

Extended treatment with typical and atypical antipsychotic drugs Differential effects on the densities of dopamine D₂-like and GABA_A receptors in rat striatum

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Received 16 October 2000; accepted 14 February 2001

Abstract

In situ radioligand binding and quantitative autoradiography have been used to measure the density of striatal D₁-like, D₂-like, and GABA_A receptors in rats treated with haloperidol at 0.01 or 0.1 mg/kg/day or chlorpromazine, olanzapine or clozapine at 0.1 or 1.0 mg/kg/day for 1, 3 or 7 months. [³H]SCH23390 binding to D₁-like receptors was not changed by any drug treatments. There were significant increases in [³H]nemonapride binding to D₂-like receptors at different time points due to treatment with haloperidol, chlorpromazine and olanzapine. By contrast, treatment with clozapine and olanzapine caused a time-dependent decrease in [³H]muscimol binding to the GABA_A receptor. These data suggest that treatment with atypical antipsychotic drugs, but not typical antipsychotic drugs, affect striatal GABAergic neurons. In addition, it would appear that clozapine might be unique in that it does not increase dopamine-D₂ like receptor density at doses which would be predicted to have antipsychotic effects in humans. The extent to which such changes are involved in the therapeutic effects of drugs such as olanzapine and clozapine remains to be determined. © 2001 Elsevier Science Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Antipsychotic drugs; Dopamine receptors; GABA_A receptors

Introduction

The need to define the mechanisms by which antipsychotic drugs produce their beneficial effects and unwanted side-effects has led to intensive study of changes in molecular architec-

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ture of the rat brain following antipsychotic drug treatment. Early studies showed that rats treated for up to one month with typical antipsychotic drugs, such as haloperidol, had increased striatal dopamine D₂-like (DA-D₂) receptors [1,2]. This finding led to the proposal that long-term treatment with antipsychotic drugs in humans could lead to an increase in DA-D₂ receptors, causing receptor supersensitivity with this resulting in the onset of tardive dyskinesia (TD). To explore this hypothesis further, rats were treated longer with antipsychotic drugs which showed that striatal DA-D₂ receptors remained increased in rats treated for up to a year with antipsychotic drugs [3–6] but that treatment for long periods did not increase DA-D₂ receptors in mesolimbic areas of the rat brain [7]. Moreover, it was shown that the ability of typical antipsychotic drugs to increase striatal DA-D₂ receptors was dose-dependent [8] and that the increases in DA-D₂ receptor density caused by antipsychotic drugs were slow to revert to non-treated levels after the cessation of drug treatment [9]. In contrast to treatment with typical antipsychotic drugs, treating rats with the atypical antipsychotic drugs clozapine (for up to 4 weeks) [10–14] or thioridazine (for 2 weeks) [14] did not result in an increase in the levels of striatal DA-D₂ receptors. Longer studies have shown that treating rats for up to a year with clozapine [6,7] or sulpiride [7] did not increase levels of DA-D₂ receptors. From these studies it was hypothesised that atypical antipsychotic failed to cause TD in humans because they do not cause receptor supersensitivity [15].

By contrast to studies on the DA-D₂ receptor, findings on the effects of antipsychotic drug treatment on DA-D₁ receptors do not appear to be consistent. For example, treatment with haloperidol for 21 weeks has been reported to decrease the density of striatal DA-D₁ receptors [16] whereas treatment with haloperidol [17–19] or fluphenazine [18,19] for up to 10 months had no effect on DA-D₁ receptors. It has also been reported that treatment with clozapine for 1 month increases the density of striatal DA-D₁ receptors [12,20]. This finding contrasts with other reports that treatment with clozapine for 1 month [13] or 1 year [7] does not change DA-D₁ receptors. The inconsistencies in these studies mean it is unclear if changes in DA-D₁ receptors are likely to be important in the actions of antipsychotic drugs.

We have recently reported a significant decrease in the density of GABA_A receptors in the rat hippocampus and temporal cortex following treatment with clozapine and olanzapine but not haloperidol or chlorpromazine [21]. Our data differ from those in the striatum where treatment with haloperidol for 1 [20] and 10 [19] months increased the density of GABA_A receptors. The differences in these data could be due to drug or brain region dependent factors, both of which would be potentially important in understanding the effects of antipsychotic drugs. To resolve some of these issues it was necessary for us to measure GABA_A receptors treated under the same regimen as those in which we demonstrated a decrease in GABA_A receptors in the hippocampus.

Existing studies have shown that antipsychotic drug treatment produces complex and regionally different changes in DA-D₂, DA-D₁ and GABA_A receptors in the rat brain. Most importantly, clozapine may be uniquely effecting some mechanism that results in an increase in DA-D₁ receptor and a decrease GABA_A receptor density. Alternatively, there may be an important role for the GABAergic systems in the mechanism by which clozapine exerts its unique therapeutic effects. Olanzapine is a new antipsychotic drug that has a similar pharmacological profile to clozapine [22] and therefore should have similar effects to those

of clozapine. If that is the case then it could be strongly argued that the apparent effects of clozapine on the dopamine/GABA systems are a function of its pharmacology profile and not due to effects on some unidentified mechanism. To test this hypothesis we examined the effect of treating rats for up to 7 months with typical (haloperidol and chlorpromazine) and atypical (olanzapine and clozapine) antipsychotic drugs on striatal DA-D₂, DA-D₁ and GABA_A receptors.

Methods

Materials

[³H]SCH23390, [³H]Microscales and Hyperfilm-³H[®] were purchased from Amersham Australia Pty. Ltd., Sydney, Australia. [³H]nemonapride and [³H]muscimol were obtained from New England Nuclear via AMRAD Biotech, Melbourne, Australia. SR95531 and chlorpromazine were obtained from Research Biochemicals International, USA. Clozapine was kindly donated by Sandoz, Australia, and olanzapine was kindly donated by Eli Lilly and Company, USA. All other chemicals were purchased from Sigma Aldrich Pty, Ltd., Australia.

Animals and drug treatment regimes

Male Sprague-Dawley outbred rats with an initial body weight of 150–200g were divided into individual groups of 5 animals per drug treatment and treated with either haloperidol (0.01 or 0.1 mg/kg/day), chlorpromazine (0.1 or 1.0 mg/kg/day), clozapine (0.1 or 1.0 mg/kg/day), or olanzapine (0.1 or 1.0 mg/kg/day) for 1 month, 3 months or 7 months. The drug doses used in these studies were selected with reference to earlier studies in rats but using lower doses to give CNS receptor occupancy approximating to that achieved when treating humans with antipsychotic drugs [23]. All drugs were administered as part of the rats' daily drinking water containing ethanol (0.2ml/kg/day) to ensure the drugs remained in solution. The vehicle treatment groups (n=5) received drinking water containing ethanol (0.2ml/kg/day) in the absence of drugs.

To reduce the residual levels of antipsychotic drug in the brain tissue, administration of drugs was terminated 48 hours prior to the rats being sacrificed by cervical dislocation and immediate decapitation. The brains were then rapidly removed and frozen by immersion in isopentane on dry ice. The brains were then placed in storage at –70°C until used for autoradiography.

Tissue preparation and in situ radioligand binding with autoradiography

Coronal sections (20µm) of rat striatum were cut at –20°C using a Reichert-Jung freezing microtome. As the sections were cut they were directly thaw-mounted onto chrome-alum gelatin coated microscope slides and stored at –70°C prior to use. Immediately prior to incubation all the tissue sections were removed from –70°C storage and air-dried at room temperature for approximately 60 minutes.

For all radioligands, binding was measured at a single concentration at least three times the K_d for each radioligand used and represents a single point saturation analysis study. In

such a study, a good estimate of the density of binding sites for each radioligand can be obtained by subtracting the density of radioligand binding sites in the presence of non-radioactive drug from that in its absence.

Measurement of dopamine D₁- and D₂-like receptors

For the measurement of dopamine receptors, all incubations were at room temperature using 50mM Tris HCl (pH 7.4) containing 120mM NaCl, 5mM KCl, 2mM CaCl₂ and 1mM MgCl₂ as the standard buffer. Dopamine D₁-like receptor density was measured as the binding of [³H]SCH23390 (3nM) in the absence or presence of 10⁻⁶M *cis*-flupenthixol [13,24] . The density of D₂-like receptors was measured as the difference between binding of [³H]nemonapride (4nM) in the absence or presence of (+)butaclamol (10⁻⁶M) [25,26]. After incubation, slide-mounted tissue sections for both D₁-like and D₂-like receptor studies were transferred through four successive 1 minute washes in ice-cold buffer (4°C), followed by a rapid rinse in ice-cold distilled water.

Measurement of GABA_A receptors

GABA_A receptors were measured as described previously [27]. Thus tissue sections were washed 3 times in ice-cold buffer at 4°C for 5 minutes, and then air-dried using a stream of cool air at room temperature. The density of GABA_A receptors was taken as the difference between the binding of [³H]muscimol (90nM) in the absence or presence of SR95531 (10⁻⁵M) following a 60 minute incubation in 50mM Tris Citrate (pH 7.1) at 4°C. Following incubation the sections were transferred through a 1 minute wash in ice-cold buffer and then briefly dipped in ice-cold distilled water.

Image analysis

Following incubation and washes, tissue sections were air-dried at room temperature using a stream of cool air and then apposed to tritium-sensitive Hyperfilm-³H[®] with a set of high and low [³H]microscales in x-ray film cassettes. Exposure time varied depending on the specific activity of the radioligand and relevant density of radioligand binding sites. All autoradiographs were analysed to determine if there was regional variability of radioligand binding sites. The density of radioligand was initially measured as film optical density using a Northern Light Precision Illuminator, CCD video camera module, and Micro-Computer Imaging Device (MCID) (Imaging Research Inc., St Catherines, Ontario, Canada) M1 image analysis software. These measurements were then compared to a standard curve of optical densities generated from [³H] microscales exposed to the same X-ray film and converted to fmol/mg estimated tissue equivalents (net weight)(ETE).

Statistics

All statistical analyses were carried out using GraphPad Prism Software Inc. Differences between radioligand binding to striatum from the different treatment groups were identified using a one-way ANOVA followed by a post hoc Bonferonni multiple comparison test to establish significant differences between individual groups.

Results

[³H]SCH23390 binding

There were significant differences in [³H]SCH23390 binding to striatum across the groups of animals treated for one month (F = 3.298, d.f. = 8,36, p = 0.006: Table 1, Figure 1). Importantly, there was no difference between any drug treated group and the vehicle treated animals. The significant differences in [³H]SCH23390 binding was to striatum from rats treated with low dose haloperidol compared to that in striatum from those receiving low (<0.05) and high dose olanzapine (p<0.05). There were no significant differences in [³H]SCH23390 binding to striatum between the groups of rats treated for 3 months (F = 0.7204, d.f. = 8,36, p = 0.67) or 7 months (F = 1.994, d.f. = 8,36, p = 0.076).

[³H]nemonapride binding

There were significant differences in the density of [³H]nemonapride binding to striatum from rats treated for 1 month (F = 11.81, d.f. = 8,36, p<0.0001: Table 1 & Figure 1). This difference was in part due to significant increases in [³H]nemonapride binding to striatum

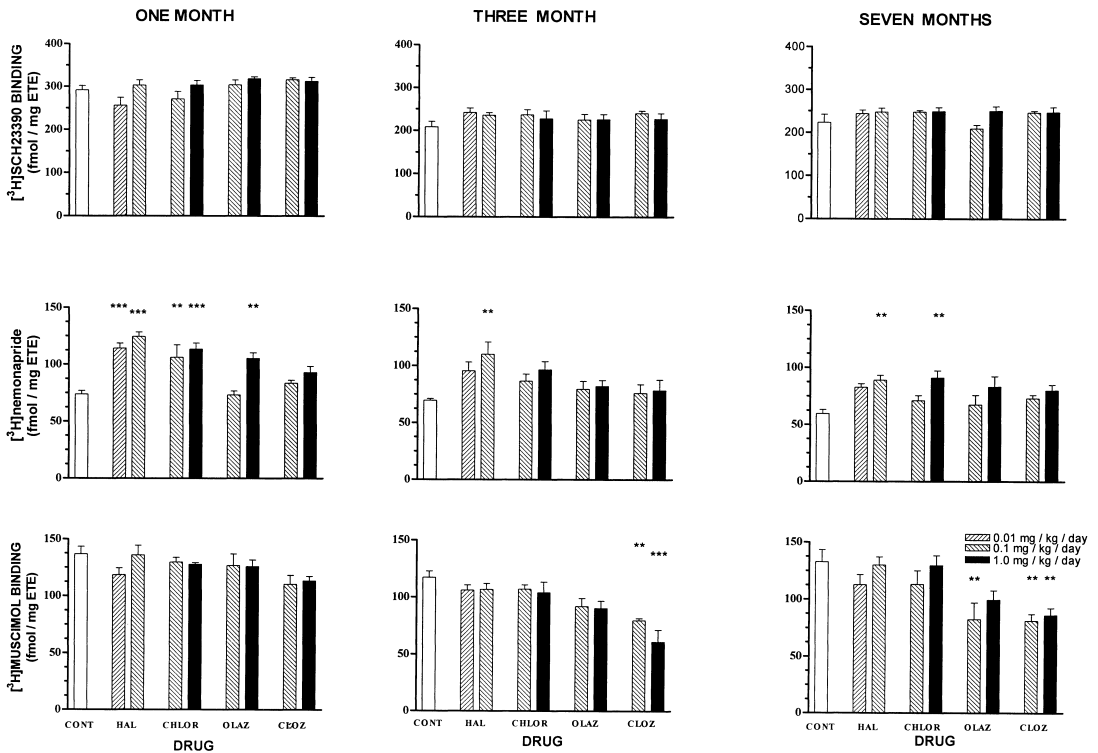


Fig. 1. The binding (mean ± SEM) of [³H]SCH23390, [³H]nemonapride and [³H]muscimol to striatum from rats treated for 1, 3 or 7 months with two dose of haloperidol (HAL), chlorpromazine (CHLOR), olanzapine (OLAZ) or clozapine (CLOZ). Significant differences between binding to striatum from rats receiving vehicle and rats receiving antipsychotic drugs are indicated as * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01 and *** p < 0.001.

Table 1
 The binding (mean ± SEM) of [³H]SCH 23390, [³H]nemonapride and [³H]muscimol to striatum from rats treated with two doses of haloperidol, chlorpromazine, olanzapine or clozapine for 1, 3, and 7 months

Treatment period (months)	Treatment	Low dose (0.1/0.01mg/kg/day)				High dose (1.0/0.1mg/kg/day)			
		[³ H]SCH23390	[³ H]nemonapride	[³ H]Muscimol		[³ H]SCH23390	[³ H]nemonapride	[³ H]Muscimol	
1	Vehicle	292 ± 10	74 ± 3	137 ± 6		292 ± 10	74 ± 3	137 ± 6	
	Haloperidol	257 ± 18	114 ± 4	118 ± 6		304 ± 12	124 ± 4	136 ± 8	
	Chlorpromazine	271 ± 17	106 ± 11	130 ± 4		304 ± 10	114 ± 5	128 ± 2	
	Olanzapine	304 ± 11	73 ± 4	127 ± 10		319 ± 5	105 ± 5	126 ± 6	
3	Clozapine	316 ± 4	84 ± 2	110 ± 8		313 ± 9	93 ± 5	113 ± 4	
	Vehicle	209 ± 13	70 ± 2	117 ± 6		209 ± 13	70 ± 2	117 ± 6	
	Haloperidol	236 ± 6	95 ± 8	106 ± 4		242 ± 10	110 ± 11	107 ± 5	
	Chlorpromazine	228 ± 18	87 ± 6	107 ± 4		237 ± 12	96 ± 7	104 ± 9	
7	Olanzapine	226 ± 12	79 ± 7	92 ± 7		225 ± 13	82 ± 5	90 ± 6	
	Clozapine	228 ± 13	76 ± 8	80 ± 2		240 ± 6	79 ± 9	61 ± 10	
	Vehicle	223 ± 19	60 ± 4	133 ± 11		223 ± 19	60 ± 4	133 ± 11	
	Haloperidol	244 ± 9	83 ± 3	113 ± 9		247 ± 9	89 ± 4	130 ± 7	
	Chlorpromazine	247 ± 4	71 ± 4	113 ± 12		249 ± 9	91 ± 6	130 ± 9	
	Olanzapine	210 ± 8	68 ± 8	83 ± 14		251 ± 10	83 ± 9	100 ± 8	
	Clozapine	247 ± 4	73 ± 3	81 ± 6		247 ± 12	80 ± 5	86 ± 6	

from rats treated with high ($p < 0.001$) and low ($p < 0.001$) doses of haloperidol, rats treated with low ($p < 0.01$) and high ($p < 0.001$) doses of chlorpromazine as well as rats treated with high dose olanzapine ($p < 0.01$) compared to rats receiving vehicle. After 3 months treatment there was a significant difference in the density of [^3H]nemonapride binding to striatum across the treatment groups ($F = 2.832$, d.f. = 8, 36, $p = 0.015$). This was due to a significant increase in the density of [^3H]nemonapride binding to striatum from rats treated with high dose haloperidol ($p < 0.05$) compared to vehicle treated rats. At 7 months there was still a significant difference in [^3H]nemonapride binding to striatum across the groups ($F = 3.4$, d.f. = 8, 36, $p = 0.005$). This was due to a significant increase in [^3H]nemonapride binding to striatum from rats treated with high dose haloperidol ($p < 0.05$) or chlorpromazine ($p < 0.05$) in comparison to binding to the striatum from vehicle treated rats.

[^3H]muscimol binding

After 1 month of treatment there were no significant changes in [^3H]muscimol binding to striatum from any of the treatment groups ($F = 2.019$, d.f. = 8, 36, $p = 0.072$). After 3 months treatment there was a significant difference between [^3H]muscimol binding to striatum from the different treatment groups ($F = 7.063$, d.f. = 8, 36, $p < 0.0001$) This was in part due to a significant decrease in [^3H]muscimol binding to striatum from rats treated with the high ($p < 0.001$) and low ($p < 0.05$) doses of clozapine compared to animals receiving vehicle (Table 1 & Figure 1). The remaining difference was due to [^3H]muscimol binding to striatum being lower in animals treated with high dose clozapine compared to those that received the high or low dose of haloperidol ($p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.001$ respectively) or chlorpromazine ($p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.01$). After 7 months of drug treatment there was still a significant difference in [^3H]muscimol binding to striatum from the different groups ($F = 4.913$, d.f. = 8, 36, $p = 0.0004$). This was in part due to a decrease in [^3H]muscimol binding to striatum from rats treated with the high ($p < 0.05$) dose of clozapine and the lower doses of clozapine ($p < 0.05$) and olanzapine ($p < 0.05$). In this instance the remaining differences were due to a significant decrease in [^3H]muscimol binding to striatum from rats receiving the low dose olanzapine or clozapine compared to those receiving the high doses of haloperidol ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.05$) or chlorpromazine ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The binding of [^3H]SCH23390, [^3H]nemonapride and [^3H]muscimol has been measured in striatum from rats treated with a variety of antipsychotic drugs for a number of treatment periods. A number of drug and time dependent differences in the outcome of antipsychotic drug treatments have been identified.

Dopamine receptors

There were no significant differences in [^3H]SCH23390 binding to striatum in any of the cohorts of the drug treated rats compared to that in the rats that received vehicle. Under the conditions used in this study, [^3H]SCH 23390 would predominantly bind to DA-D₁ receptors [28,29]. Hence our data suggest that treatment with antipsychotic drugs for up to 7 months does not significantly change the level of DA-D₁ receptors in the rat striatum compared to

that seen in untreated animals. This finding on striatal DA-D₁ receptors is in agreement with other studies which show no change in these receptors in rats treated for up to 1 year with antipsychotic drugs [6,7,13]. By contrast, our findings do not agree with a study that reported an increase in striatal DA-D₁ receptors following a 1 month treatment with haloperidol [16] or studies which suggest that treatment with clozapine increases the density of striatal DA-D₁ receptors [12,20]. Whilst further studies are necessary to fully resolve the effects of antipsychotic drug treatment on DA-D₁ receptors, our data would favor the hypothesis that antipsychotic drugs do not cause a change in DA-D₁ receptor density in rat striatum.

This study has shown a number of differences in the binding of [³H]nemonapride to striatum from rats treated with antipsychotic drugs. As used in this study, [³H]nemonapride has been shown to bind to both DA-D₂ and σ receptors [30,31]. However, we have shown that SKF 10047, a σ receptor antagonist [30], only displaced 10% of bound [³H]nemonapride from human striatum suggesting that 90% of binding of the radioligand would be to DA-D₂ receptors. These data are consistent with reports that the density of σ receptors is very low in the rat striatum [32,33] and together indicate that [³H]nemonapride would predominantly bind to DA-D₂ receptors in the striatum. Thus, our data show that there is an increase in DA-D₂ receptor density in rats that have received either dose of haloperidol or chlorpromazine and the high dose of olanzapine for 1 month. With regard to the typical antipsychotic drugs haloperidol and chlorpromazine, our data is in agreement with previous studies [6,11–13] that have shown that treating rats for one month with typical antipsychotic drugs up-regulate the DA-D₂ receptor. Moreover, our data is agreement with other studies [12,13,34,35] that show that treating rats with clozapine does not increase the density of DA-D₂ receptors in rat striatum. In addition we report that at the higher dose used, olanzapine caused a transient increase in the density of DA-D₂ receptors after treatment for 1 month. It is important to note that the recommended therapeutic daily dose of olanzapine is approximately 10 % of that for clozapine [15,36] therefore the effect we have observed at the higher dose of olanzapine may be attainable with a higher dose of clozapine. However, there is an association between the capacity of an antipsychotic drug to increase the density of DA-D₂ receptors in the rat striatum and their ability to produce extrapyramidal side effects in humans [37]. If this is true for olanzapine the use of this drug above the recommended dose [38] should be avoided as it could result in the onset of extrapyramidal side effects.

The results from treating rats for longer than one month show that the increase in DA-D₂ receptors caused by olanzapine are transient, not being detectable after 3 months. By contrast, as in an earlier study [7], increases in DA-D₂ receptors are still present after 7 months treatment with high dose typical antipsychotic drugs. Thus it would appear that the ability to “up-regulate” DA-D₂ receptors for long periods may be a function of the more selective DA-D₂ receptor antagonists. The rationale for classifying antipsychotic drugs as typical and atypical is that the atypical drugs cause fewer extra-pyramidal side effects [38]. From our data, another method of classifying atypical antipsychotic drugs might be their inability to cause long-term increases DA-D₂ receptor density in the rat striatum which would mean olanzapine clearly fulfills the criteria of an atypical antipsychotic drug.

GABA_A receptors

This study has shown that treating rats for 3 months or more with clozapine, or for more than three months with high dose olanzapine, decreases [³H]muscimol binding in the stri-

tum. Under the conditions used in this study [^3H]muscimol would be expected to bind predominantly to the GABA_A receptor [28]. Thus our data indicate that treatment with clozapine and, to a lesser extent olanzapine, causes a decrease in GABA_A receptor density in the striatum. It has been shown that treating rats for 1 month with the same doses of clozapine and olanzapine, but not haloperidol or chlorpromazine, causes a decrease in GABA_A receptors in hippocampus and temporal cortex [21]. This suggests that both clozapine and olanzapine down-regulate the GABA_A receptor, however the time and dose-dependency of this effect may vary between brain regions. Our results agree with a previous study which showed that treating rats with haloperidol for 6 months did not change the density of GABA_A receptors in the striatum [39] but differ from those of others that suggest that treatment with haloperidol increases striatal GABA_A receptors [19,20]. Clearly the effects of antipsychotic drugs on the GABAergic system remain to be fully elucidated but our data suggests that treatment with atypical antipsychotic drugs decreases the levels of GABA_A receptors, at least in the striatum and hippocampus.

Conclusions

We have shown that antipsychotic drugs have different effects on DA-D₂ receptors and GABA_A receptors in rat brain. There is a close association between dopaminergic and GABAergic systems in the rat striatum [40] and therefore one could postulate that such changes could be inter-related and important in the therapeutic actions of antipsychotic drugs. However, our results would not support this hypothesis because the changes in DA-D₂ and GABA_A receptors do not show any relationship and do not result from treatment with a single class of antipsychotic drug. Significantly, clozapine was the only drug that did not up-regulate DA-D₂ receptors but did down-regulate GABA_A receptors within 3 months. However, as olanzapine and clozapine cause similar changes in dopaminergic and GABAergic markers in the rat striatum it would seem unlikely that these changes are associated with the unique outcomes arising from the use of clozapine which includes being effective in treatment resistant subjects and lessening negative symptoms [15].

Our data show that, of the drugs we studied, only the atypical antipsychotic drugs affected the density of GABA_A receptors in the rat striatum. The atypical antipsychotic drugs used in this study, clozapine and olanzapine, differ from the typical antipsychotic drugs used in that they have a high affinity for serotonergic and muscarinic receptors [22]. Significantly, stimulation of the serotonergic system has been shown to increase GABA release [41] whereas stimulation of the cholinergic systems has been shown to decrease the level of GABA [42]. Therefore by blocking these pathways, clozapine and olanzapine should be able to decrease and increase the levels of GABA respectively. It has been shown that decreasing levels of GABA_A receptor predominantly reflect increasing levels of GABA [43]. Thus, our data in the rat striatum would be most consistent with the hypothesis that atypical antipsychotic drugs modulate levels of GABA_A receptors by inhibiting the muscarinic system, causing an increase in GABA release. This hypothesis is supported by a study showing problems in changing psychotic subjects from treatment with clozapine to an atypical antipsychotic drugs with no cholinergic activity, risperidone [44], because of a resulting cholinergic overdrive and GABA supersensitivity. Studies on the effect of atypical antipsychotic drugs without

cholinergic activity on levels of GABA_A receptor in the rat would be worthwhile to confirm our hypothesis as the hypothesis may have significance when considering altering antipsychotic drug treatment regimes in humans.

Acknowledgments

BD is the holder of a NARSAD Young Investigator Award. TH was the recipient of a National Health and Medical Research Dora Lush Scholarship (957473). The authors would like to thank Renee Pearson, Lee Naylor, Fiona Parkin, and Susie Kitsoulis for their contributions towards the antipsychotic drug treatments of rats.

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