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NEUROPHARAMACOLOGY OF NICOTINIC DRUGS

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ABSTRACT

Our understanding of the receptor systems underlying nicotine's interoceptive effects is greatly advanced by preclinical drug discrimination approaches. Nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChRs) are essential for the transmission of the nicotine cue, according to early observations. Our knowledge of these mechanisms has increased recently due to developments in molecular biology and the identification of new ligands that are more selective for particular nAChR subtypes.

The precise nAChR subtypes implicated in nicotine selectivity are now known; furthermore, there is evidence that suggests additional systems, such as adenosine, cannabinoids, dopamine, glutamate, and serotonin, may also be modulatory. Additionally, the neuroanatomical mechanisms that mediate the nicotine cue are starting to be clarified.

1. INTRODUCTION

Three main treatments—varenicline, rimonabant, and "vaccines" against nicotine—are undergoing extensive clinical study, and some published sources support these claims. However, this study will also take into account some of the most recent theories on the neuropharmacological underpinnings of nicotine and tobacco dependency in order to better understand the proposed mechanisms of action of these treatments.

1. The neuropharmacological underpinnings of nicotine and tobacco dependence

The main justification for utilizing nicotine replacement therapy as a smoking cessation aid is the overwhelming evidence that nicotine plays a fundamental role in tobacco dependency, which has been reviewed numerous times . Preclinical research aimed at determining the neurological processes underlying tobacco dependence and identifying potential targets for pharmacotherapies to treat the addiction has also been significantly impacted by this fact. Nicotine exhibits many of the characteristics of a substance of dependence, most notably those of psychostimulant drugs of dependence like cocaine and amphetamine, according to behavioral and neurobiological experiments conducted in laboratories. als that had received the drug for a few days before the test day . Therefore, noncontingent injections of nicotine promote locomotor activity at the behavioral level, especially when given to anim

2. Nicotine reinforcement's underlying neurobiology

Drug addiction is characterized by a loss of behavioral control, which leads to compulsive drug-seeking behavior, even though there are many behavioral factors that contribute to it. In abstinent people, this mediates relapse and keeps the addiction going. Numerous studies have demonstrated that nicotine injections cause dopamine (DA) to overflow in the nucleus accumbens, a neuronal reaction generally believed to explain the drug's "rewarding" qualities that boost self-administration .

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Subject

   From Harlan (Indianapolis, IN, USA), 27 male Sprague-Dawley rats weighing 302±17 g at the beginning of the investigation were acquired. A brief drug-free investigation had previously employed rats to see whether exposure to a different environment proactively hindered the rats' ability to get familiar with a testing environment as measured by new object interaction (Wilkinson et al., 2006a). Individual rats were kept in aspen shaving-lined translucent 48.3 × 26.7 × 20.3 cm (l × w × h) polycarbonate tubs. The home cage has water available all the time. Following daily sessions, rats were fed the Harlan Teklad Rodent Diet; the amount of food was limited to keep the rats' body weights at 85% of their free-feeding levels.

2. Apparatus

   In this investigation, eight conditioning chambers with dimensions of 30.5 × 24.1 × 21.0 cm (l × w × h) (ENV-008CT; Med Associates, Inc., St. Albans, VT, USA) were employed. The front and rear walls were made of clear polycarbonate, while the sidewalls were made of aluminum. A recessed container measuring 5.2 × 5.2 × 3.8 cm (l × w × d) was installed on one sidewall of each chamber. A 0.1-ml cup of 26% sucrose solution (w/v) was lifted into the container by a dipper arm. Head incursions into the dipper were tracked by an infrared emitter/detector device that was positioned 3 cm from the chamber floor and 1.2 cm into the container. To offer a gauge of overall activity, a second infrared emitter/detector device was installed in each chamber during the investigation. This item divided the chamber 14.5 cm from the side wall where the container was located In this investigation, eight conditioning

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chambers with dimensions of 30.5 × 24.1 × 21.0 cm (l × w × h) (ENV-008CT; Med Associates, Inc., St. Albans, VT, USA) were employed.

3. Drugs

(−)-1-Methyl-2-(3-pyridyl)pyrrolidine (nicotine), (R)-(+)-7-Chloro-8-hydroxy-3-methyl-1- phenyl-2,3,4,5-tetrahydro-1H-3-benzazepine hydrochloride (SCH-23390), and 3-Chloro-5- ethyl-N-[[(2S)-1-ethyl-2-pyrrolidinyl)methyl]-6-hydroxy-2-methoxy-benzamide hydrochloride (eticlopride) were purchased from Sigma (St. Louis, MO, USA). 2-Methyl-6- (phenylethynyl)pyridine hydrochloride (MPEP), (5S,10R)-(+)-5-Methyl-10,11-dihydro-5Hdibenzo[a,d]cyclohepten-5,10-imine maleate (MK-801; dizocilpine), and N-[(1-Butyl-2-pyrrolidinyl)methyl]-4-cyano-1-methoxy-2-naphthalenecarboxamide (nafadotride) were purchased from Tocris Cookson, Inc. (Ellisville, MO, USA). Nafadotride was dissolved at 100 mM in 1 eq. HCl. Distilled water was then added to obtain desired concentrations. All other drugs were mixed in 0.9% saline solution. Nicotine was adjusted to a pH of 7.0±0.2 using a dilute NaOH solution and injected s.c. 5 min before placement in the chamber.

Treatments in clinical development

1 Varenicline

Varenicline functions as a partial agonist at the α4 and β2 subunit-based subtype of neuronal nicotine receptors [30]. It shares chemical and physiological similarities with cytisine, an alkaloid that has a strong affinity for several distinct nicotinic receptor subtypes and that pharmacologists have utilized to investigate the role of these receptors. In the form of a herbal extract of Cytisus Laborinum L. (Golden Rain acacia), cytisine has been utilized as a tobacco dependence treatment in Eastern Europe [31]. Anecdotal evidence suggests that during the Second World War, this plant was utilized in Germany as a tobacco substitute.

Clinical Result : There were between 329 and 349 smokers per group, and their ages ranged from 18 to 75. Every participant smoked at least ten cigarettes every day. Table 2 displays the quit rates, which are calculated as total abstinence from week 9 to week 52. In one of the investigations, Varenicline was 2.4 times more effective than placebo, considerably better than bupropion, and marginally significant in the other.

2 Rimonabant

Another strategy is to look for non-nicotinic medications that might affect how nicotine affects the brain's neurological pathways linked to nicotine and tobacco dependency. There is increasing interest in determining the physiological functions of these systems as a result of the identification of cannabinoid receptors and their natural ligands, the endocannabinoids, inside the central nervous system [39]. The well-established pharmacological effects of exogenous cannabinoids derived from marijuana, such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), provide clues to the potential functions of endocannabinoids.

Stimulating feeding behavior is one of its behavioral activities [40]. Following that approach, researchers have demonstrated that using rimonabant to inhibit the cannabinoid CB1 receptors reduces feeding behavior.

Table 1. Continuous quit rates (%) during the last 4 weeks of the treatment in 2 Phase II studies.

Study	Placebo	Varenicline 3 mg/day	Varenicline 1 mg/day	Varenicline 2 mg/day	Bupropion 300 mg/day	Statistical significance
Oncken [36]	12		45	51		Varenicline 2 mg versus placebo; $p < 0.001$ Varenicline 1 mg versus placebo; $p < 0.001$
Oncken [37]	14	25	31	41	29	Varenicline 2 mg versus placebo; $p < 0.001$ Varenicline 2 mg versus bupropion: $p < 0.05$

Clinical Result: The two trials' protocols were comparable. Ten weeks of active medication were administered, and tests comparing 5 and 20 mg of rimonabant to a placebo were conducted. The two trials had varying numbers of subjects (260–267/group). The 10-week stop rates for the 20-mg, 5-mg, and placebo groups in the US research were 28%, 16%, and 16%, respectively [45].

The percentages in the Europe study [103] were, correspondingly, 25, 24, and 20% (not statistically significant).

Expert opinion:

In animals, nicotine shares many characteristics with other stimulants that cause dependence. Moreover, withdrawal symptoms are triggered when nicotine delivery is abruptly stopped after a period of long-term treatment. In the nucleus accumbens, nicotine, like other stimulants, promotes DA outflow.

Distinguishing between the functions of the DA projections to the core and shell of the nucleus accumbens in nicotine dependence has been the focus of recent studies.

While DA projections to the accumbal core may be implicated in the mechanisms by which conditioned stimuli enhance drug-seeking behavior and encourage relapse in abstinent individuals, increased DA outflow in the accumbal shell is believed to be crucial in the acquisition of drug-seeking behavior.

4. CONCLUSION

We might be able to create novel treatments for nicotine addiction (Lester et al., 2012; Lester et al., 2009) or neuroprotection against Parkinson's disease (PD) by comprehending the inside-out pharmacology of nicotinic ligands (Srinivasan et al., 2014). Nowadays, the majority of drug development initiatives focus on creating and refining ligands that are specific to AChR subtypes, most likely α6* or α4* AChRs.

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