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Nederlandse samenvatting

Serotonine en cognitieve flexibiliteit; gedrags-, neurochemische-, en electrofysiologische studies in ratten.

De aansturing van doelgericht gedrag en de mogelijkheid om flexibel om te gaan met een veranderende omgeving wordt cognitieve flexibiliteit genoemd en is een belangrijke functie van de prefrontale cortex (PFC). Onderzoek heeft uitgewezen dat verschillende hersengebieden binnen de PFC nauw betrokken zijn bij specifieke cognitieve taken en dat een verminderde PFC functie leidt tot een verminderde cognitieve flexibiliteit. Daarnaast heeft de PFC een belangrijke rol in de integratie van motivationele informatie in de keuze en de uitvoering van beslissingen. De vraag hoe deze functies gereguleerd worden door de neurotransmitter serotonine (5-HT) staat centraal in dit proefschrift.

Vanuit verschillende invalshoeken is deze vraagstelling onderzocht. Met behulp van acute tryptofaan depletie onderzochten wij het effect van verminderde beschikbaarheid van serotonine op een cognitieve taak voor flexibiliteit (hoofdstuk 2). In de hoofdstukken 3 en 4 zijn wij vervolgens dieper ingegaan op eerdere bevindingen van onderzoek met tryptofaan depletie op cognitie en affect, evenals de mate waarin veranderingen in 5-HT afgifte bepalend zijn voor de gevonden effecten. Vervolgens hebben wij met behulp van locale neurotoxische 5-HT depletie de rol van serotonerge innervatie in de prefrontale cortex getest. In deze studie (hoofdstuk 5) hebben wij naast tests voor cognitieve flexibiliteit ook de affectieve waarde van de beloner gevarieerd met als doel de rol van 5-HT op affectieve processen te onderzoeken. Het proefschrift wordt besloten met metingen aan individuele neuronen in de prefrontale cortex gedurende de uitvoering van een gedragstaak voor flexibiliteit. Bovendien hebben wij in deze experimenten (hoofdstukken 6 en 7) direct het effect gemeten van locale toediening van farmaca op (taak gerelateerde) neurale activiteit.

Acute tryptofaan depletie en de rol van 5-HT in cognitieve flexibiliteit en affect.

De beperkende factor in de synthese van 5-HT is de beschikbaarheid van het essentieel aminozuur tryptofaan. Een verlaging van inname van tryptofaan via de voeding leidt tot een verminderde synthese van 5-HT, een verlaagde hersenconcentratie, en, naar algemeen wordt aangenomen, een verlaagde serotonerge neurotransmissie. Vanwege de korte werking en omkeerbaarheid van deze serotonine depletie en de toepasbaarheid in

mensgebonden onderzoek is acute tryptofaan depletie (ATD) een populaire methode om de rol van serotonine te onderzoeken.

In hoofdstuk 2 is een experiment beschreven waarin de rol van 5-HT in cognitieve flexibiliteit is onderzocht met behulp van ATD. Om te meten of 5-HT betrokken is bij de uitvoering van een 'reversal-taak' werden ratten getest nadat ze een tryptofaan depletie hadden ondergaan. In de betreffende taak worden twee stimuli aangeboden die elk geassocieerd zijn met een bepaalde respons en uitkomst, één beloond en één onbeloond. Zodra de associaties zijn geleerd wordt de respons – uitkomst relatie omgekeerd en moet de respons worden aangepast om de beloning te krijgen. De resultaten van deze experimenten gaven een eerste indicatie dat 5-HT niet betrokken is bij de uitvoering van een 'reversal' taak die spatueel van opzet is. Het bleef echter onduidelijk in welke mate de tryptofaan depletie de afgifte van 5-HT had verminderd. Om een beter inzicht te krijgen in de relatie tussen de mate van 5-HT reductie in de PFC en de resultaten van de gedragsstudie hebben wij vervolgens de afgifte van 5-HT na ATD gemeten met behulp van microdialyse.

Hoofdstuk 3 beschrijft deze studie waarin gemeten werd hoe groot het effect is van ATD op de afgifte van 5-HT in de prefrontale cortex. In mensgebonden studies wordt het effect van ATD op de afgifte van 5-HT slechts indirect gemeten. Om die reden wordt een verlaging van plasma tryptofaan, ook in dierexperimentele studies, vaak als maat gezien voor het succes van de behandeling. Dat deze maat geen afspiegeling is van de afgifte van 5-HT blijkt uit de microdialyse metingen. De resultaten geven aan dat ATD weliswaar een verlaging induceerde van plasma tryptofaan, zoals dat ook in andere studies is gezien, maar dat deze verlaging niet leidde tot de verwachte verlaging van afgifte van 5-HT in de prefrontale cortex. Deze bevinding geeft aan dat de relatie tussen ATD en serotonine functie niet zo eenduidig is al algemeen voorondersteld en dat ATD-geïnduceerde effecten mogelijk niet enkel serotonerg van aard zijn.

In Hoofdstuk 4 wordt een overzicht van bewijs voor ATD geïnduceerde effecten op 5-HT transmissie gegeven. Een belangrijk punt dat in dit overzicht naar voren komt is het gebrek aan direct bewijs dat ATD de afgifte van 5-HT verlaagt en dat een causale relatie tussen 5-HT en effecten van ATD moeilijk aan te tonen is. De effectiviteit van ATD in induceren van cognitieve effecten lijkt in sterke mate afhankelijk van de gevoeligheid van het test subject voor veranderingen van serotonine spiegels. Tot deze zogenaamde kwetsbare groepen behoren (familieleden van) patiënten met een verleden van depressie, vrouwen, en personen met een bepaalde mutatie van de serotonine transporter gen. Daarnaast wordt in dit hoofdstuk de mogelijkheid besproken dat de effecten van ATD op gedrag en cognitie mogelijk veroorzaakt worden door een interactie tussen een directe modulatie van autonome activiteit (bv. hartslag, bloeddruk en viscerale perceptie) en cognitieve processen.

Hoewel deze bevindingen zeer belangrijk zijn voor het onderzoek naar functies van het serotonerge systeem met behulp van ATD, duiden ze erop dat de belangrijkste conclusie van hoofdstuk 2, namelijk dat 5-HT niet betrokken is bij flexibiliteit van spatiele informatie, mogelijk niet gefundeerd is. Er zal naar onze mening enige terughoudendheid moeten worden betracht met het toeschrijven van de effecten van ATD aan een verlaging van 5-HT transmissie. Alleen onder specifieke condities is aangetoond dat ATD de afgifte van 5-HT verlaagd. Dit kan na verlaagde synthese of een verhoogd verbruik van 5-HT.

Mediaal PFC 5-HT en affect

Hoofdstuk 5 beschrijft een experiment waarin wij opnieuw onze hypothese testen dat prefrontaal 5-HT belangrijk is voor flexibiliteit. Deze rol wordt weer onderzocht met behulp van reversal leren, maar daarnaast hebben wij in deze experimenten ook bestudeerd wat de impact is van een verandering in affectieve waarde van de beloning. Hiertoe werd tijdens de uitvoering van de taak het type beloning dat verdiend kon worden veranderd vangewoon voer in een suiker pellet.

Depletie van 5-HT in de mediale PFC leidde niet tot een verslechtering van de taakuitvoering van spatiele reversal en dat stemt dus overeen met onze eerdere bevindingen uit hoofdstuk 2. Echter, wanneer het type beloning werd veranderd zagen wij een sterk effect op de taak uitvoering. De resultaten lieten zien dat wanneer 5-HT verminderd aanwezig is in de mPFC de ratten niet langer in staat waren om de veranderde waarde van de beloning in de taakuitvoering te integreren. Daarmee hebben wij kunnen laten zien dat mediale PFC 5-HT belangrijk is voor gedrag wanneer affectieve informatie het gedrag kan beïnvloeden. De betrokkenheid van de mPFC 5-HT is hierin wel anders dan die voor de oPFC 5-HT en reversal-leren. In het laatste geval uit een verslechterde taakuitvoering zich door een groter aantal verkeerde responsen door een veranderde relatie tussen de respons en uitkomst. In onze experimenten bleken de ratten goed in staat om een reversal te volbrengen maar lieten ze zich niet leiden door de huidige waarde van de beloning. Deze uitkomsten ondersteunen bevindingen in humaan onderzoek dat 5-HT een belangrijke rol vervult in de verwerking van beloningsgerelateerde- en emotionele informatie. Serotonerge innervatie van de mPFC vervult hierin een belangrijke complementaire rol in het medieren van cognitieve flexibiliteit in het algemeen en reversal leren in het bijzonder.

Codering van beloningsgerelateerde informatie en 5-HT in de orbitale PFC

Een belangrijke punt dat tot op heden nauwelijks onderzocht is, is de vraag hoe 5-HT in de orbitale PFC bij de uitvoering van een reversal taak betrokken is op neuronaal niveau. Om deze vraag te beantwoorden ontwikkelden wij een 'combidrive' waarmee

tegelijktijd neuronale activiteit gemeten kan worden en lokaal in dezelfde neuronale populatie een farmakologisch actieve stof toegediend kan worden. De afsluitende hoofdstukken hebben betrekking tot de effecten van lokale toediening van farmaca op neurale activiteit (hoofdstuk 6) en de codering van taakgerelateerde informatie (hoofdstuk 7).

Voor deze experimenten hebben wij gebruik gemaakt van een speciale 'drive' die de mogelijkheid biedt om zeer lokaal neuronen te meten en tegelijk een farmacon toe te dienen. Voor de validatie experimenten (hoofdstuk 6) hebben wij het effect onderzocht van veel gebruikte inhiberende farmaca en in hoofdstuk 7, een specifieke 5-HT_{2A} antagonist voor het effect van serotonerge manipulatie op de codering van beloningsgerelateerde informatie.

De validatie experimenten beschreven in hoofdstuk 6 toonden aan dat de voor deze experimenten ontworpen drive geschikt is om lokaal farmaca toe te dienen in een gebied waarin tegelijk de neurale activiteit gemeten kan worden. Om dit aan te tonen hebben we 3 veelgebruikte remmers van neuronale activiteit toegediend en laten zien dat deze activiteit in een dosisafhankelijke manier verlagen. Verschillen tussen lidocaine, muscimol en tetrodotoxine (TTX) gaven bovendien aan dat korte, maar onvolledige, inactivatie het best met lidocaine bewerkstelligd wordt, maar voor langere, en meer complete, inactivatie, muscimol of TTX gebruikt kan worden. Waarbij TTX langer werkt maar mogelijk tot celdood kan leiden.

Hoofdstuk 7 beschrijft een experiment waarin het effect van 5-HT_{2A} receptor blokkade op de codering van beloningsgerelateerde informatie in de oPFC is onderzocht. Neuronale activiteit in de oPFC werd gemeten tijdens de uitvoering van een reversal-taak, waarbij er in het meetgebied een antagonist of controle oplossing werd geïnfundeerd. De resultaten laten zien dat blokkade van de 5-HT_{2A} receptor verstorend werkt op de codering van beloningsgerelateerde informatie. In de controle conditie liet het merendeel van de uitkomstgevoelige neuronen een verandering van vuuractiviteit zien in relatie tot de beloonde trials, een minderheid van neuronen reageerde op onbeloonde trials. Dit onderscheid was niet aanwezig in de sessies waarin de antagonist werd geïnfundeerd. Mogelijk dat deze verstoorte codering ten grondslag ligt aan de veranderde gevoeligheid voor positieve- en negatieve stimuli zoals dat eerder in mensgebonden onderzoek is gevonden. De antagonist had geen effect op het onderscheid dat neuronen maken tussen de verschillende beloningen; in beide condities maakten neuronen onderscheid tussen geprefereerde- en niet geprefereerd beloningen.

Daarnaast werd onderzocht of antagonisme van de 5-HT_{2A} receptor mogelijk van invloed is op stimulusgevoelige neuronen die hun respons aanpassen na een taak reversal. Een dergelijke interactie zou mogelijk kunnen verklaren hoe 5-HT depletie de uitvoering van een reversal taak kan verstoren. Echter, in deze experimenten kwam

naar voren dat neuronen in de oPFC slechts zeer sporadisch hun respons ‘omdraaien’ na een taak reversal. Veel vaker verdwijnen bestaande correlaten en worden er nieuwe gevormd volgens de nieuwe ‘stimulus – beloning’ relatie.

Deze resultaten zijn de eerste waarin direct het effect bestudeerd werd van een lokale toediening van een farmacon op de codering van beloningsgerelateerde informatie tijdens een gedragstaak. De resultaten suggereren dat een verslechterde taakuitvoering na 5-HT depletie mogelijk een gevolg is van een verstoorde codering van beloningsgerelateerde informatie.

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