Hijacking the Progress of Addiction: Looking at β-Arrestin 1 and β-Arrestin 2 to Cognize Drugs of Abuse

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Editorial

The reward system comprises a group of neural structures accountable to mediate distinct behavioural change, learning, and optimistic emotions particularly ones that comprise feeling (i.e., love, euphoria, and ecstasy) as a central cog [1,2]. The nucleus accumbens (NAc) is the most central region of the reward system. It is an important structure of the basal ganglia receiving information from cortical and limbic structures and facilitates persistent behaviours [3-5]. Enduring exposure of different classes of drugs disturbs plasticity of this region, promoting an extreme desire for drug seeking (Figure 1). β-arrestin 1 and β-arrestin 2 are abundantly expressed scaffolding proteins carrying out diverse functions in the cell. These adapter proteins are able to form complexes with many G-protein coupled receptors (GPCRs) after binding of a ligand resulting in activation of the receptors [6]. In fact, β-arrestins have been reported to play major and critical roles in related processes of GPCR desensitization and sequestration consequently leading to inactivation of G-protein and signal cascades [7]. This is said to cause inhibition of cellular responses to stimuli such as hormones, neurotransmitters, or sensory signals. In the central nervous system, β-arrestins are copiously expressed.

In a study, Mittal et al. examined the key mechanisms involved in behavioural performances mediated by β-arrestin 1 [8]. Using a mice model lacking β-arrestin 1, they studied the role of this scaffolding protein in reward-driven behaviours and striatal glutamatergic role. They observed that mice lacking the β-arrestin 1 were slow responses to self-administration of cocaine and quenching of the response. The researchers revealed the difficulty in learning advocated by natural food reward, proposing distortion in the reward system [8]. It has been observed that glutamate plays a major role in processes (i.e., reinforcement, sensitization, context conditioning, habit and reinforcement learning, craving and relapse) facilitating development and managing of addiction [9]. They later to undergo cocaine self-administration tested the strength of the glutamatergic synaptic response in wild-type (WT) and knock-out (KO) medium spinal neurons of the NAc shell in naïve animals. There were an increase in the α-amino-3-hydroxy-5-methylisoxazole-4-propionate (AMPA)/N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) ratio and a relative lack of GluN2B-enriched calcium-penetrable AMPARs [8]. Lastly, the researchers administered ifenprodil as a GluN2B antagonist, to the NAc shell of WT mice in other to study effects of reduced basal GluN2B-NMDARs in reward-processing observed in KO mice which resulted into a significantly reduced food-motivated behaviour. They finally concluded that lack of β-arrestin 1 result in specific deficits in cocaine and food-related behaviours and in glutamatergic synaptic asset and subunit construction [8].

Conversely β-arrestin 2 interacts directly with receptors as well as signalling pathways that facilitate behavioural changes due to effects of drugs of abuse. Bohn et al. measured conditioned place preference (CPP) to study the effect of β-arrestin 2 KO in morphine-induced locomotion and reward behaviours [12]. The researchers observed that...

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mice lacking β-арrestин 2 show efficient morphine reward but blunted morphine-induced locomotion. Similarly, mice lacking β-арrestин 2 show augmented morphine-induced dopamine release in the striatum with respect to controls [12]. In a study Urs et al. tested morphine CPP and locomotion in order to study the role of β-арrestин 2 in D1-comprising neurons in conditional KO mice that absence β-арrestин 2 only in D1-comprising cells [13]. Although β-арrestин 2 interactions with dopamine receptors may change effects of opioid, staffing of μ-opioid receptor by β-арrestин 2 could also be imperative due to morphine's great magnetism for μ-opioid receptors. The role of μ-opioid agonists to recruit β-арrestин 2 could have vital behavioural concerns. μ-opioid agonists, for example, morphine, heroin and oxicodone had low levels of endocytosis and recruitment of β-арrestин 2 although they all have high abuse potential and can cause tolerance and dependence [14-16].

Like morphine, cannabinoid receptor agonists are also abused although can provide pain relief. Both CB1 and CB2 cannabinoid receptors recruit β-арrestин 2. Raehal and Bohn reported that β-арrestин 2 also affects behavioural changes in many but not all cannabinoid receptor agonists [17].

Björk et al. examined that mice without β-арrestин 2 intakes markedly less alcohol at low doses and had abated penchant for alcohol in a two-bottle choice procedure compared to controls [18]. In another study, Li et al. showed mice with β-арrestин 2-KO consumed more alcohol, especially at higher doses [19].

β-арrestins can have copious roles in behavioural responses to addictive drugs. β-арrestин 1 and β-арrestин 2 are likely aspirants for controlling the roles of abuse. However, further studies are obligatory to clarify the neurobiological mechanisms to explicate exactly the tactic by which β-арrestин 1 and β-арrestин 2 controls behavioural responses to drugs of abuse, as well as its auspicious potential as a therapeutic target to hijack the progress of addiction.

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Competing Interests

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References