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Effects of Chronic Stimulation of Nucleus Accumbens on Binge Drinking and Transcriptome

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Presenter Information
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Effects of Chronic Stimulation of Nucleus Accumbens on Binge Drinking and Transcriptome

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Abstract

The nucleus accumbens (NAc) is an important brain region in alcohol use disorders. Previously, we found increasing NAc activity decreases binge drinking of alcohol, without altering fluid or tantant intake. Here, we used clozapine-N-oxide (CNO) to selectively activate muautogenic excitatory G protein-coupled receptors (GMPs) in the NAc. We found that the effects of chronically increasing NAc activity produced lasting reductions in binge-like drinking, based on these behavioral results we proposed that transcriptional changes potentially underlie these changes.

Methods

High Drinking In the Dark (HDID)-1 mice were stereotactically injected with AAV2-DIO-M3D4q-mCherry and Cre-GFP for the NAc. We used a 6 week Drinking the Dark (DID) schedule where mice had 2hr access to 20% ethanol (DIO). For 7 days, mice were indexed with 1% DMSO in saline (vehicle, IP, 30 minutes prior to DID) to determine baseline intake. Mice were then treated with CNO (1 mg/kg) prior to daily drinking for 28 days. Then, mice were administered vehicle for another 7 days to determine whether the effects of chronic CNO treatment were lasting. There were 3 control groups (ethanol drinking mice not receiving CNO, and water and drinking mice receiving either CNO or vehicle).

Conclusion

Based on these behavioral studies and analyses, we propose that chronically increasing NAc activity via (CNO/DREADDs) can induce molecular and cellular plasticity. By using these analyses, we are working to identify changes in gene expression related to harmful binge-like drinking and CNO/DREADD-induced reductions in binge-drinking. We plan to identify key hubs for pharmacological manipulation of binge-drinking.

Research Question

What are the effects of changing NAc activity on binge-like drinking and gene expression networks? Can we reverse alcohol-induced changes in gene expression using DREADDs?

Using DREADDs to Manipulate Activity in the Nucleus Accumbens

Chronic NAc stimulation produces lasting reduction in binge-like drinking

Experimental Design and Schedule:

HDID-1 female mice were stereotactically injected with AAV2-DIO-M3D4q-mCherry into the NAc and allowed to recover to 3 weeks before behavioral testing began.

Methods

Pandera: Female: Adult female HDID-1 mice were stereotactically injected with AAV2/DIO-M3D4q-mCherry into the NAc (coordinates: +1.5 L/M, +2.3 A/R. 4.5° Dorsally) and allowed to recover for 2 weeks prior to testing. Binge-like ethanol intake was tested using a variation of the Drinking in the Dark (DID) schedule where mice received access to one bottle of 20% ethanol daily for 2 hours. There were 4 experimental groups: Ethanol DIO with or without CNO and Water drinking groups with or without CNO (n = 13-12/group). Mice were from same selection generation. Mice received daily injections (IP) of either 1 mg/kg clozapine-N-oxide (CNO) or vehicle (1% DMSO in saline) approximately 30 minutes before a 2 Hour DID session. For CNO groups: weeks 1 and 6 were vehicle injections and weeks 2, 3, 4, and 5 were CNO injections (1 mg/kg). Vehicle groups were injected with 1% DMSO in saline (IP) for 5 weeks. Mice were euthanized via cervical dislocation one day after the last session.

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1. Quantifying Gene Expression Differences Between Groups

Differential expression analysis (DE) is used to analyze gene expression levels between treatment groups.

• Sequenced RNA from NAc tissue of mice from both CNO and VEH (Water and EtOH treatment) groups is aligned to the Mus musculus genome, and normalized.

• Regions of the sequenced genome in one sample cover regions of Mus musculus. Different samples between groups may have variability in alignment coverage.

• Based on this coverage between samples, we can see how genes are being expressed (Up-regulated/Down-regulated).

• How does CNO change gene expression? (What are the significant genes? What are their functions?)

2. How Do Differentially Expressed Genes Correlate?

Weighted Gene Co-expression Analysis (WGCNA) is used to describe correlation patterns between genes. It can identify sets of tightly co-regulated genes (modules) based on network analysis. Understanding connectivity between genes can be used to single out important hub genes.

• In gene co-expression networks, RNA-Seq data is transformed into a count matrix. This matrix is used to compare gene expression between samples. Each gene (and its counts) correspond to a node; two nodes are connected if their expression values are highly correlated.

• The network is built on the basis of gene-gene correlations. The network is built on the basis of gene-gene correlations, which are collected in an adjacency matrix.

• The adjacency matrix is further processed and then clustered to detect gene modules (groups of genes that are coexpressed).

• Gene sets that have many strong correlations are denoted as hubs. These hubs are important regulators of mood.

• The Nucleus Accumbens (NAc) is a site of convergent inputs and an important regulator of mood.

Conclusions

• We found that chronically increasing NAc activity (via CNO/DREADDS) can induce lasting reductions in binge-drinking and propose that molecular plasticity underlies this effect.

• By using these analyses, we are identifying changes in gene expression related to harmful binge-like drinking and CNO/DREADD-induced reductions in binge-drinking.

• We plan to identify key hubs (WGCNA) for pharmacological manipulation of binge-like drinking.

Acknowledgements

Workflow: How do we analyze changes in gene expression?