From head to tail it’s a 2 way street for neuro-immune communication

How to cite:


© 2014 The Authors

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/

Version: Proof

Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:
http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.4161/21624046.2014.959425

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk
From head to tail it’s a 2 way street for neuro-immune communication

A Anderson and R McMullan

QUERY SHEET

This page lists questions we have about your paper. The numbers displayed at left can be found in the text of the paper for reference. In addition, please review your paper as a whole for correctness.

Q1. Au: Please confirm you have submitted your publication costs form.
Q2. Au: Please provide full reference for article this commentary is referring to.

TABLE OF CONTENTS LISTING

The table of contents for the journal will list your paper exactly as it appears below:

From head to tail it’s a 2 way street for neuro-immune communication
A Anderson and R McMullan
A. Anderson and R. McMullan*
Department of Life Sciences; Imperial College London; South Kensington Campus; London, UK

Keywords: G proteins, immune response, infection, sensory neurons, serotonin

Abbreviations: C. elegans, Caenorhabditis elegans; M. nematophilum, Microbacterium nematophilum; GPCR, G-protein coupled receptor; CaMKII, Calcium/calmodulin-dependent protein kinase II; DCV, Dense Core Vesicle; NK cell, Natural Killer cell; tph-1, tryptophan hydroxylase-1

*Correspondence to: R. McMullan; Email: r.mcmullan@imperial.ac.uk

Submitted: 05/07/2014
Revised: 06/03/2014
Accepted: 06/25/2014

http://dx.doi.org/10.4161/21624046.2014.959425

Commentary on; Serotonergic Chemosensory Neurons Modify the C. elegans Immune Response by Regulating G-Protein Signaling in Epithelial Cells.

www.landesbioscience.com Worm e959425-1

Animals need to be able to rapidly and effectively respond to changes in their external and internal environment. To achieve this, the nervous and immune systems need to coordinate their responses, integrating multiple cues including presence of potential pathogens, and availability of food. In our recent study we demonstrate that signaling by sensory neurons in the head using the classical neurotransmitter serotonin can negatively regulate the rectal epithelial immune response upon infection of C. elegans with the naturally occurring bacterial pathogen Microbacterium nematophilum (M. nematophilum). The complicated nature of the mammalian brain and immune system has made it difficult to identify the molecular mechanisms mediating these interactions. With its simple, well described, nervous system and a rapidly growing understanding of its immune system, C. elegans has emerged as an excellent model to study the mechanisms by which animals recognize pathogens and coordinate behavioral and cellular immune responses to infection.

Chemosensory Neuronal Signaling Acts Upstream of Epithelial Immune Responses

C. elegans commonly encounters many environmental hazards including pathogenic bacteria. In order to respond appropriately, the worm must integrate multiple environmental cues including food availability and pathogenicity to maximize its chances of survival. What are the molecular mechanisms that allow this finely tuned integration of information from both the nervous and immune systems? Previous work has shown that neuronal signaling can profoundly affect susceptibility to infection by mediating pathogen avoidance. Mutations in the neuronally expressed G protein coupled receptor (GPCR) npr-1 gene, which encodes a homolog of the neuropeptide Y receptor, can mediate the behavioral immune response of avoidance of a number of pathogens including Pseudomonas aeruginosa. In comparison, our recent work has shown that during M. nematophilum infection, signaling via the neurotransmitter serotonin can suppress the cellular immune response in the rectal epithelium (Fig. 1A).

How does neuronal signaling influence the immune response? The amphid chemosensory neuron pair ADF, which are exposed to the external environment, have the ability to modulate behavioral and cellular immune responses to Pseudomonas aeruginosa and M. nematophilum. These responses rely on the regulation of the biosynthetic enzyme tryptophan hydroxylase-1 (tph-1) in ADF neurons. TPH-1 is the rate-limiting enzyme in the synthesis of serotonin, and animals carrying a putative null allele for this gene are deficient for serotonin production and signaling. Transcription of tph-1 in ADF is regulated by a number of conditions including food quality, availability and heat stress. Our work shows that the cellular immune response to M. nematophilum is negatively regulated by tph-1 expression in ADF neurons and that this acts via the serotonin receptors SER-1 and SER-7 to regulate signaling by the G-protein goa-1 (Gto) in the rectal epithelium (Fig. 1A). M. nematophilum innately repels C. elegans and this behavioral immune response is not affected by mutations in tph-1. Using a transcriptional reporter we found that exposure to this pathogen does not increase tph-1 expression in ADF neurons.
expression in ADF.\textsuperscript{1} In comparison, in response to contact with the pathogen \textit{Pseudomonas aeruginosa}, \textit{C. elegans} undergoes a behavioral immune response, learning within hours to avoid the smell of \textit{Pseudomonas}. In this case, \textit{Pseudomonas} ingestion increases intracellular calcium, which then increases \textit{tph-1} transcription and the levels of serotonin in ADF.\textsuperscript{9} This response is cell-autonomously regulated by the \textit{C. elegans} homolog of calcium/calmodulin-dependent protein kinase II (CaMKII), UNC-43.\textsuperscript{9} This suggests that the same gene in the same chemosensory neurons can show differential
regulation in response to different pathogens, illustrating the precise and subtle levels of control required.

Dense Core Vesicle Release and the Immune Response

Unlike small synaptic vesicles, which are localized to synaptic zones, dense core vesicles (DCVs) are diffusely scattered throughout the nerve terminal. DCVs release a number of bioactive molecules including serotonin, and neuropeptides, many of which influence the immune response. Reducing DCV release by mutations in unc-31 (the calcium activator protein required for DCV secretion) results in increased resistance to Pseudomonas aeruginosa infections, suggesting that molecules released from DCV’s suppress this innate immune response. Different DCV cargoes are required to modulate the response to different pathogens. Our work has shown that exogenous serotonin suppresses the rectal epithelial immune response to infection with M. nematophilum, while reductions in serotonin synthesis results in an increased immune response. In comparison, during Pseudomonas aeruginosa infections, loss of serotonin has no effect on cellular immunity, while mutations in the neuropeptide processing enzymes egl-3 and egl-21 result in enhanced pathogen resistance. This is due to the action of the insulin-like neuropeptide INS-7, acting as a DAF-2 agonist to negatively regulate resistance to Pseudomonas infection.

Further DCV cargoes have also been implicated in modulating the immune response. Zugasti et al. have demonstrated that TGF-β signaling from the nervous system promotes expression of Caenacins peptides in the epidermis following infection with the fungal pathogen Drechmara coniospora. Recent work by the Aballay lab has shown that during Pseudomonas infection OCTR-1, a putative catecholamine receptor whose ligand octopamine, is the invertebrate equivalent of noradrenaline, is required in ASH and ASI neurons to negatively regulate p38 MAPK and unfolded protein response in pharyngeal and intestinal cells (Fig. 1B). However, whether octopamine acts as the OCTR-1 ligand to mediate this effect on the immune response is currently unclear. Another monoamine neurotransmitter found in DCVs is dopamine. Although direct evidence that this neurotransmitter can modulate the immune response is lacking, dopaminergic neurons have been shown to play a role in enabling the conditioning of C. elegans to enteropathogenic E. coli so that they are more resistant to infection upon a second exposure (Fig. 1C).

Although there is strong evidence that molecules released from DCVs modulate the cellular immune response, the question of whether neurotransmitter release from small synaptic vesicles can also affect innate immune function remains to be addressed. The availability of C. elegans mutants in enzymes required to synthesize neurotransmitters provides an excellent starting point to address this question.

Neuronal Signaling to Immune Cells; A Direct or Indirect Action?

One key question is how signals originating in neurons in the head are transmitted to distant targets such as the rectal epithelium or intestine. During M. nematophilum infection serotonin synthesized and released from ADF chemo感受性 neurons in the head acts via GOA-1 to modulate the response of rectal epithelial cells in the tail. Although ADF forms synapses with 17 interneurons and sensory neurons, as well as forming gap junctions with 2 additional sensory neurons, it is known to act downstream of serotonin. GOA-1 expressed on cholinergic motor neurons in the ventral nerve cord, suggesting that serotonin does indeed act indirectly on GOA-1 in cholinergic motor neurons. Similarly, serotonin may act indirectly on GOA-1 to modulate the immune response in the rectal epithelium. Our worked defined at least SER-1 and SER-7 receptors as playing a role in modulating the epithelial immune response. However, in the absence of infection, the reported expression for SER-1 and SER-7 places neither receptor in the rectal epithelium, suggesting that their action on the epithelium is likely to be indirect.

A Conserved Network of G Proteins Mediate Neurotransmission and Epithelial Immunity

Locomotion in C. elegans is dependent upon a network of G-proteins, including EGL-30(Goq) and GOA-1(Goα) which act antagonistically in cholinergic motor neurons to regulate acetylcholine release. Loss of egl-30 results in reduced acetylcholine release and locomotion. Animals lacking goa-1 show increased release and movement, as well as being resistant to the enhanced slowing on food response mediated by serotonin, suggesting this response is mediated by goa-1. Genetic data suggests that GOA-1 acts parallel to or upstream of EGL-30 in locomotion. In 2012, we showed that the immune response to M. nematophilum in the
rectal epithelium requires the EGL-30 (Gαq)-UNC-73(TRIO)-RHO-1 (RhoA) signaling pathway. Our most recent work shows that GOA-1 signaling acts antagonistically to this signaling pathway in the rectal epithelium, acting upstream of, or in parallel to, EGL-30. This demonstrates that the same conserved G-proteins can mediate different responses in different tissues.

**Neuro-Immune Signaling in Mammalian Systems**

The concept of neuro-immune communication is not restricted to *C. elegans*.

Humans undergoing psychological stress show changes in immune measures and are known to become more susceptible to new infections or reactivation of a latent infection. Clinical depression is associated with changes in cellular immunity, including changes in lymphocyte proliferation and natural killer (NK) cell activity. In mammals both the innate and adaptive immune systems show interactions with the nervous system. Mammalian immune cells express receptors for neurotransmitters, including serotonin, and can be influenced by neuronal signaling. Serotonin is released in response to injury and pro-inflammatory signals and many immune cells express receptors for serotonin including dendritic cells, mast cells and macrophages. Treating T-cells with exogenous serotonin can inhibit proliferation and promote T-cell activation. Serotonin can also act induce mast cell degranulation and proliferation of NK cells. Dopamine is also implicated in mediating immune responses in mammals. Induction of dopamine release has been shown to suppress systemic inflammation and improve survival in a mouse model of sepsis.

Evidence is also accumulating that this communication is bidirectional and that the immune system can also modulate neuronal signaling. In response to infection, mammalian immune cells can produce neurotransmitters, cytokines and neurotrophic factors that influence the nervous system and can lead to the development of sickness syndrome and depression. This bidirectional communication means that dysfunction in the nervous system can have a significant impact on the immune system and vice versa. Indeed analysis of people with the autoimmune condition rheumatoid arthritis reveals an increased incidence of depression.

The role of the immune response in regulating neuronal function is yet to be explored in *C. elegans*. However, detailed characterization of the neuronal circuits underlying behavior, coupled with our growing understanding of *C. elegans* immunity, provides an excellent starting point for this work.

**Future Perspectives**

Our recent publication together with previous data highlights the profound interrelationship between the nervous and immune systems required for optimal survival. Balancing the inputs of the 2 systems is complex. For example, when food is scarce expending resources mounting an immune response may not always be the most appropriate response. Likewise, mutants defective in DVC secretion are better at combating an opportunistic infection but this often accompanies by defects in locomotion that would likely prove detrimental to survival in their natural environment. As classical neurotransmitters become recognized as immunomodulators, it will be interesting to determine whether synaptic vesicle morphology and serotonin biosynthesis in *C. elegans* elicits a serotonin-synthesis mutant. In mammals both the innate and adaptive immune systems have the opportunity to provide an excellent starting point for this work.

**Funding**

AA and RM are funded by a Wellcome Trust Career Development Fellowship to RM.

**References**

13. Kawli T, Tan MW. Neuroendocrine signals modulate the innate immunity of Caenorhabditis elegans through interplay between the nervous and immune systems in the future.

Worm Volume 0 Issue 0


18. Nutrith S, Segalar L, Kaplan JM. Serotonin inhibition of synaptic transmission: Galphal(0) decreases the abundance of UNC-13 at release sites. Neuron 1999; 24:231-42; PMID:10677040; http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0896-6273(00)80835-1


