

Psychopharmacology of Hallucinogens

MOLECULAR DETERMINANTS FOR INTERACTION WITH THE LSD RECEPTOR: BIOLOGICAL STUDIES AND QUANTUM CHEMICAL ANALYSIS

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5-Hydroxytryptamine (5-HT) is widely distributed and potently active on many tissues in some of which it appears to react with sites similar to those of D-lysergic acid diethylamide (D-LSD) and some other hallucinogenic compounds. For these reasons, a search for the molecular structural characteristics that determine the effects of these and related substances has attracted attention (Johnson et al. 1975; Green et al. 1974). About ten years ago, efforts began to use quantum mechanics to learn the electronic characteristics of specific atoms in the indole ring that could account for the activities of 5-HT and other tryptamines (Merril et al., 1966; Green, 1966, 1967). This work was given impetus with the availability of more sophisticated quantum mechanical methods. These were used to account quantitatively for the potencies of tryptamines on the D-LSD receptor in the fundus of the stomach (Green and Kang, 1970).

We describe here the results of studies on the potencies of tryptamines on three different biological systems and the molecular electronic correlates of the potencies. The biological measurements are: contraction of the fundus of the rat stomach; inhibition of high affinity binding of D-LSD to rat brain membranes; and inhibition of uptake of 5-HT by rat synaptosomes. Only the last lacks sensitivity to D-LSD.

As well as doing total valence electron calculations, we studied the molecular reactivity of some of the tryptamines by new theoretical methods (Weinstein et al. 1974; Bartlett and Weinstein, 1975; Politzer and Weinstein, 1975; Chang et al. 1976) using ab-initio calculations.

Biological Studies

Activities of Tryptamines on the Isolated Stomach of the Rat

5-HT in low concentrations (10^{-10} to 10^{-6} M), like many other tryptamines, contracts the isolated fundus of the stomach of the rat, an effect that is blocked by brom-LSD i.e. 2-bromolysergic acid diethylamide (BOL) and D-LSD (Vane, 1957; Barlow and Khan, 1959a,b; Offermeier and Ariens, 1966 a,b; Winter et al. 1967; Pinder et al. 1971; Barzaghi et al. 1973). Mescaline, amphetamine and some other phenylalkylamines also contract the fundal strip

and their effect too is blocked by brom-LSD as well as other 5-HT antagonists, e.g., mianserin and methylsergide (Vane, 1957, 1960; Innes, 1963; Innes and Kohli, 1969; Frankhuijzen and Bonta, 1974a). The 5-HT receptor in this tissue is very similar or even identical to the α -adrenergic receptor. α -Adrenergic blocking agents antagonize both 5-HT and amphetamine in this preparation (Vane, 1957; Innes, 1963; Frankhuijzen and Bonta, 1974b; Frankhuijzen, 1975). Both amines protect the receptor against α -adrenergic blockade (Innes, 1963). And the α -adrenergic blockers compete with mianserin and methylsergide for the same receptor (Frankhuijzen and Bonta, 1974a,b).

In an effort to define the molecular requirements for activation of this receptor, we first looked for a correlation between the electronic structure of the tryptamines (Kang and Green, 1969) and their potency as measured by Vane (1959). Among five tryptamines bearing different substituents at the 5 position of the ring, potency correlated almost precisely with decreasing resonance constants. This suggested that high electron density at the active site or sites of the molecule is associated with activity (Kang and Green, 1969). This finding clearly revealed that the substituents on the ring altered biological activity because of an effect they had on the electronic density in the ring system. The use of resonance constants for a correlation cannot indicate which atom(s) is involved in the activity. To identify the specific sites, we then carried out molecular orbital calculations on the nine ring-substituted tryptamines tested by Vane (1959). Potency was found to be correlated with specific electronic characteristics on three different atoms in the ring (Green and Kang, 1970).

This study has now been extended with another method of molecular orbital calculation which is suitable for handling molecules having a chlorine substituent. In addition, this analysis prompted the study of the action of twelve additional tryptamine derivatives on the fundus. We sought correlations between potency and molecular structure, using the results of theoretical (quantum chemical) analysis.

Methods. Potency of the tryptamines was measured by the method of Vane (1957). A strip of longitudinal muscle (approximately 2 mm wide and 2 cm long when stretched) was placed in a 10 ml muscle bath at 37°C. The buffer was Krebs-Henseleit, supplemented with 10^{-7} M scopolamine hydrobromide and 10^{-5} M iproniazid phosphate, bubbled continuously with 95% O₂-5% CO₂. Drugs were added in a volume of 0.1 ml or less from a microliter syringe. Contractions were recorded on a Clevite Brush Mark 220 recorder with a Grass Force-Displacement Transducer FT03C. The potencies were obtained by estimating the concentrations of the tryptamine derivative and 5-HT that give the same contraction of the rat fundus: dose-response curves for the tryptamine analogs were always compared to the dose-response curve of 5-HT run on the same tissue since the concentration of 5-HT giving 50 percent of maximal contraction varied markedly in different fundus strips. Only those experiments in which the dose-response curves of the tryptamine analogs were parallel to that of 5-HT were used. In these circumstances parallel lines were fit to the data by eye and the equipotent molar ratios (MR) calculated as the ratio of the molar concentration of the tryptamine derivative to the molar contraction of 5-HT required to produce the same contraction. Occasionally, a tryptamine derivative, which in all previous experiments had yielded dose-response curves paralleling the 5-HT curve, failed to give a parallel response, and this experiment was discarded. However, as described below, certain derivatives consistently gave non-parallel curves.

Non-parallel dose-response curves strongly suggest that the agonists are not acting in the same way e.g., that they are acting on more than one receptor. Any compound that did not give a dose-response curve parallel to that of 5-HT was not entered into the regression analysis. Those tryptamines that did not give parallel dose-response curves were the 6,7-(OH)₂, 5-benzyloxy, 7-benzyloxy, and 7-OH derivatives. Another indication that a series of agonists acts on the same or similar receptor may be obtained by doing dose-response curves before and after blockade with an irreversible antagonist (Furchgott, 1966). Correlation of the potencies with the affinity constants provides further evidence that only one receptor is involved in the action of the compounds.

The affinity constants, i.e., the reciprocal of the agonist dissociation constants, were measured with the use of an irreversible antagonist, phenoxybenzamine, by a method described by Furchgott (1966). Complete dose-response curves to a tryptamine derivative were obtained before and after exposure of the fundus strip to phenoxybenzamine, 2.5×10^{-6} M, for 10 min. A computerized curve fitting procedure was used to calculate the agonist affinity constant (Parker and Waud, 1971). At least three different fundus strips were used for each tryptamine derivative, and the molar ratios were measured on strips different from those used to measure the affinity constants.

All tryptamine derivatives, with the exception of 5-fluorotryptamine (K and K Laboratories) and tryptamine (Sigma), were synthesized by Regis Chemical Co. (Morton Grove, Ill.) and obtained through Dr. Albert Manian of the National Institute of Mental Health (Manian, 1974). Iproniazid phosphate was obtained from Sigma, scopolamine hydrobromide from K and K Laboratories, D-LSD-25 from Sandoz through Ms. Jacqueline Bryant of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and phenoxybenzamine from Smith, Kline and French. We are grateful for these gifts.

Results. Table 1 shows the original results of Vane (1959) (column A), our original results in the absence of ascorbic acid (column B of Table 1) and our results in the presence of ascorbic acid (column C of Table 1). All values are calculated relative to 5-HT in the absence of ascorbic acid (column B). The relative activities of the analogues of tryptamine are expressed in terms of molar potencies equiactive with 5-HT (=1).

In our initial studies on the fundus, the tryptamine derivatives were freshly dissolved in water and stored on ice for each day's experiment. The molar ratios obtained by us under these conditions are shown in column B of Table 1. Our values for tryptamine and 5-methoxytryptamine agree reasonably well with the 1959 study of Vane (column A of Table 1). However, during the course of these experiments we noted that several of the tryptamines yielded slightly colored solutions when dissolved in water (especially the 5,7-(OH)₂ and 5,6-(OH)₂ derivatives). This pigment formation was considerably reduced by dissolving the tryptamines in 10 mM ascorbic acid. Under these conditions several of the tryptamines were more potent, i.e. they had significantly lower molar ratios (column C of Table 1). Surprisingly, this was true even for tryptamine and the 5-F derivative, compounds that are considered relatively stable. The 4-NH₂ derivative formed a blue pigment when dissolved in water at room temperature. Ascorbic acid did not greatly affect the stability. Pigment formation could be prevented by dissolving the compound in cold water, when it was immediately tested. However, after storage in the frozen state overnight a blue pigment was apparent and activity on two fundus strips had decreased to 25 per cent of the activity of the fresh

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SUMMARY

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1. Potencies of a series of tryptamines were measured in three different systems: contraction of the fundus of the rat stomach; inhibition of binding of D-LSD by rat brain membranes; inhibition of uptake of 5-HT by crude rat synaptosomes.
2. The potencies in contracting the stomach correlated ($r=0.94$) with potencies in inhibiting D-LSD binding by brain membranes.
3. The potencies correlated with frontier electron densities on the indole ring: N1, C3, C4, and C5.
4. These positions correspond to the sites at which the density of the highest occupied molecular orbital is localized on 5-HT.
5. Results from *ab-initio* molecular orbital calculations were used to define reactivity indices for tryptamines: electrostatic interaction potentials and maps of susceptibility to polarization.
6. These indices showed the importance of C4-C5 and the bridge (i.e., C8-C9) regions in polarization complexes such as postulated for interaction with the receptor.
7. From the electrostatic potential maps, force vectors were derived indicating the preferred orientation of the indole ring with another molecule such as a receptor.
8. The vector of the most potent compound, 5-HT, was shown to be perpendicular to that of the least potent compound, 6-HT. The biological consequences of this difference in orientation are discussed.
9. The reactivity indices were tested by calculating the interaction of tryptamines with positive species (e.g., a proton) at various atoms in the indole ring.
10. The resulting interaction energies support the validity of using electrostatic interaction potentials as reactivity indices.
11. The indole nitrogen and carbon atoms respond to the interaction with a proton in a markedly different way. Carbon atoms accumulate the charge, the nitrogen atom transfers it to its neighboring atoms. This charge transduction by nitrogen activates the neighboring atoms for polarization interaction.
12. The interaction of 5-HT as an electron donor with imidazolium as an electron acceptor was studied (in different geometries) as a model of the interaction of tryptamines with receptor sites.
13. The results supported the use of force vectors as criteria for the orientation of reacting molecules in polarization complexes.
14. The charge redistribution resulting from the 5-HT interaction with imidazolium showed that charge transduction occurs when a positive site on imidazolium interacts with the indole nitrogen. This transduction strengthens the complex and could help to explain the importance of nitrogen in activity.

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