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Association between the expression of amphetamine-induced behavioral sensitization and Cdk5/p35 activity in Dorsal Striatum

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Behavioral expression of amphetamine sensitization is mediated by Cdk5/p35

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Abstract

Sensitization to psychostimulants is strongly influenced by the environmental context in which the drug is administered and little is known about the molecular mechanisms that regulate this process. Chronic treatment with psychostimulants has been shown to up-regulate the expression of cyclin-dependent kinase 5 (Cdk5) in the striatum, as a downstream target gene of Δ FosB. This study was therefore designed to analyze neurochemical changes underlying the expression of amphamphetamine (amph)-induced sensitization. To this end, periadolescent rats were given saline or 4 mg/kg amphamphetamine in a NOVEL or a HOME environment. After one day of amphamphetamine, subjects were challenged with vehicle or 2 mg/kg amphamphetamine in the same context in which they received the first administration of the drug. Locomotor activity and the expression levels of p35 and Cdk5 activity in synaptosomes of the dorsal striatum were analyzed. The expression of behavioral sensitization was observed only in the NOVEL condition. Furthermore, only animals trained and tested in the NOVEL condition showed increased p35 protein levels and Cdk5 activity. Our findings provide clear behavioral and neurochemical evidence of a specific association between increased p35 and Cdk5 activity in the dorsal striatum and the expression of amphamphetamine-behavioral sensitization, allowing us to propose p35 as a biochemical marker of behavioral sensitization to amphamphetamine.

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Key words:

[Amphetamine](#); Cdk5/p35; behavioral sensitization; novelty; synaptosomes; two-injection protocol

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1. Introduction

Repeated exposure to psychostimulants results in a progressive and enduring enhancement of the motor stimulant effect elicited by a subsequent drug challenge, a phenomenon known as behavioral sensitization. This phenomenon is proposed to model the increased drug craving observed in human psychostimulant abusers (Robinson and Berridge, 1993, 2003; Vanderschuren and Kalivas, 2000). It is known that psychostimulants may cause long-lasting behavioral changes, partly via stimulation of dopamine D1 receptors and increasing the levels of the transcription factors, cFos, cJun, Zif-268, and Δ FosB in the dorsal and ventral striatum (Ehrlich et al., 2002; Kelz et al., 1999; McClung and Nestler, 2003; Nestler, 2001; Robison et al., 2013). Chronic treatment with [cocaine](#) has been shown to up-regulate the expression of Cyclin-dependent kinase 5 (Cdk5) in the striatum, as a downstream target gene of Δ FosB (Bibb et al., 2001; Kumar et al., 2005). It has also been demonstrated that the induction of Zif-268, through the ERK pathway, increases the expression of the Cdk5 activator protein, p35 (Harada et al., 2001). Cdk5 is a member of the serine/threonine kinases that is activated upon interaction with a regulatory subunit, either p35 or p39, identified in the brain (Humbert et al., 2000; Tang et al., 1995; Tsai et al., 1994) and the level of p35 protein is also known to be a rate-limiting factor for Cdk5 activity (Takahashi et al., 2005). Cdk5/p35 complex has been implicated in multiple brain processes, including neuronal development, dopaminergic signaling and transmission, and also in memory formation (Angelo et al., 2006; Chergui et al., 2004; Hawasli

et al., 2007; Lai and Ip, 2009; Paglini and Caceres, 2001; Pigino et al., 1997). In addition, dysregulation of Cdk5 has also been implicated in many neurological disorders (Chen and Wang, 2010; Ikiz and Przedborski, 2008; Krapacher et al., 2010). Further, Cdk5 has been demonstrated to dampen the effect of chronic cocaine administration, indicating a possible regulatory role of this kinase in drug addiction (Bibb et al., 2001). Studies conducted in our laboratory have demonstrated a transient enhanced expression of p25, the truncated fragment of p35, after acute and chronic amphetamine administration, supporting the idea that the increases in Cdk5 activity could be specifically involved in the cellular events underlying sensitization to psychostimulant drugs (Mlewski et al., 2008), but up to date, this association has not been wholly demonstrated.

It is well known that context novelty plays an important role in the development of locomotor sensitization to psychostimulants (Anagnostaras and Robinson, 1996; Ferguson et al., 2004; Stewart and Badiani, 1993). The fact that the circumstances surrounding drug administration strongly modulate the expression of behavioral sensitization gives us an excellent opportunity to study some mechanisms by which drugs of abuse exert both short and long-lasting effects on the brain (Badiani and Robinson, 2004).

Although data from our laboratory, and others, have shown that chronic exposure to psychostimulants up-regulates the expression levels of the Cdk5/p35 complex, no studies have revealed its association with the behavioral sensitization process. The present study was therefore designed to explore the possible specific association between Cdk5/p35 complex and the expression of amphetamine-induced sensitization. To this end, we generated two experimental conditions, NOVEL and HOME context, that differentially promoted the expression of behavioral sensitization, and we took advantage of the sensitivity of the two-

injection protocol (Valjent et al., 2010) to detect specific alterations in signaling mechanisms, compared with repeated injection ~~paradigms~~procedures. Since it is not necessary to repeatedly administer a psychostimulant drug to produce behavioral sensitization. A single injection of cocaine (~~coc~~) or ~~amph~~amphetamine (~~amph~~) can promote this effect (i.e. enhanced locomotor activity), which is revealed by a second injection of the same or another drug given hours, days, or even weeks after the first administration (Alvarez Jdo et al., 2006; Chinen et al., 2006; Jackson and Nutt, 1993; Robinson et al., 1982; Vanderschuren et al., 1999). This protocol cannot be compared with other ~~paradigm~~procedures because repeated injections of drugs can trigger biochemical responses that are different from those induced by single exposures, making it very difficult to establish causality links between behavioral and biochemical responses (Valjent et al., 2010). Besides, the use of this ~~paradigm~~procedure provides interesting clues about the role of specific signaling pathways *in vivo* (Corbille et al., 2007; Paz et al., 2013; Stipanovich et al., 2008; Valjent et al., 2005) and offers an excellent model for the molecular dissection of the long-lasting effects of drugs of abuse (Kameda et al., 2011; Vanderschuren and Kalivas, 2000; Vezina and Leyton, 2009).

The present study was conducted with adolescent rats. Although most of the studies focused on cellular and molecular changes associated with psychostimulants are conducted with adult organisms, we consider it important to perform studies in adolescents, given the fact that in this ontogenetic phase the subjects are particularly vulnerable to the development of drug addiction (Spear 2000; Kameda et al., 2011), and that some studies suggest that adolescents are more predisposed to display behavioral sensitization to stimulants than adults (Laviola, 2003; Kameda et al., 2011; Mathews et al., 2011).

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Furthermore, we consider important to perform the experiments in adolescent rats given the fact that in this ontogenetic phase the organisms are particularly vulnerable to the development of drug addiction (Spear 2000; Kameda et al., 2011) and little is known about the cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying the effects of stimulants drugs in relevant brain areas in this developmental stage.

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2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Animals

Periadolescent male Wistar rats (33-35-days-old) of our breeding, weighing approximately 120g at the onset of the experiment, were housed in standard laboratory Plexiglas cages in a climate-controlled room at $22 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ with a 12-h dark and 12-h light cycle, with free access to food and water. We used 64 male rats for the behavioral experiment (n= 8 per group), and 128 male rats for biochemical analyses (n= 8 per group). All the experiments were carried out during the light cycle, between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm, in a separate behavioral testing room. During the test, the room was quiet and dimly lit, and rats were allowed to acclimatize to the room for 30 min before the start of each experiment. All animal care and experimental procedures were approved by the National Department of Animal Care and Health (SENASA - ARGENTINA) and were in compliance with the National Institute of Health general guidelines for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. Efforts were made to minimize animal suffering and to reduce the number of animals used.

2.2. Drugs

D-~~amph~~amphetamine sulfate (Parafarm, Switzerland, ~~amph~~) was dissolved in sterile saline (NaCl 0.9%, sal). Animals were intraperitoneally (i.p.) injected at doses of 0 (vehicle only), 2 or 4 mg/kg of ~~amph~~amphetamine. [Dosage of D-amphetamine was selected on the basis of a prior study from our laboratory in which we observed behavioral sensitization with these doses \(Mlewski et al., 2008\).](#)

2.3. Behavioral assessment

Following maternal separation, rats were housed in pairs (2 per cage, HOME cage) and maintained in this way until the end of the experiment. The experiment began when the rats reached an age of 33 days. One of the two rats in the HOME cage went to a cylindrical (40 cm diameter), open field (NOVEL condition) and the other rat remained in the home cage (HOME condition) where it received all experimental treatments.

Drug-induced locomotor activity was evaluated using a two-injection protocol, which involved both, a “Training” phase (first injection on day 1) and a “Challenge” phase (test day, second injection).

On the first day (Training), animals received one injection of vehicle (sal) or ~~amph~~amphetamine (4 mg/kg). After the injection, the rats were immediately placed in the corresponding test cage, which was either HOME (the cage where the rat was housed since maternal separation) or NOVEL (open field)] and locomotor activity was recorded every 5 minutes, for a total session lasting 1 hour.

The Challenge was conducted [24 hours](#) after [the Training phase](#) ~~a drug withdrawal period of 1 day~~ (on the third day of the experiment). In this phase, half of the subjects treated with ~~amph~~amphetamine and half of those treated with sal during the Training received 2mg/kg

~~amph~~amphetamine, while the remaining rats received sal. After the Challenge injection, they were immediately placed in the same environment where they were evaluated during the Training day. Consequently, there were 4 groups for the HOME condition (sal/sal, sal/~~amph~~amph, ~~amph~~amph/sal and ~~amph~~amph/~~amph~~amph) and the same number of groups for the NOVEL condition.

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We assessed locomotor activity by counting the number of quadrants that were crossed by the animal. The floor of the NOVEL and HOME environments was divided into 4 quadrants. A trained researcher blind to the experimental conditions registered the number of quadrants crossed (head and front member for one score) during the test.

2.4. Biochemical analysis

Another set of rats was behaviorally evaluated and killed by decapitation at either 1 h or 4 h after the Challenge. Brains were rapidly removed and chilled in ice-cold sal. The dorsal striatum was dissected over ice and subjected to a subcellular fractionation technique and Cdk5 activity assay.

2.4.1. Preparation of synaptosome fractions

Procedures for preparing crude synaptosome fractions were performed as described previously, with minor modifications (De Camilli et al., 1983). Briefly, the tissue was homogenized in 20 volumes of ice-cold sucrose buffer/g original tissue (0.32 M sucrose, 10mM HEPES and 1 mM EDTA, pH 7.4, 1 µg/ml Aprotinin, 1 µg/ml Leupeptin, 100 µg/ml PMSF, 1 µg/ml Pepstatin, and 0.2 mM Sodium Orthovanadate), using a small Potter glass–Teflon homogenizer and centrifuged at 1000 x g for 10 min. The supernatant (total homogenate) was then centrifuged at 10000 x g for 20 min to obtain the cytosolic fraction and the resulting pellet

was resuspended in cold lysis buffer RIPA (50 mM Tris-HCl, pH 7.5, 150 mM NaCl, 1% Nonidet P-40, 0.5% sodium deoxycholate, 0.1% SDS, 1 µg/ml Aprotinin, 1 µg/ml Leupeptin, 100 µg/ml PMSF, 1 µg/ml Pepstatin, and 0.2 mM Sodium Orthovanadate) to obtain a crude synaptosomal fraction (SF) (Mlewski et al., 2008). Only the SF was used for western blot analysis and Cdk5 kinase activity assay.

2.4.2. Western blot analysis

SFs from individual rats were assayed for protein determination (DC protein assay Kit, Bio-Rad laboratories). Equal amounts of protein (20 µg) were separated by 12% SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (PAGE) and transferred to PVDF membranes (Amersham Biosciences, Buckinghamshire, England). Membranes were then blocked in 5% skim milk in TBST (10 mM Tris, pH 7.5, 150 mM NaCl plus 0.05% Tween-20) for 1h, and then incubated overnight at 4°C with their primary antibodies diluted in TBST. Polyclonal antibody anti-p35 (1:400, C-19, Santa Cruz Biotechnology) and anti- α -tubulin (1:3000, DM1A, Sigma-Aldrich) were used. Membranes were then washed three times in TBST and incubated with a secondary horseradish peroxidase-conjugated antibody (1:2000, donkey anti-Rabbit IgG-HRP and 1:2000 donkey anti-Mouse IgG-HRP from Jackson Immunoresearch Laboratory, West Grove, PA, USA) for 1h at room temperature. After five washes with TBST, the blots were developed using an enhanced chemiluminescence detection kit (ECL, Amersham Life Science, Buckinghamshire, England). Chemiluminescence was detected by autoradiography using Agfa medical X-Ray Film (Bs.As., Argentina). Densitometry analyses of western blot bands were quantified on scanned films by Scion Image for Windows (Scion Corporation Frederick, MD, USA) analysis software.

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Values of the proteins of interest were normalized to α -tubulin and the ratios were then used to perform statistical analysis.

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2.4.3. Cdk5 kinase activity assay

For in vitro Cdk5 activity kinase assays, 250 μ g of total cellular proteins from SF lysates were immunoprecipitated with anti-Cdk5 antibody conjugated to agarose beads (C-8, Santa Cruz Biotechnology) as described previously (Mlewski et al., 2008). Briefly, immunoprecipitates were washed three times with lysis buffer RIPA and once with kinase buffer (30 mM MOPS, pH 7.2, 5 mM MgCl₂, and 0.1 mM cold ATP). The washed beads were then incubated with kinase buffer containing 1.5 μ g of Histone H1 (Roche Diagnostics Corporation) as Cdk5 substrate, and 5 μ Ci of [γ -³²P] ATP in a final volume of 30 μ l. After 30 min of incubation at 30°C, 10 μ l of 4x Laemmli sample buffer (250 mM Tris-HCL, 40% glycerol, 10% SDS, 10% 2-mercaptoethanol and 0,1% bromophenol blue at ph 6.8) was added to each sample to stop the reaction and they were then analyzed by SDS-PAGE using 12% polyacrylamide gels. Once the gels were dried, radiographic bands were visualized in a phosphoimage instrument (Storm 840, Molecular Dynamics) and quantified using the Image Quant software (Molecular Dynamics).

2.5. Design and Statistical analysis

The factorial design for the HOME and NOVEL behavioral experiment was defined by amphamphetamine (amph) treatments in the Training (0 or 4 mg/kg) and Challenge (0 or 2 mg/kg) phase. The design resulted in four independent groups: sal/sal, sal/amphamph, amphamph/sal and amphamph/amphamph. Behavioral data for both HOME and NOVEL conditions were analyzed separately by means of two-way mixed ANOVAs: 2 [Treatment on

Training (sal or ~~amph~~) X 2 [Treatment on Challenge (sal or ~~amph~~)]. Results of locomotor activity were expressed as total mean values +/- SEM. In order to make specific group comparisons, post-hoc Duncan's multiple range tests were performed.

Biochemical data were analyzed by a one-way ANOVA followed by post-hoc Tukey analysis to enable specific group comparison. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. All the data were analyzed using the Statistic 5.1 program (Statsoft, Inc.; OK, USA).

3. Results

3.1. Expression of sensitization as a function of context novelty in a two-injection protocol

~~We have previously shown that adolescent rats increased locomotion response to 4 mg/kg of amphetamine chronically administrated and when challenged with the half dose (2 mg/kg) after two days of withdrawal, those rats pre-treated with amphetamine exhibited a significant increase in locomotor activity compared with the saline-treated group during the training (Mlewski, et al 2008).~~ Considering Given that novelty is known to play a critical role in behavioral sensitization, we ~~developed~~ ~~conducted~~ ~~used~~ an experimental setting to manipulate the expression of behavioral sensitization. To this end, the two-injection protocol was applied in a familiar (HOME condition) and in a novel environment (NOVEL condition), as described in section 2.3

Figure 1A shows total activity scores in the HOME environment, during both the Training (first injection) and Challenge (second injection) trials. The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of ~~amph~~amphetamine treatment at Training, $F(1,29) = 7.415$, indicating that animals given 4 mg/kg ~~amph~~amphetamine (groups ~~amph~~/sal and ~~amph~~/amph) moved more than sal-treated controls (groups sal/sal and

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sal/amphamph). An ANOVA conducted on the data from the challenge trial found a significant main effect of amphamphetamine at Challenge [$F(1,29)= 8.856$; $p<0.01$], indicating that, regardless of the training experience, rats treated with amphamphetamine (2 mg/kg; groups sal/amphamph and amphamph/amphamph) displayed higher locomotor activity scores than those treated with sal.

As expected for this HOME condition, animals that received amphamphetamine for the second time (group amphamph/amphamph) showed no statistical difference in comparison with those that received amphamphetamine for the first time (group sal/amphamph), thereby indicating that amphamphetamine treatment in the HOME condition was not sufficient to induce locomotor sensitization.

“**Figure 1** about here”

The remaining half of the subjects were evaluated in the NOVEL condition. Figure 1B shows total locomotor activity scores of these subjects during both the Training and Challenge phases. The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of amphamphetamine treatment at Training [$F(1,29)= 149.41$; $p<0.001$], indicating that subjects treated with 4 mg/kg amphamphetamine exhibited higher locomotor activity scores than sal-treated subjects. The ANOVA conducted with activity data collected during the Challenge indicated a significant main effect of amphamphetamine at Challenge [$F(1,29)= 53.34$; $p<0.001$] and a significant interaction between amphamphetamine treatment at Training and at Challenge [$F(1,29)= 6.57$; $p<0.05$]. According to the post-hoc analyses, locomotor activity scores from amphamph/amphamph and

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sal/[amphamph](#) groups were significantly higher than those from their respective sal control conditions.

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Interestingly, and relevant to the aims of the study, when challenged with [amphamphetamine](#) the animals pretreated with [amphamphetamine](#) during the training phase ([amphamph/amphamph](#) group) displayed significantly higher locomotor activity than those pretreated with sal (sal/[amphamph](#) group), thereby indicating that behavioral sensitization to the stimulating effect of [amphamphetamine](#) had been expressed. There were no statistical differences between groups treated with sal at the Challenge phase (groups: sal/sal and [amphamph](#)/sal). These results demonstrate that, in the NOVEL condition, the two-injection protocol using 4 mg/kg of [amphamphetamine](#) and challenging with the half dose induced locomotor behavior sensitization. These behavioral data, obtained by combining the two-injection protocol with the manipulation of the circumstances surrounding [amphamphetamine](#) administration, provided us with an excellent tool to investigate short-term neurochemistry modifications necessary to evoke long-lasting adaptations underlying behavioral sensitization.

3.2. Expression and activity of Cdk5/p35 associated with the expression of locomotor

sensitization to [amphamphetamine](#) in a two-injection protocol

[It is well known that the striatum plays an important role in locomotor activity and reward-related behaviors, and psychostimulants drugs cause long- and short-term behavioral and biochemical changes in the dorsal and ventral striatum \(Nestler, 2013\). Previous data obtained from acute and chronic amphetamine-administered rats showed a raised and lasting expression of p35 protein level in dorsal striatal synaptosomal fraction \(SF\) of periadolescent rats, and this increase can be observed 4 hours after the amphetamine treatment and last to at least 24 hours.](#)

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Moreover, p25 protein (proteolytic fragment of p35) increased its expression 4 hours after the last amphetamine injection, returning to the basal level after 24 hours, indicating that this rapid modulation of this protein could play a role during the expression of the sensitized response (Mlewski et al., 2008). It is well known that the striatum plays an important role in processing information related to motor function and reward-related behaviors and psychostimulants drugs cause long and short behavioral and biochemical changes in the dorsal and ventral striatum (Nestler, 2013). Previous data obtained from acute and chronic amphetamine administered rats showed a raised and lasting expression of p35 protein level since 4 hours to at least 24 hours post last amphetamine administration, in dorsal striatal synaptosomal fraction (SF) of periadolescent rats. Moreover, p25 protein (proteolytic fragment of p35) increased its expression 4 hours after the last amphetamine injection, returning to the basal level after 24 hours, indicating that this rapid modulation of this protein could play a role during the expression of the sensitized response (Mlewski et al., 2008).

In order to analyze a specific association between p35 and the expression of sensitization, we examined the expression levels of this protein in the synaptosomal fraction (SF) of the dorsal striatum of animals from the HOME and NOVEL conditions, sacrificed immediately after finished the testing session (1 hour) (Fig. 2A) or 4 hours (Fig. 2B) after the amphetamine Challenge.

Western blot analysis on striatal SF from HOME condition animals showed that amphetamine had any effect on the expression of p35 levels; neither 1 hour (Fig. 2A) nor 4 hours (Fig. 2B) after Challenge. The ANOVA did not detect significant effects or interactions at any of these time points, indicating that neither the increase in locomotor activity induced by

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amphamphetamine during the Challenge day, nor the prior experience with amphthe drug on the Training day modified the expression of p35 in the dorsal striatum in a familiar environment.

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“**Figure 2** about here”

Figure 3 shows p35 levels in the dorsal striatum at 1 hour (A) and 4 hours (B) after amphamphetamine Challenge in the NOVEL condition. In this case, the statistical analysis revealed a biochemical pattern similar to the behavioral profile. The data analyses showed that, at both of the times tested, p35 was only increased in amphamphetamine challenged animals that had received prior experience with amphamphetamine in the Training phase. The ANOVA found a significant interaction between amphamphetamine in the Training phase and amphamphetamine in Challenge [$F(1,44)=5.67$, $p<0.05$]. In addition, post-hoc analyses showed an increase in p35 levels only in the amphamph/amphamph group compared with the remaining groups (amphamph/sal or sal/amphamph). This effect was observed regardless of the time point at which samples were collected (1 or 4 hours after amphamphetamine Challenge treatment).

“**Figure 3** about here”

Results from *in vivo* studies have demonstrated that p35 is the rate-limiting factor for the regulation of Cdk5 activity (Takahashi et al., 2005). For this reason, we attempted to determine whether the increase in p35 in the NOVEL context correlates with an increase in Cdk5 activity. To this end, we examined Cdk5 kinase activity in animals trained and challenged in the NOVEL

context. As we expected, IP of Cdk5 followed by kinase activity assays using histone H1 as a substrate, revealed that Cdk5 activity increased dramatically in the SF of sensitized rats (group ~~amphamph/amphamph~~) at both testing times, 1 hour [F(1,12)=7.55, p<0.05] (Fig 3C) and 4 hours [F(1,12)=9.77, p<0.01] (Fig 3D) after ~~amphamphetamine~~ Challenge treatment.

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Discussion

~~B.F. Singer et al. / Neuropharmacology 85 (2014) 243e252~~

~~NAcc roseovotine (Ros) administered during exposure blocked the induction of conditioned locomotion but spared the induction of locomotor sensitization. The present findings indicate that perturbing Cdk5 and Kal7 signaling in the NAcc exclusively during exposure to amphetamine prevents the development of conditioned locomotion but spares the development of locomotor sensitization by the drug. Therefore, Cdk5 and Kal7 signaling in the NAcc is necessary for the induction of excitatory contextual associative conditioning but not for nonassociative forms of plasticity such as sensitization.~~

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~~B.F. Singer et al. / Behavioural Brain Research 275 (2014) 96–100~~

~~Abstract When psychostimulant drugs like amphetamine are administered repeatedly in the presence of a contextual stimulus complex, long-lasting associations form between the unconditioned effects of the drug and the contextual stimuli. Here we assessed the role played by the proline-directed serine/threonine kinase cyclin-dependent kinase 5 (Cdk5) in the nucleus accumbens (NAcc) on the expression of the conditioned locomotion normally observed when rats are returned to a context previously paired with amphetamine. Infusing the Cdk5 inhibitor rosecovitine (40 nmol/0.5 μ l/side) into the NAcc 30-min before the test for conditioning significantly enhanced the conditioned locomotor response observed in rats previously administered amphetamine in the test environment. This effect was specific to the expression of a conditioned response as inhibiting Cdk5 produced no effect in control rats previously administered saline or previously administered amphetamine elsewhere. As inhibiting Cdk5 during exposure to amphetamine has~~

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~~been found to block the accrual of locomotor conditioning, the present results suggest distinct roles for NAcc Cdk5 in the induction and expression of excitatory conditioning by amphetamine.~~

~~In the present experiment, pharmacologically inhibiting Cdk5 in the NAcc with Ros exclusively on the test for conditioning enhanced the conditioned locomotor response observed in Paired rats. This effect was specific to the expression of the excitatory conditioned response as NAcc-Ros produced no significant effects in Unpaired and Control rats.~~

The current study was designed to explore the specific association between the expression of behavioral sensitization induced by [amphamphetamine](#) and the activity and expression of the Cdk5/p35 complex. The effect of our experimental manipulations, in combination with the two-injection protocol, which induced sensitization in a NOVEL but not in a HOME environment, were strong enough to associate specific changes in Cdk5 activity and p35 levels with this process. Therefore, adolescent rats developed and expressed locomotor sensitization with 4 mg/kg of [amphamphetamine](#) in a two-injection protocol, but only when they were trained and evaluated in a NOVEL environment. However, the equivalent [amphamphetamine](#) treatment and manipulation failed to generate such an effect in the HOME condition. More importantly, our results demonstrated that the increased Cdk5 activity and p35 protein levels were only observed in the dorsal striatum of those animals that displayed locomotor sensitization to [amphamphetamine](#), suggesting that mere exposure to the drug is not enough to induce changes in the activity and expression levels of these proteins. Taken together, our findings provide clear behavioral and neurochemical evidence of a specific association between increased p35 and Cdk5 activity in the dorsal striatum and the expression of [amphamphetamine](#)-behavioral

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sensitization in a two-injection protocol. Therefore we propose the protein p35 as a possible biochemical marker of psychostimulants behavioral sensitization.

Cdk5 and p35 has been involved in chronic administration of ~~eeecocaine~~ (Bibb et al., 2001), meth~~amphetamine~~ (Chen and Chen, 2005), and ~~amphetamine~~ (Mlewski et al., 2008). Our results revealed that it is not necessary to administer repeated injections of ~~amphetamine~~ in order to up-regulate these proteins. The two-injection ~~amphetamine~~ treatment in the NOVEL context was sufficient to generate changes at the level of expression of p35 and Cdk5 activity. In support of these findings was the observation that both control conditions (groups: sal/~~amph~~ and ~~amph~~/sal) of the NOVEL context, and animals trained and challenged in the HOME environment, failed to show any changes in p35 protein levels. It is important to point out that this is the first study in which an environmental condition (HOME or NOVEL) combined with the two-injection protocol has revealed a direct association between sensitization and increased p35 protein levels. Further, the elevated activity of Cdk5 may be a result of the increased protein level of the Cdk5 co-activator p35, as previously demonstrated *in vivo* (Takahashi et al., 2005). Thus, our data suggest that, irrespective of the administration protocol employed, increased p35 levels in the dorsal striatum is required to activate Cdk5 kinase ~~— an observed n-essential-condition_—forof the~~ expression of locomotor sensitization induced by ~~amphetamine~~.

~~↓.——~~Two recent studies suggest that Cdk5 activity would not necessarily be implicated in the development of amphetamine-sensitization. Singer et al. (2014 a and b) observed that inhibition of Cdk5 activity with roscovitine interfered with Pavlovian conditioning acquired during the exposure to amphetamine. Their results suggest that Cdk5 may play opposing roles

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during the acquisition and expression of associative learning, since roscovitine prevented conditioning when it was given during the training phase, and enhanced the conditioned response when it was administered soon before testing. Interestingly, while interfering with Pavlovian conditioning, roscovitine administration did not affect sensitization induced by amphetamine. Considering these results, it is plausible that the increase in Cdk5/p35 activity that we observed in the NOVEL, but not in the HOME condition, is linked to contextual Pavlovian conditioning induced by amphetamine, and not with the expression of sensitization. This possibility is congruent with the fact that sensitization induced by the two-injection protocol can involve contextual learning (Valjent, 2010). In the present study, we do not present additional data that might allow us to infer the role that Cdk5 may be playing, but we can contrast our results with the existing evidence. Firstly, it is important to note that, unlike Singer et al. found, our protocol did not result in a conditioned response in the NOVEL condition. This effect would give rise to an increase in locomotor activity at testing in the amph/sal group when compared to the sal/sal group, which was not observed. Furthermore, we did not find significant differences between these groups when levels of expression of p35 or activity of Cdk5 were examined. The function that Cdk5 is playing in the behavioral response to psychostimulants is unclear, since inhibition of Cdk5 in the ventral striatum can result in inhibition (Chen and Chen, 2005), potentiation (Bibb et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2007) or even have no effect (Singer et al., 2014 a and b) upon the locomotor sensitized response induced by psychostimulants. Differences in the structure (dorsal vs ventral striatum) and the protocols used, including the type of drug, may account for this variability. The main contribution of our study to this field is to point out one environmental variable that may jointly modulate the activity of the Cdk5/p35 complex in the dorsal striatum and the expression of sensitization induced by amphetamine. Two recent studies suggest that

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Cdk5 activity in the NAcc after amphetamine exposure would not necessarily be implicated in the development of amphetamine sensitization. Singer et al. (2014 a and b) observed that inhibition of Cdk5 activity with roscovitine interfered with Pavlovian conditioning acquired during the exposure to amphetamine. Their results suggest that Cdk5 may play an opposite role during the acquisition than during the expression of associative learning, since roscovitine prevented conditioning when it was given during the training phase, and enhanced the conditioned response when it was administered soon before testing. Interestingly, while interfering with Pavlovian conditioning, roscovitine administration did not affect sensitization induced by amphetamine. Considering these results, it is plausible that the increase in Cdk5/p35 activity that we observed in the novel NOVEL, but not in the home HOME condition, is linked to contextual Pavlovian conditioning induced by amphetamine, and not with the expression of sensitization. This possibility is congruent with the fact that sensitization induced by the two injection protocol injection can involve contextual learning (Valjent, 2010). In the present study, we do not present additional data that allow inferring the role that Cdk5 may be playing, but we can contrast our results with the existing evidence. Firstly, it is important to note that, unlike Singer et al. found, our protocol did not result in a conditioned response in the novel NOVEL condition. This effect would give place to an increase in locomotor activity at testing in the Amph/ Sal group when compared to the Sal/ Sal group, which was not observed. Furthermore, we did not find significant differences between these groups when levels of expression of p35 or activity of Cdk5 were examined. The function that Cdk5 is playing in the behavioral response to psychostimulants is unclear, since inhibition of Cdk5 in the ventral striatum can result in inhibition (Chen and Chen, 2005; Chen), potentiation (Bibb et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2007; Bibb)

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or even be ineffective (Singer et al., 2014 a and b) upon the locomotor sensitized response induced by psychostimulants. Differences in the structure (dorsal vs ventral striatum) and the protocols used, included the type of drug, may account this variability. The main contribution of our study to this field is to point out into one environmental variable that may jointly modulate the activity of the Cdk5/p35 complex in the dorsal striatum and the expression of sensitization induced by amphetamine.

Cdk5, although as mentioned, changes in Cdk5 activity may not be necessarily related with sensitization induced by amphetamine or cocaine, at least in the NAcc (Singer et al., 2014; Seiwel et al., 2007).

literatura conflictiva

Whilst it was not an aim of the present study to identify the target substrates at which this increased Cdk5 activity is directed, it has been reported that the Cdk5/p35 complex exerts a regulating effect on the dopamine pathway after several days of cocaine administration (Bibb et al., 2001). In this particular administration protocol, Valjent and colleagues (Valjent et al., 2010) have characterized many of the biochemical changes underlying some mechanisms of locomotor sensitization to cocaine in a two-injection protocol, wherein the dopaminergic pathway is clearly involved, and required the stimulation of both dopamine D1 (DR1) and glutamate (NMDA) receptors, as well as ERK activation and novo protein synthesis. With respect to this issue, it has been shown that DR1 and dopamine D2 (DR2) receptors play a critical role in the locomotor

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effects of amphetamine and cocaine, whereas DR1 seem to be involved in the development of amphetamine sensitization, and DR2 in its expression (Dias et al., 2004; Vanderschuren and Kalivas, 2000). Strikingly, D2R has recently been identified as a novel substrate of Cdk5, in the striatopallidal D2R medium spiny neuron population. This interaction suggests a new regulatory mechanism of the dynamic nature of D2R surface availability (Jeong et al., 2013). Given the fact that we used amphetamine in our experimental design, and DR2 receptors have been involved in the expression of locomotor sensitization, it would be reasonable to think that the increased Cdk5/p35 activity observed in this study may also be directed to regulate the dynamic process of surface receptor availability. Whilst this provides further insight into the adaptive changes of the dopamine system in response to drug exposures, implicating a role for Cdk5, further research is needed to explore this possibility.

Although it has been shown that it is the long-lasting qualities of behavioral sensitization that make it such a potentially important component of drug addiction, it is accepted that short-term transient modifications are necessary to evoke long-lasting adaptations that mediate persistent drug hyperresponsiveness (Vanderschuren and Kalivas, 2000; Wolf and Xue, 1998). The present data are compatible with the idea that the activation of Cdk5/p35 complex in striatum may be an important step in the cascade of molecular events linked to a single experience with psychostimulants, although as discussed, the role of the Cdk5/p35 complex may be related to different learning processes occurring during experience with the drug. Whilst it was not an aim of the present study to identify the target substrates at which this increased Cdk5 activity is directed, it has been reported that the Cdk5/p35 complex exerts a regulating effect on the dopamine pathway after several days of cocaine administration (Bibb et al., 2001). In this particular administration protocol, Valjent and colleagues (Valjent et al., 2010) have

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characterized many of the biochemical changes underlying some mechanisms of locomotor sensitization to cocaine in a two-injection protocol, wherein the dopaminergic pathway is clearly involved, and required the stimulation of both dopamine D1 (DR1) and glutamate (NMDA) receptors, as well as ERK activation and novo protein synthesis. With respect to this issue, it has been shown that DR1 and dopamine D2 (DR2) receptors play a critical role in the locomotor effects of amphetamine and cocaine, whereas DR1 seem to be involved in the development of amphetamine sensitization, and DR2 in its expression (Dias et al., 2004; Vanderschuren and Kalivas, 2000). Strikingly, D2R has recently been identified as a novel substrate of Cdk5, in the striatopallidal D2R medium spiny neuron population. This interaction proposes a new regulatory mechanism of the dynamic nature of D2R surface availability (Jeong et al., 2013). Given the fact that we used amphetamine in our experimental design, and DR2 receptors have been involved in the expression of locomotor sensitization, it would be reasonable to think that the increased Cdk5/p35 activity observed in this study may also be directed to regulate the dynamic process of surface receptors availability. Whilst this provides further insight into the adaptive changes of the dopamine system in response to drug exposures, implicating a role for Cdk5, further research is needed to explore this possibility.

— Although it has been shown that it is its long-lasting qualities that make behavioral sensitization such a potentially important component of drug addiction, it is accepted that short-term transient modifications are necessary to evoke long-lasting adaptations that mediate persistent drug hyperresponsiveness (Vanderschuren and Kalivas, 2000; Wolf and Xue, 1998). The present data support the idea that the activation of Cdk5/p35 complex in striatum may be an important step in the cascade of molecular events ultimately leading to the emergence of a psychostimulant sensitization response. Furthermore, an improved comprehension of the

~~molecular processes that contribute to the manifestation of behavioral sensitization to psychostimulants is highly relevant for the understanding of development of addiction and places p35 protein as a putative biochemical marker of expression of behavioral sensitization to psychostimulants drugs. Discovery of disruptions in the fine balance that normally exists between brain circuits underling reward, motivation, memory and craving may facilitate the development of new interventions for prevention and treatment of addictive disorders.~~

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~~The present study suggests that the Cdk5/p35 complex may play a role in the neuroadaptations that underlie various (and as yet poorly understood) aspects of the development of addiction and places p35 protein as a putative biochemical marker of expression of behavioral sensitization to psychostimulants drugs. Discovery of disruptions in the fine balance that normally exists between brain circuits underling reward, motivation, memory and craving have important implications for designing new interventions for the prevention and treatment of addictive disorders.~~

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Acknowledgements

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Authors contribution

All authors were responsible for the design of the study. ECM and CA collected animal data and conducted statistical data analysis. ECM performed biochemical essays. ECM, CA and GP interpreted the findings and drafted the manuscript. CA and GP provided critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content. All authors critically reviewed content and approved the final version for publication.

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Figure legends

Figure 1: Total counts of locomotor activity were registered for one hour during Training (first injection, 4mg/kg of amphamphetamine) and Challenge (second injection, 2mg/kg amphamphetamine). On both days, the animals were evaluated in the HOME condition (A) and in the NOVEL condition (B). Error bars represent standard error of the mean (SEM). For A:

*Differences between amphamph/sal and amphamph/amphamph vs sal/sal and sal/amphamph groups. &Differences between sal/amphamph and amphamph/amphamph vs sal/sal and amphamph/sal groups. For B: *Differences between amphamph/sal and amphamph/amphamph vs sal/sal and sal/amphamph groups. &Differences between sal/amphamph and amphamph/amphamph vs sal/sal and amphamph/sal groups. #Differences between amphamph/amphamph and sal/amphamph groups. *.&.# p < 0.05. (amph: amphetamine)

Figure 2: Representative western immunoblots showing the levels of expression of p35 protein in SFs of the dorsal striatum of animals from the HOME condition, sacrificed 1 h (A) or 4 h (B) after Challenge. At any of the times tested, an ANOVA did not detect any differences in p35 levels between groups. Error bars represent standard error of the mean (SEM).

Figure 3

Expression levels of p35 protein in SFs of the dorsal striatum of animals from the NOVEL condition, sacrificed 1 h (A) or 4 h (B) after Challenge. Note the increase in p35 levels in the [amph/amph](#) group compared with the remaining groups ([amph/sal](#) or [sal/amph](#)) at both time points. *In vitro* Cdk5 activity of SFs of the dorsal striatum of animals from the NOVEL condition, sacrificed 1 h (C) or 4 h (D) after Challenge. Cdk5 was immunoprecipitated from individual fractions and subjected to kinase assay using histone H1 as the substrate. Note that Cdk5 activity increased dramatically in SFs of sensitized rats (group [amph/amph](#)) at both testing times. *Differences between [amph/amph](#) group and their control groups. Error bars represent standard error of the mean (SEM). *p < 0.05. (amph: amphetamine)