

Meeting abstract

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Establishing a new mouse model for investigating the function of amygdala neurons in anxiety

Yvan Peterschmitt^{1,2}, Stefan Weger³, Alexander Plauth³, Regine Heilbronn³, William Wisden⁴, Günther Sperk¹ and Werner Sieghart^{*2}

Address: ¹Institute of Pharmacology, Medical University of Innsbruck, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria, ²Center for Brain Research, Medical University of Vienna, 1090 Vienna, Austria, ³Institute of Virology, Charité Centrum, Medical University of Berlin, 12203 Berlin, Germany and ⁴Institute of Medical Sciences, University of Aberdeen, Foresterhill, Aberdeen, AB25 2ZD, UK

Email: Werner Sieghart* - werner.sieghart@meduniwien.ac.at

* Corresponding author

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Benzodiazepine site agonists modulate the firing pattern of neurons via GABA_A receptors and by that influence the activity of the network in which they participate and cause appropriate changes in behaviour. Since the amygdala is involved in regulating anxiety, it can be expected that GABA_A receptors located in this brain region contribute to the anxiolytic effects of benzodiazepine site agonists. Here we take advantage of an *in vivo* mouse model [1] in which a Phe to Ile point mutation was introduced into the gene coding for the GABA_A receptor $\gamma 2$ subunit. This $\gamma 2F77I$ mutation, which was also flanked by loxP sites, affects only the benzodiazepine binding site of the respective receptors, and mice carrying this mutation no longer are sensitive to certain benzodiazepine site agonists but are otherwise normal. Here we aim to selectively replace the "benzodiazepine insensitive" mutated $\gamma 2F77I$ subunit by a GFP-labeled native one in the amygdala of $\gamma 2F77Ilox$ mice by a stereotaxic injection of recombinant adeno-associated viral (rAAV) vectors expressing Cre-recombinase and GFP-labeled wild-type $\gamma 2$ subunits. It has been demonstrated previously that the replaced wild-type subunits combine with endogenous subunits to form completely assembled receptors with normal subcellular distribution. Then only those amygdala neurons expressing the GFP-labeled wild-type $\gamma 2$ subunits can be modulated by a systemic application of these benzodiazepine site agonists and any behavioural effects observed with

these drugs must have been generated via these neurons. In this report we present a preliminary characterization of the newly developed mouse model demonstrating the correct expression of Cre-recombinase and GFP-labeled wild-type $\gamma 2$ subunits in amygdala neurons by immunohistochemical and *in situ* hybridization techniques. Future experiments aim to characterize our model by behavioural pharmacology in paradigms of anxiety.

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References

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