Evaluation of orexin A activity on LH and FSH release from primary culture pituitary cells in immature and mature female rats

Lidia Martyńska, Ewa Wolińska-Witort, Magdalena Chmielowska, Wojciech Bik, Bogusława Baranowska

Department of Clinical Neuroendocrinology, Medical Centre of Postgraduate Education, Warsaw, Poland

Correspondence to: Lidia Martyńska, MSc.
Department of Clinical Neuroendocrinology
Medical Centre of Postgraduate Education
Marymoncka 99/103, 01-813 Warsaw, Poland.
tel: +48 22 56 93 850; fax: +48 22 56 93 859; e-mail: zne@cmkp.edu.pl

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES: Orexin A (OxA) is a regulatory neuropeptide which is involved in the control of various autonomic and neuroendocrine functions. It regulates sleep-wake cycle, food intake and modulates the hypothalamic and pituitary hormones secretion. Orexin A acts through two types of receptors, which proved to exist in the pituitary. This may indicate the possibility of direct action of OxA on the adenohypophysis level. The aim of this study was to evaluate the direct effect of orexin A on gonadotropin (LH and FSH) release from cultured pituitary cells of immature female rats as well as mature female rats (ovariectomized and ovariectomized and estradiol treated rats).

MATERIAL AND METHODS: The effect of 0.1 nM and 100 nM orexin A on LH and FSH release from anterior pituitary cells after 1 h of incubation was examined in immature female rats (IM) as well as mature female rats (ovariectomized – M/OVX; and ovariectomized and estradiol treated – M/OVX+E2) rats. The concentration of LH and FSH in medium was determined by RIA method.

RESULTS: Orexin A at a dose of 0.1 nM and 100 nM significantly stimulated LH secretion in IM group. In M/OVX group release of LH was inhibited by OxA only in higher dose (100 nM). No effect of orexin A on FSH secretion was found.

CONCLUSIONS: OxA may directly modulate LH secretion from cultured pituitary cells and it has the contradictory effect on LH release in immature and ovariectomized mature female rats.

INTRODUCTION

Orexin A (OxA), also known as Hypocretin 1, is a peptide synthesized mainly, but not solely, by neurons which perikarya are located in the lateral hypothalamus (de Lecea et al. 1998; Sakurai et al. 1998). These neurons form an extensive system in the central nervous system (Kukkonen et al. 2002).

Orexin A acts through two different G-protein coupled receptors, OX1R and OX2R. The binding properties of these receptors are partially different. OX1R is highly selective for OxA, whereas OX2R is a receptor that binds both orexins, OxA and orexin B (Sakurai et al. 1998). Orexin receptors presence has been demonstrated in various areas of the brain and peripheral tissues e.g. pituitary.
and ovary (Date et al. 2000; Voisin et al. 2003; Sakurai 2005; Silveyra et al. 2007a; Silveyra et al. 2007b). Such a wide occurrence of OxA and its receptors suggests the pleiotropic effects of this peptide. The first known function of OxA was to stimulate the process of food intake and energy expenditure (Sakurai et al. 1998). Orexin A was also shown to participate in regulating the sleep-wake rhythm and locomotor activity (Ohno & Sakurai 2008; de Lecea & Sutcliffe 2005; Sakurai 2007). The influence of OxA on the regulation of tropic hormones secretion by influencing the level on the hypothalamus and pituitary also appears to be significant (López et al. 2010). Orexinergic fibres have been shown to have connections with about 80% of GnRH neurons, and that approximately 85% of GnRH neurons express both types of orexin receptors (Campbell et al. 2003). This may indicate the possibility of direct influence of OxA on these neurons. On the other hand, orexin expression was found in the pituitary (Date et al. 2000). The presence of orexin receptors in the anterior pituitary was also demonstrated (Blanco et al. 2001; Jöhren et al. 2003; Silveyra et al. 2007b). These data may suggest that orexin acts on the pituitary gland as a hormone, in addition to the modulatory action of OxA at the hypothalamus.

Several reports have demonstrated that OxA plays a regulatory role in the reproductive axis. It was found that intracerebroventricular administration of orexin in steroid primed ovarietomized (OVX) rats stimulated LH secretion (Pu et al. 1998) but suppressed LH secretion in unprimed OVX rats (Tamura et al. 1999). It has been reported that the activity of orexin system in the hypothalamus, pituitary and ovaries was associated with hormonal milieu of estrous cycle (Silveyra et al. 2007a; b).

It is also known that sexual maturation process is associated with increased pulsatile secretion of GnRH. GnRH secreted from nerve endings in the median eminence of the hypothalamus, are the main stimulator of the transcriptional activity of genes encoding gonadotropin subunits and their release from the pituitary (Gajewska 2006). Reaching sexual maturity is associated with an increased frequency of pulsatile GnRH secretion. However, the mechanism of control of its secretion during puberty is complex and remains unclear (Terasawa & Fernandez 2001; Ojeda et al. 2006).

An analysis of the published data indicates that orexin A may modulate the activity of GnRH neurons and gonadotropin receptors – secreting pituitary cells (Silveyra et al. 2010). GnRH neuronal activity and the synthesis and secretion of LH and FSH from the pituitary depends not only on the effects of neuropeptides secreted in the CNS, but may also be associated with the degree of sexual maturity and the hormonal status. In the literature, there is no study in vitro (with the use of primary cultures of pituitary cells), analyzing the influence of orexin A on the secretion of both gonadotropic hormones (LH and FSH) depending on the degree of maturity.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the direct effect of orexin A on gonadotropin (LH and FSH) release from cultured pituitary cells in immature female rats as well as mature female rats (ovariectomized and ovarietomized and estradiol treated rats).

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The study was conducted on female Wistar rats from Laboratory Animal Science in Warsaw. Animals were accustomed for 7 days under controlled conditions to temperature (23 ± 1°C) and lighting (LD 14:10); the light was switched on at 06:00. Three specimens of rats were kept in standard cages, with constant access to water and standard pelleted food (Murigran, Poland). All studies were approved by the 1st Warsaw Ethic Committee for Experiments on Animals.

The following experimental models were applied: 1) IM – sexually immature animals, with naturally low levels of endogenous estrogens (age 25 days, with body weight range from 90 to 110 g) and M – sexually mature females (age 3 months, with body weight range form 220 to 260 g): 2) M/OVX – ovarietomized females treated subcutaneously (sc.) 200 µl of oil for 3 consecutive days preceding the relevant experience; 3) M/OVX + E2 – ovarietomized females injected sc. a suspension of 17-β estradiol in a dose of 20 µg/200 µl oil / rat for 3 consecutive days preceding the relevant experience.

Removal of the gonads is a procedure allowing the elimination of endogenous estrogens of ovarian origin. Subcutaneous injections of estradiol or oil for OVX animals allowed the unification of the estrogen level within the groups.

The procedures of pituitary tissue dissociation, cell preparation and cell culture were based on previously described methods (Baranowska et al. 2003). Pituitary glands were obtained from female rats that had been anesthetized by ketamine injections and decapitated. The glands were washed twice with DMEM supplemented with 2 nM glutamine, 0.3% fetal calf serum (FCS), antibiotic/antimycotic, and immediately processed for culturing. They were enzymatically dispersed by 15 min incubation at 37°C in 0.1% trypsin in DMEM followed by 15 min incubation in DMEM supplemented with 10% FCS and antibiotic / antimycotic containing 0.1% DNase I (deoxyribonuclease I from bovine pancreas, type IV). The glands were then mechanically dispersed through a sieve (50 mesh) and the cells washed twice with culture medium DMEM-FCS, collecting them by centrifugation for 15 min at 2000 rpm. The pituitary cells were counted in a hemocytometer and assessed for viability by trypan blue exclusion (>97%). The cell suspension was diluted to 0.5×10⁶ cells/ml, placed in 24-well culture plates and incubated for up to 48 h in a humidified atmosphere of 95% air and 5% CO₂ at 37°C.

To examine effects of OxA, doses in concentrations 0.1 nM and 100 nM were added and after 1 hour the
medium was collected. The control groups were cultured without OxA. The medium was stored at –20°C until analyses for LH and FSH were carried out.

All media and chemicals were purchased from Sigma (Sigma Aldrich, Germany) and culture dishes were from Nunc (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Denmark).

Concentrations of LH and FSH in samples of cell culture medium were measured using RIA utilizing reagents prepared by Dr A.F. Parlow and provided by the NIDDK (Bethesda, MD, USA). Values were expressed in relation to LH-RP-3 and FSH-RP-2 reference standards, respectively. The limit of detection varied for LH was 0.1 ng/ml and for FSH was 1.25 ng/ml. All measurements were made twice in one assay for each hormone. Intra-assay coefficients of variation (CV) were <7%. The data are presented as the mean ± SD.

Statistical analyses were done using Statsoft Statistica 7.1 PL for Windows. Initially all groups of data were tested for normality by the Shapiro-Wilk’s test. Statistical differences between the groups were determined by nonparametric Kruskall-Wallis test followed by the Mann-Whitney U test. Differences in mean values were considered significant if $p \leq 0.05$.

RESULTS

In the control group M/OVX LH and FSH release was significantly higher as compared with IM control group ($p \leq 0.0001$ and $p \leq 0.0001$ respectively) and M/OVX+E2 control group ($p \leq 0.001$ and $p \leq 0.01$ respectively).

In IM group adding orexin A to the medium resulted in a significant increase of LH by 110% ($p \leq 0.001$) at a dose of 0.1 nM OxA and about 98% ($p \leq 0.01$) after administration of 100 nM OxA, compared to the control group. However, no changes in FSH were observed.

In M/OVX group secretion of LH was inhibited by OxA. Orexin A in a dose of 0.1 nM resulted in a reduction of LH level by 18%, and in a dose of 100 nM by 33% ($p \leq 0.01$) compared with control. There was no significant change in the secretion of FSH after incubation with 0.1 nM of orexin A, while the tendency to inhibition of FSH secretion from the cells after 100 nM OxA was visible.

In M/OVX+E2 group no effect of OxA on gonadotropins secretion was observed. Data were presented in Table 1.

DISCUSSION

Pituitary glands for in vitro studies were collected from animals with different estrogen milieu. The cells from IM, M/OVX or M/OVX+E2 differed due to the hormonal environment from which they were collected. The results of the presented study have shown that OxA stimulates LH secretion from the pituitary cells of female immature rats. A reversed tendency of change, namely inhibition of LH secretion from pituitary cells in the presence of OxA was observed in animals M/OVX, while pituitary cells collected from animals with higher estrogen milieu (M/OVX+E2) did not change the secretion of LH and FSH under the influence of OxA.

Data from the literature showed that orexins are expressed in the rat and human anterior pituitary (Date et al. 2000; Blanco et al. 2001). Expression of both types of orexin receptors have also been shown in the pituitary gland of mammals, which indicates the possibility of direct influence of OxA on pituitary cells (Date et al. 2000; Blanco et al. 2001). Furthermore it was found that there is more OX1R than OX2R (Blanco et al. 2001) in the anterior lobe of pituitary, which suggests a greater importance of OxA in the regulation of pituitary hormones secretion. It was observed changes in the orexin receptor expression which could connect with the reproductive cycle (Russell et al. 2001; Silveyra et al. 2009; Kamiński et al. 2010). The link between quantitative changes and the hormonal state of animals indicates an important role of estrogens as the regulators of the expression of orexin receptors. In rat hypothalamus, OX1R mRNA expression was shown to be significantly higher during late proestrus than at metaestrus (Wang et al. 2003). The highest level of expression of mRNA for the OxA and OX1R was observed in the proestrus phase (Silveyra et al. 2007b). In contrast, no differences in the mRNA levels of OxA and OX2R were observed in hypothalami of control, gonadectomized, and steroid-treated female or male rats (Johren et al. 2001; Johren et al. 2003). In ovariectomized rats the level of mRNA OX1R was significantly higher than in the sham operated animals, and the administration of estradiol inhibited the expression of mRNA for OX1R. The OX1R mRNA level in the pituitary was the highest in females O VX (Johren et al. 2003). Furuta et al. (2002) found that suppressive action of orexin A on pulsatile LH secre-

Tab. 1. Effects of orexin A (OxA) on LH and FSH release from primary culture of anterior pituitary cells in immature female rats (IM), in ovarioectomy treated, mature, rats (M/OVX) and in ovarioectomy treated mature estrogen treated rats (M/OVX+E2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hormones [ng/ml]</th>
<th>IM</th>
<th>OxA</th>
<th>OxA</th>
<th>OxA</th>
<th>OVA</th>
<th>OVA</th>
<th>OVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>control</td>
<td>0.1 nM</td>
<td>100 nM</td>
<td>0.1 nM</td>
<td>100 nM</td>
<td>0.1 nM</td>
<td>100 nM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LH</td>
<td>8.06±1.37</td>
<td>15.0±2.32***</td>
<td>14.2±2.56**</td>
<td>34.7±4.09</td>
<td>25.1±3.49</td>
<td>24.1±5.01**</td>
<td>15.7±4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSH</td>
<td>2.34±0.23</td>
<td>2.24±0.60</td>
<td>2.20±0.60</td>
<td>6.89±1.46</td>
<td>5.94±0.60</td>
<td>5.51±0.48</td>
<td>5.82±1.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 × 10^5 cells/well were incubated in medium (control), with 0.1 nM or 100 nM OxA for 1 h (n = 8 wells/treatment group). Data are presented as mean ± SD. **p≤0.01; ***p≤0.001 compared to the appropriate control group.

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tion is potentiated by low doses of estrogen. It has been known that estrogens play an important role in the regulation of GnRH – gonadotropin axis (Christian & Moenter 2010). However, the mechanism of inhibitory and stimulatory influence of estrogen on GnRH secretion and biosynthesis is controversial (Herbison 1998).

Ferguson & Samson (2003) in in vitro studies of the impact of OxA administered in doses ranging from 0.01 pM to 100 nM, on the secretion of LH in primary cultures of pituitary cells of mature cyclic female rats have shown no statistically significant changes in the secretion of the studied hormones. While the studies carried out on immature porcine pituitary cells demonstrated a dose-dependent (0.1–100 nM) stimulation of LH secretion by OxB in a primary culture (Barb & Matteri 2005).

In our study we did not show differential activity of OxA at low and high dose, although research in Chinese hamster ovary cell line (CHO) has been showed that stimulation of orexin receptors is dependent on the dose of the peptide and leads to different OxA signal transduction (Johansson et al. 2008). At the lowest OxA concentrations diacylglycerol (DAG) was mainly generated as phospholipase D activity. Whereas higher doses of OxA resulted in the hydrolysis of PIP2 and release of both DAG and 1,4,5-triphosphatidylinositol (IP3). Thus, activation of OXR by OxA was combined by phospholipases D and C activities (Johansson et al. 2008).

Studies on the effects of OxA on pituitary cells should be continued with a focus on the stage of maturity, estrogen status and signal transduction pathways.

In conclusion, the results of our study revealed that OxA may directly modulate LH secretion from cultured pituitary cells and it has the contradictory effect on LH release in immature and ovariecromized mature female rats.

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