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Tau isoforms imbalance impairs the axonal transport of the amyloid precursor protein in human neurons

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2 **the amyloid precursor protein in human neurons**

3 **One sentence summary:** Tau isoforms in APP axonal transport

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36

37

38 **Abstract.**

39 Tau, as a microtubule-associated protein, participates in key neuronal functions
40 such as the regulation of microtubule dynamics, axonal transport and neurite outgrowth.
41 Alternative splicing of exon 10 in the tau primary transcript gives rise to protein isoforms
42 with three (3R) or four (4R) microtubule binding repeats. While tau isoforms are
43 balanced in the normal adult human brain, imbalances in 3R:4R ratio have been tightly
44 associated to the pathogenesis of several neurodegenerative disorders, yet the
45 underlying molecular mechanisms remain elusive. Several studies exploiting tau
46 overexpression and/or mutations suggested that perturbations in tau metabolism impair
47 axonal transport. Nevertheless, no physiological model has yet demonstrated the
48 consequences of altering the endogenous relative content of tau isoforms over axonal
49 transport regulation. Here we addressed this question using a *trans*-splicing strategy
50 that allows modulating tau exon 10 inclusion/exclusion in differentiated human-derived
51 neurons. Upon changes in 3R:4R tau relative content neurons showed no
52 morphological changes, but live imaging studies revealed that the dynamics of the
53 amyloid precursor protein (APP) were significantly impaired. Single trajectories analyses
54 of the moving vesicles showed that predominance of 3R tau favored the anterograde
55 movement of APP-vesicles, increasing anterograde run lengths and reducing retrograde
56 runs and segmental velocities. Contrarily, the imbalance towards the 4R isoform
57 promoted a retrograde *bias* by a significant reduction of anterograde velocities. These
58 findings suggest that changes in 3R:4R tau ratio has an impact on the regulation of
59 axonal transport and specifically in APP dynamics, which might link tau isoforms
60 imbalances with APP abnormal metabolism in neurodegenerative processes.

61 **Significance statement:** Tau protein has a relevant role in the transport of cargos
62 throughout neurons. Dysfunction in tau metabolism underlies several neurological
63 disorders leading to dementia. In the adult human brain, two tau isoforms are found in
64 equal amounts, while changes in such equilibrium have been associated with
65 neurodegenerative diseases. We investigated the role of tau in human neurons in
66 culture and found that perturbations in the endogenous balance of tau isoforms were
67 sufficient to impair the transport of the Alzheimer's disease related APP, although
68 neuronal morphology was normal. Our results provide evidence of a direct relationship
69 between tau isoforms imbalance and defects in axonal transport, which induce an
70 abnormal APP metabolism with important implications in neurodegeneration.

71

72 **Introduction.**

73 The microtubule-associated protein tau regulates microtubules (MTs) dynamics
74 supporting the axonal transport of proteins, vesicles and organelles (reviewed in Morris
75 et al. 2011). A number of neurodegenerative diseases referred to as tauopathies,
76 including Alzheimer's Disease and some forms of Frontotemporal Dementia, are
77 characterized by the aberrant accumulation of hyperphosphorylated tau. In such
78 pathological conditions tau is disengaged from MTs and accumulated in insoluble
79 filamentous inclusions (reviewed in Spillantini & Goedert 2013).

80 The human *MAPT* gene encoding tau protein comprises 16 exons. Alternative
81 splicing of exons 2, 3 and 10 produces six different isoforms in the central nervous
82 system (Goedert et al., 1989). Exon 10 (E10) encodes the second of four microtubule-
83 binding repeats; thus, E10 alternative splicing gives rise to tau isoforms with three (3R)
84 or four (4R) MT-binding repeats (Goedert et al., 1989). Only 3R tau is expressed in the

85 developing brain while a balanced 3R:4R tau expression is found in the adult human
86 brain (Goedert et al., 1989; Andreadis, 2005). Mutations impairing E10 splicing
87 segregate with disease in familial frontotemporal dementia with parkinsonism linked to
88 chromosome 17 (FTDP-17) (Hutton et al., 1998; Spillantini et al., 1998). To date, more
89 than 50 disease-associated mutations have been found in *MAPT*, with a third of them
90 affecting E10 splicing (Ghetti et al., 2015). Yet, the mechanisms underlying
91 neurodegeneration due to 3R:4R isoform imbalance remain to be further elucidated.

92 Among the myriad of neuronal functions affected by tau abnormal metabolism,
93 axonal transport is likely to be particularly disturbed: The anterograde and retrograde
94 axonal transport of cargos is mediated by kinesin and dynein motors that differentially
95 interact within the MT-polarity (Terada et al., 2010; Encalada and Goldstein, 2014). Tau
96 can regulate axonal transport either by directly interacting with molecular motors, by
97 altering MT dynamics or competing with the binding of motors to MT (Dixit et al., 2008 ;
98 Kanaan et al., 2012; Goldstein, 2012). Tau-microtubule interaction depends on the
99 number of tau microtubule-binding domains (Panda et al., 2003) thus, it is potentially
100 affected by the relative content of 3R and 4R isoforms, as well as by mutations in E10.
101 Transgenic mice expressing missense human E10 mutations (P301S or P301L)
102 revealed deficits in axonal transport (Ittner et al., 2008; Bull et al., 2012; Mellone et al.,
103 2013; Rodríguez-Martín et al., 2016). Conversely, reduction in the level of kinesin-I
104 anterograde motor enhance tau pathology in the P301L transgenic mouse, suggesting
105 that transport defects impact on tau physiology (Falzone et al., 2009). Also, cultured
106 neurons showed mitochondrial axonal transport defects under 3R or 4R isoform

107 overexpression (Stoothoff et al., 2009; Mertens et al., 2013) or when bearing mutations
108 that increase E10 inclusion (Iovino et al., 2014).

109 The amyloid precursor protein (APP) is significantly linked to Alzheimer's
110 Disease, leading to the generation of amyloid- β and plaque pathology under the
111 presence of mutations, overexpression or transport defects (Stokin et al., 2005;
112 Goldstein et al. 2012). As a Golgi-derived transmembrane protein, APP-vesicles
113 undergo constitutive fast axonal transport, interacting with kinesin and dynein motors
114 (Reis et al, 2012, Fu and Holzbaur, 2013, Koo et al, 1990). Defects in APP transport
115 are early events in neurodegenerative diseases (Stokin et al., 2005; DeVos et al,
116 2008), therefore, measuring APP dynamics is a gold standard method for detecting
117 transport deficits associated with pathological conditions (Goldsbury et al., 2007;
118 Falzone and Stokin, 2012).

119 In this study we investigated whether the imbalance in 3R:4R ratio impact on the
120 dynamics of APP axonal transport in human neurons. We used a *trans*-splicing RNA
121 reprogramming strategy that drives the inclusion/exclusion of exon 10 in the
122 endogenous tau transcript (Avale et al., 2013). Tau isoforms ratio was modulated
123 without altering total tau protein amount in cultured differentiated neurons derived from
124 human embryonic stem cells (hESC). Live imaging analyses of APP fluorescent
125 vesicles revealed differential effects of 3R or 4R isoforms over anterograde and
126 retrograde axonal transport, suggesting that changes in endogenous tau isoform ratio
127 impairs APP transport in human neurons.

128

129

130 **Materials & Methods**

131

132 *Cell culture and neuronal differentiation*

133 Neurons were derived from hESCs. Briefly, irradiated MEFs were plated over gelatin
134 coated Petri dishes 24h prior to hESCs plating and maintained in DMEM complete (high
135 glucose DMEM, 10% FBS, 1% Glutamax, 1% penicillin-streptomycin). hESCs were
136 grown at 37°C, 95% humidity and 5% CO₂ in Human Embryonic Stem Cell media (KO
137 DMEM, 20% KO Serum Replacement, 1% Glutamax, 1% Non Essential Amino Acids,
138 0.1% Beta-Mercaptoethanol, 4 ng/ml bFGF) to allow colony formation. When colonies
139 reached optimal size they were first transferred to a Petri dish and after 12-18 hours to
140 25 cm² flasks and grown in suspension to allow embryoid body formation, which was
141 induced by Neural Induction Media NIM (DMEM/F12, 1% N2 Supplement, 1% of Non-
142 essential AA, 280UI/ml heparin and 1% penicillin-streptomycin). Embryoid bodies were
143 then transferred to laminin coated 6 multi-well plates for neural rosettes formation. After
144 7-14 days of growth, the neural rosettes were picked and transferred to 25 cm² flasks
145 and maintained in NIM complete medium (NIM, 2% B27 supplement, Ascorbic Acid) for
146 up to one month, changing the growth medium every two days. Neural rosettes were
147 picked and dissociated by a 5 min Accutase and Trypsin treatment. The reaction was
148 blocked by Trypsin inhibitor and the suspension centrifuged for 5 min at 1000 rpm. The
149 pellet was washed with DMEM/F12 and resuspended in Neural Differentiation Media
150 NDM (Neurobasal, 1% N2 supplement, 2% B27 supplement and 1% penicillin-
151 streptomycin). Cells were plated over poly-ornitine and laminin coated coverslips into
152 24-multiwell plates and maintained in 500 µl/well NDM complete medium (NDM,
153 Laminin, cAMP, Ascorbic Acid, BDNF, GDNF).

154

155 *Neuron plating, transduction and transfection*

156 Plated neurons were maintained in culture, changing $\frac{3}{4}$ of the medium every 7 days. On
157 DIV11 neurons were transduced with either control (dsRED), PTM-4R (formerly named
158 PTM6)(Rodriguez-Martin et al., 2005) or PTM-3R (formerly PTM9)(Rodriguez-Martin et
159 al., 2009). PTMs were expressed under the human synapsin promoter, in a replication-
160 defective lentiviral vector, prepared as described previously (Avale et al., 2013). 5 μ l of
161 each concentrated LV ($\sim 10^7$ TU/ml) were added in 200 μ l medium per well containing
162 150,000 neurons, to achieve a multiplicity of infection (MOI) between 5 to 10, as
163 previously described (Avale et al., 2013)). After 12 hours the cells were topped up with
164 300 μ l of fresh NDMc medium. Seven days after LV transduction (on DIV18), neurons
165 were transfected with 1 μ g of pcDNA3-APP-YFP (Falzone et al., 2009) in a transfection
166 mix of OptiMEM and Lipofectamine 2000. Two hours after transfection, culture medium
167 was replaced and 24 hours later (on DIV 19) neurons were analyzed by imaging for
168 transport analysis, fixed for immunocytochemistry or processed to obtain RNA and
169 protein for qPCR and western blot analyses. *3R and 4R Tau Isoform quantitation by*
170 *qPCR*

171 Total RNA was isolated from neurons using AllPrep DNA/RNA mini kit (Qiagen) from
172 high density cultures at DIV 19. Reverse transcription was performed with 0.5 μ g of
173 RNA with the TaqMan RT kit (Applied Biosystems) in a total volume of 10 μ l. RT
174 conditions were: 10 min at 25°C, 30 min at 48°C, and 5 min at 95°C. To simultaneously
175 detect tau isoforms by end-point PCR, 0.2 μ g of reverse-transcribed RNA were
176 amplified by PCR using Go Taq polymerase (Promega) with primers spanning exons 9-

177 13, as previously described (Avale et al., 2013). PCR products were separated by
178 electrophoresis in 2% (w/v) agarose gels and stained with ethidium bromide. To perform
179 the relative quantification of 4R and 3R mRNA isoforms by real time PCR, specific pairs
180 of primers were used for each isoform, annealing with the E9-E10 or the E9/11-E11
181 junction. Both pairs of primers showed similar efficiency. Primer sequences were as
182 follows: 4Rfor(E9):5'TCCACTGAGAACCTGAAG3';
183 4Rrev(E10):5'AGTGTGGCTCAAAGGATA3';
184 3Rfor(E9/11):5'AGGCGGGAAGGTGCAAATAG3';3Rrev(E11):5'TCCTGGTTTATGATG
185 GATGTT3'. The mRNA coding for human Apolipoprotein B was used as a reference
186 (ApoBFor:5'-TGGTGCTCACAAGGCGGACACTAA3';
187 ApoBRev:5'GGCGGCTTTCCCATCCAGACTA-3'). Real-time PCR reactions were
188 performed in triplicate with 10 ng of cDNA and 5 µl of Power SYBR® Green PCR
189 Master Mix (Applied Biosystem) in a final volume of 10 µl using a MJ Research Opticon
190 2 thermal cycler under the following cycling conditions: initial denaturation at 95°C for 3
191 min, 50 cycles of 30 s at 95°C, 30 s at 58°C and 45 s at 72°C, and a final step of 1 min
192 at 72°C. Data was analyzed with the *Opticon monitor 3* software (Biorad) to obtain the
193 ΔCt per sample (Ct Tau isoforms-Ct ApoB). Data from three independent experiments
194 were pooled and analyzed using Graph Pad Prism software.

195 *Western blotting*

196 Total protein was collected from neurons at DIV19 in 100 µl of sample buffer (40 mM
197 Tris-HCl (pH 7.5), 150 mM NaCl in 1× protease inhibitor (Invitrogen). Protein
198 concentration was measured using the Bradford assay (Bio-Rad). Equal amounts of
199 protein (10-20 µg) in 20 µl of loading buffer (bromophenol blue (0.5 %), 10 % glycerol

200 and 10% of 2-Mercaptoethanol) were loaded onto 12% (w/v) SDS-polyacrylamide gels
201 (N,N'-Methylenebisacrilamide 30%, Invitrogen). Proteins were transferred onto
202 nitrocellulose membranes (Whatman, USA) using the wet transfer method. Membranes
203 were blocked in 5% (w/v) nonfat milk (Sancor, Argentina), 0.05% v/v Tween 20 in PBS
204 for 1 hour. After blocking, membranes were incubated overnight at 4°C in blocking
205 solution containing primary antibody directed against 3R Tau (1:2000 Anti-Tau 3-repeat
206 isoform RD3; mouse monoclonal, Millipore), 4R tau (1:1000 Anti-Tau 4-repeat isoform
207 RD4; mouse monoclonal, Millipore), total tau (1:10000; rabbit polyclonal; SIGMA),
208 phosphorylated tau CP13 and PHF1 (1:200; gift from Dr. Peter Davies), β -actin (mouse
209 monoclonal, 1:10000; abcam), APP (mouse monoclonal 22C11) or tubulin (mouse
210 monoclonal, 1:800, DM1a, Covance). After washing 3 times in TBS containing 0.05%
211 v/v Tween 20, blots were incubated with the appropriate secondary antibody, goat anti-
212 rabbit (1:2000, Cell Signaling) or horse anti-mouse (1:2000, Cell Signaling) for 3 hours
213 at room temperature. Proteins were visualized using the GeneGnomeXRQ (Syngene,
214 US). Scanned images were analyzed using ImageJ software.

215

216 *Imaging, tracking and analysis*

217 Imaging of live cells and kymograph analysis of axonal transport was carried as
218 previously described (Falzone and Stokin, 2012). Briefly, 30s movies of APP-YFP
219 moving particles in neurons were recorded by using an inverted epifluorescence
220 microscope (Olympus IX81) connected to a CCD camera (Olympus DP71/12.5
221 megapixels). Cultures were observed under a 60x lens (NA: 1.40) and maintained at
222 37°C, 5% CO₂ and 10% humidity using a CO₂ humid chamber and heated stage

223 (Olympus). Directionality was determined by tracking fluorescent axons. To avoid
224 introducing biases due to the gradient concentration of tau in axons, imaging was
225 performed in axons at their middle part separated by at least 2 fields of view distance
226 (~200 μm) from cell bodies and from axonal tips. Kymographs were generated from the
227 recordings with ImageJ using the multiple kymograph plug-in (Otero et al., 2014) and
228 processed using Image-Pro Plus 6 (Media Cybernetics, Rockville, MD, USA) and
229 MATLAB scripts (The Mathworks, Natick, MA, USA) to track single fluorescent vesicles
230 with sub-pixel precision, as previously reported (Otero et al., 2014). Kymographs were
231 blind-coded for particle tracking and unbiased data collection.

232 Segmental velocities, run-lengths, pauses and reversions were computed from
233 trajectories using custom made MATLAB routines. For the calculation of segmental
234 velocities, processive trajectories were divided into segments and the mean velocity of
235 the segment was computed from the slope using a MATLAB algorithm. Briefly, each
236 trajectory was cut in segments of 20 frames of duration producing a linear
237 approximation with the least squares method, filtering trajectories with outliers and
238 significant differences between the dataset and the fitted curve. Subsequently, the slope
239 of the regression was considered as the velocity of the segment. The point in which the
240 movement is equal to 0, filtering the points produced by the noise of the trajectory was
241 used for the calculation of run-lengths, pauses and reversions. The trajectories between
242 those points are considered continuous segments and classified in anterograde or
243 retrograde movement if they show positive or negative velocity respectively (velocities
244 are the slope of a linear approximation of the trajectory). Pauses are considered when
245 segments follow a stationary criteria for more than 5 frames (625 ms) moving less than

246 0.05 pixel per frame ($<0.16 \mu\text{m}/\text{sec}$). The script merges continuous segments of the
247 same type, and segments that are too small. The difference in μm between the final
248 point and the initial point of a determined continuous segment is considered as the run-
249 length. The points separating anterograde and retrograde segments are considered
250 reversions. The parameters of the Gaussian mixture model were determined by an
251 Expectation Maximization (EM) algorithm using a function (`gmdistribution.fit`) in
252 MATLAB. A bootstrapping with resampling procedure with $N=1000$ was implemented to
253 compute the intervals of confidence of the Gaussian mixture parameters estimates.

254

255 *Immunofluorescence, image collection and morphology.*

256 Cells were washed with phosphate-buffered saline (PBS), and fixed with 4% para-
257 formaldehyde and 4% sucrose in PBS for 30 minutes at 37°C . After fixation cells were
258 washed twice with PBS for 10 minutes and permeabilized with 0.1% Triton X-100 for 10
259 min at room temperature. Cells were incubated at room temperature for 1 h using a
260 blocking solution consisting of 3% bovine serum albumin (BSA), 0.1% Triton X-100 and
261 10% goat serum in PBS. Cells were then stained with primary antibodies in blocking
262 solution and incubated overnight at 4°C . When using two primary antibodies, the
263 staining was done sequentially. Cells were then rinsed in PBS and stained with
264 secondary antibodies at room temperature for 2 hours. Cells were stained for 30 min
265 with Hoechst and mounted on slides with 70% glycerol. Primary antibodies used were:
266 anti tau CP13 (1:800), rabbit polyclonal to total tau (1:800), APP (1:800) and secondary
267 antibodies against mouse and rabbit IgG conjugated to Alexa Fluor 564 (1:400) or Alexa
268 Fluor 488 (1:400). Fixed cells were imaged with an inverted Zeiss LSM 780 confocal

269 microscope (Zeiss, Oberkochen, Germany) using an oil immersion objective (40×/0.55
270 N.A). YFP fluorescence was excited by 488 nm line of the argon laser, while the
271 emission light was collected through the band pass filter (505-530 nm). Red
272 fluorescence (dsRED) was excited with the He/Ne laser (543 nm) and the emission light
273 was filtered with long pass filter, with a cut-off below 560 nm. Neuronal morphology was
274 quantitatively evaluated with three parameters which describe neuron size and
275 projection branching complexity. Briefly, the projection extension was estimated by
276 measuring the sum of all the projections from images of single neurons imported in
277 Image J after pixel was converted into μm . The skeletonized neuron length was
278 estimated from total extensions and number of primary projections obtained. Branching
279 complexity was investigated using the Sholl plug-in in Neuron-J from which number of
280 intersections along consecutive rings was obtained and represented in plots of
281 projection intersection versus soma distance in μm . Statistical significance of data was
282 determined with the two-tailed *t* test. Values are expressed as Mean \pm S.E.M.

283

284 **Results:**

285 **Modulation of 3R:4R tau ratio by *trans*-splicing in differentiated human neurons**

286 Neuronal cultures were obtained by differentiation of human embryonic stem cells
287 (Hues9) using a standard protocol previously described (Figure 1; Zhang et al. 2010).
288 To test for proper polarization, immunofluorescence staining was performed 5 days after
289 plating (DIV 5); at this stage human neurons showed early development of highly
290 polarized structures with defined axonal (tau-positive) and dendritic (MAP2-positive)
291 projections (Figure 1B). After 19 days in culture (DIV 19), enriched neuronal cultures
292 displayed dense connectivity and axonal arborization together with detectable staining
293 of tau in the axons (Figure 1C). At this stage, neurons also show electrophysiological
294 profiles of mature neurons such as repetitive spiking and increased amplitude of
295 voltage-dependent Na⁺ and K⁺ currents (Pozo Devoto, *et al.*; under revision).
296 To modulate the relative content of 3R:4R tau isoforms, we used a *trans*-splicing RNA
297 reprogramming strategy (Rodriguez-Martin et al., 2005). Tau pre-*trans*-splicing
298 molecules (PTMs) were delivered using lentiviral vectors (LV), as previously described
299 (Avale et al., 2013). After integration into the neuron genome, the PTM cassette is
300 transcribed into an RNA molecule that binds to intron 9 of the endogenous tau transcript
301 and drives a *trans*-splicing reaction (Figure 1E). We used two different LVs carrying
302 Tau-PTMs: i) LV-Tau-PTM3R, containing exons 11-13 to exclude exon 10 from the tau
303 transcript; or ii) LV-Tau-PTM4R, carrying exons 10-13 to include exon 10 in the resulting
304 *trans*-spliced product (Figure 1E). Based on this strategy, LV-PTM3R is expected to
305 increase the relative content of 3R tau, while LV-PTM4R would drive the production of
306 4R tau (Figure 1E). High density neuronal cultures were transduced at DIV 11 with LV-

307 Tau-PTM3R, LV-Tau-PTM4R or LV control, carrying a red fluorescent reporter gene
308 (dsRED) instead of the PTM, within the same vector backbone (Figure 1E). Molecular,
309 immunofluorescence and functional analyses were performed at DIV 19, to allow
310 maximal expression of the LVs. Transduction efficiency was assessed by the
311 expression of the fluorescent reporter dsRED from the control LV (Figure 1D).

312 To validate the *trans*-splicing system in human derived neurons we first analyzed 3R
313 and 4R tau isoforms measuring the relative content of tau mRNA with or without E10
314 (here after also referred to as 4R and 3R mRNA, respectively) (Figure 1F-G). End point
315 RT-PCRs, using primers that amplify both isoforms simultaneously from RNA of
316 transduced neurons, showed a clear change in tau isoforms relative content in either
317 PTM transductions compared with control (Figure 1F). We next performed a relative
318 quantification analysis by real time RT-PCR, using isoform-specific primers to analyze
319 changes in 3R and 4R relative contents (Figure 1G, see methods). Control neurons at
320 DIV 19 showed a 4R/3R ratio of 0.6 ± 0.07 , suggesting neuronal maturity evidenced by
321 the presence of 4R tau, although the 3R:4R isoform balance was not yet achieved at
322 this stage. As expected, transduction with LVs carrying either PTM3R or PTM4R
323 induced a bias in the endogenous 4R/3R ratio: LV-PTM3R transduced neurons showed
324 a net 4R/3R tau ratio reduction to 0.34 ± 0.17 due to a 30% relative increase in 3R tau,
325 although the reduction observed in 4R isoform was not statistically significant. On the
326 other hand, LV-PTM4R transduced neurons showed 2-fold increase in 4R tau compared
327 to control neurons, while a 50% reduction in 3R tau was observed, yielding a relative
328 4R/3R ratio increase to 3.9 ± 0.18 (Figure 1G).

329 To test whether the change in the relative content of tau isoforms observed at the RNA
330 level was translated to the protein content, 3R and 4R tau were separately detected by
331 western blotting with isoform-specific antibodies in protein lysates obtained at DIV19
332 from each LV transduced neurons (Figure 1H-I). Due to potential differences in
333 antibodies affinities it is not possible to accurately estimate the 4R/3R tau ratio at the
334 protein level, then, changes in each tau isoform were analyzed independently,
335 comparing PTM transduced neurons *versus* control conditions. Neurons transduced
336 with LV PTM3R showed a significant increase in 3R tau protein amount compared to
337 transduction with the control virus (Figure 1H) with a mild reduction observed in this
338 isoform under PTM4R transduction. Conversely, 4R tau protein content (Figure 1I) was
339 increased after PTM4R transduction and decreased in PTM3R transduced neurons.
340 Taken together, these results suggest that the *trans*-splicing strategy was efficient to
341 modulate the relative content of tau isoforms in differentiated neurons, both at the RNA
342 and protein levels.

343

344 **Normal neuronal polarization in human derived neurons under 3R:4R tau isoform**
345 **imbalance.**

346 We next evaluated whether changes in tau isoform ratio impacts on neuronal survival
347 and/or morphology. Neuronal structure and polarization in transduced neurons were
348 analyzed by immunofluorescence staining against cytoskeletal and membrane markers
349 at DIV 19 (Figure 2 A,B). Tau and APP staining showed similar number of neurons in
350 LV-PTM3R and LV-PTM4R transduced cultures compared with non-transduced control
351 (NTC), displaying similar degree of ramification and arborization (Figure 2 A, B). In

352 addition, no changes in the number of projections or differences in axonal or dendrite
353 length were observed between control and LV-PTM3R or LV-PTM4R transduced
354 neurons (Figure 2C-E). Transduced neurons did not show evidence of axonal retraction
355 or swelling, neither the accumulation of tau in their projections (Figure 2B). These
356 results indicate that neither the transduction with LVs nor the induced changes in tau
357 isoforms ratio alter survival, polarization or morphology of human neurons in culture.
358 To test whether PTM expression, or the LV transduction, alter the amount of total tau
359 protein we performed western blot analysis from homogenates collected at DIV 19 using
360 an anti-tau or anti-APP antibody. No changes in the amount of total tau or APP were
361 observed between control (dsRED), LV-PTM3R and LV-PTM4R transduced neurons
362 (Figure 2 F, G), showing that neither LV transduction nor the modulation of tau isoforms
363 alter the total content of these proteins. To test whether a shift in tau isoforms balance
364 might induce changes in tau phosphorylation we also performed western blot analyses
365 using antibodies recognizing tau phosphorylated at Ser202 (CP13) or at Ser 396/404
366 (PHF1). No differences were observed among the experimental conditions suggesting
367 that the level of tau phosphorylation is not affected after *trans*-splicing (Figure 2H).
368 Therefore, through the use of the *trans*-splicing strategy we have been able to modulate
369 the relative 3R:4R tau ratio in differentiated human neurons without altering tau protein
370 expression, phosphorylation state, neuronal morphology, or survival. We thus reasoned
371 that this is a suitable model to investigate particular neuronal functions, such as axonal
372 transport, that might be affected by tau isoforms imbalance.

373

374 **APP axonal transport impairment after changes in the 3R:4R tau ratio.**

375 Since the 3R:4R tau ratio can be efficiently modulated by *trans*-splicing, we next asked
376 whether imbalance in tau isoforms perturbs APP axonal transport. To answer this
377 question APP dynamics was monitored at DIV19 by continuous high definition live
378 imaging recordings to generate movies from axons identified by morphology, as
379 previously described (Otero et al., 2014). Neurons were transduced at DIV11 with LV-
380 PTM3R, LV-PTM4R or control LV-dsRED and transfected at DIV18 with the fluorescent
381 hAPP695-YFP expression vector (pCDNA3-APP-YFP) to track fluorescent APP vesicles
382 as indicated in the experimental timeline (Figure 1). Co-localization of YFP and dsRED
383 signals in transduced control showed that 99% of APP-YFP transfected cells were also
384 transduced with the LV (Figure 1D). A group of neurons that had not been transduced
385 with LVs (non-transduced control, NTC) was also included in the experiment to rule out
386 any effect over APP transport due to LV transduction. Movies were obtained from axons
387 at their middle part (at least 200 μm away from the cell body or tip) to generate detailed
388 kymographs of time *versus* distance, for qualitative and quantitative analyses (Figure
389 3A, see movies 1-3). The parameters analyzed (velocities and run lengths) of APP
390 dynamics in control (NTC) neurons were comparable to those described for different
391 neuronal settings from mouse, chicken and *Drosophila* with vesicular movement
392 undergoing fast anterograde and retrograde axonal transport (Goldsbury et al., 2007;
393 Reis et al, 2012; Falzone and Stokin, 2012). NTC human neurons revealed an even
394 distribution of anterograde and retrograde moving APP vesicles and a fraction of
395 stationary vesicles under the time frame analyzed (Figure 3C). The average velocity for
396 anterograde and retrograde APP moving vesicles in NTC conditions (Figure 3D) were

397 consistent with the values obtained for fast axonal transport in other systems (Stokin et
398 al., 2005; Falzone et al., 2009).

399 Transduction with either LV-PTM3R or LV-PTM4R significantly impaired the axonal
400 transport of APP (Figure 3C). More specifically, increased levels of 3R isoform (by LV-
401 PTM3R transduction) led to 30 - 50 % reductions of anterograde and retrograde APP
402 movement respectively; and significantly increased the proportion of stationary vesicles
403 by 30% (Figure 3C). Interestingly, shifting the balance towards 4R isoform (LV-PTM4R
404 transduction) produced a similar reduction of the APP anterograde and retrograde
405 transport while increasing the stationary proportion (Figure 3C). The density of APP-
406 YFP vesicles in axons was similar between the different conditions (Figure 3E),
407 revealing that the observed reduction in transport is likely to be induced by a shift from
408 moving towards stationary vesicles. When analyzing the dynamics of net moving
409 vesicles of APP-YFP, anterograde and retrograde average velocities (including
410 movement and pauses of each analyzed particle) were significantly reduced in LV-
411 PTM3R and LV-PTM4R transduced neurons compared with dsRED or NTC neurons
412 (Figure 3D). Control transduced (LV-dsRED) neurons showed similar proportions and
413 average velocities of APP-YFP vesicles compared with control NTC neurons,
414 suggesting that LV transduction itself does not modify APP axonal transport properties
415 measured 8 days post transduction (Figure 3C, D). Taken together, these results
416 showed significant changes in the movement of APP vesicles when the endogenous
417 ratio of 3R:4R tau isoforms is modified, suggesting that axonal transport of APP is
418 tightly regulated by the ratio of tau isoforms, either attached to MTs or soluble in the
419 axonal shaft.

420

421 **Differential anterograde and retrograde regulation over APP axonal transport by**
422 **3R or 4R Tau isoforms**

423 To further understand tau regulation over APP transport dynamics in human neurons
424 and to investigate potential mechanisms affected by the 3R:4R imbalance, fluorescent
425 APP moving vesicles were tracked using an algorithm developed to identify particle
426 positions with sub-pixel precision. Single trajectories obtained from movies (Figure 3 A,
427 B) were analyzed using custom made MATLAB routines in order to extract axonal
428 transport properties such as run length, number of pauses per trajectories, reversion of
429 directionality and segmental velocity distributions (see methods, Figure 4). To
430 understand whether tau can regulate processive axonal transport of APP we computed
431 the anterograde average run length of APP vesicles in LV-PTM3R and LV-PTM4R
432 transduced neurons and compared them with control transduced neurons (Figure 4C).
433 Interestingly, shifting tau isoforms towards 3R content (LV-PTM3R) induced a significant
434 (30%) increase of the anterograde run length but enhancing 4R isoform (LV-PTM4R)
435 showed no significant effect on anterograde runs (Figure 4C). On the other hand, LV-
436 PTM3R transduction induced a significant effect on the retrograde component with more
437 than 70% reduction in the average run length while LV-PTM4R showed no changes
438 over the average retrograde run length compared with control conditions (Figure 4C).
439 We did not observe significant changes in the number of pauses within trajectories and
440 in reversion from anterograde to retrograde transport or *vice versa* due to tau 3R:4R
441 shifting (Figure 4D). Next, we analyzed the distribution of segmental velocities of
442 moving APP vesicles in LV-PTM3R, LV-PTM4R compared with control transduced

443 neurons (Figure 4E, F). A multimodal distribution of segmental velocities was observed,
444 thus we propose a Gaussian mixture model with 3 components to describe each data
445 set (see methods, and Reis et al. 2012). The distribution of anterograde segmental
446 velocities in control transduced neurons ranges from 0.1 to 5 $\mu\text{m}/\text{second}$ and can be
447 adjusted to modes A, B and C (Figure 4E). A similar result was obtained for the
448 distribution of retrograde segmental velocities, but with more probable lower velocities
449 (Figure 4F). The distributions obtained from neurons transduced with either LV-PTM3R
450 or LV-PTM4R showed that anterograde segmental velocities are affected by shifting tau
451 ratios either towards 3R or 4R (Figure 4E, F and Table I). Enhanced 3R content showed
452 mild shape changes in the anterograde segmental velocity distribution revealing
453 reduced modes of velocities mainly in the C mode with enhanced representation for
454 mode A (Figure 4E, Table I). On the other hand, shifting tau content towards 4R
455 induced significant reductions in anterograde velocities for modes A, B and C compared
456 with control and with LV-PTM3R transduction (Figure 4E). Under 3R increase, the
457 amplitude of anterograde modes A and B were significantly increased suggesting also a
458 shift in the total distribution to lower anterograde velocities (Figure 4E, table I).
459 Retrograde axonal transport of APP under enhanced 3R isoform showed significant
460 changes of retrograde segmental velocity distributions compared with control (Figure
461 4F). Nevertheless, no change in the number of segmental velocities representing each
462 mode pick (mode weight) was observed in LV-PTM3R transduced neurons (Figure 4F,
463 Table I), suggesting that increases in 3R tau induce mild reductions in the dynein
464 movement, affecting the retrograde component. Neurons transduced with LV-PTM4R
465 showed less impact on the retrograde movement with similar retrograde modes

466 compared with control, however, enhanced mode weights were observed for mode A,
467 with significant weight reductions for modes B and C (Figure 4F, table I). Taken
468 together, these results suggest that changes in tau isoform ratio towards increases
469 either in 3R or 4R can directly modulate the properties of anterograde and retrograde
470 APP vesicles movement by differentially changing the run length and modifying the
471 distribution of segmental velocities of moving vesicles.

472

473 **Discussion**

474 Here we tested whether relative content in tau isoforms played crucial roles in the
475 regulation of axonal transport, combining the RNA *trans*-splicing strategy with high
476 definition/speed live imaging of APP vesicles in human-derived neurons. Our findings
477 have particular relevance to understand early neuronal dysfunction and the interplay
478 between tau and APP in molecular pathways of disease (Götz et al., 2006; Goldstein
479 2012).

480 Axonal transport is one of the tau-regulated mechanisms likely perturbed in
481 tauopathies, yet the available data seems controversial. On one hand, several
482 experimental models showed axonal cargo depletion, clogging and transport defects
483 after tau overexpression (Ebner et al., 1998; Stamer et al., 2002; Mertens et al., 2013).
484 Moreover, impairments in transport dynamics have been observed under abnormal tau
485 3R:4R content in cultured neurons (Iovino et al., 2015; Mertens et al., 2013, Stoothoff et
486 al., 2009) and in mouse models (Dawson et al., 2007). However, tau overexpression or
487 disease-associated mutants might have underlined some of the observed phenotypes,
488 making difficult to determine the precise role of tau isoform ratio in transport. On the

489 other hand, some experiments showed no defects in ^{35}S -methionine-labeled protein
490 distribution in tau knock-out mouse models, suggesting that tau deletion or
491 overexpression might not influence transport (Yuan et al., 2008; Yuan et al., 2013).
492 However, it has been shown that tau knock-out mice upregulate other MAPs as a
493 compensatory mechanism, (Ke et al., 2012; Ma et al., 2014), which may account for the
494 lack of transport deficits in those mice. Furthermore, it is particularly difficult to analyze
495 the role of 3R:4R tau balance in mice because only 4R tau is expressed in the adult
496 rodent brain. The *trans*-splicing strategy have created a unique platform to dissect the
497 functional consequences of human tau isoform imbalance, allowing the modulation of
498 the endogenous tau isoform ratio in differentiated human neurons, without altering total
499 tau protein or impairing other tau-dependent functions such as axon elongation or
500 neuronal polarization.

501 Axonal transport defects underlie many neurological diseases (Stokin et al., 2005
502 DeVos et al., 2008; Goldstein 2012). However, it remains unclear whether such
503 impairments represent an early causative effect or a late consequence in disease (Götz
504 et al., 2006; Goldstein, 2012; Bodea et al., 2016). Particularly, the transport of APP and
505 its subcellular *mis*-localization have putative implication in Alzheimer's Disease, with tau
506 playing a crucial role in controlling APP trafficking (Stamer et al., 2002; Goldsburly et
507 al., 2007). Here we show that changes in the endogenous 3R:4R tau ratio are sufficient
508 to significantly impair the transport of APP vesicles in human neurons suggesting a
509 possible pathological link between tau isoform imbalances and APP. These results open
510 new avenues to understand how tau isoforms modulate not only the dynamics but also

511 the metabolism of APP, that is intimately linked to its intracellular transport (Rodrigues
512 et al., 2012).

513 From a mechanistic perspective, our data complement previous evidence about
514 the role of tau in the regulation of molecular motors. Two models have been proposed
515 for the bidirectional transport of cargos such as APP vesicles along MTs: *Coordination*,
516 assumes that anterograde kinesin and retrograde dynein motors activity are regulated
517 by accessory proteins, and thus the direction of motion depends on which motor is
518 active (Fu and Holzbaaur, 2013; Leidel et al., 2012); and *tug-of-war*, which postulates
519 that cargo direction is exerted by the larger net force resulting from both polarity motors
520 simultaneously active (Müller et al., 2008). Recently, a hybrid interaction between both
521 models is proposed to lead transport (Hendricks et al., 2012). The many physiological
522 roles of tau can modulate transport by regulating motor-microtubule interaction
523 (Trinczek et al., 1999; Magnani et al., 2007), modifying the MT structure and/or
524 triggering phosphorylation cascades that modify motors (Kanaan et al., 2012). In this
525 context, we propose that APP vesicles are bound to multiple kinesin and dynein motors
526 which are regulated by tau (Figure 5). Tau binding transiently to MTs increases the
527 probability of kinesin detachment (Dixit et al., 2008), and if tau concentration is high, the
528 probability of unbound kinesin to attach to the MT is reduced (Vershinin et al., 2007)
529 (Trinczek et al., 1999). Conversely, dyneins are less affected by tau on MT (Dixit et al.,
530 2008). Thus, we propose that under balanced content of 3R:4R tau, few weak dyneins
531 and stronger kinesins would transport the APP vesicle, resulting in control values of run
532 lengths and segmental velocities (Figure 5A). Based on binding results showing that the
533 affinity of 3R isoform for MTs is lower than that of 4R (Goode et al., 2000) and assuming

534 that affinity is directly related with the mean attachment time of tau on a MT, we propose
535 that the 3R increase enhances the number of active motors driving the cargo, although
536 the number of sites occupied by tau within the MT would remain equal. Then, the
537 engagement of extra kinesins would lead to enhanced anterograde processivity (longer
538 runs). The reduction in retrograde runs and segmental velocities in 3R are also
539 consistent with this model, since kinesin could act as a dynein anchor (Figure 5B).
540 Conversely, 4R increase would facilitate motor detachment and impair kinesin (Trinczek
541 et al., 1999). This is consistent with the reduction in the anterograde velocities observed
542 in this condition, suggesting a reduced load in the number of active kinesins driving the
543 APP vesicle with no change in runs (Figure 5C). *A priori*, this mechanistic model is
544 consistent with *in vitro* experiments showing that kinesin activity is highly regulated by
545 tau compared with dynein (Vershinin et al., 2007; Dixit et al., 2008; McVicker et al.,
546 2011). Yet, there is an apparent contradiction between our experimental data and
547 previous reports showing that *long* 4R tau is less inhibitory for single kinesin than *short*
548 3R tau which proposed to be due to an increased static inhibitory state of *short* 3R in
549 artificially stabilized MTs (Dixit et al., 2008; Mcvicker et al., 2014). However, such
550 differential impact on kinesin could be explained by the different number of N-terminal
551 repeats in the tau variants used in those studies (*short* tau= 0N3R, and *long* tau=
552 2N4R). N-terminal repeats also modulate kinesin velocities; being 0N more inhibitory
553 than 2N, and 3R less inhibitory than 4R (Tarhan et al., 2013). In our system, 3R and 4R
554 tau are not expected to differ in the N-terminal repeats given that the *trans*-splicing
555 reaction occurs at intron 9, spatiotemporally downstream of exons 2 and 3 splicing.

556 Although we propose a simplified model of tau isoforms affecting motors through
557 their differential binding to MTs (Figure 5), it is noteworthy that such regulation of
558 transport could also arise indirectly, upon changes in other tau isoform-dependent
559 functions, such as the regulation of MT dynamics (Mandelkow et al., 2003), motor
560 stability (Tarhan et al., 2013), the interaction with the dynactin complex (Magnani et al.,
561 2007) and/or the control of kinases involved in the phosphorylation of motors (Kanaan
562 et al., 2012).

563 Finally, these findings also highlight the relevant physiological role of tau
564 alternative splicing in the human brain. During early development, all mammals express
565 high levels of 3R tau in the nervous system; however, while 4R tau is predominant in
566 the adult brain of most species, the (normal) adult human brain contains equal levels of
567 3R and 4R tau (Goedert et al., 1989; Andreadis, 2005). A differential anterograde to
568 retrograde bias for 3R and 4R tau in axonal transport is consistent with the
569 predominance of 3R tau during neuronal development that should favor the distal
570 delivery of cargos in projections that need to grow and extend, while the 3R:4R balance
571 reached in mature human neurons would be functional to maintain synapse delivery but
572 also retrieval of survival factors to the soma. The human neurons derived from hESC
573 used in this study displayed an endogenous 4R/3R ratio of 0.6 after 19 days in culture,
574 showing that 3R isoform still predominates over 4R, probably due to the embryonic
575 origin of the neurons and the short time in culture. The *trans*-splicing induced by LV-
576 PTM3R or LV-PTM4R creates an imbalance of tau isoforms leading to significant shifts
577 in the almost equivalent ratio of human derived neurons. Changes in the relative content
578 of 3R and 4R tau have been shown to affect MT assembly and might impair proper

579 neuronal polarity development (Panda et al., 2003). However, we did not observe
580 significant changes in neuronal morphology or polarization after *trans*-splicing
581 transduction, maybe because the neurons were already highly polarized when tau
582 isoforms shift was induced (DIV 11).

583 In summary, we provide novel mechanistic data about tau modulation of axonal
584 transport in a relevant human neuronal setting that contribute to understand the highly
585 regulated interplay of molecular motors in microtubule-dependent dynamics. We
586 showed that perturbations in the endogenous 3R:4R tau ratio is sufficient to impair the
587 transport of the Alzheimer's associated molecule APP, suggesting a direct relationship
588 between tau isoforms imbalance and APP *mis*-localization, that might underlie its
589 pathological processing leading to neuronal dysfunction. These data raise new
590 perspectives about the modulation of abnormal tau metabolism as potential
591 therapeutical intervention for human tauopathies, including Alzheimer's disease.

592

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744

745 **Figure Legends**

746 **Figure 1: 3R or 4R tau modulation by *trans*-splicing in highly polarized human**
747 **neurons. A-B)** Human neuronal cultures at five days after plating (DIV 5) showing
748 projections and proper polarization in brightfield (A) and after immunostaining with
749 axonal and dendritic markers (Tau and MAP2) (B). White arrow indicates the axon
750 without MAP2 staining and yellow arrows show dendrites. **C)** Enriched human neuronal
751 cultures at DIV 18, showing highly polarized projections and dense connectivity. **D)**
752 Neuron at DIV 19 showing co-localization of APP-YFP (green) with LV-dsRED
753 transduction (red). **E)** Map of lentiviral vectors (LV) used for neuronal transduction at
754 DIV 11. LV-dsRED: control vector carrying the reporter cassette; LV-PTM3R: LV
755 carrying a pre-*trans*-splicing molecule with exons 11-13; or LV-PTM4R: with exons 10-
756 13. TSD: *trans*-splicing domain consisting of a binding domain complementary to the 3'
757 end of intron 9, a branch point and a 3' splice acceptor site. **F)** Representative gel of
758 RT-PCR products obtained with primers spanning tau exons 9-13, simultaneously
759 amplifying 3R and 4R isoforms. RT-PCR was performed with mRNA extracted from
760 neurons transduced with each LV. **G)** Relative content of 3R and 4R tau isoforms,
761 determined by real time RT-PCR with specific primers for 3R (E10-) and 4R (E10+) tau
762 mRNA. Delta Ct was calculated relative to human ApoB gene expression (mean
763 \pm S.E.M; $n=3$), in three independent experiments. One-way ANOVA followed by
764 Dunnet's comparison *versus* control neurons, performed separately for each isoform;
765 $*p<0.05$ and $**p<0.001$ *versus* 3R CTRL; $\#p<0.001$ *vs* 4R CTRL. **H-I)** Western blot
766 analyses of human neurons homogenates. Detection of 3R (H) and 4R (I) tau protein
767 with isoform-specific antibodies normalized to actin, quantified by optical density;

768 ** $p < 0.001$ ($n=3$); One-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's comparison to control (CTRL)
769 neurons (transduced with LV-dsRED).

770

771 **Figure 2: Normal neuronal polarization after 3R:4R tau isoform modulation. A)**

772 Confocal images of enriched neuronal cultures at DIV 19 without transduction, or
773 transduced with LV-PTM3R or LV-PTM4R (from top to bottom). Immunofluorescence
774 staining showing APP, tau and Hoechst number for nuclei. **B)** Confocal high
775 magnification images from control and transduced neurons stained for APP and tau
776 showing polarization and extension integrity. **C-D)** Sum of neuronal projection extension
777 expressed in μm (H), and number of primary projection extensions from cell bodies (I) in
778 neurons at DIV 19 that were transduced at DIV 11 with LV control, LV-PTM3R and LV-
779 PTM4R. **E)** Sholl analysis performed at DIV 19 in transduced neurons showing the
780 number of projection intersections *versus* distance from cell bodies (μm) (Data
781 represent mean \pm S.E.M; $n=10$). **F-G)** Western blot of neuronal homogenates showing
782 total tau and APP protein levels after each LV transduction conditions compared to non-
783 transduced control (NTC) neurons. Tubulin (tub) was used as loading control. (Data in
784 G is expressed as percentage of NTC; mean \pm S.E.M; $n=3$). **H)** Western blot using
785 antibodies specific to tau phosphorylated at Ser 202 (CP13) or Ser 396/404 (PHF-1).
786 Quantitative analyses are related to beta-actin signal as loading control (mean \pm S.E.M;
787 $n=3$).

788

789 **Figure 3: Impairment of axonal transport of APP vesicles in neurons after under**

790 **tau 3R:4R imbalance. A)** Representative images from movies used to analyze the

791 axonal transport of APP vesicles in neurons transduced with LV-control (dsRED), LV-
792 PTM3R and LV-PTM4R. Scale bar: 10 μ m. See movies 1-3 **B)** Kymographs of time
793 versus distance from a 30s movie generated at 8 frames/s in axons from neurons
794 transfected with APP-YFP Scale bar: 10 μ m. **C)** Average proportion per kymographs of
795 anterograde, stationary and retrograde APP-YFP vesicles from non-transduced control
796 (NTC), or transduced with LV carrying dsRED, PTM3R or PTM4R. **D)** Average velocity
797 of anterograde and retrograde moving vesicles per kymographs. kymographs analyzed
798 $n= 59$ (NTC); 78 (dsRED); 57 (PTM3R); 58 (PTM4R). One-way ANOVA followed by
799 Dunnett's comparison *versus* NTC * <0.05 , ** <0.02 , *** <0.01 . **E)** Average number of
800 APP-YFP vesicles per μ m of axonal length in NTC, dsRED, PTM3R and PTM4R. $n= 25$
801 for each. One-way ANOVA.

802

803 **Figure 4: Kinesin and dynein transport properties are differentially impaired by**
804 **tau isoform ratio modulation in human neurons. A)** Representative kymographs of
805 time versus distance showing moving and stationary APP vesicles and their trajectories
806 using MATLAB (dotted lines). **B)** Representative recovered trajectory plotted as a
807 function of distance vs time showing the properties extracted using custom made
808 MATLAB scripts. **C-E)** Run lengths, segmental velocities, pauses and reversions were
809 determined from a total of 1283 trajectories (see methods for details). **C)** Anterograde
810 and retrograde average run lengths of vesicles moving in a net direction, obtained from
811 APP-YFP trajectories in neurons transduced with LV-dsRED (control), PTM3R or
812 PTM4R. $n=$ ctrl: antero 1551, retro 1548; PTM3R: antero 572, retro 555; PTM4R: antero
813 465, retro 503. One-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's comparison *versus* Ctrl * <0.05 ,

814 *** <0.01 . **D)** Average number of pauses and reversions per trajectory. Pauses $n=$ ctrl:
815 2752; PTM3R: 981; PTM4R: 913. Reversion: $n=$ ctrl: 895; PTM3R: 307; PTM4R: 262.
816 **E-H)** Distribution of segmental velocities of moving APP-YFP vesicles. A Gaussian
817 mixture model with 3 modes (A, B and C) was used to represent the segmental
818 velocities distributions for anterograde (E) and retrograde (G) APP vesicle transport in
819 control (full line), or transduced with PTM3R (light grey) or PTM4R (dark grey) LVs
820 (dotted lines). The center and fraction of the different modes are displayed in Table I.
821 Relative frequencies of anterograde (F) and retrograde (H) segmental velocities used
822 for model construction. Segmental velocities $n=$ ctrl: antero 1671, retro 1344; PTM3R:
823 antero 795, retro 549; PTM4R: antero 916, retro 752. Significant differences (**)
824 obtained from comparison of non-overlapping confidence intervals to control group (LV-
825 dsRED transduced neurons).

826

827 **Figure 5: Hybrid competition-regulation model of tau isoform-dependent APP**
828 **axonal transport.** We propose a model where the APP vesicle is driven by two groups
829 of motors –i.e. kinesin and dynein- along tau-decorated MTs. Motors behave in a tug-of-
830 war/coordination scenario; displaying a differential tau isoform-dependent interaction
831 with MTs. **A)** In control condition the two groups of motors are balanced to result in
832 higher anterograde runs (dark arrows) and segmental velocities (light arrows) compared
833 to the retrograde ones giving an anterograde bias (red triangle) for the movement of
834 APP vesicles. **B)** Shifts in the ratio towards 3R would not change the amount of tau
835 bound to MT but reduce its binding strength, facilitating the recruitment of extra active
836 motors. Extra kinesin load leads to an anterograde bias (red triangle) that favors the

837 distal delivery of APP vesicles. **C)** Increased 4R tau level induces a higher binding
838 strength of tau to MT that facilitate anterograde motor detachment and strongly impair
839 kinesin velocities (light arrows) while no significant changes in retrograde runs or
840 velocities are observed. This results in a retrograde bias (red triangle) that should favor
841 retrieval of APP vesicles to the cell body.

842

843 **Table I. Segmental velocity data modeled as a combination of normal**
844 **distributions.** The table displays the values of the central position and fraction? of the
845 modes parameters of a Gaussian mixture model with three components (A, B and C)
846 obtained using an Expectation Maximization algorithm. Errors were determined as the
847 standard deviation of n=1000 resampling with replacements bootstrapping procedure.
848 Significant differences (**) obtained from comparison of non overlapping confidence
849 intervals to control group (LV-dsRED transduced neurons).

850

851 **Movie 1: APP transport in control neuron:** Representative movie showing the axonal
852 transport of APP vesicles in real time in a neuron that has been transduced with control
853 lentivirus and transfected with APP-YFP. Movie showing time in seconds (8 frames/s) is
854 oriented so right to left moving vesicles corresponds to anterograde transport, and left to
855 right to retrograde movement. Scale bar: 20 μm .

856

857 **Movie 2: APP transport in PTM3R transduced neuron:** Representative movie
858 showing axonal transport of APP vesicles in real time in a neuron that has been

859 transduced with PTM3R lentivirus and transfected with APP-YFP. Movie showing time
860 in seconds (8 frames/s) is oriented so right to left moving vesicles corresponds to
861 anterograde axonal transport, and left to right to retrograde movement. Scale bar: 20
862 μm .

863

864 **Movie 3: APP transport in PTM4R transduced neuron:** Representative movie
865 showing the axonal transport of APP vesicles in real time in a neuron that has been
866 transduced with PTM4R lentivirus and transfected with APP-YFP. Movie showing time
867 in seconds (8 frames/s) is oriented so right to left moving vesicles corresponds to
868 anterograde axonal transport, and left to right to retrograde movement. Scale bar: 20
869 μm .

870

Figure 1:

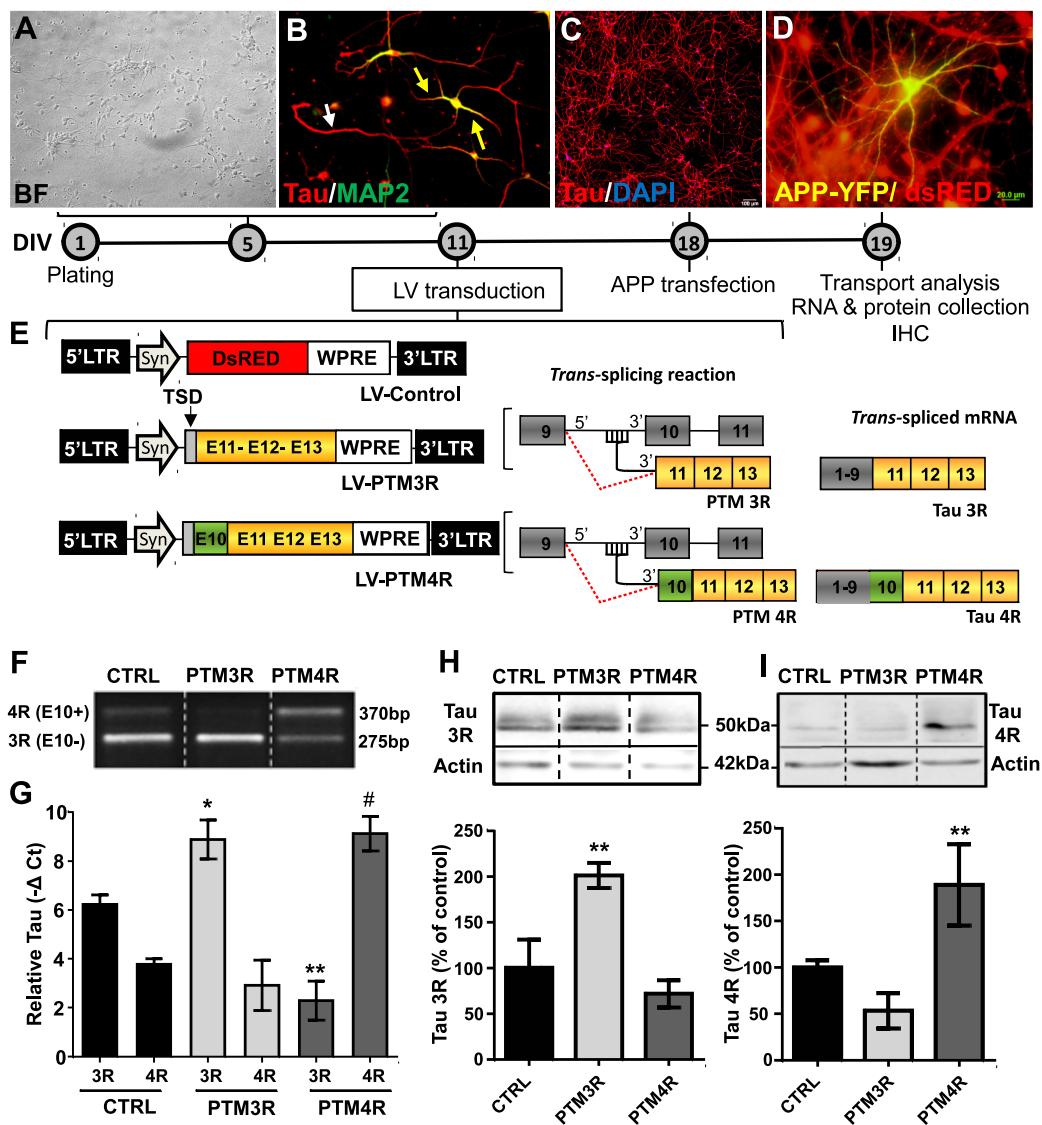


Figure 2:

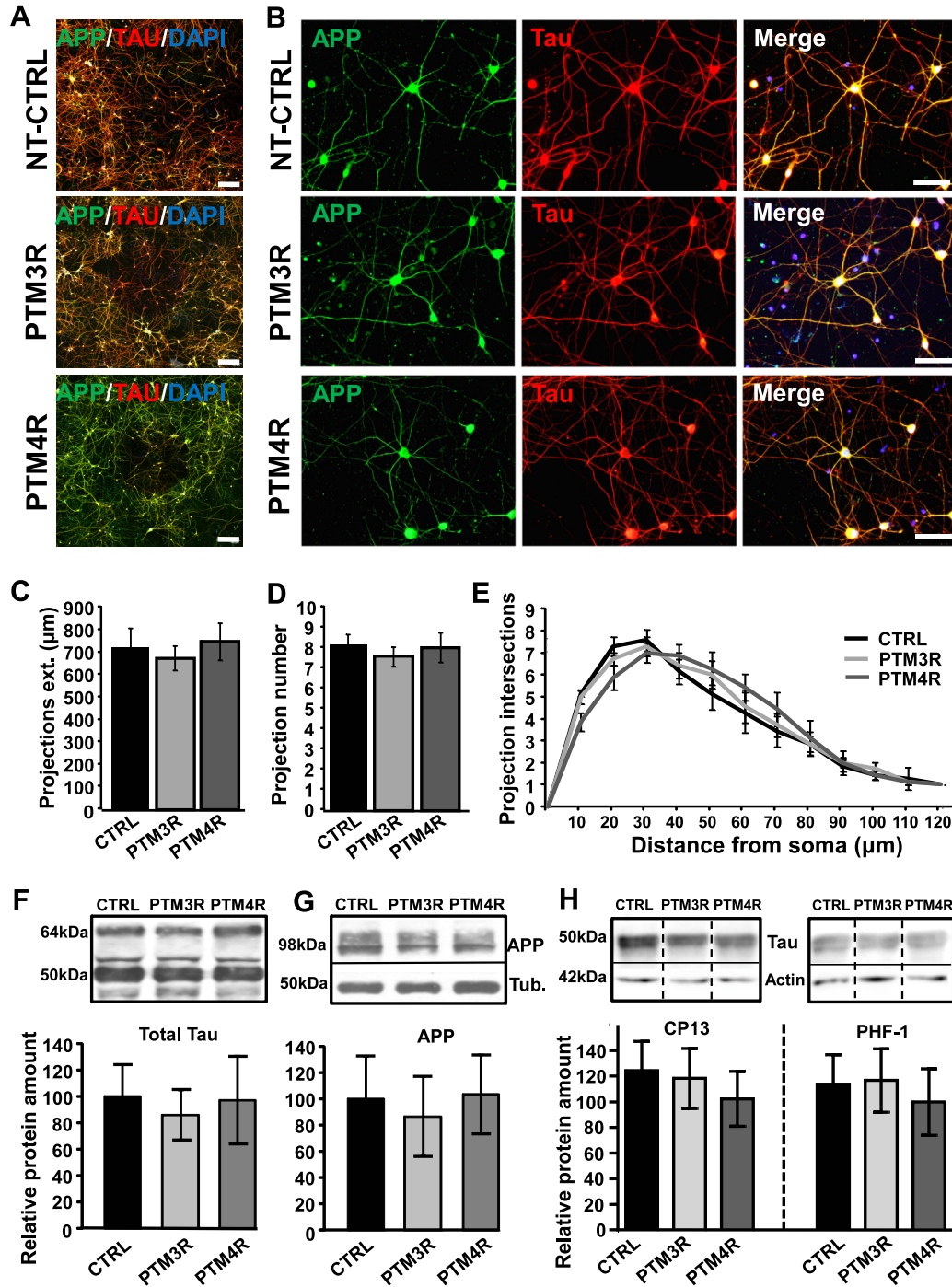


Figure 3:

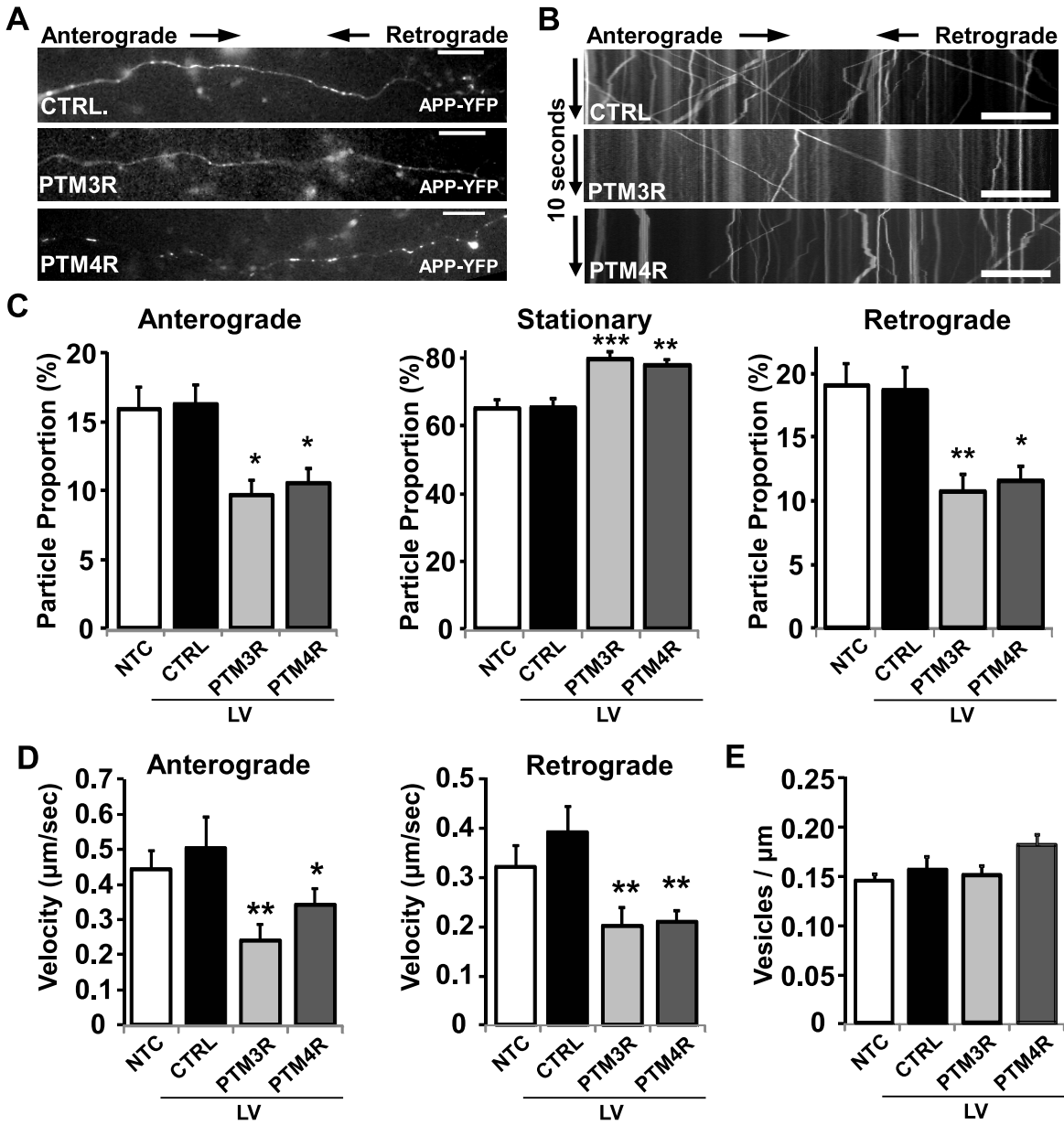


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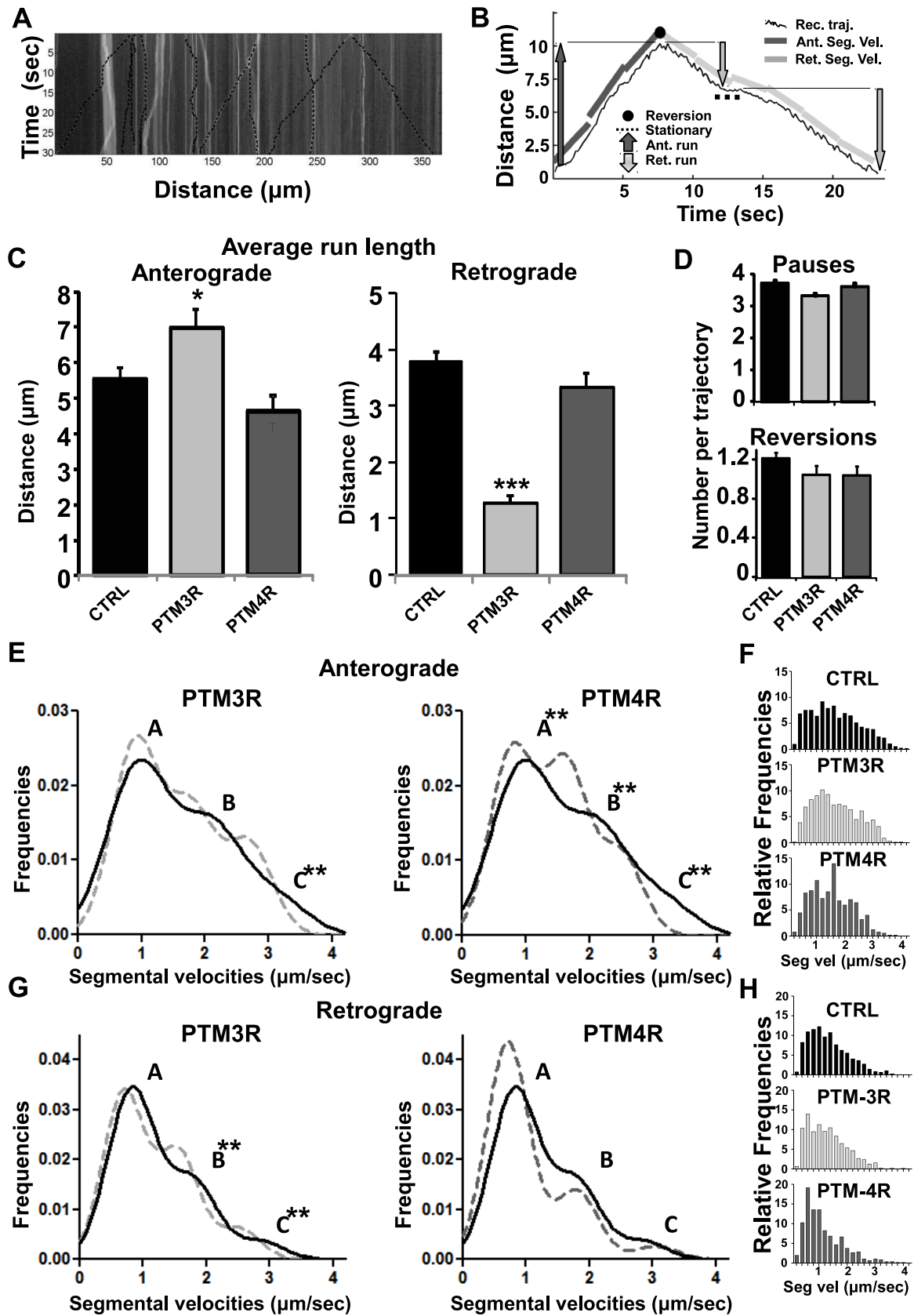


Figure 5:

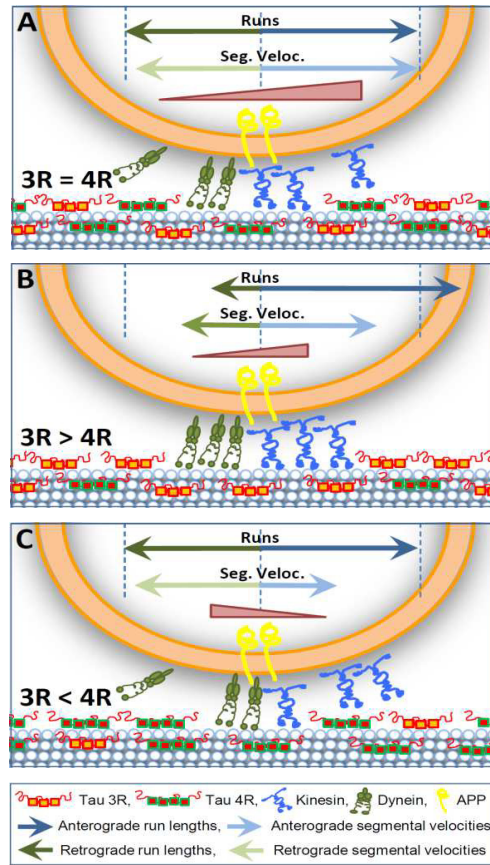


Table 1

ANTEROGRADE					
Mode Center					
	A Max +/- error	B Max +/- error		C Max +/- error	
PTM-dsRED	0.94 +/- 0.07	2.09 +/- 0.19		3.11 +/- 0.38	
PTM-3R	0.90 +/- 0.04	1.77 +/- 0.09		2.69 +/- 0.06 **	
PTM-4R	0.78 +/- 0.07 **	1.62 +/- 0.13 **		2.49 +/- 0.16 **	
Mode Fraction					
	A Mode	B Mode	C Mode	error	Sigma +/- error
PTM-dsRED	0.54	0.34	0.12	+/- 0.05	0.24 +/- 0.04
PTM-3R	0.47	0.31	0.23	+/- 0.03	0.13 +/- 0.02
PTM-4R	0.42	0.39	0.19	+/- 0.05	0.12 +/- 0.03
RETROGRADE					
Mode Center					
	A Max +/- error	B Max +/- error		C Max +/- error	
PTM-dsRED	0.81 +/- 0.03	1.78 +/- 0.09		2.88 +/- 0.14	
PTM-3R	0.69 +/- 0.04	1.55 +/- 0.09 **		2.52 +/- 0.14 **	
PTM-4R	0.71 +/- 0.02	1.78 +/- 0.10		3.04 +/- 0.18	
Mode Fraction					
	A Mode	B Mode	C Mode	error	Sigma +/- error
PTM-dsRED	0.64	0.29	0.07	+/- 0.03	0.14 +/- 0.01
PTM-3R	0.55	0.35	0.10	+/- 0.04	0.11 +/- 0.02
PTM-4R	0.72	0.23	0.05	+/- 0.02	0.11 +/- 0.01





