Acta Histochemica xxx (xxxx) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Acta Histochemica

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/acthis

Short communication

Localization of orexin B and orexin-2 receptor in the rat epididymis

Giovanna Liguori[a], Simona Tafuri[a], Chika Miyoshi[b], Masashi Yanagisawa[b], Caterina Squillacioti[a], Valeria De Pasquale[c], Nicola Mirabella[a], Alfredo Vittoria[a], Anna Costagliola[a,*]

[a] Department of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Productions, University of Naples Federico II, Via Delpino 1, 80137, Naples, Italy
[b] International Institute for Integrative Sleep Medicine (WPI-IIIS), University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki, 305-8575, Japan
[c] Department of Molecular Medicine and Medical Biotechnology, University of Naples Federico II, Via S. Pansini 5, 80131, Naples, Italy

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Orexin B
Orexin-2 receptor
Epididymis
Rat

ABSTRACT

The peptides orexin A (OXA) and orexin B (OXB) derived from the proteolytic cleavage of a common precursor molecule, prepro-orexin, were originally described in the rat hypothalamus. Successively, they have been found in many other brain regions as well as in peripheral organs of mammals and other less evolved animals. The widespread localization of orexins accounts for the multiple activities that they exert in the body, including the regulation of energy homeostasis, feeding, metabolism, sleep and arousal, stress, addiction, and cardiovascular and endocrine functions. Both OXA and OXB peptides bind to two G-coupled receptors, orexin-1 (OX1R) and orexin-2 (OX2R) receptor, though with different binding affinity. Altered expression/activity of orexins and their receptors has been associated with a large number of human diseases. Though at present evidence highlighted a role for orexins and cognate receptors in mammalian reproduction, their central and/or local effects on gonadal functions remain poorly known. Here, we investigated the localization of OXB and OX2R in the rat epididymis. Immunohistochemical staining of sections from caput, corpus and cauda segments of the organ showed intense signals for both OXB and OX2R in the principal cells of the lining epithelium, while no staining was detected in the other cell types. Negative results were obtained from immunohistochemical analysis of hypothalamic and testicular tissues from OX2R knock-out mice ($OX2R^{-/-}$) and OX1R/OX2R double knock-out ($OX1R^{-/-}$; $OX2R^{-/-}$) mice, thus demonstrating the specificity of the rabbit polyclonal anti-OX2R antibody used in our study. On contrary, the same antibody clearly showed the presence of OX2R in sections from hypothalamus and testis of normal mice and rats which are well known to express the receptor. Thus, our results provide the first definite evidence for the immunohistochemical localization of OXB and OX2R in the principal cells of rat epididymis.

1. Introduction

Orexin A (OXA) and orexin B (OXB) are two peptides initially discovered in the mammalian hypothalamus (Sakurai et al., 1998; de Lecea et al., 1998) and subsequently found in other regions of the brain and peripheral organs. Both peptides originate from the proteolytic cleavage of a common precursor molecule, prepro-orexin, and bind to two G-coupled receptors, namely orexin-1 (OX1R) and orexin-2 (OX2R) receptor. While OX1R is highly selective for OXA, OX2R shows similar binding affinity for both orexins (Sakurai et al., 1998). The orexins and their receptors will be refereed hereunder as the orexinergic complex.

A huge amount of evidence demonstrated the involvement of orexinergic complex in the regulation of a variety of physiological processes including energy homeostasis, feeding, sleep and arousal, neuroendocrine and autonomic responses, addiction, cognition, mood, and many other (Silvani and Dampney, 2013; Chieffi et al., 2017; Kukkonen, 2013; Ma et al., 2018; Mieda and Sakurai, 2009; Tafuri et al., 2017; Zhou and Leri, 2016). Furthermore, the orexinergic complex plays important roles in the regulation of the mammalian nervous and digestive system, cardiovascular apparatus, pancreas, adrenal glands, and reproductive tract (Celik et al., 2015; Heinonen et al., 2008; Korczynski et al., 2006; Kukkonen, 2017; Rani et al., 2017; Voisin et al., 2003). Disturbances in the release of the two peptides and/or altered expression levels of their receptors contribute to the onset of many human diseases including insomnia, narcolepsy with cataplexy, drug addiction, major mood disorders, obesity, cardiovascular and neuroendrocrine disorders, cancers, and other (Rainero et al., 2011; Alexandre et al., 2014; Burfeind et al., 2016; Ferini-Strambi, 2014; James et al., 2017; Nixon et al., 2015; Song et al., 2015; Szczepanska-Sadowska et al., 2010). Currently, orexin receptors are active targets in

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: anna.costagliola@unina.it (A. Costagliola).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acthis.2018.02.011
Received 17 January 2018; Received in revised form 22 February 2018; Accepted 23 February 2018

a number of therapeutic areas (Andrews et al., 2016; Boss and Roch, 2017; Tanaka et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2013).

Although in recent years increasing attention has been drawn to address the role of the orexinergic complex in the mammalian reproductive axis (Celik et al., 2015; Nurmio et al., 2010; Silveyra et al., 2010), the central and/or local effects of orexins on gonadal functions remain to be assessed. Expression of OXA and OX2R in the placenta of cat and dog (Dall'Aglio et al., 2012, 2014), OXA and OXB in the porcine uterus (Nitkiewicz et al., 2012), OX1R and OX2R in the rat and porcine ovaries (Nitkiewicz et al., 2010; Silveyra et al., 2007), and OXA and OX1R in the vestibular glands of the cattle genital tract (Pavone et al., 2009) has been demonstrated. These findings, coupled with functional studies, indicated that orexins and their receptors affect female reproductive functions through the modulation of ovarian steroidogenesis.

As far as it concerns the presence of the orexinergic complex in the male, Karteris et al. (2004) detected OX1R and OX2R in human testis, epididymis, penis, and seminal vesicle. In particular, receptor expression was found in Leydig cells, myoid cells of seminiferous tubules, and Sertoli cells. Orexin receptors have been shown to be expressed in the testes of rat (Jöhren et al., 2001), chicken (Ohkubo et al., 2003), sheep (Zhang et al., 2005) and boar (Russo et al., 2014). The expression of OXA and OX1R in the mouse testis at different stages of postnatal development has been reported (Joshi and Singh, 2016, 2017). Recently, we demonstrated OXA and OX1R immunohistochemical localization in multiple organs of the mammalian male reproductive apparatus, often combined with the expression of mRNAs coding for pre-proorexin and OX1R, and the corresponding proteins. In particular, we provided evidence for the presence of OXA and OX1R in the urethroprostatic complex of the cattle (Russo et al., 2008), epididymis (Liguori et al., 2014; Tafuri et al., 2009) and testis of rat (Assisi et al., 2012; Tafuri et al., 2010) and alpaca (Liguori et al., 2012), and in human normal, hyperplastic and neoplastic prostates (Alexandre et al., 2014; Valiante et al., 2013, 2015). Functional studies suggest a potential involvement of OXA and OX1R in the control of the Leydig cell steroidogenesis as well as in the development of the seminiferous epithelium (Assisi et al., 2012; Barreiro et al., 2005; Tafuri et al., 2010).

By contrast, the expression and role of OXB and OX2R in the male gonads have been poorly investigated. We recently demonstrated the expression of OXB and OX2R in pachytene and secondary spermatocytes and in spermatids through all stages of the seminiferous epithelium cycle of the rat and alpaca testis (Liguori et al., 2017a,b). OXB, in contrast to OXA, was not found to promote steroidogenesis. In order to get more insights into the localization of OXB and OX2R in the reproductive apparatus, in this study we explored the presence of OXB and OX2R in the rat epididymis by immunohistochemistry. To ensure specificity of the anti-OX2R antibody used, we tested the antibody on hypothalamic and testicular tissues from OX2R knock-out ($OX2R^{-/-}$) mice and OX1R/OX2R double knock-out ($OX1R^{-/-}/OX2R^{-/-}$) mice.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Antibodies and reagents

Mouse anti-OXB (MAB734) monoclonal antibodies were purchased from R&D System (Abingdon, UK) and their synthetic peptides from Tocris Bioscience (Bristol, UK); rabbit polyclonal anti-OX2R antibody (ab3094), and its blocking peptide (AG794) from Millipore (Bellerica, MA, USA); biotinylated goat anti-mouse (BA-9200) and goat anti-rabbit (BA-1000) secondary antibodies, and peroxidase conjugated avidin–biotin complex (PK-6105) from Vector Laboratories (Burlingame, CA, USA).

2.2. Animals

Eight healthy adult Wistar male rats (Charles River, Calco, LC, Italy) were bred in the vivarium of the Department of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Productions of the University of Naples Federico II. The animals were kept with free access to food and tap water, under constant conditions of light and temperature (22 °C). The experimental procedures were approved by the Ethical Committee for Animal Experimentation of our Universities, and were conducted in accordance with the EU Directive 2010/63/EU for animal experiments. The anesthetized animals were sacrificed and epididymes were collected and divided in three segments (caput, corpus and cauda); each segment was transversely cut in small pieces. Specimens were fixed in Bouin's fluid for 24–48 h, and then processed for immunohistochemistry as described below. Anesthetized $OX2R^{-/-}$ and $OX1R^{-/-}/OX2R^{-/-}$ mice were transcardiacally perfused with 4% paraformaldehyde, and their hypothalami and testes were fixed in the same fluid for 24 h after collection. Such materials were cryoprotected in 40% sucrose and successively embedded in OCT to obtain 10 µm cryocut sections.

2.3. Immunohistochemistry

The fixed samples from caput, corpus and cauda segments of epididymis were dehydrated in ascending alcohols, embedded in Paraplast, and microtomically cut in 6 µm thick sections. The avidin-biotin immunohistochemical procedure was performed as previously described (De Luca et al., 2014; Pelagalli et al., 2016). Briefly, sections were covered with normal goat serum, and then incubated with the primary antibodies 1:200 dilution, for overnight at 6 °C. Reactions were detected with a goat anti-mouse or goat anti-rabbit secondary antibody. Successively, sections were incubated with peroxidase conjugated avidin-biotin complex (ABC) for 30 min and 3-3′ diaminobenzidine (DAB) was used as final staining. Some sections were counterstained with hematoxylin in order to better localize the immunoreactive structures and the epididymal cytotypes. The preparations were observed by a Nikon Eclipse E 600 light microscope, and photographed by a Coolpix 8400 digital camera.

Sections of hypothalamus and testis from $OX2R^{-/-}$ and $OX1R^{-/-}/OX2R^{-/-}$ mice (Irukayama-Tomobe et al., 2017) in the C57BL6/J background were used as negative controls for immunohistochemistry with anti-OX2R antibody. We used paraplast sections from wild-type mouse hypothalamus and rat testis, both tissues well known to express OX2R (Irukayama-Tomobe et al., 2017; Liguori et al., 2017a), as positive controls.

3. Results and discussion

Multiple studies demonstrated that orexins may affect mammalian reproductive functions either centrally or locally. However, the specific tissue localization and the exact mechanism of action of orexins in the epididymal/gonadal complex has not been fully explored. In order to extend our current knowledge on this issue, here we investigated the localization of OXB and OX2R in the rat epididymis by immunohistochemistry. The analysis of the tissue samples showed the presence of OXB immunoreactivity (IR) in the epithelium of all segments (caput, corpus, and cauda) of the epididymis (Fig. 1). The caput of epididymis is characterized by a proximal and a distal portion. In the proximal caput, single or scattered epithelial principal cells were intensely stained (Fig. 1a). The positive material filled the entire profile of the cells from the basal to the apical portion. OXB-IR was also found in the distal caput (Fig. 1b), corpus (Fig. 1c) and cauda (Fig. 1d) of the epididymis. In these segments, the positive material appeared as condensed granules, localized in the supra-nuclear portion of the principal cell cytoplasm. The amount of staining in these segments was much higher than that observed in the proximal caput, and sometimes positive cells were seen to encircle almost entirely the transverse profile of the epididymal tubule, rarely intermingled by negative elements. Throughout the organ the distribution of the positive material was zonal. Negative controls were performed substituting the anti-OXB