only 30%. We found that high levels of cAMP interfered with agonist-activated p38 MAPK phosphorylation. L748337 increased extracellular acidification rate (ECAR) in the cytosensor microphysiometer with efficacy similar to zinterol and L755507, albeit with lower potency (pEC<sub>50</sub> value of 7.2 compared with zinterol, 8.1, and L755507, 8.6). The ECAR response to L748337 was largely via activation of p38 MAPK, demonstrated by 65% inhibition with 4-[4-(4-fluorophenyl)-1-(3-phenylpropyl)-5-(4-pyridinyl)-1H-imidazol-2-yl]-3-butyne-1-ol (RWJ67657). We conclude that the  $\beta_3$ -AR agonist L755507 couples to both G<sub>s</sub> and G<sub>i</sub> to activate adenylate cyclase and MAPK signaling, whereas the  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist L748337 couples predominantly to G<sub>i</sub> to activate MAPK signaling.

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$\beta$ -Adrenoceptors (ARs) mediate responses to circulating adrenaline and to noradrenaline released from sympathetic nerve terminals. The  $\beta_1$ -,  $\beta_2$ -, and  $\beta_3$ -AR subtypes have distinct patterns of expression in heart, lung, blood vessels, the gastrointestinal tract, adipose tissue, and the central ner-

**ABBREVIATIONS:** AR, adrenoceptor; CHO, Chinese hamster ovary; ECAR, extracellular acidification rate; MAPK, mitogen-activated protein kinase; Erk1/2, extracellular signal-regulated protein kinase 1/2; PTX, pertussis toxin; ISO, (–)-isoproterenol; DMEM, Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium; FBS, fetal bovine serum; ICYP, <sup>125</sup>I-(–)-cyanopindolol; BSA, bovine serum albumin; DDA, 2',3'-dideoxyadenosine; 8-Br-cAMP, 8-bromoadenosine 3',5'-cAMP; PKA, protein kinase A; LDS, ligand-directed signaling; RWJ67657, 4-[4-(4-fluorophenyl)-1-(3-phenylpropyl)-5-(4-pyridinyl)-1H-imidazol-2-yl]-3-butyne-1-ol; L755507, 4-[[[(hexylamino)carbonyl]amino]-N-[4-[2-[[[(2S)-2-hydroxy-3-(4-hydroxyphenoxy)propyl]amino]ethyl]phenyl]-benzenesulfonamide; L748337, (S)-N-[4-[2-[[[3-(acetamidomethyl)phenoxy]-2-hydroxypropyl]amino]ethyl]phenyl]benzenesulfonamide; LY294002, 2-(4-morpholinyl)-8-phenyl-4H-1-benzopyran-4-one; PP2, 4-amino-5-(4-chlorophenyl)-7-(t-butyl)pyrazolo[3,4-d]pyrimidine; PD98059, 2'-amino-3'-methoxyflavone; H-89, N-[2-(p-bromocinnamylamino)ethyl]-5-isoquinolinesulfonamide dihydrochloride; SR59230A, 3-(2-ethylphenoxy)-1-[(1S)-1,2,3,4-tetrahydronaphth-1-yl]amino]-(2S)-2-propanol oxalate; CL316243, disodium 5-[(2R)-2-[(2R)-2-(3-chlorophenyl)-2-hydroxyethyl]amino]propyl]-1,3-benzodioxole-2,2-dicarboxylate; CGP12177A, (±)-4[3-[(1,1-dimethyl)amino]-2-hydroxypropoxy]1,3-dihydro-2H-benzimidazol-2-one hydrochloride.

vous system. Agonists at the  $\beta_3$ -AR stimulate lipolysis in white adipocytes, thermogenesis in brown adipocytes, and reduce contractility in gastrointestinal tract and the uterus. Consequently, the  $\beta_3$ -AR is of interest as a therapeutic target for the treatment of obesity, irritable bowel syndrome, and preterm labor. Agonists selective for the  $\beta_2$ -AR already have widespread clinical use in the treatment of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and preterm labor.

In contrast,  $\beta_1$ -AR antagonists are used in the treatment of high blood pressure and heart failure. These act via inhibition of the renin-angiotensin system, central inhibition of sympathetic nervous system outflow, and slowing of heart rate; however, the wider mechanisms of  $\beta$ -AR antagonist action are not understood because of complex effects in multiple cell types. There is emerging evidence that  $\beta$ -AR antagonists have agonist actions independent of their ability to block cAMP signaling. To date, studies have focused on the stimulation of Erk1/2 signaling via  $\beta_1$ - and  $\beta_2$ -ARs (Azzi et al., 2003; Baker et al., 2003; Galandrin and Bouvier, 2006; Wisler et al., 2007; Galandrin et al., 2008). For example, the antagonist carvedilol stimulates Erk1/2 phosphorylation in cells expressing the human  $\beta_2$ -AR via receptor phosphorylation and recruitment of  $\beta$ -arrestin (Wisler et al., 2007). In cells expressing the human  $\beta_1$ -AR, bucindolol is a partial agonist and propranolol is a weak inverse agonist for cAMP relative to (–)-isoproterenol (ISO), but both drugs stimulate Erk1/2 phosphorylation (Galandrin et al., 2008). Only the ISO-stimulated Erk1/2 response is pertussis toxin (PTX)-sensitive, and none of these responses involves  $\beta$ -arrestins. Bioluminescence resonance energy transfer demonstrates that ISO induces a conformational change in the  $\beta_1$ -AR that is spatially distinct from those induced by bucindolol and propranolol.

We found recently that the  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist SR59230A can activate signaling in CHO-K1 cells expressing mouse  $\beta_3$ -ARs at physiological levels. SR59230A is a competitive antagonist for cAMP accumulation yet increases extracellular acidification rate (ECAR) in the cytosensor microphysiometer by activating p38 MAPK, acting as a full agonist relative to the recognized  $\beta_3$ -AR agonist CL316243 (Hutchinson et al., 2005). Both CL316243 and SR59230A induce p38 MAPK phosphorylation, but the effect is more pronounced in cells that express physiological rather than high levels of receptors, and SR59230A has higher efficacy than CL316243. Both ligands also stimulate Erk1/2 phosphorylation, but again, SR59230A has higher efficacy than CL316243 (Sato et al., 2007).

The signaling properties of the mouse  $\beta_3$ -AR differ from those of the human receptor. For example, agonists activate Erk1/2 signaling by the human  $\beta_3$ -AR partly via  $G_{i/o}$ , whereas mouse  $\beta_3$ -AR-mediated Erk1/2 phosphorylation is PTX-insensitive (Gerhardt et al., 1999; Soeder et al., 1999; Hutchinson et al., 2002). The potential of antagonists to stimulate MAPK signaling at the human  $\beta_3$ -AR has not been examined previously. Given the widespread clinical use of  $\beta$ -AR antagonists, it is important to understand their action at each of the human  $\beta$ -ARs. We have examined actions of two structurally related drugs, L748337 and L755507 (Fig. 1), compared with the  $\beta_2$ -AR/ $\beta_3$ -AR agonist zinterol (Hutchinson et al., 2006), at the human  $\beta_3$ -AR expressed in CHO-K1 cells (CHO $\beta_3$ ). L748337 is a selective  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist that competitively blocks cAMP responses to agonists in CHO $\beta_3$  cells and inhibits lipolytic responses in primate adipocytes (Candelore et al., 1999). L755507 is a potent agonist at the human  $\beta_3$ -AR, with 440-fold selectivity for  $\beta_3$ -AR compared with  $\beta_1$  or  $\beta_2$ -ARs (Parmee et al., 1998). It elevates

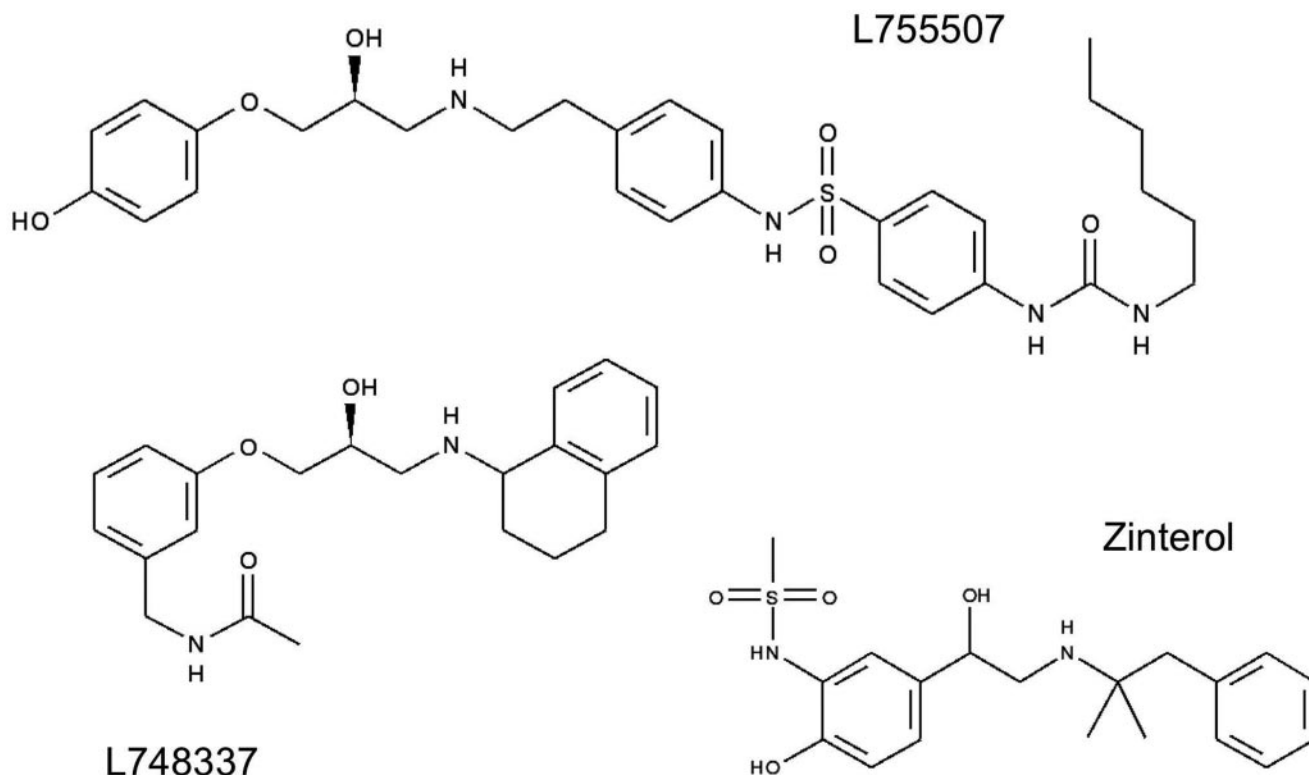


Fig. 1. Structures of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR agonist L755507, antagonist L748337, and the  $\beta_2$ -/ $\beta_3$ -AR agonist zinterol.

cAMP in CHO $\beta_3$  cells, causes thermogenesis in transgenic mice expressing human  $\beta_3$ -ARs (Hu et al., 2001), and induces lipolysis and an elevation of metabolic rate in rhesus monkeys (Fisher et al., 1998).

We have examined the agonist and antagonist actions of these compounds at the human  $\beta_3$ -AR by measuring cAMP accumulation, ECAR, Erk1/2 phosphorylation, and p38 MAPK phosphorylation. We find that L748337 has very weak partial agonist activity for cAMP accumulation but acts as an antagonist of responses to zinterol and L755507. L748337 strongly activates Erk1/2 phosphorylation by signaling predominantly through  $G_i$ .

## Materials and Methods

**Generation of Human  $\beta_3$ -Adrenoceptor Clones.** An insert carrying the coding region of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR was generated by reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction on RNA extracted from human SK-N-MC cells using *Pfx* polymerase (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA). The primers used were forward (5'-CGCAAGCTTCGC-CATGGCTCCGTGG-3') and reverse (CTTCTAGACCTTCAGG CCTAAGAACTCCC-3') and included HindIII and XbaI sites for subcloning fragments into the mammalian vector pcDNA3.1(+) (Invitrogen). The complete insert and junctions with pcDNA3.1(+) were checked by DNA sequencing on both strands (Micromon, Monash University, VIC, Australia).

**Cell Culture and Transfection of the Human  $\beta_3$ -AR in CHO-K1 Cells.** CHO-K1 cells were grown as monolayers in 50:50 Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DMEM): Ham's F-12 medium containing 10% (v/v) fetal bovine serum (FBS), L-glutamine (2 mM), penicillin (100 U/ml), and streptomycin (100  $\mu$ g/ml). All cells were maintained under 5% CO<sub>2</sub> at 37°C. For transfection, CHO-K1 cells were seeded overnight at  $12 \times 10^6$  cells/150-cm<sup>2</sup> flask. Plasmid DNA (2–5  $\mu$ g) containing the coding region of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR and additional pcDNA3.1(+) to a DNA total of 21  $\mu$ g was added to 1.75 ml of Opti-MEM (Invitrogen). This was then added to a solution containing 170  $\mu$ l of Lipofectamine (Invitrogen) in 1.75 ml of Opti-MEM and incubated for 30 min at room temperature. An additional amount of Opti-MEM (14 ml) was then added to the lipid-DNA complexed solution to create the transfection mix. Media were removed from the flask, the cells were washed with 10 ml of Opti-MEM, and the transfection mix was layered onto the cells and left for 4 h. DMEM/Ham's F-12 (50:50; 17.5 ml) containing 20% (v/v) fetal bovine serum was then added and incubated overnight. Media were replaced 24 h later with standard (50:50) DMEM/Ham's F-12, and another 24 h later, stable transformants were selected in medium containing 800  $\mu$ g/ml G418. Clonal cell lines were obtained by limiting dilution of mixed cell populations and were expanded and analyzed by a single point <sup>125</sup>I(-)-cyanopindolol (ICYP, 800 pM) binding screen. Suitable clones were grown further for a full saturation binding analysis.

**Radioligand Binding Assay.** Cells were grown to 90% confluence as a monolayer before membranes were harvested for binding studies. Cells were washed with phosphate-buffered saline and scraped from flasks with lysis buffer (25 mM Tris, pH 7.5, room temperature, 1 mM EDTA, 10 mg/ml bacitracin, 10 mg/ml leupeptin, 10 mg/ml pepstatin A, and 0.5 mg/ml aprotinin). Cells were homogenized with a Dounce homogenizer (approximately 10 strokes per pestle; Wheaton Science Products, Millville, NJ) and centrifuged at low speed (800g, 10 min) to remove cell debris. The supernatants containing membranes were retained, and the pellet was rehomogenized and centrifuged again. Supernatants were pooled and centrifuged (39,000g, 20 min, 4°C). The pellet was homogenized in binding buffer (50 mM Tris, pH 7.4, 5 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub>, 1 mM EDTA, 10 mg/ml bacitracin, 10 mg/ml leupeptin, 10 mg/ml pepstatin A, and 0.5 mg/ml aprotinin) and placed on ice for use on the same day. Experiments were performed at room temperature in a volume of 100  $\mu$ l of binding

buffer, pH 7.4, in 96-well microtiter plates. Homogenate (~10–20  $\mu$ g of protein) was incubated with ICYP (100–2000 pM) for 60 min at room temperature in the absence or presence of (–)-alprenolol (1 mM) to define nonspecific binding. Reactions were terminated by rapid filtration through GF/C filters presoaked for 30 min in 0.5% (v/v) polyethylenimine using a Packard Cell Harvester (PerkinElmer Life and Analytical Sciences, Waltham, MA). Filters were washed three times with cold wash buffer (50 mM Tris, pH 7.4, 4°C) and dried, and radioactivity was measured using a Packard Top Count (PerkinElmer Life and Analytical Sciences). Experiments were performed in duplicate with *n* referring to the number of different membrane homogenate samples used.

**cAMP Accumulation Studies.** Cells ( $1 \times 10^4$ /well) were grown in 96-well plates in DMEM/Ham's F-12 medium containing 0.5% (v/v) FBS for 2 days. On the day of experiment, the medium was aspirated, and appropriate drugs diluted in stimulation buffer (1 mg/ml BSA, 0.5 mM IBMX, and 0.5 M HEPES, pH 7.4 in Hanks' balanced salt solution) added in a final volume of 100  $\mu$ l. After 30 min of incubation at 37°C, the medium was removed, and 100  $\mu$ l of lysis buffer [1 mg/ml BSA, 0.3% (v/v) Tween 20, 0.5 M HEPES, and 0.5 mM IBMX, pH 7.4] was added. Samples were rapidly frozen at –70°C and then thawed before assay to lyse cells before measurement of cAMP.

To examine the role of  $G_{i/o}$  coupling, cells were pretreated with PTX at 100 ng/ml for 16 h. For all other inhibitor experiments, cells were treated for 30 min before stimulation with appropriate drugs. cAMP accumulation was measured using the cAMP Alphascreen method (PerkinElmer Life and Analytical Sciences, VIC, Australia). Samples were defrosted, and cAMP standards (10 pM to 1  $\mu$ M) were prepared in detection buffer [0.4% (v/v) Hanks' balanced salt solution, 3 mM HEPES, 0.2% (v/v) Tween 20, and 0.1% (v/v) BSA, pH 7.4] and 5  $\mu$ l of unknown samples or cAMP standards transferred into a white 384-well plate. Acceptor beads (5  $\mu$ l; anti-cAMP acceptor beads diluted in detection buffer) were divided into aliquots in each well and incubated for 30 min in the dark. A 15- $\mu$ l sample of donor bead mix (streptavidin donor beads diluted in detection buffer, 133 U/ $\mu$ l biotinylated cAMP) solution was added to each well, and the plate was sealed and incubated in the dark overnight. cAMP accumulation was detected using a Fusion  $\alpha$  microplate reader (PerkinElmer). All results are expressed as a percentage of the response to 100  $\mu$ M forskolin to correct for variability in cell number or viability between individual samples.

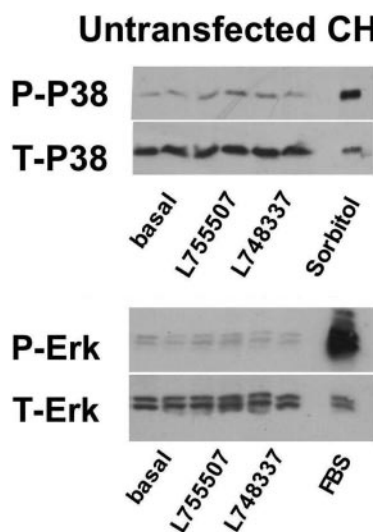
**Cytosensor Microphysiometer Studies.** The cytosensor microphysiometer (Molecular Devices, Sunnyvale, CA) was used to measure  $\beta_3$ -AR-mediated increases in ECAR as described previously (Hutchinson et al., 2002, 2005). In brief, CHO $\beta_3$  cells were seeded into 12-mm Transwell inserts (Costar; Corning Life Science, Acton, MA) at  $5 \times 10^5$  cells/cup and left to adhere overnight. On the day of experiment, cells were equilibrated for 2 h, and cumulative concentration-response curves to L755507, zinterol, or L748337 were constructed in paired sister cells with each concentration of drug exposed to cells for 14 min. Results are expressed as a percentage of the maximal response to L755507. In experiments examining the effect of inhibitors, cells were treated for 30 min before stimulation with appropriate drugs. All drugs were diluted in modified RPMI 1640 medium. These results are expressed as a percentage of the maximal response to L755507, zinterol, or L748337 over basal.

**Western Blotting.** Cells were grown in 12-well plates at  $1 \times 10^5$ /well in DMEM/Ham's F-12 medium containing 0.5% FBS for 2 days, and the medium was replaced with nonserum medium 2 h before the experiment. In time course studies, cells were exposed to agonist for 0 to 30 min. Cells were lysed directly in each well by the addition of 40  $\mu$ l of 65°C SDS sample buffer (62.5 mM Tris-HCl, pH 6.8, 2% SDS, 10% glycerol, 50 mM dithiothreitol, and 0.1% bromophenol blue). Cells were scraped, transferred to an Eppendorf tube on ice, and sonicated for 10 s followed by heating to 95°C for 5 min. Aliquots of the samples were separated on a 12% polyacrylamide gel and electrotransferred to a polyvinylidene difluoride membrane (Bio-



Rad, Hercules, CA) with a semidry electroblotter. After transfer, the membranes were allowed to soak in Tris-buffered saline for 5 min, followed by quenching of nonspecific binding (1 h at room temperature in 5% nonfat dry milk, 0.1% Tween 20 in Tris-buffered saline). Membranes were incubated overnight at 4°C with primary antibody phospho-p38 MAPK (Thr180/Tyr184) or phospho-p44/42 MAPK (Thr202/Tyr204) (diluted 1:1000) added. Antibody bound was detected using a secondary antibody (horseradish peroxidase-linked anti-rabbit IgG) (diluted 1:2000) and enhanced chemiluminescence. The membranes were then stripped with 10 M urea, 50 mM sodium phosphate, and 100 mM  $\beta$ -mercaptoethanol for 30 min at 50°C and reprobed with the appropriate p38 MAPK or p44/42 MAPK antibody and detected with the same secondary antibody. Results are expressed as the ratio of phosphorylated-to-total p38 MAPK or Erk1/2 protein over basal. All experiments were performed in duplicate with  $n$  referring to the number of independent experiments performed. We checked that the observed p38 MAPK or Erk1/2 phosphorylation was mediated by the  $\beta_3$ -AR by showing that untransfected CHO-K1 cells did not respond to 10  $\mu$ M L755507 or L748337 (Fig. 2). To examine the role of  $G_{i/o}$  coupling, cells were pretreated with PTX at 100 ng/ml for 16 h. For all other inhibitor experiments, cells were treated for 30 min before stimulation with appropriate drugs.

**Data Analysis.**  $^{125}$ I-Cyanopindolol saturation binding isotherms were analyzed via nonlinear regression using Prism version 4.0 (GraphPad Software Inc., San Diego, CA) using a one-site mass action model to derive estimates of the radioligand dissociation constant ( $K_D$ ) and maximal density of receptor binding sites ( $B_{max}$ ). For functional assays, all results were expressed as a mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. of  $n$  experiments. Data were analyzed using nonlinear curve fitting (GraphPad PRISM version 4.0). Concentration-response curves were analyzed using the general equation for a sigmoid curve with a Hill slope of 1:  $Y = \text{Bottom} + (\text{Top} - \text{Bottom}) / (1 + 10^{\log EC_{50} - X})$ , where  $Y$  is the response,  $X$  is the log [ligand], Bottom is the  $Y$  response value for the bottom plateau, Top is the  $Y$  response value for the top plateau ( $E_{max}$ ), and  $EC_{50}$  is the ligand concentration corresponding to the  $Y$  value halfway between bottom and top. In functional experiments in which L748337 was an antagonist of agonist-mediated cAMP responses,  $pK_B$  values were calculated according to the method of Furchgott (1972). Statistical significance was determined using two-way analysis of variance tests or Student's  $t$  test. Probability values less than or equal to 0.05 were considered significant.



**Fig. 2.** Lack of Erk1/2 and p38 MAPK phosphorylation in untransfected CHO-K1 cells. p38MAPK phosphorylation was examined after administration of sorbitol (500 mM), L755507 (10  $\mu$ M), or L748337 (10  $\mu$ M). Erk1/2 phosphorylation was examined after administration of FBS (10% v/v), L755507 (100 pM), or L748337 (100 pM). L755507 and L748337 did not stimulate either p38 MAPK or Erk1/2 phosphorylation in untransfected CHO-K1 cells.

**Drugs and Reagents.** RWJ67657 was supplied by Dr. John Siekierka (Johnson & Johnson, Raritan, NJ). L755507 and L748337 were supplied by Dr. Maria Luisa Candelore (Merck Research Laboratories, Rahway, NJ). Zinterol (*N*-[2-hydroxy-5-[1-hydroxy-2-[(2-methyl-1-phenyl-propan-2-yl)amino] ethyl] phenyl]methanesulfonamide hydrochloride) was a gift from Bristol-Myers Squibb (Noble Park, VIC, Australia). Drugs and reagents were purchased as follows: G418, LY294002, PP2, and PD98059 were from Calbiochem Corp. (La Jolla, CA);  $^{125}$ I-(+)-CYP (2200 Ci/mmol) was from PerkinElmer Life and Analytical Sciences; (–)-alprenolol, bacitracin, IBMX, polyethylenimine, forskolin, 2',3'-dideoxyadenosine (DDA), and H-89 were from Sigma Chemical Co. (St. Louis, MO); and aprotinin, leupeptin, and pepstatin A were from Valeant Pharmaceuticals (Costa Mesa, CA). All cell culture media and supplements were obtained from Trace Biosciences (Castle Hill, NSW, Australia). Antibodies were obtained from Cell Signaling Technology (Danvers, MA). All other drugs and reagents were of analytical grade.

## Results

**Radioligand Binding Characteristics of Transfected CHO-K1 Cells.** Levels of expression in stably transfected CHO $\beta_3$  cells were determined by saturation binding experiments using  $^{125}$ I-cyanopindolol. The  $pK_D$  and  $B_{max}$  values for the human  $\beta_3$ -AR clone used were  $9.00 \pm 0.34$  and  $203 \pm 45$  fmol/mg, respectively. This expression level is similar to that occurring physiologically in newborn human adipose tissue (Deng et al., 1996).

**Effects of Zinterol, L755507, and L748337 on cAMP Accumulation.** In CHO $\beta_3$  cells, both the selective  $\beta_3$ -AR agonist L755507 and the recognized  $\beta_2$ -AR agonist zinterol caused a concentration-dependent increase in cAMP, whereas the selective  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist, L748337, was a weak partial agonist relative to zinterol (Table 1 and Fig. 3). L755507 is a highly potent agonist for cAMP accumulation, displaying a 25,000-fold amplification of response relative to its binding affinity, whereas zinterol shows a 30-fold amplification of response (Table 1). PTX pretreatment did not significantly affect  $pEC_{50}$  values for cAMP accumulation in response to stimulation but did increase maximal responses. This could suggest that one or more conformations of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR couple to both  $G_s$  and  $G_i$  or may reflect the removal of non-competitive basal effects of constitutively active  $G_i$  after PTX treatment. The latter seems unlikely, however, because we see no effect of PTX on the cAMP response to L748337 at the human receptor (Fig. 3) or on CL316243 responses mediated by the mouse  $\beta_{3a}$ -AR expressed in the same cellular background (Sato et al., 2005).

The human  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist L748337 blocked increases in cAMP levels stimulated by zinterol (50 nM) and L755507 (10 pM) with  $pK_B$  values of  $9.20 \pm 0.25$  ( $IC_{50} = 63$  nM) and  $9.46 \pm 0.14$  ( $IC_{50} = 35$  nM), respectively (Fig. 3). In comparison, Candelore et al. (1999) found that L748337 was a highly potent antagonist of isoproterenol (70 nM)-stimulated cAMP responses, with an  $IC_{50}$  value of 6 nM. Small differences in the behavior of L748337 may reflect the somewhat higher abundance of the  $\beta_3$ -AR in our study (203 fmol/mg protein) compared with the previous work (40–60 fmol/mg protein; Candelore et al., 1999). The higher  $\beta_3$ -AR expression level used in our studies is also consistent with the acquisition of weak partial agonist activity.

**Effects of Zinterol, L755507, and L748337 on Extracellular Acidification Rate.** To examine the net effect of receptor activation, we measured changes in ECAR. In con-

trast to cAMP signaling, L748337 caused a marked increase in ECAR with an efficacy similar to that observed for zinterol and L755507 but with significantly lower potency (Table 1 and Fig. 4). This suggested that a significant proportion of the ECAR response to L748337 was due to activation of pathways other than the  $G_s$ /adenylate cyclase/cAMP cascade. Untransfected CHO-K1 cells showed no response to zinterol, L755507, and L748337 (data not shown), suggesting that these ligands had no effect on other receptor or signaling components.

To investigate the mechanisms involved in agonist or antagonist-stimulated changes in ECAR, we tested the effect of pathway inhibitors on cells treated with concentrations of zinterol (100 nM), L755507 (10 nM), or L748337 (1  $\mu$ M) that produced 80 to 90% of maximal responses. Responses to zinterol, L755507, or L748337 were unaffected by the adenylylase inhibitor DDA (50  $\mu$ M) but were partially blocked by the PKA inhibitor H-89 (10  $\mu$ M) (Fig. 5). In addition, the ECAR response to zinterol was partially inhibited and that to L748337 was markedly inhibited by the p38 MAPK inhibitor RWJ67657 (10  $\mu$ M), whereas responses to L755507 were unaffected (Fig. 5). Responses to all three ligands were not significantly affected by the phosphoinositide 3-kinase inhibitor LY294002 (10  $\mu$ M), the Src inhibitor PP2 (10  $\mu$ M), or the mitogen-activated protein kinase kinase inhibitor PD98059 (10  $\mu$ M).

It was surprising that H-89 reduced ECAR responses given that an upstream adenylylase cyclase inhibitor (DDA) had no effect, so we tested whether H-89 might have other actions at the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. cAMP responses to zinterol and L755507 were inhibited to a similar extent by DDA (50  $\mu$ M) and H-89 (10  $\mu$ M) (Fig. 6a). Although the reduced cAMP in the presence of DDA reflects inhibition of adenylylase cyclase, that in response to H-89 contrasts with previous studies in which H-89 potentiated cAMP accumulation in CHO $\beta_3$  cells (Sato et al., 2007) or in mouse brown adipocytes endogenously expressing this receptor (Fredriksson et al., 2001). Because H-89 has been shown to be an antagonist at  $\beta_1$ - and  $\beta_2$ -ARs (Penn et al., 1999), we tested whether it binds to the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. As shown in Fig. 6b, H-89 competed for binding of [ $^{125}$ I]-cyanopindolol with a  $pK_i$  value of  $5.00 \pm 0.11$  ( $n = 4$ ), equivalent to the concentration used for inhibition of PKA. Thus, in contrast to a lack of effect on the mouse  $\beta_3$ -AR, H-89 is clearly an antagonist at the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. The p38 MAPK inhibitor RWJ67657 also inhibited cAMP accumulation in

response to zinterol and L755507 but did not compete for ICYP binding, suggesting that activation of p38 MAPK activity can potentiate cAMP signaling by the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. The other difference between H-89 and RWJ67657 is that H-89 caused similar inhibition of ECAR in response to zinterol, L755507, and L748337, consistent with an antagonist action, whereas RWJ67657 only caused a substantial reduction in the ECAR response to L748337.

**L755507, Zinterol, and L748337 Stimulate p38 MAP Kinase Phosphorylation.** The experiments examining the effects of signaling pathway inhibitors on the ECAR response to ligands suggested that p38 MAPK was responsible for a greater proportion of the response to L748337 than for either L755507 or zinterol. This was further examined using Western blotting. We first determined the time course of p38 MAPK phosphorylation in response to concentrations of L755507 and L748337 known to give maximal ECAR responses. Exposure to L755507 (10 nM) increased the ratio of phospho/total p38 MAPK by 70%, whereas L748337 (1  $\mu$ M) produced a 5-fold increase. In both cases, the plateau was reached after 10 to 15 min (data not shown). We next determined full concentration-response curves for L755507, zinterol, and L748337 at the 15-min time point (Fig. 7). In our previous study using CHO-K1 cells expressing the mouse  $\beta_3$ -AR at 115 fmol/mg protein, the antagonist SR59230A had a 3.6-fold higher efficacy than the agonist CL316243 for p38 MAPK phosphorylation (Sato et al., 2007). Here, in CHO-K1 cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR at 203 fmol/mg protein, the efficacies of the antagonist L748337 and the agonist L755507 were similar and were both higher than that of zinterol. L755507, L748337, and zinterol had similar potency, with  $pEC_{50}$  values of 5.5, 5.7, and 5.9, respectively (Table 1). It seems that the lesser contribution of p38 MAPK signaling to L755507-stimulated ECAR reflects a higher efficacy toward alternative signaling pathways rather than a reduced capacity to activate p38 MAPK phosphorylation, whereas zinterol acts as a partial agonist for this pathway.

**Interaction between the cAMP and p38 Kinase Pathways.** We also showed previously that cell-permeable cAMP analogs inhibit p38 MAPK phosphorylation (Sato et al., 2007). It seemed likely that the same interaction would occur in CHO $\beta_3$  cells, and we therefore examined the effect of the cAMP analog 8-bromoadenosine 3',5'-cAMP (8-Br-cAMP) on p38 MAPK phosphorylation stimulated by sorbitol, L755507, and L748337 (Fig. 8). 8-Br-cAMP did not affect basal p38

TABLE 1

Comparison of  $pEC_{50}$  values (top) and  $E_{max}$  values (bottom) relative to L755507 for responses in functional bioassays in CHO-K1 cells expressing human  $\beta_3$ -adrenoceptors (CHO $\beta_3$ )

Note the relatively low  $E_{max}$  value for L748337 for cAMP accumulation but that the same compound has high  $E_{max}$  values for ECAR, p38 MAPK, and Erk1/2 activation. Agonist potency values are mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n$ ).

Ligand	cAMP	ECAR	p38 MAPK	Erk1/2	$pK_i$ Binding
Zinterol					7.1 <sup>a</sup>
$pEC_{50}$ ( $n$ )	8.55 $\pm$ 0.09 (4)	8.14 $\pm$ 0.05 (4)	5.93 $\pm$ 0.19 (6)	10.86 $\pm$ 0.18 (5)	
$E_{max}$ relative to L755507 <sup>b</sup>	1.02	0.96	0.60	0.75	
L755507					7.9 <sup>c</sup>
$pEC_{50}$ ( $n$ )	12.28 $\pm$ 0.03 (4)	8.64 $\pm$ 0.08 (4)	5.54 $\pm$ 0.34 (4)	11.72 $\pm$ 0.31 (6)	
$E_{max}$ relative to L755507 <sup>b</sup>	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
L748337					8.4 <sup>d</sup>
$pEC_{50}$ ( $n$ )	9.12 $\pm$ 0.82 (4)	7.15 $\pm$ 0.06 (4)	5.66 $\pm$ 0.29 (4)	11.58 $\pm$ 0.33 (6)	
$E_{max}$ relative to L755507 <sup>b</sup>	0.11	0.95	1.42	0.90	

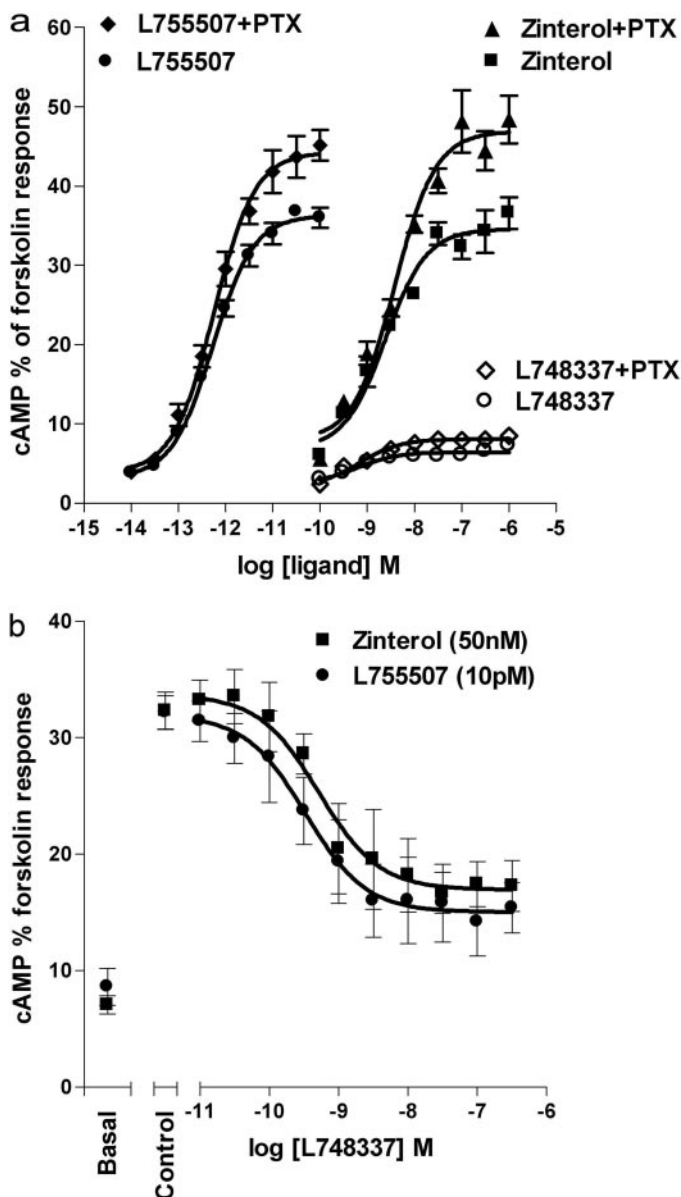
<sup>a</sup> Data from Hutchinson et al. (2006).

<sup>b</sup> Defined as a fraction of the absolute maximal response to L755507 in each individual experiment.

<sup>c</sup> Data from Fischer et al. (1998).

<sup>d</sup> Data from Candelore et al. (1999).

MAPK phosphorylation, but responses to sorbitol (500 mM), L755507 (10  $\mu$ M), and L748337 (10  $\mu$ M) were reduced in the presence of 8-Br-cAMP by 45, 60, and 57%, respectively. This inhibition by 8-Br-cAMP mirrors that seen in mouse CHO $\beta_3$ L cells but does not seem consistent with the contrast between agonist and antagonist responses in cells expressing the mouse and human  $\beta_3$ -AR. We suggest that L755507 may have an inherently higher efficacy for p38 MAPK activation than L748337 but that this is masked by the inhibitory effect of high cAMP levels. In contrast, at the mouse  $\beta_3$ -AR,

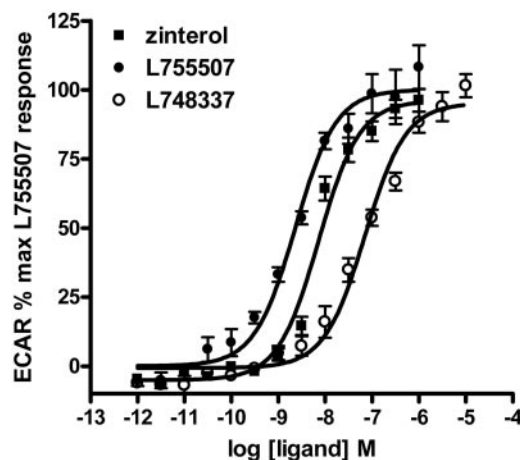


**Fig. 3.** Concentration-response curves for cAMP accumulation in response to zinterol, L755507, or L748337 in cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. a, the  $\beta_2$ -/ $\beta_3$ -AR agonist zinterol and the  $\beta_3$ -AR agonist L755507 produced concentration-dependent increases in cAMP accumulation. The  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist L748337 weakly increased cAMP accumulation. PTX treatment (100 ng/ml for 16 h) significantly increased responses to zinterol ( $P < 0.05$ ) and L755507 ( $P < 0.05$ ). b, concentration-dependent antagonism of increases in cAMP accumulation to zinterol (50 nM) or L755507 (10 pM) by L748337 in cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. All results are expressed as a percentage of the forskolin (100  $\mu$ M) response. Values represent mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. from four individual experiments, with each point the average of duplicate determinations.

CL316243 may have a lower efficacy than SR59230A, and this is compounded by the inhibitory effect of cAMP.

**The Effect of Inhibitors on p38 MAPK Signaling.** We next examined the effect of inhibitors on p38 MAPK phosphorylation elicited by L755507 and L748337 to determine whether different signaling pathways are used (Fig. 9). PTX (100 ng/ml) almost abolished p38 MAPK phosphorylation to L748337 (119% compared with basal), although there was no effect on the response to L755507. DDA (50  $\mu$ M) slightly increased p38 MAPK phosphorylation to L755507, whereas there was a small inhibitory effect on the response to L748337. It was surprising that H-89 (10  $\mu$ M) increased phosphorylation of p38 MAPK in response to both L755507 and L748337, in contrast to its inhibitory effect on both cAMP accumulation and changes in ECAR (Figs. 5 and 6). In the case of L755507, H-89 may remove the inhibitory effect of the cAMP/PKA pathway on p38 MAPK phosphorylation, but this would be expected to be negligible with L748337 because little or no cAMP is generated. As expected, RWJ67657 (10  $\mu$ M) completely abolished p38 MAPK phosphorylation to both L755507 and L748337.

**Stimulation of Erk1/2 Phosphorylation by L755507 and L748337.** In light of the differences between particular drugs acting at the mouse or human  $\beta_3$ -AR, we assessed Erk1/2 phosphorylation in response to L755507 and L748337 in CHO $\beta_3$  cells. In contrast to the mouse  $\beta_3$ -AR data, the level of Erk1/2 phosphorylation caused by activation of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR by L755507 and L748337 was similar. The maximal responses elicited by 15-min exposure of L755507 and L748337 expressed as phospho/total Erk1/2 ratio over basal were 552 and 499%, respectively (Fig. 10), and both compounds had similar high potency with pEC<sub>50</sub> values of 11.7 and 11.6 (Table 1). Zinterol had a lower efficacy (416% basal) and potency (pEC<sub>50</sub> = 10.9) compared with L755507 or L748337. If we compare pEC<sub>50</sub> values with binding affinities for the  $\beta_3$ -AR, L755507 and zinterol display a 6300-fold amplification of the Erk1/2 response relative to their pK<sub>i</sub> values, whereas L748337 has a 1600-fold amplification (Table 1). Whereas 100 pM L755507 and L748337 produced maximal Erk1/2 responses in cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR (Fig.



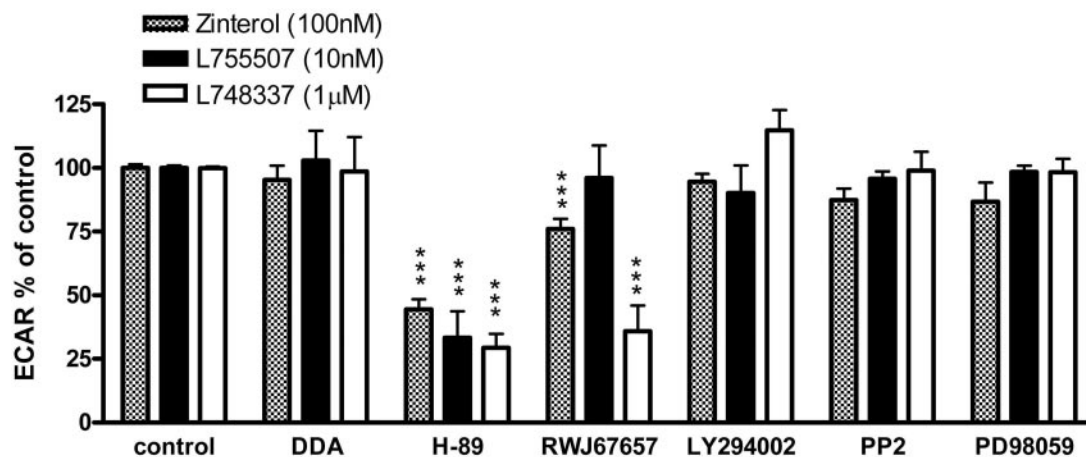
**Fig. 4.** Concentration-response curves for ECAR in response to zinterol, L755507, or L748337 in cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. The results are expressed as a percentage of the maximum response to L755507. Each point shows mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n = 4$ ). Note that zinterol, L755507, and L748337 produce equivalent responses for ECAR, albeit with differing potency (Table 1).



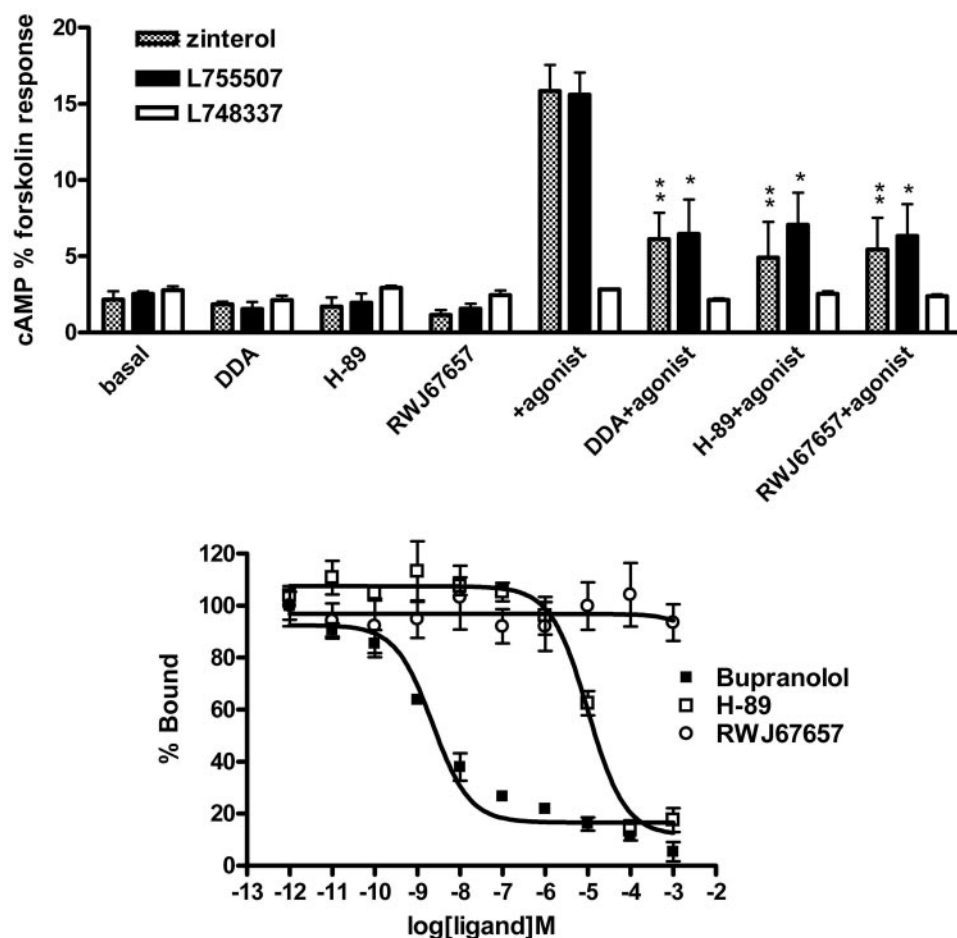
10), there was no detectable phosphorylation in untransfected CHO-K1 cells (Fig. 2). Unlike p38 MAPK, the Erk1/2 phosphorylation response to 100 pM L755507 or L748337 was not significantly reduced in the presence of 1 mM 8-Br-cAMP (Fig. 11).

**The Effect of Inhibitors on Erk1/2 Signaling.** Several inhibitors were used to examine the signaling pathways that

are involved in Erk1/2 signaling in response to 100 pM L755507 and L748337 (Fig. 12). DDA (50  $\mu$ M) had a small inhibitory effect but also reduced basal Erk1/2 phosphorylation. In contrast to the cAMP experiments, H-89 (10  $\mu$ M) had no inhibitory effect on Erk1/2 responses. This is not consistent with its antagonist action at the human  $\beta_3$ -AR (Fig. 6), suggesting that H-89 may selectively interfere with a  $\beta_3$ -AR



**Fig. 5.** The effect of inhibitors on ECAR responses to zinterol (▨), L755507 (■) and L748337 (□) in CHO-K1 cells expressing human  $\beta_3$ -AR. The results are expressed as the percentage increase from control induced by the agonist over basal ECAR. Each point represents the mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n = 4-7$ ). The inhibitors, DDA (adenylate cyclase, 50  $\mu$ M), LY294002 (phosphoinositide 3-kinase, 10  $\mu$ M), PP2 (Src, 10  $\mu$ M), or PD98059 (mitogen-activated protein kinase kinase, 10  $\mu$ M) had no effect on ECAR responses to zinterol (100 nM), L755507 (10 nM), or L748337 (1  $\mu$ M). H-89 (PKA, 10  $\mu$ M) partially inhibited ECAR responses to zinterol, L755507, or L748337 (\*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ). RWJ67657 (p38 MAPK, 10  $\mu$ M) weakly inhibited responses to zinterol (\*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ) and effectively inhibited responses to L748337 (\*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ).



**Fig. 6.** a, the effect of inhibitors of adenylate cyclase (DDA), PKA (H-89), and p38 MAPK (RWJ67657) on cAMP accumulation in response to zinterol, L755507, and L748337 in CHO-K1 cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. The results are expressed as a percentage of the forskolin (100  $\mu$ M) response. Each point shows mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n = 4$ ). DDA (50  $\mu$ M), H-89 (10  $\mu$ M), and RWJ67657 (10  $\mu$ M) all significantly reduced cAMP accumulation in response to zinterol (50 nM) and L755507 (10 pM). None of the inhibitors significantly affected cAMP levels in the presence of L748337 (50 nM). b, competition by bupranolol, H-89, or RWJ67657 for  $^{125}$ I-CYP binding to the human  $\beta_3$ -AR expressed in CHO-K1 cells. Incubations were for 60 min at room temperature, and nonspecific binding was defined by (–)-alprenolol (1 mM). Competition for ICYP binding was demonstrated for the  $\beta$ -AR antagonist bupranolol ( $pK_i = 8.65 \pm 0.12$ ) and H-89 ( $pK_i = 5.00 \pm 0.11$ ) but not RWJ67657. The results are expressed as a percentage of the maximum specific binding for ICYP in each individual experiment. Points show mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n = 4$ ).

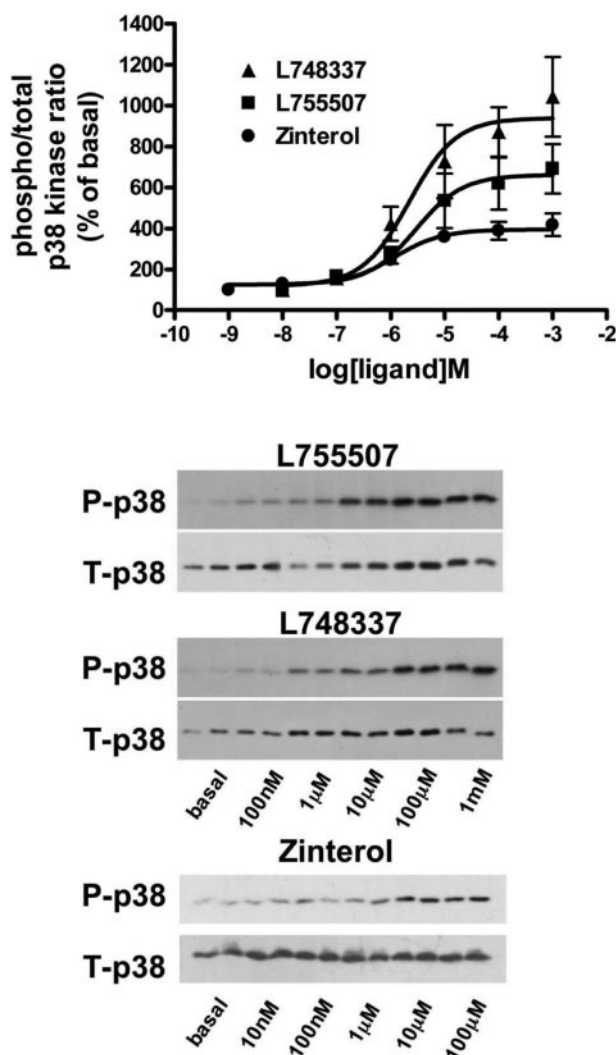
conformation coupled to  $G_{\alpha}$ /adenylate cyclase/cAMP but not that coupled to Erk1/2. Like p38 MAPK, PTX substantially reduced the Erk1/2 response to L748337 (from 564 to 137% of basal), but in this case also somewhat inhibited the L755507 response (from 601 to 422%). Thus, L748337 stimulation of Erk1/2 phosphorylation involves a major contribution by inhibitory G proteins, whereas the response to L755507 is partially mediated by  $G_{i/o}$ .

## Discussion

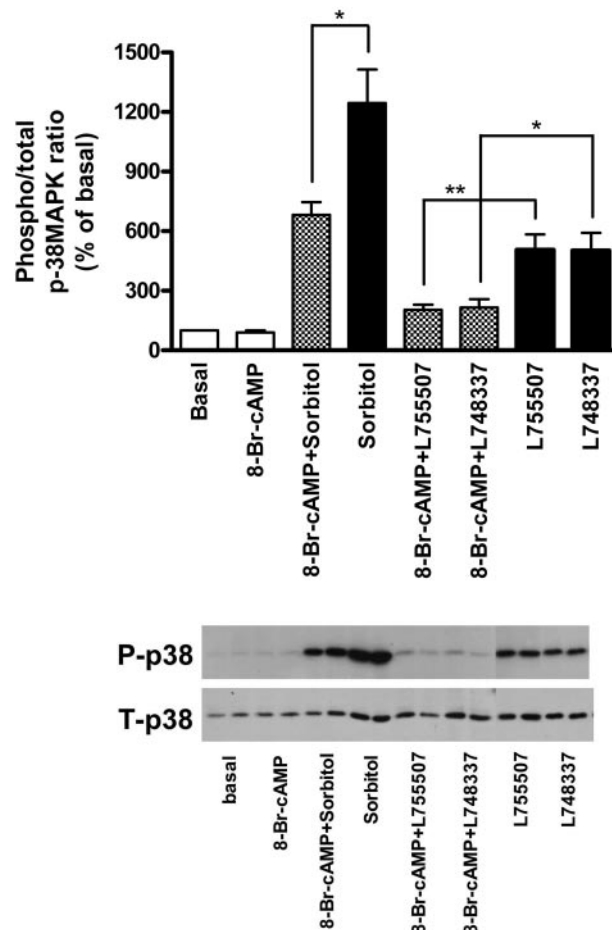
We show here that the human  $\beta_3$ -AR displays ligand-directed signaling (LDS) (Neubig, 2007; Urban et al., 2007) when expressed at physiological levels. L748337 acts as a competitive antagonist of cAMP accumulation but has high potency and efficacy for Erk1/2 phosphorylation. The agonist

zinterol, on the other hand, has high efficacy for cAMP accumulation but lower efficacy than L748337 for Erk1/2 and p38 MAPK phosphorylation. Based on efficacy alone, these findings reproduce our previous demonstration of LDS by the agonist CL316243 and the antagonist SR59230A acting at the mouse  $\beta_3$ -AR (Sato et al., 2007). If we compare the potency of the drugs with their binding affinity for the  $\beta_3$ -AR, however, a different pattern emerges. At the mouse  $\beta_3$ -AR, the potencies of CL316243 and SR59230A for Erk1/2 phosphorylation tracked within an order of magnitude of the affinity values (Sato et al., 2007). We found a sizable amplification of response only for cAMP accumulation in high-expressing CHO $\beta_3$  cells stimulated with CL316243. It is therefore a unique feature of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR that three separate drugs, two of them agonists with differing structures (Fig. 1), and the other an antagonist for cAMP, promote more than 1000-fold amplification of Erk1/2 phosphorylation relative to their affinity values.

Although previous studies have shown  $\beta_3$ -AR mediated Erk1/2 signaling, we are the first to demonstrate the extraor-



**Fig. 7.** p38 MAPK phosphorylation in response to L755507, L748337, and zinterol in CHO-K1 cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. Concentration-response curves for p38 MAPK phosphorylation in response to 15-min exposure to L755507, L748337, or zinterol in cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR, with (bottom) representative immunoblots from four to six experiments performed in duplicate (P-p38 MAPK, phosphorylated p38 MAPK; T-p38 MAPK, total p38 MAPK). Each point represents the mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. The maximum responses of phospho/total p38 MAPK elicited by L755507, L748337, and zinterol over basal were  $662 \pm 67$ ,  $939 \pm 87$ , and  $394 \pm 18$ , respectively. The response to zinterol is significantly lower than those to both L755507 ( $P < 0.01$ ) and L748337 ( $P < 0.001$ ).



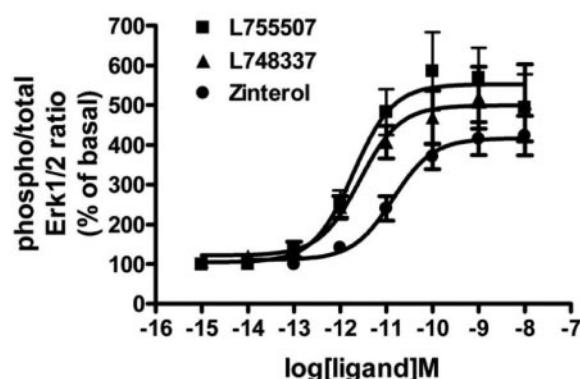
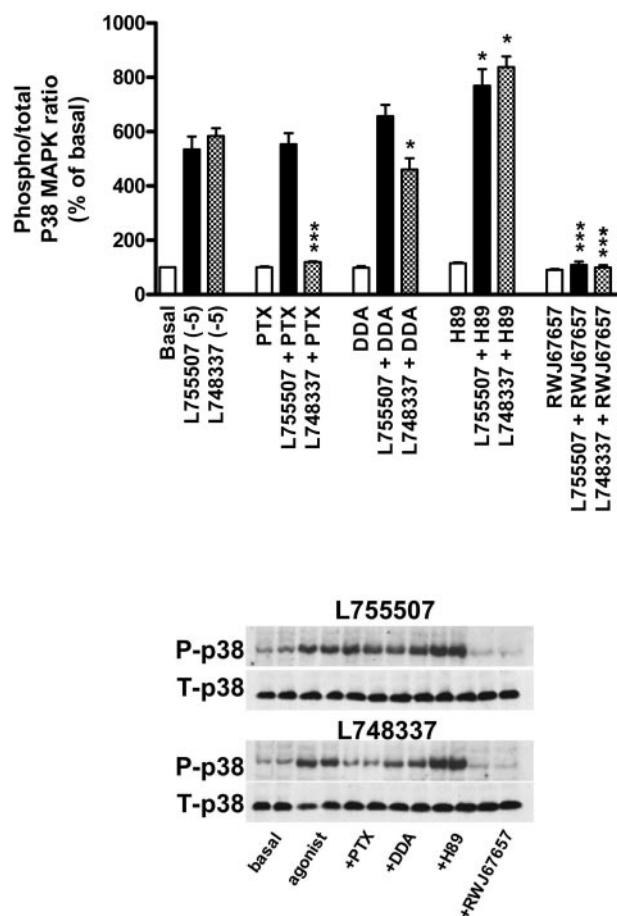
**Fig. 8.** Interaction between cAMP and p38 MAPK signaling in CHO-K1 cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. p38 MAPK phosphorylation was examined in response to sorbitol (500 mM), L755507 (10  $\mu$ M), or L748337 (10  $\mu$ M) in the presence or absence of 8-Br-cAMP treatment (1 mM, 30 min). Values represent means  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n = 4$ , performed in duplicate; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*,  $P < 0.05$ ). 8-Br-cAMP did not affect basal p38 MAPK phosphorylation ( $90 \pm 11\%$ ). Sorbitol, L755507, and L748337 all increased p38 MAPK phosphorylation (by  $1245 \pm 168$ ,  $506 \pm 76$ , and  $501 \pm 91\%$ , respectively), and the responses were significantly inhibited (to  $682 \pm 63$ ,  $204 \pm 26$ , and  $215 \pm 43\%$ , respectively) in the presence of 8-Br-cAMP.



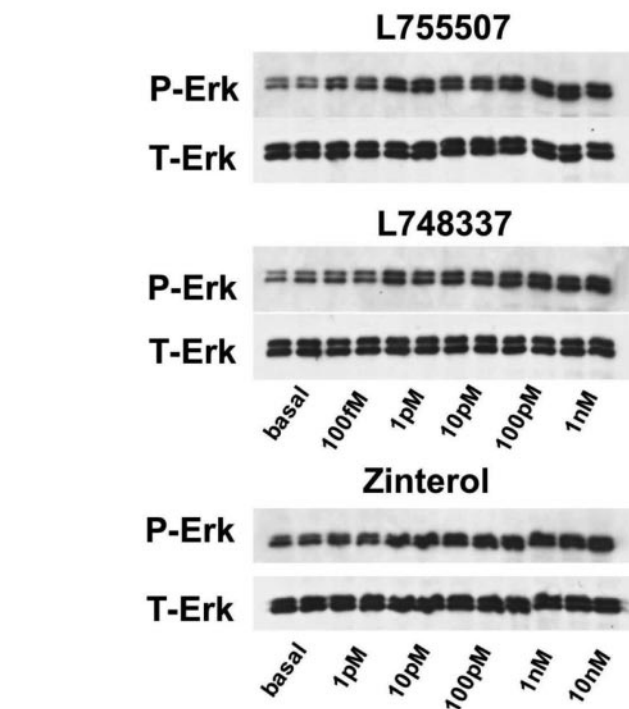
dinary responsiveness of the human receptor (Gerhardt et al., 1999; Soeder et al., 1999; Hutchinson et al., 2002). The difference between the mouse and human  $\beta_3$ -AR may correlate with observed differences in  $G_{i/o}$  signaling. Previous studies have demonstrated the involvement of  $G_{i/o}$  in agonist-activated Erk1/2 phosphorylation in CHO $\beta_3$  cells but not in CHO $\mu\beta_3$  cells. Our data confirm that agonist activation of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR promotes  $G_{i/o}$  coupling, because pretreatment of cells with PTX increases cAMP accumulation. PTX partially inhibits L755507-stimulated Erk1/2 phosphorylation but almost completely blocks responses to L748337. Thus, L748337 recognizes or induces a conformation of the  $\beta_3$ -AR that efficiently couples to  $G_{i/o}$  but not to  $G_s$  (Fig. 13). This finding also highlights differences between the three human  $\beta$ -ARs, because antagonist-stimulated Erk1/2 phos-

phorylation at the  $\beta_1$ - and  $\beta_2$ -AR is PTX-insensitive (Wisler et al., 2007; Galandrin et al., 2008).

Unlike Erk1/2 signaling, L755507, L748337, and zinterol stimulate p38 MAPK phosphorylation with very low potency. Thus, half-maximal responses occur at agonist or antagonist concentrations that should saturate the receptor population (Table 1). The confounding effect of cAMP generation on p38 MAPK phosphorylation may explain the low potency of the agonists but would not explain the antagonist result. L748337 may have lower affinity for the conformation of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR coupled to p38 MAPK than that coupled to the Erk1/2 pathway. In fact, L748337 competition binding curves indicate a small population of low-affinity  $\beta_3$ -ARs (Candelore



**Fig. 9.** The effect of inhibitors on p38 MAPK signaling in CHO-K1 cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. The results are expressed as the percentage increase from control induced by the agonist over basal, with (bottom) a representative immunoblot. Each histogram represents the mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n = 4$ ). L755507 (10  $\mu$ M) and L748337 (10  $\mu$ M) increased p38 MAPK phosphorylation ( $535 \pm 48$  and  $585 \pm 28\%$ , respectively). PTX ( $G_i$ , 100 ng/ml) almost completely abolished p38 MAPK phosphorylation in response to L748337 ( $119 \pm 4\%$ ,  $***$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), whereas there was no significant effect on the response to L755507 ( $554 \pm 41\%$ ). DDA (adenylate cyclase, 50  $\mu$ M) had no effect on p38 MAPK phosphorylation to L755507 ( $657 \pm 42\%$ ), but there was some inhibition of the response to L748337 ( $461 \pm 42\%$ ,  $* P < 0.05$ ). H-89 (PKA, 10  $\mu$ M) slightly increased phosphorylation of p38 MAPK in response to both L755507 and L748337 ( $769 \pm 62$  and  $838 \pm 39\%$ , respectively;  $*$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). RWJ67657 (p38 MAPK, 10  $\mu$ M) completely abolished p38 MAPK phosphorylation to L755507 and L748337 ( $110 \pm 22$ , and  $99 \pm 10\%$ , respectively;  $***$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ).



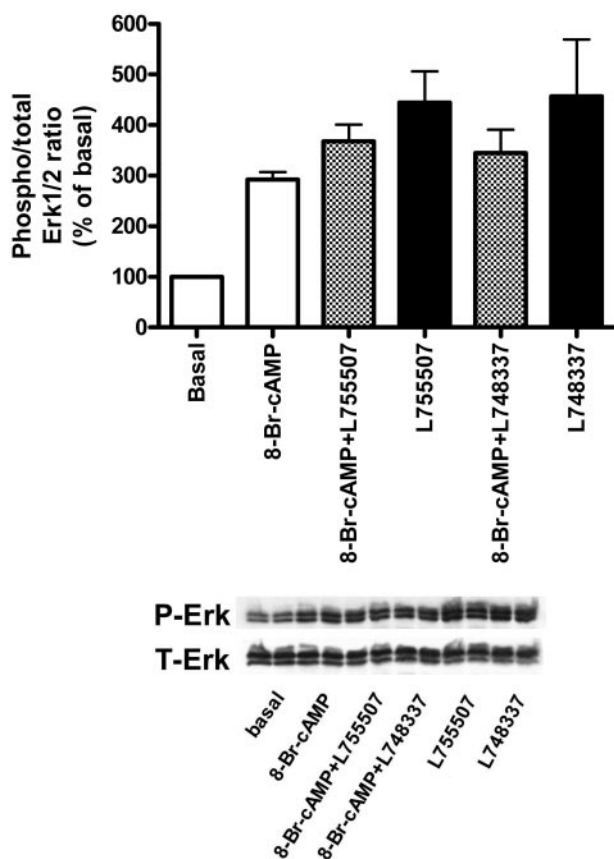
**Fig. 10.** Erk1/2 phosphorylation in response to L755507, L748337, and zinterol in CHO-K1 cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. Concentration-response curves for Erk1/2 phosphorylation in response to 15-min exposure to L755507, L748337, or zinterol in cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR are shown at the top, with representative immunoblots (bottom) (P-Erk1/2, phosphorylated Erk1/2; T-Erk1/2, total Erk1/2). Each point represents the mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n = 5-6$ , performed in duplicate). The maximum responses expressed as phospho/total Erk1/2 ratio elicited by L755507, L748337, and zinterol over basal were  $553 \pm 36$ ,  $499 \pm 33$ , and  $417 \pm 21\%$ , respectively. The response to zinterol was significantly lower than those to L755507 ( $P < 0.01$ ) and L748337 ( $P < 0.05$ ).

et al., 1999). PTX pretreatment completely blocks p38 MAPK phosphorylation in response to L748337, suggesting that both pathways involve  $G_{i/o}$  or  $G_{\beta\gamma}$ . However, because  $pEC_{50}$  values for L748337-stimulated Erk1/2 and p38 MAPK phosphorylation differ widely,  $G_{i/o}$  or  $G_{\beta\gamma}$  cannot represent a common intermediate. This suggests that separate conformations of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR activated or stabilized by L748337 may couple to different  $G_{i/o}$  subtypes or to different signaling complexes incorporating common  $G_{i/o}$  proteins but additional distinct  $\beta_3$ -AR binding partners.

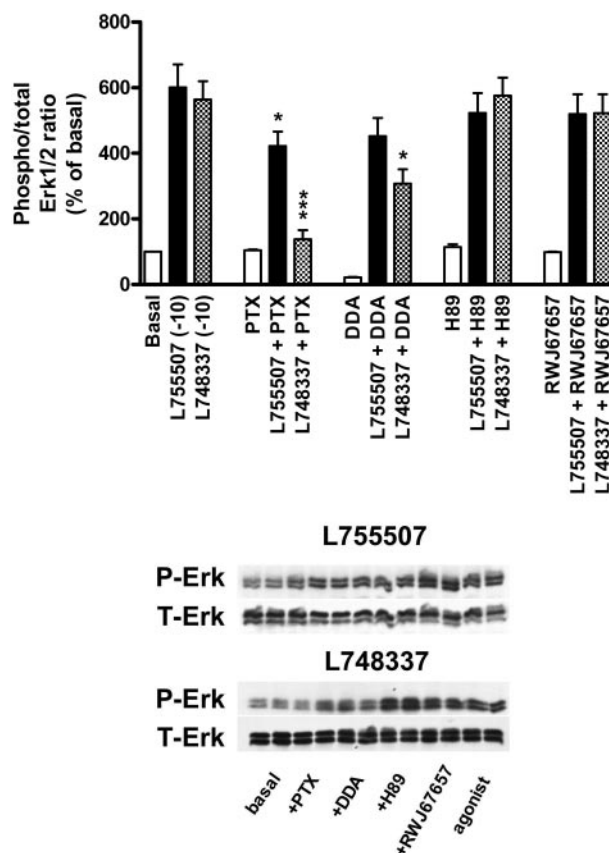
Zinterol had a significantly lower efficacy for p38 MAPK than L748337, whereas L748337 and L755507 had similar efficacy. L755507 may have a higher intrinsic efficacy for p38 MAPK than L748337, but this is masked by its ability to generate cAMP. In CHO-K1 cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR at 2.3 pmol/mg protein (Gerhardt et al., 1999), CGP12177A (10  $\mu$ M) failed to stimulate p38 MAPK activation. We suggest that cAMP levels generated by this concentration of CGP12177A in cells with high  $\beta_3$ -AR expression completely suppressed p38 MAPK activation. Differential signaling pathway activation in cells expressing high or low receptor levels has important implications for drug screening, which is usually done using high-expressing cells. How-

ever, the low potency of all three drugs in our system with physiological expression levels indicates that activation of p38 MAPK via the human  $\beta_3$ -AR is unlikely to mediate side effects of drugs given at therapeutic doses.

We have demonstrated LDS at the human  $\beta_3$ -AR based on the reversal of efficacy between zinterol and L748337. In addition, our observations indicate that L755507 and L748337 each act on multiple receptor conformations. The coupling of receptors to multiple pathways indicates that 1) subsets of a homogeneous population of receptors couple to particular pathways because of stochastic effects or differential localization and interaction with protein complexes, or 2) ligands induce or stabilize multiple receptor conformations, creating a heterogeneous population of receptors and potentially giving rise to LDS (Neubig, 2007; Urban et al., 2007). The large difference in  $pEC_{50}$  values for L748337 between p38 MAPK and Erk1/2 phosphorylation, and differential effects of H-89 on Erk1/2 phosphorylation versus cAMP accumulation stimulated by L755507 are consistent with the involvement of heterogeneous receptor subpopulations. The



**Fig. 11.** Effect of treatment with 8-Br-cAMP on Erk1/2 signaling in CHO-K1 cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. Erk1/2 phosphorylation was examined in response to L755507 (100 pM) or L748337 (100 pM) in the presence or absence of 8-Br-cAMP treatment (1 mM, 30 min) with a representative immunoblot (bottom). Values represent means  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n = 4$ , performed in duplicate). Erk1/2 phosphorylation was increased by 8-Br-cAMP ( $292 \pm 15\%$ ), L755507, and L748337 ( $444 \pm 62$  and  $457 \pm 112\%$ , respectively), but the latter two responses were not significantly altered ( $368 \pm 33$  and  $345 \pm 46\%$ , respectively) in the presence of 8-Br-cAMP.



**Fig. 12.** The effect of inhibitors on Erk1/2 signaling in CHO-K1 cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. The results are expressed as the percentage increase from control induced by the agonist over basal with a representative immunoblot (bottom). Each histogram represents the mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. ( $n = 4$ ). L755507 (100 pM) and L748337 (100 pM) increased Erk1/2 phosphorylation ( $601 \pm 70$  and  $564 \pm 56\%$ , respectively). PTX ( $G_i$ , 100 ng/ml) almost completely abolished Erk1/2 phosphorylation to L748337 ( $138 \pm 28\%$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ), and there was also some inhibitory effect on the response to L755507 ( $422 \pm 44\%$ , \*,  $P < 0.05$ ). DDA (adenylate cyclase, 50  $\mu$ M) had no significant effect on Erk1/2 phosphorylation to L755507 ( $452 \pm 56\%$ ), whereas there was some inhibition of the response to L748337 ( $308 \pm 43\%$ , \*,  $P < 0.05$ ). H-89 (PKA, 10  $\mu$ M) had no effect on Erk1/2 phosphorylation to either L755507 or L748337 ( $523 \pm 61$  and  $576 \pm 55\%$ , respectively) as did RWJ67657 (p38 MAPK, 10  $\mu$ M) ( $520 \pm 60$  and  $522 \pm 57\%$ , respectively).

study by Galandrin et al. (2008) provides another example of two drugs that fail to show the hallmark reversal of efficacy but nonetheless display LDS. Bucindolol acts as a partial agonist for cAMP accumulation and Erk1/2 phosphorylation at the human  $\beta_1$ -AR, but the Erk1/2 response to bucindolol is PTX-insensitive, whereas isoproterenol-stimulated Erk1/2 phosphorylation is partially  $G_{i/o}$ -dependent. In addition, direct biophysical measurement of bioluminescence resonance energy transfer ratios indicates that isoproterenol and bucindolol promote distinct conformations of the  $\beta_1$ -AR.

Multicenter, large-scale clinical trials show that  $\beta$ -AR antagonists represent an effective treatment for cardiac failure. After myocardial damage, reduced cardiac output activates compensatory mechanisms involving the sympathetic nervous system that initially maintain function; however, long-term release of norepinephrine results in adverse ventricular remodelling. Both  $\beta_1$ - and  $\beta_2$ -ARs are associated with cardiac hypertrophy, oxidative stress, and apoptosis. It was widely accepted that drugs with high  $\beta_1$ -AR selectivity and low partial agonist (or sympathomimetic) activity would produce optimal clinical outcomes; however, this is not borne out in practice (López-Sendón et al., 2004). For example, carvedilol is a beneficial  $\beta$ -AR antagonist despite having low  $\beta_1$ -AR selectivity and some partial agonist activity. Other effective  $\beta$ -AR antagonists include metoprolol, bisoprolol, nebivolol, and atenolol, whereas drugs such as xamoterol and bucindolol are associated with adverse outcomes. The emerging evidence for agonist activity of  $\beta$ -AR antagonists independent of cAMP blockade may shed light on the variable clinical efficacy of these drugs. We have now shown that the human  $\beta_3$ -AR is strongly coupled to Erk1/2 activation in response to agonists and an antagonist. This in combination with demonstrated roles for the  $\beta_3$ -AR in the cardiovascular system indicates that, like the  $\beta_1$ - and  $\beta_2$ -AR, the  $\beta_3$ -AR should be regarded as a player in determining the potential therapeutic efficacy of  $\beta$ -AR antagonists.

In addition to well characterized functions in adipose tissue, the gastrointestinal tract, and the uterus, the  $\beta_3$ -AR is known to mediate vasodilation of human and animal vessels (Trochu et al., 1999; Dessy et al., 2004). Treatment of mice with the  $\beta_3$ -AR agonist CL316243 produces a significant and sustained drop in blood pressure (Rohrer et al., 1999). Most intriguing are data concerning nebivolol, an antagonist used

clinically to treat heart failure, that displays  $\beta_1$ -AR selectivity with respect to blockade of cAMP. This drug relaxes human coronary arteries via enhanced NO synthase activation, NO production, and  $Ca^{2+}$  signaling mediated by  $\beta_3$ -ARs located on vascular endothelial cells, and it also stimulates angiogenesis (Dessy et al., 2005; Rozec et al., 2006; Evangelista et al., 2007).

$\beta_3$ -AR agonists decrease contractility in ventricular strips from human and dog myocardium. Unlike the vasodilatory actions of  $\beta_3$ -AR ligands across mammalian species, the negative inotropic effect of  $\beta_3$ -AR agonists is weak or absent in rat, mouse, or ferret (Gauthier et al., 1999; Rohrer et al., 1999). This highlights again the idea of species differences in the expression or signaling properties of the  $\beta_3$ -AR. In particular, the capacity of the human  $\beta_3$ -AR to couple to  $G_{i/o}$  proteins is consistent with its negative inotropic activity (Gauthier et al., 1996). The presence of  $\beta_3$ -ARs in human vascular endothelial cells and in ventricular myocardium indicates that our observed stimulation of Erk1/2 phosphorylation at low antagonist concentrations is of considerable clinical interest. For example, the Erk1/2 signaling pathway is known to be cardioprotective, in part as a result of inhibition of the cardiomyocyte apoptosis that results from ischemia/reperfusion injury or oxidative stress (Yue et al., 2000; Lips et al., 2004).

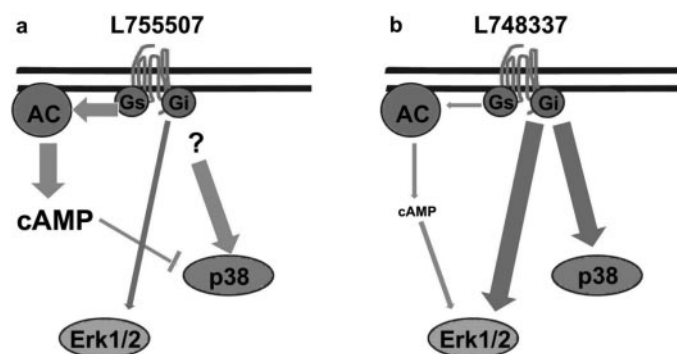
In conclusion, although L748337 is a  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist with respect to the cAMP pathway, it acts as an agonist for Erk1/2 and p38 MAPK phosphorylation. It is particularly striking that L748337 has exquisitely high potency in stimulating Erk1/2 phosphorylation, similar to L755507 and zinterol. We suggest that the  $\beta_3$ -AR agonist L755507 couples to both  $G_s$  and  $G_i$  to activate adenylate cyclase and Erk1/2, whereas the  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist L748337 couples predominantly to  $G_i$  to activate Erk1/2. This activation of a MAPK pathway by a human  $\beta_3$ -AR antagonist highlights the importance of screening new drugs developed as antagonists to determine whether they have agonist properties for alternative signaling pathways, including those involved in cell proliferation, differentiation, and survival, that could mediate unwanted side effects or perhaps desirable therapeutic outcomes.

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**Fig. 13.** Proposed signaling pathways for L755507 and L748337 in cells expressing the human  $\beta_3$ -AR. a, L755507 stimulates  $G_s$  to activate adenylate cyclase (AC) leading to cAMP production that inhibits p38 MAPK activation but has little effect on Erk1/2 phosphorylation. b, L748337 produces little cAMP that has a weak if any effect on either p38 MAPK or Erk1/2. L748337 strongly activates p38 MAPK and Erk1/2 predominantly via  $G_i$ .



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