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Antidepressant effects of focused ultrasound induced blood-brain-barrier opening

Authors: Skyler J. Mooney^{1,*}, José N. Nobrega, PhD^{3,4}, Anthony J. Levitt, MBBS^{2,3}, Kullervo Hynynen, PhD^{1,5}

Affiliations:

¹ Physical Sciences Platform, Sunnybrook Research Institute, Toronto, Canada ² Department of Psychiatry, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

³ Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

⁴ Behavioural Neurobiology Laboratory, Research Imaging Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

⁵ Department of Medical Biophysics, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

* Corresponding author: 2075 Bayview Avenue, Suite Co7 13 Toronto, ON Canada M4N 3M5 Telephone: 647-523-2478 Email: mooneysk@sri.utoronto.ca

Highlights

- The blood-brain-barrier of rats is transiently opened with focused ultrasound
- 2 weekly treatments results in short-term antidepressant effects.
- Longer-term effects are absent at 5 weeks post-treatment

Abstract

In many cases, hippocampal neurogenesis appears to be a hallmark of antidepressant treatments. One novel technique for inducing this type of neurogenesis is using focused ultrasound waves, in conjunction with circulating microbubbles, to open the blood-brain-barrier. The present experiment aimed to test whether this technique has antidepressant effects in a rodent model. Rats were subjected to 1, 2 or 3 weekly treatments of magnetic resonance-guided focused ultrasound in order to open the blood-brain-barrier in the hippocampal region. Before and after treatments, animals went through modified forced swim tests. 1 week after the final treatment, animals that received 2 weekly treatments showed antidepressant-like effects on behavioural measures in comparison to untreated controls. This was not the case for animals that received 1 or 3 weekly treatments. Effects had disappeared by 5 weeks following the first ultrasound treatment. These results suggest that focused ultrasound may be used for inducing short-term antidepressant effects.

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