

Dopamine Receptor Gene Expression in the Human Medial Temporal Lobe

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The distributions of the messenger RNA molecules encoding the five known dopamine receptors have been determined in the medial temporal lobe of postmortem human brain. All five receptor mRNAs are present in temporal lobe structures, although their distributions are heterogeneous. The D₁-like receptors, D₁ and D₅, have strikingly dissimilar distributions. D₁ receptor mRNA is abundant in temporal neocortex but is rare elsewhere. D₅ receptor message, however, is seen in the hippocampus, subicular complex, and in temporal cortex. The D₂-like receptors have similar distributions: D₂, D₃, and D₄ receptor mRNAs are all identifiable in the hippocampal

formation and in the cortical regions of the medial temporal lobe. Distinct patterns of relative regional concentrations for each message are observed, however, suggesting a neuroanatomical substrate for potential differences in dopaminergic regulation within discrete regions of the medial temporal lobe. These results provide a description of the distribution of these receptor mRNAs in normal humans and suggest multiple levels of complexity as well as regulation of the medial temporal lobe dopamine projection. [Neuropsychopharmacology 10:239–248, 1994]

KEY WORDS: Dopamine receptors; Messenger RNA; Hippocampus; Subiculum; Entorhinal; Perirhinal; Cerebral cortex

The medial temporal lobe is a complex structure, comprising the hippocampal formation and several distinct cortical areas. This region of the brain has been implicated in a number of higher functions including memory, stress response, and affective modulation. Further,

several of these neuroanatomical structures, most notably the hippocampus and the entorhinal cortex, have been implicated in the pathophysiology of schizophrenia by converging lines of evidence including neuropathological and neurochemical data, animal models, and theoretical arguments (Schmajuk 1987; Altshuler et al. 1990; Krieckhaus et al. 1992; Benes et al. 1991; Lipska et al. 1992).

Dopamine has also been consistently implicated in the pathophysiology of schizophrenia, as most anti-psychotic medications exert their effects within the dopamine system. The dopaminergic dysfunction is thought to involve the mesocorticolimbic dopamine system, originating in the ventral tegmental area of the midbrain, which projects to a number of more rostral cortical and limbic regions, including the medial temporal lobe structures.

The brain dopamine systems have recently been found to be considerably more complex than previously appreciated. Five dopamine receptor subtypes have now been cloned. These receptors all appear to belong to the superfamily of seven transmembrane domain,

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G-protein coupled receptors. The five dopamine receptors cluster into two distinct groups: a D₁-like and a D₂-like family. The D₁-like dopamine receptors consist of the D₁ and the D₅ receptors (Dearry et al. 1990; Zhou et al. 1990; Sunahara et al. 1990; Sunahara et al. 1991; Grandy et al. 1991). These two receptors share similar pharmacological profiles, although they have distinct anatomical distributions (Mansour et al. 1991; Meador-Woodruff et al. 1991, 1992; Fremeau et al. 1991; Mengod et al. 1991; Weiner et al. 1991; Tiberi et al. 1991). The D₂-like family of dopamine receptors consists of the D₂, D₃, and D₄ receptors (Van Tol et al. 1991; Grandy et al. 1989; Giros et al. 1990). These three receptors share a number of common features, including the presence of introns within their coding regions which results in a number of distinct isoforms. These three receptors have high affinities for a number of dopaminergic antagonist drugs with antipsychotic properties, although each receptor subtype has some unique pharmacological features: for example, the D₄ receptor has a particularly high affinity for the atypical neuroleptic clozapine (Van Tol et al. 1991). The three D₂-like receptors differ considerably in terms of their anatomical distributions in the rat brain (Meador-Woodruff et al. 1989; Sokoloff et al. 1992; O'Malley et al. 1992; Najlerahim et al. 1989; Weiner and Brann 1989; Mengod et al. 1989; Bouthenet et al. 1991; Landwehrmeyer et al. 1993): the D₂ receptor appears to be expressed in most dopaminergic regions of the brain, including motor and limbic structures. The D₃ and D₄ receptors, however, are enriched in limbic system components and are relatively rare in the motor system; this finding may explain the clinical observation of a relative lack of extrapyramidal side effects caused by the atypical antipsychotics. What is particularly interesting about the neurochemical anatomy of the dopamine systems is that the single area of the rat brain that has been demonstrated to express all five of the dopamine receptors is the hippocampal formation.

Both dopamine and the medial temporal lobe have been implicated in the pathophysiology of schizophrenia. Further, it appears that in the rat the dopaminergic innervation of structures within the medial temporal lobe is particularly rich and complex. Because of these considerations, the purpose of the present work was to examine the nature of dopamine receptor gene expression in the medial temporal lobe of normal human brain by determining the location and concentrations of the messenger RNA molecules encoding each of the five dopamine receptors in the various structures in the medial temporal lobe. This descriptive study was designed in anticipation of subsequent experiments involving dopamine receptor gene expression in postmortem brain tissue from schizophrenic subjects.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Tissue Samples

Tissue samples were excised from the brains of three individuals at the time of autopsy, as authorized by the Chief Medical Examiner, State of North Carolina. These individuals were all males (ages 19, 25, and 41 years) who died suddenly (two were homicide victims and sustained gunshot wounds to the chest, and the third suffered from an acute myocardial infarction). All were free of significant chronic medical illness or psychiatric disease and all were screened free of drugs of abuse at the time of death by toxicological analysis. Postmortem interval times were 10, 10.5, and 12 hours.

Blocks of tissue (1 cm thick) were removed in a coronal plane from the medial temporal lobe. These blocks originated from the rostral half of the hippocampal formation. These brain samples were immediately frozen on powdered dry ice and stored at -80°C until the time of further processing. Tissue blocks were cryostat-sectioned and 15 μm sections were thaw-mounted onto poly-L-lysine-subbed microscope slides (2 \times 3 inch). Slides were stored at -80°C until the time of study.

In Situ Hybridization

In situ hybridization was performed with riboprobes that were generated from constructs of fragments of specific cDNAs encoding each of the human dopamine receptors, which had been subcloned into a member of the pGEM series of vectors. The human D₁ receptor probe was a 400 base riboprobe corresponding to the region of the human D₁ receptor spanning transmembrane domains II to V, containing the second intracytosolic loop. The D₂ receptor probe was a 446 bp riboprobe directed to the region encoding the third intracytosolic loop and transmembrane domains VI and VII of the human D₂ receptor, thus equally recognizing both the short and long isoforms of this receptor. Both of these probes have been previously described in more detail (Meador-Woodruff et al. 1993). The D₃ probe was a 536 bp fragment of the human D₃ receptor (bases 727 to 1262) corresponding to transmembrane domains V to VII, including the third cytosolic loop. The D₄ receptor probe was a 236 bp portion of the human D₄ receptor (bases 1532 to 1767) and directed to the region of human D₄ receptor mRNA encoding transmembrane domain IV and the third intracytosolic loop. The D₅ riboprobe was a 900 bp fragment directed against the third intracytosolic loop and transmembrane domains VI and VII (bases 900 to 1799).

Sections were removed from frozen storage and im-

mersed in 4% formaldehyde for 60 minutes. These fixed sections were then treated for in situ hybridization as previously described (Meador-Woodruff et al. 1991, 1993). Sections were hybridized with [³⁵S]-labeled riboprobes (5 to 20 × 10⁶ dpm/section) in 75% formamide hybridization buffer and incubated overnight at 55°C. Following hybridization, sections were treated with RNase A and then progressively more stringent rinses culminating in a 60 minute wash in 0.5 × SSC at 55°C. The slides were then dehydrated in graded alcohols and apposed to Kodak X-OMAT film for 5 to 40 days.

A series of technical control studies was performed to ensure the specificity of each riboprobe used in this study, as we have previously described (Mansour et al. 1990; Meador-Woodruff et al. 1991, 1993). Both "sense"-strand and RNase-pretreated "antisense"-labeled sections were run in parallel with "antisense"-labeled sections. Under the stringency conditions used in this study, specific hybridization was observed only in the "antisense"-labeled condition, except for faint labeling that was observed in the choroid plexus and the dentate gyrus for some of these probes (Figures 1 and 2).

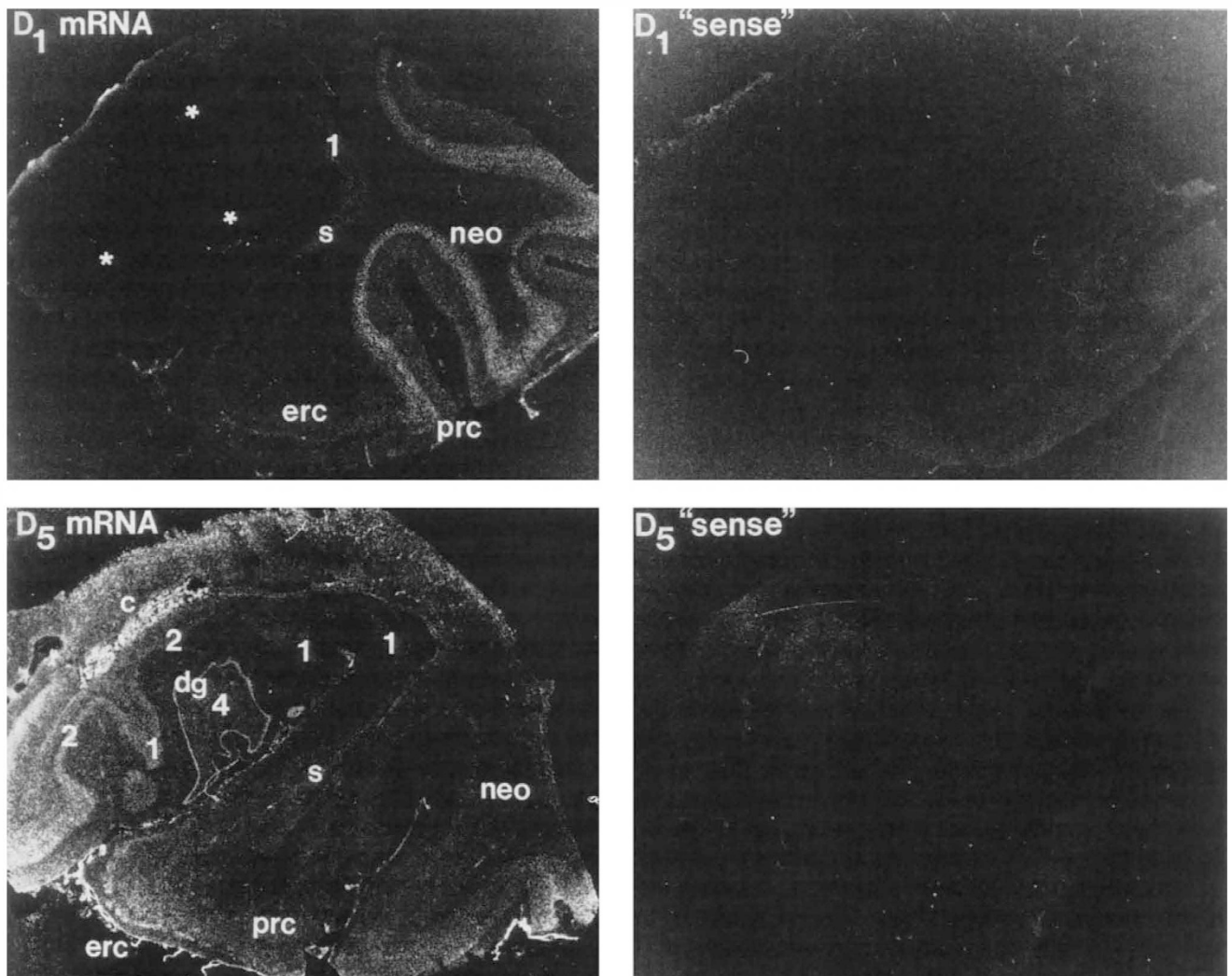


Figure 1. Distributions of the messenger RNAs encoding the D₁-like dopamine receptors (D₁ and D₅) in the human medial temporal lobe. Note the striking dissimilarities in the distributions of the mRNAs encoding the D₁ and D₅ receptors (left panels). Moderate levels of D₅ mRNA are seen in the granular cell layer of the dentate gyrus with lower levels seen throughout the pyramidal cell layer of CA1-CA4, the subiculum, and associated cortical regions. High levels of D₁ receptor mRNA are seen in the neocortex with a small amount in the subiculum and in CA1, and very little in the region of the dentate gyrus and the remaining CA subfields (area delineated with *). The right panels are matched "sense"-strand control images, revealing no significant hybridization. Abbreviations: dg, dentate gyrus; s, subicular complex; erc, entorhinal cortex; prc, perirhinal cortex; neo, neocortex; c, choroid plexus. CA1-4 are abbreviated with numerals (1 to 4).

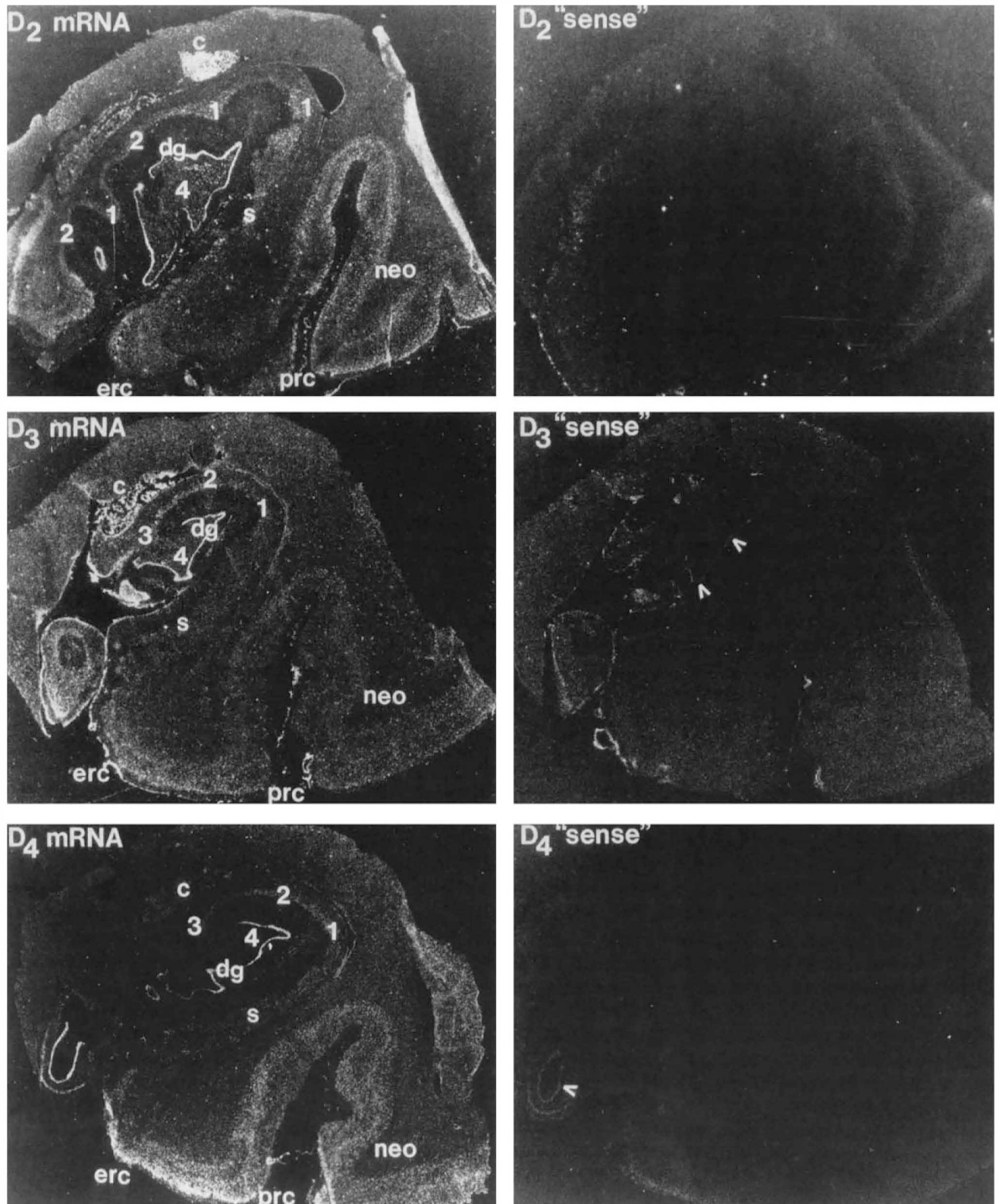


Figure 2. Distributions of the mRNAs encoding the D₂-like dopamine receptors (D₂, D₃, and D₄) in the human medial temporal lobe. Note the similarities in the distributions of these mRNAs (left panels); for all three, moderate levels of corresponding mRNA are seen in the granular cell layer of the dentate gyrus, with lower levels seen throughout the pyramidal cell layer of CA1-CA4, the subiculum, and associated cortical regions. These distributions are similar to what was observed for D₅ mRNA (Figure 1). The right panels are corresponding "sense"-strand control images revealing no significant hybridization except for faint, nonspecific labeling of the dentate gyrus for D₃ and D₄ (arrows). Abbreviations are the same as those in Figure 1.

Data Analysis

Films were digitized and optical densities in anatomical regions of interest were determined using quantitative densitometry. Regions of interest were identified from Nissl-stained slides that had been used for *in situ* hybridization. Mean optical density values were obtained for each region studied for each probe from multiple slides per subject. These values were averaged to provide a single value for each region and each probe for each subject. To express relative amounts of each message across all of the regions of interest, mean optical densities for each region were normalized to the mean optical density for the neocortex for each dopamine receptor probe.

RESULTS

The distributions of the mRNAs encoding the five dopamine receptors are demonstrated in Figures 1 and 2. D₁ receptor mRNA was concentrated primarily in deeper layers of the neocortex with moderate levels of expression in the perirhinal cortex, the subiculum, and in the pyramidal cell layer of CA1. Expression of this receptor message in other regions was extremely low; in some sections, faint labeling could be observed, but in others, no appreciable labeling could be discerned. The image in Figure 1 is representative of expression of this mRNA.

D₂ receptor mRNA was seen throughout the medial temporal lobe. The granular cell layer of the dentate gyrus exhibited the highest level of labeling. Other regions expressed low to moderate D₂ receptor mRNA expression. The pyramidal cell layers of CA1–CA4 all had modest levels of expression, as did the subiculum, including the presubiculum and the parasubiculum. Deep layers of entorhinal and perirhinal cortex had modest levels of expression, and both superficial and deep layers of temporal neocortex expressed this mRNA.

D₃, D₄, and D₅ receptor messages were noted to have quite similar distributions. Fairly high levels of expression of all were observed in the granular cell layer of the dentate gyrus with modest levels seen in the pyramidal cell layer of CA1–CA4 and somewhat lower levels in the subiculum. Both superficial and deep layers of entorhinal, perirhinal, and neocortical areas were faintly labeled.

Quantitation (as determined by optical density) of the relative abundances of each message in each anatomical subdivision was also performed; these results are summarized in Figure 3. Three general patterns of distribution of dopamine receptor mRNA across each region were observed. The first pattern was a D₁-specific distribution, which consisted of highest levels of mRNA expressed in the neocortex, with lowest lev-

els in CA2–CA4 and in the presubiculum. The second observed pattern was a distribution unique to D₂ receptor mRNA, in which all regions were noted to have similar levels of mRNA except the dentate gyrus, where higher levels were seen. The third pattern was seen for the D₃, D₄, and D₅ receptors. This pattern consisted of relatively higher levels of expression in the dentate gyrus, CA2, and the general area from the presubiculum through the entorhinal cortex. Interestingly, this pattern is generally opposite the D₁ pattern; areas of relative abundance of D₃, D₄, and D₅ receptor mRNAs correspond to those areas in which D₁ receptor message was relatively scarce.

For a variety of technical reasons, it is difficult to accurately compare relative concentrations between each message. Nonetheless, an estimate of relative concentration of each mRNA species in each region was also made by adjusting optical density readings for probe length, number of radioactively labeled bases, exposure time, and rate of radioactive decay. Based on these approximations it appears that D₂, D₄, and D₅ receptor mRNAs are about equimolar throughout the hippocampus, and D₃ receptor mRNA is two- to five-fold lower than these three messages. D₁ receptor mRNA is quite rare, being present in concentrations of five- to 20-fold lower than those of D₂, D₄, and D₅, and at least two- to three-fold lower than corresponding concentrations of D₃ receptor mRNA. On the other hand, in the temporal neocortex all five messages appear to be present at comparable levels within a factor of two or three.

DISCUSSION

These results indicate that the mRNAs encoding the five dopamine receptor messages are differentially expressed throughout the human medial temporal lobe. For the most part, D₂ receptor mRNA is expressed at constant levels throughout all of the structures surveyed in this work. D₃, D₄, and D₅ receptor messages are similarly distributed with relative enrichment in several areas, especially the dentate gyrus, CA2, the parasubiculum, and entorhinal cortex. D₁ receptor mRNA, however, is distributed in a unique pattern that is generally opposite the distributions of D₃, D₄, and D₅. Those areas that are relatively enriched in D₃, D₄, and D₅ receptor mRNAs are the areas that have a relative scarcity of D₁ receptor message and vice versa. This complementary distribution has also been reported when binding sites have been studied (Goldman-Rakic et al. 1990; Kohler et al. 1991a) and reveals that certain regions preferentially express certain classes of dopamine receptors. These data suggest region-specific differences in dopaminergic neurotransmission.

Dopamine is well-established as a neurotransmit-

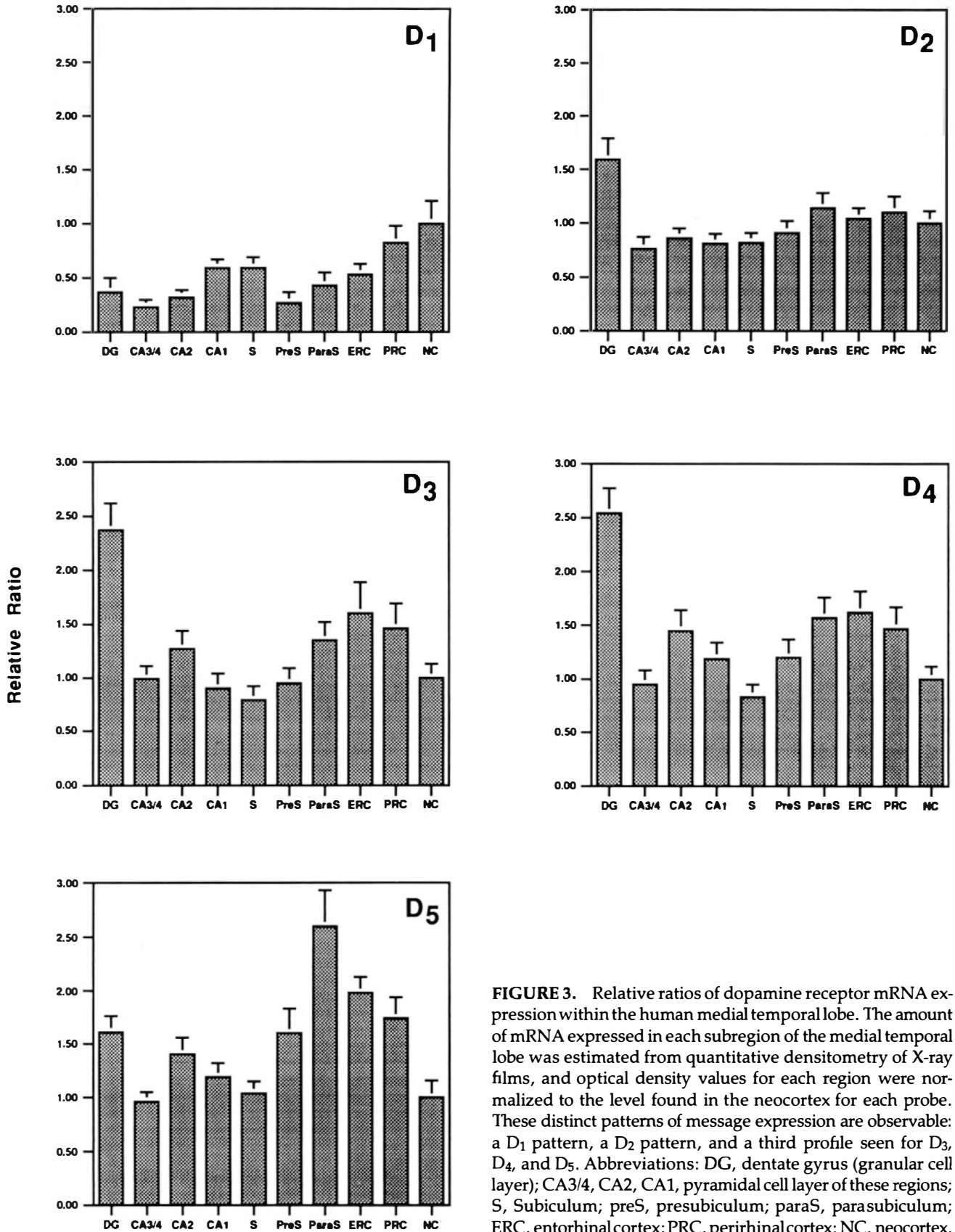


FIGURE 3. Relative ratios of dopamine receptor mRNA expression within the human medial temporal lobe. The amount of mRNA expressed in each subregion of the medial temporal lobe was estimated from quantitative densitometry of X-ray films, and optical density values for each region were normalized to the level found in the neocortex for each probe. These distinct patterns of message expression are observable: a D₁ pattern, a D₂ pattern, and a third profile seen for D₃, D₄, and D₅. Abbreviations: DG, dentate gyrus (granular cell layer); CA3/4, CA2, CA1, pyramidal cell layer of these regions; S, Subiculum; preS, presubiculum; paraS, parasubiculum; ERC, entorhinal cortex; PRC, perirhinal cortex; NC, neocortex.

ter in the medial temporal lobe, especially in the hippocampus and the entorhinal cortex (Ishikawa et al. 1982). The dopaminergic innervation of the medial temporal lobe originates in the midbrain, especially from the ventral tegmental area, but there are afferent fibers from the substantia nigra as well (Scatton et al. 1980; Ferraro et al. 1991). Both D₁- and D₂-like receptors appear to be located within the medial temporal lobe (Dewar and Reader 1989; Diop et al. 1988; Bruinink and Bischoff 1986; Bischoff et al. 1980), and both receptor subtypes appear to be functionally coupled to adenylate cyclase (Grilli et al. 1988). Further, both D₁- and D₂-like receptors have been associated with various electrophysiological properties of the hippocampus (Bernardo and Prince 1982; Pockett 1985; Malenka and Nicoll 1986; Gribkoff and Ashe 1984; Berretta et al. 1990; Yanagihashi et al. 1991; Smialowski and Bijak 1987, 1989), including long-term potentiation (Yanagihashi and Ishikawa 1992; Frey et al. 1989, 1990, 1991), and both have been implicated in the mediation of certain animal behaviors (Borker and Mascarenhas 1991; Packard and White 1989).

Anatomical demonstrations of dopaminergic innervation of the medial temporal lobe have also been performed using a variety of techniques (Fallon et al. 1978). Several studies have employed immunohistochemistry for tyrosine hydroxylase (TH) to demonstrate catecholamine-synthesizing axons projecting to the medial temporal lobe. The difficulty with this approach is that dopaminergic as well as adrenergic and noradrenergic fibers contain TH. Several innovative methods have attempted to resolve the adrenergic/noradrenergic from dopaminergic contributions to TH immunostaining. In one study, Baulac et al. (1986) lesioned the adrenergic/noradrenergic systems in the rat. Following these lesions, all remaining TH positive fibers should be dopaminergic. What was seen was rich dopaminergic innervation projecting to the entorhinal cortex as well as the subiculum and CA1. In another study, Samson et al. (1990) also stained for dopamine- β -hydroxylase (DBH), an enzyme specific to noradrenergic and adrenergic cells. By comparing TH-positive and dopamine- β -hydroxylase-positive fibers, they concluded that there was a rich dopaminergic innervation to the dentate gyrus, CA1, CA3, and the subiculum of the cynomolgus monkey.

The detailed distribution of dopamine receptor binding sites in the medial temporal lobe have been described. These results have tended to be rather discrepant, but both D₁ and D₂-like binding have been reported in most structures in this region. In the rat (Kohler et al. 1991a), D₁-like binding sites (as determined with SCH 23982, potentially labeling both D₁ and D₅ sites) were found in deeper layers of entorhinal cortex, parasubiculum, and in the CA subfields, par-

ticularly in the stratum lacunosum moleculare. Dawson et al. (1986), using a related ligand (SCH 23390, also potentially labeling both D₁ and D₅ sites), reported a similar distribution of D₁-like binding sites, primarily in the molecular layer of the dentate gyrus and in the CA subfields, but also in the subiculum. Kohler et al. (1991a) reported that D₂-like sites (determined with NCQ 298) were distributed in a complementary pattern to their demonstration of D₁-like sites; D₂-like binding was reported in more superficial layers of the entorhinal cortex and in the presubiculum but essentially absent from those areas with appreciable D₁-like binding. On the other hand, in a study using spiperone to label D₂-like receptors (D₂, D₃, and D₄ sites), Bruinink and Bischoff (1993) found significant labeling in the subiculum and in CA1 and CA2, and Bouthenet et al. (1987) reported significant D₂-like binding (with iodospiperone, primarily labeling D₂ and D₃ receptors) in the subiculum and in the stratum lacunosum moleculare of the CA subfields.

Dopamine receptor binding sites have also been demonstrated in the monkey (Kohler et al. 1991b) and human (Kohler et al. 1991b; Joyce et al. 1991) medial temporal lobe. These results have been variable with NCQ 298 binding (D₂-like) being found in the presubiculum and entorhinal cortex in both monkey and human, but when these same regions have been studied with epidepride, little binding was found. Epidepride binding was identified in the subiculum, CA3, and the dentate gyrus. In less comprehensive surveys, however, modest levels of both D₁-like (as determined by SCH 23390) and D₂-like (using CV 205-502) binding have been demonstrated in the dentate gyrus, CA1, and CA3 of both the rhesus monkey and human (Camps et al. 1990; Cortés et al. 1989).

Following the cloning of the five dopamine receptors, a number of studies were published reporting the distribution of the mRNAs encoding these receptors in the rat brain. The determination of the distribution of these mRNAs was particularly important for several reasons. There is currently a lack of specific ligands for most of these receptors, thus the identification of specific mRNAs is the only unambiguous method to resolve all five of the dopamine receptors. Additionally, the distribution of a given mRNA is distinct from the distribution of corresponding receptor binding sites. The mRNA encoding a receptor is seen only in the cell body that is associated with the receptor; the specific binding sites, however, may be distributed on a number of parts of a given cell including the cell body as well as axons and dendrites, which may be quite distant from the soma. Although the determination of both mRNA and binding sites in some ways provide complementary information, the determination of dopamine receptor mRNA distributions allows the identification of

specific dopaminoceptive cells. The consensus of a number of studies is that the only region that expresses all five of these receptor mRNAs is the hippocampal formation; D₂, D₃, D₄, and D₅ are all expressed throughout the hippocampal formation of the rat, primarily in the pyramidal cell layer of the hippocampus and in the granular cell layer of the dentate gyrus (Tiberi et al. 1991; Meador-Woodruff et al. 1989, 1992; Sokoloff et al. 1992; O'Malley et al. 1992; Najlerahim et al. 1989; Weiner and Brann 1989; Mengod et al. 1989; Bouthenet et al. 1991; Landwehrmeyer et al. 1993). D₁ receptor mRNA was found to be more limited in its distribution, being located predominantly in the ventral portion of the dentate gyrus (Mansour et al. 1991; Meador-Woodruff et al. 1991; Fremeau et al. 1991; Mengod et al. 1991; Weiner et al. 1991).

Perhaps due to the enormity of the task, comprehensive surveys of the distributions of dopamine receptor mRNAs in the human (as well as in monkeys) have been lacking. Because of the potential clinical implications of the dopaminergic regulation of the medial temporal lobe, as well as the codistribution of these five receptor messages in the rat hippocampal formation, we undertook this study to begin to describe the distributions of the five dopamine receptors in the human brain focusing on the temporal lobe structures.

Several features of the present findings are of interest. Similar to results previously reported in the rat brain, all five of the dopamine receptors appear to be expressed in this region of the human brain. Further, the expression of these genes appears somewhat similar in the human to that seen in the rat, especially the minimal distribution of D₁ receptor mRNA in the hippocampus relative to the mRNAs encoding the other four receptors (Mansour et al. 1991; Meador-Woodruff et al. 1991; Fremeau et al. 1991; Mengod et al. 1991; Weiner et al. 1991). These data are in reasonable agreement, but not complete agreement, with previous binding results. There are a number of possible explanations for such discrepancies. Foremost, the distributions of binding sites and corresponding mRNA for a given receptor do not necessarily overlap, as noted above. In the hippocampus, for example, the cell bodies synthesizing the D₂ receptor are primarily located in the pyramidal cell layer, whereas the associated binding sites are located in the stratum lacunosum moleculare on terminal processes. The lack of receptor-specific ligands for binding studies may also explain some minor discrepancies, given that most ligands that have been used in past binding studies are now realized to have high affinities for multiple dopamine receptors.

Both the medial temporal lobe and dopaminergic dysfunction have been implicated in the pathophysiology of schizophrenia. These data suggest that the human medial temporal lobe is the recipient of rich and complex dopaminergic innervation. Given that all five

of the dopamine receptors are expressed in the human medial temporal lobe, but are differentially distributed, this suggests many possible substrates for subtle levels of dopaminergic regulation (and corresponding possibilities for dysregulation) within this region of the brain. The rather low variances observed for each probe suggest that it may be quite feasible to study the expression of these five receptors within an anatomical context in the brain, especially in psychiatric illnesses such as schizophrenia.

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