

Project 1.12. Deciphering activity of CA1 region during alcohol seeking and consumption

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Background:

Development of drug addiction involves functional alterations within brain areas controlling reward-driven behaviour and memory processes. In this context, remodelling of the glutamatergic synapses has gained a lot of attention (Hanse *et al*, 2013; Lüscher *et al*, 2011; Wolf, 2016). Still the molecular processes which contribute to the remodelling of the synapses and circuits in addicted individuals are poorly understood. Our aim in this project is to test **the hypothesis that regulation of activity of CA1 pyramidal neurons by Arc/Arg3.1 protein controls addiction-related behaviours**. Arc/Arg3.1 protein is rapidly upregulated by strong synaptic activity and critically contributes to weakening glutamatergic synapses by promoting AMPA receptor endocytosis (Plath *et al*, 2006; Tzingounis and Nicoll, 2006). The hypothesis is also based on our observations showing that Arc knockout mice (Arc KO) are impaired in alcohol seeking during relapse induced by alcohol-associated cues, while alcohol consumption and seeking in wild-type animals affects expression of Arc protein in the area CA1 of the hippocampus.

To verify the hypothesis we plan to realize the following tasks:

Task 1. To test the role of Arc/Arg3.1 in CA1 in regulation of addiction-related behaviours.

Task 2. To test the role of Arc/Arg3.1 in regulation of alcohol-induced plasticity of CA1 neurons.

Task 3. To test the dynamics of CA1 neurons during alcohol consumption and seeking.

Aim:

Our aim in this project is to test the hypothesis that regulation of activity of CA1 pyramidal neurons by Arc/Arg3.1 protein controls addiction-related behaviours.

Requirements:

The students should have MSc in Biology (Molecular), Neurobiology, Biotechnology, Bioinformatics or Biophysics. Only highly motivated students with outstanding academic record and fluent English will be accepted.

One PhD student will be responsible for behavioral analysis of Arc KO mice and electrophysiological characteristics of Arc KO^{CA1} neurons (Tasks 1 and 2). Strong background in biology will be an asset of the successful candidate.

The second PhD student will be involved in implementation of miniscopes in a new cages and image data analysis. Strong background in mathematics/bioinformatics/image analysis will be an asset of the successful candidate.