

# Nimodipine Protects PC12 Cells against Oxygen-Glucose Deprivation

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Received July 13, 2006; Revised July 29, 2007; Accepted July 30, 2007

This paper is available online at <http://ijpt.iums.ac.ir>

## ABSTRACT

The protective effect of an L-type calcium channel blocker, nimodipine, on cell injury induced by oxygen-glucose deprivation (OGD) in PC12 cells was investigated. PC12 cells were exposed to oxygen-glucose deprivation (30 minutes and 60 minutes respectively) in the presence or absence of nimodipine (10 $\mu$ M/L) in three different time schedules (pre-24h, pre-3h and concurrently). Cellular viability was assessed by MTT assay. OGD-induced cell injury was significantly attenuated by nimodipine in all three treatment schedules. Application of MK801 (10 $\mu$ M/L), an antagonist of NMDA glutamate receptors also inhibited PC12 cell death induced by OGD. Our study suggests that nimodipine has protective effects against OGD-induced neurotoxicity.

**Keywords:** *Nimodipine, Oxygen-glucose deprivation, PC12 cell line*

Brain requires a continuous supply of oxygen and glucose to maintain normal functions. Loss of this supply, even for a short period, leads to irreversible brain injury, including neuron degeneration and cell death. The primary cause of the vulnerability of neurons may be related to the fact that oxygen-glucose deprivation (OGD) is mediated by deregulation of extracellular levels of glutamate. Glutamate is a principal excitatory neurotransmitter. Exposure of the neurons to high concentration of glutamate that occurs during ischemia and a variety of pathologic conditions like stroke and various neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease can lead to neuronal death [1].

The destructive effects of excess glutamate are mediated by glutamate receptors, particularly those of the NMDA type. Activated NMDA receptors elevate calcium influx and open voltage-gated channels [2]. A variety of studies have led to the hypothesis that Ca<sup>2+</sup> surplus appears to play a critical role in the genesis of neuronal injury followed by activation of protein kinases, phospholipases, nitric oxide synthesis, impaired mitochondrial functions, the generation of free radicals and finally leading of this sequence to neurodegeneration and cell death [3].

Various classes of calcium-channel blockers have been introduced [4]. Among these classes, dihydropyridines (DHP<sub>s</sub>) derivatives are widely used to show the

existence of L-type class of Ca<sup>2+</sup> channels. Nimodipine has been shown to dilate cerebral arterioles and to increase cerebral blood flow in animals and humans. It is used in the treatment of a range of cerebrovascular disorders [5]. Major interests to date, however, have focused on its use in the prevention and treatment of the delayed ischemic neurological deficits [6]. But the effectiveness of nimodipine is still unknown. Despite some positive reports about it, some studies indicate that it is ineffective in ischemic insults [7] and some report that nimodipine worsens neuronal degeneration and can induce neuronal cell death when compared with placebo [8].

In the current study, we examined the effects of nimodipine on OGD-induced neurotoxicity, in PC12 cells, a rat pheochromocytoma cell line.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Materials

Nimodipine was supplied from Bayer and dissolved in methanol at a concentration of 1mM as a stock solution. The methanolic solution was further diluted with DMEM to obtain desired concentrations. The highest concentration of methanol in each well of the plates was lower than 0.1%; this had no significant cytotoxic ef-

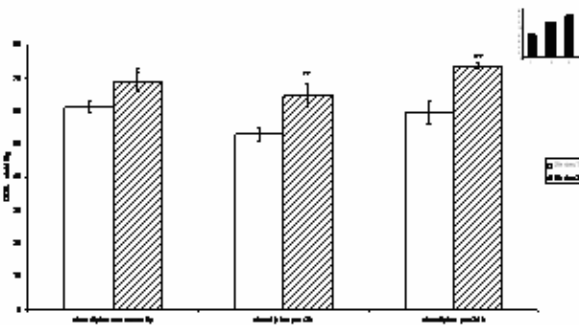


Fig 1. The effects of nimodipine on three different time schedules, concurrently, pre-3 h and pre-24 h under OGD conditions (30min.) on PC12 cell culture. The difference between the effects of nimodipine and control group is plotted in the inset. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.005$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.0005$

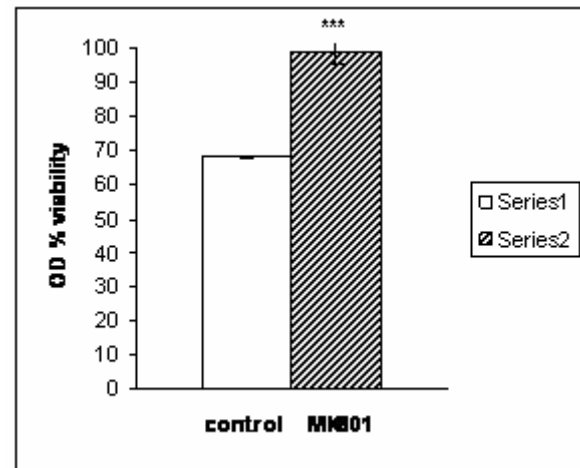


Fig 2. The effects of NMDA glutamate receptor antagonist, (MK-801), on OGD-induced cell injury. \*\*\*  $p < 0.0005$

fects on PC12 cells. Methyl tetrazolium bromide (MTT) was purchased from sigma

#### Cell line

PC12 cells were obtained from Pasteur Institute of Iran (Tehran / Iran) and were grown in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DMEM, GIBCO BRL), supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS, heat-inactivated), 5% horse serum (HS, heat-inactivated) from (GIBCO BRL), 100 IU /ml penicillin and 100  $\mu$ g/ml streptomycin (GIBCO BRL), in a humidified incubator aerated with 5% CO<sub>2</sub> in air at 37°C. The cells were subcultured twice a week by gentle scraping and cultured at a density of  $6-8 \times 10^5$  cells/cm<sup>2</sup> in 96-well plates. Cells were used for experiments 24 h after seeding.

#### Viability measurements

The cytotoxic effect was assessed using a tetrazolium-based colorimetric assay (MTT assay) [9]. The cells were cultured into a 96-well flat-bottomed tissue culture plate. After each treatment, MTT (5mg/ml) was added to each culture well. After incubation at 37°C for 3 hours, the formazan crystals were dissolved by addition of 100  $\mu$ L dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), and the plates were shaken vigorously to ensure complete solubilization. Formazan absorbance was assessed at 570 nm by a microplate reader (Dynex MMx). Values were expressed as percentage of viable cells.

#### Drug administration schedules for Oxygen-glucose deprivation

Procedures for OGD were performed as described previously [10]. Briefly, cell cultures were treated with nimodipine with three time schedules (24 h, 3 h and

concurrently). Afterwards, the culture medium was replaced with glucose-free Krebs buffer (KR) with the following ionic composition: 5.36 mM KCL, 1.26 mM CaCl<sub>2</sub>, 0.44 mM KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, 0.49 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub>, 0.41 mM MgSO<sub>4</sub>, 137 mM NaCl, 4.17 mM NaHCO<sub>3</sub>, 0.34 mM NaH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, and 10 mM HEPES (pH 7.4) and cultures were exposed to hypoxia for 30 and 60 minutes in a small anaerobic jar previously filled with 95% (v/v) N<sub>2</sub> and 5% (v/v) CO<sub>2</sub> at 37°C. The OGD was ended by replacing the KR buffer with DMEM and the cells were returned to incubator with 95% atmosphere and 5% CO<sub>2</sub> for additional 24h. Citotoxicity was quantified by MTT assay and values were expressed as percentage of viable cells.

#### Data analysis

Data were expressed as means  $\pm$  SEM. The significance of differences between means was determined with student's t-test. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.005$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.0005$ .

## RESULTS

#### The effects of nimodipine on OGD-induced cell injury on PC12 cell line

In order to test the effects of nimodipine against OGD-induced cell injury, we exposed PC12 cells to OGD for 30 and 60 minutes. As shown in Fig.1, after 30 minutes OGD the drug significantly decreased OGD-induced cell injury on three different treatment schedules (concurrently, pre-3 h and pre-24 h). The drug on the pre-24 hour and pre-3 hour schedules dramatically increased cell viability. In concurrent treatment schedule nimodipine significantly but partially decreased OGD-induced cell injury. In contrast, after 60 minutes

insult nimodipine could not protect OGD-induced cell injury (data not shown).

#### *OGD-induced NMDA receptor- dependent cell injury*

We examined the blockade of NMDA glutamate receptor to determine if glutamate contributed to ischemic injury. MK-801 (10 $\mu$ M) an antagonist at NMDA subtype of glutamate receptors, markedly attenuated OGD-induced cell injury (Fig.2). This result suggested that glutamate release and subsequent NMDA receptor activation is the major cause of OGD-induced cell injury.

### DISCUSSION

L-type voltage-dependent calcium-channel blockers, have been reported to protect the neurons against glutamate-induced toxicity and OGD-induced cell injury [11, 12]. We investigated whether the calcium-channel blocker, nimodipine can protect PC12 cells against ischemic insult. In this work, we used PC12 cells, a rat pheochromocytoma cell line, as a model of neurons. OGD was employed as an in-vitro ischemic model. The results obtained in this study showed that nimodipine could effectively protect the PC12 cells against cell death induced by OGD. These effects were similar to those obtained with nimodipine effects in glutamate induced-cell death [12].

We observed that when cells were exposed to 30 minutes OGD, the drug dramatically suppressed the PC12 cells death. It could be suggested that voltage dependent calcium channels play a role in extracellular glutamate receptor activation. Glutamate is an important excitatory amino acid working at a variety of excitatory synapses in nervous system. It causes important impression on fundamental cellular actions like synaptic plasticity, neuronal development and excitation via the activation of glutamate receptors [13, 14]. Compelling evidence have led to the fact that excess extracellular glutamate concentration leads to cell loss in in-vitro studies using cultured neurons [15, 16]. On the other hand, substantial evidence indicates that OGD is accompanied by massive increases in extracellular glutamate, which plays a crucial role in induction of neuronal cell injury [17]. Notably MK-801, an antagonist of glutamate at NMDA receptors markedly attenuated OGD-induced cell toxicity. In other words, NMDA receptor activation is the major cause of OGD-induced cell injury. In addition, nimodipine did not show a significant effect on cell death when OGD was applied for 60 minute, suggesting that involvement of excitotoxic release of neuronal glutamate is restricted to an early stage of ischemia. The exact mechanisms by which intra cellular Ca<sup>2+</sup> concentration are increased during ischemia is still not completely understood but the glutamate-induced Ca<sup>2+</sup> overload hypothesis has been widely accepted as the mechanism of neuronal injury in glutamate-induced excitotoxicity and in injury occurring in cerebral hypoxia or ischemia [18, 2, 19, 20]. L-type calcium channels which are present throughout the central nervous

system have an important role in excitatory process. Our current results show that nimodipine can significantly decrease cell injury induced by OGD in PC12 cells; this may be related to blockade of L-type calcium channels and attenuation influx of calcium into the PC12 cells. In differentiated PC12 cells, MK-801 was tested and showed that it is capable of blocking NMDA receptors and inhibiting excess glutamate release [21, 22].

In conclusion, our results showed that nimodipine, a 1, 4- dihydropyridines, belonging to class III calcium channel antagonists could protect PC12 cells against neurotoxicity induced by OGD.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by Razi Institute for Drug Research, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran. The authors wish to thank Dr. S.A. Ebrahimi for his assistance in the data analysis and Dr. P. Rahimi-Moghaddam for reading this manuscript.

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