

NEUROCIRCUITRY OF MOOD DISORDERS

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One of the first neurochemical theories of depression was the monoamine deficiency hypothesis (139,143,153). Over the past 30 years, this hypothesis has been the most scrutinized of any theories regarding the biology of depression. Unfortunately, the biology of depression remains an elusive issue, despite intense biological research. It is widely held that most, if not all, antidepressant drug treatments produce their therapeutic antidepressant effects, at least in part, by modulating monoamine systems (noradrenergic, serotonergic, and dopaminergic); however, less is known about the neurochemical pathology of these monoamine systems in depression. Early attempts to evaluate monoamine systems in depressive disorders led to diverse and not clearly integrated findings. As a result, many other neurochemical theories have been generated in efforts to explain the biological basis of depression. These theories include HPA axis hyperactivity (111), the GABA hypothesis (132), the galanin hypothesis (186), the substance P hypothesis (82), the glutamate hypothesis (162), the neurotrophin hypothesis (39), and many others. A substantial portion of the evidence supporting these “other neurotransmitter” theories derives from studies of the pharmacologic and behavioral effects of antidepressant drugs in laboratory animals. Of course, these antidepressant drugs have prominent actions on norepinephrine (NE), serotonin (5HT), and to a lesser extent, dopamine (DA). Hence, originators of new hypotheses are continuously forced to place new theories in the context of the old monoamines. The principal reason for this is that, despite years of pharmaceutical development, drugs with primary actions on monoamine systems remain the mainstay of treatment for depressive disorders. In fact, evidence that there has been an improvement of medication over the

past 20 years is highly debated, in terms of greater efficacy or even faster onset of action. If improvements are evident in antidepressant medications, then they are as a result of a reduction of adverse side effects with newer antidepressant compounds, rather than novel pharmacologic mechanisms with enhanced activity. For this reason, as research on depression biology progresses into this new century, the monoamine hypotheses continue to be among the most popular biological theories and continue to be heavily investigated and debated.

Much of the past 10 years of research in the biology of mood disorders has led to advancements in our understanding of the role that monoamines play in these disorders. New modern approaches have been applied, including the use of *in vivo* imaging techniques in live patients, morphologic and neurochemical investigations with high levels of anatomic resolution, use of postmortem brain tissues from psychiatrically characterized subjects, and genetic studies. Considerable evidence has accumulated implicating multiple system pathology in mood disorders, including abnormalities of monoamine as well as other neurotransmitter systems. These approaches and findings have led researchers to propose broader theories regarding depression biology (e.g., depression as a spreading neuronal adjustment disorder or limbic–cortical dysregulation disorder) (67,102). In this chapter, the authors reconcile new findings of multiple system pathologies specifically with regard to monoaminergic systems. Emphasis is placed on the cellular sources of monoamine systems and their circuitry, the communication between these monoamine nuclei, and the influence of other neurotransmitter systems that are putatively disrupted in depression on monoaminergic neuronal activity.

NORADRENERGIC CIRCUITRY AND DEPRESSION

The original speculation that NE is deficient in depression hinged partly on clinical observations of depression in some

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individuals receiving reserpine for hypertension. Reserpine depletes brain monoamines by blocking vesicular monoamine storage; however, only a fraction of individuals administered reserpine develops depression. In fact, short-term depletion of NE by administration of alpha-methyl-*p*-tyrosine to normal control subjects does not result in a significant change in mood (152). These findings, along with a history of inconsistent findings regarding levels of NE and its metabolites in depressive disorders (19,138,147,180), casted doubt about NE's role in depression for many years. Recently, however, Charney and co-workers (28) demonstrated that rapid pharmacologic depletion of NE in patients taking noradrenergic antidepressants causes a rapid relapse of depression. This latter finding demonstrates that NE is critical to the therapeutic action of noradrenergic antidepressant drugs. Most recently, and of considerable significance, is the demonstration that depletion of catecholamines (NE and DA) in unmedicated fully remitted subjects with histories of major depression resulted in relapse into depression (21). Together, these studies demonstrate that acute NE depletion is insufficient to induce depressive symptoms by itself, but depletion in a susceptible individual induces depressive symptoms.

The neurobiological relationship between NE and mood is poorly understood. Most of the NE in the brain arises from cell bodies in the locus ceruleus (LC). The projections of these neurons are diffuse and overlapping with respect to the brain regions innervated. Some of the brain regions that are most densely innervated by the LC are limbic brain regions, including the amygdala and hippocampus. The LC is part of the reticular activating system and neurons of the LC have tonic pacemaker activity. LC activity is elevated during states of arousal. In contrast, LC activity slows during sleep and is inactive during random eye movement (REM) sleep. The LC is robustly activated by stress, contributing to the alerting of the organism to stimuli relevant to survival. In addition to innervation of forebrain regions, the LC densely innervates other monoaminergic nuclei, including the serotonergic raphe nuclei and the dopaminergic ventral tegmental area (VTA) (10,116). Given the large number of brain regions innervated by the LC, noradrenergic transmission is in an ideal position to globally modulate brain function, and modulate the activity of other monoamines. Foote and colleagues (51) and Aston-Jones and associates (10) have extensively reviewed the physiologic consequences of LC activation.

The hypothesis that NE plays a role in the neurochemical pathology of depression raises the possibility that the activity and biochemistry of the noradrenergic LC is abnormal in this illness. Recent studies using postmortem brain tissues from psychiatrically characterized subjects reveal a complex pathology of the noradrenergic LC in major depression. These studies are unique with respect to many previous postmortem research studies on the noradrenergic system in depression because of the focus on neurons that are the

source of NE and because brain tissues utilized were from subjects whose psychiatric status was rigorously characterized (80,195). Prominent among exclusion criteria for subjects is the absence of any antidepressant (or antipsychotic) drug use, determined both by next-of-kin interview and from a toxicology examination. Elevated amounts of tyrosine hydroxylase (TH) (195) elevated binding to α_2 -adrenoceptors (119,122) and reduced amounts of NE transporter binding (80) have been reported in the LC of major depressive subjects as compared to psychiatrically normal control subjects. In contrast, other proteins measured in the LC of major depressives appear to occur in normal amounts (e.g., monoamine oxidase A, MAO-A) (118). Interestingly, a lower number of noradrenergic neurons have been observed in the rostral LC from victims of suicide relative to normal control subjects (5). In contrast, Klimek and co-workers (80,195) report no differences in noradrenergic neuron cell counts in the middle to caudal portion of the LC between depressed suicide victims and psychiatrically normal control subjects, or in psychiatrically uncharacterized suicide victims compared to control subjects (120). Elevation of radioligand binding to some (3), but not all, noradrenergic receptors (4,79) has also been identified in some projection areas of the LC, comparing suicide victims to control subjects.

To interpret these postmortem findings, it is very useful, if not necessary, to utilize information from studies of NE in laboratory animals. In animals, stress activates the LC (130) and exposure to repeated stress elevates the demand for NE (110,124) revealed by increases in LC TH (105,175, 183). Uncontrollable shock, a stress-based animal model of depression, increases the release of NE (187) and reduces NE stores (187). Because TH is the enzyme catalyzing the rate-limiting step in the synthesis of NE, increased tyrosine hydroxylase in the LC may adjust the set point of basal activity in the NE system, to keep pace with increased demand. Similar examples of up-regulation of TH expression in the LC occur after administration of reserpine (31) and intraventricular infusion of 6-hydroxydopamine (106), both of which cause loss of brain NE. Pharmacologic depletion of NE also up-regulates binding to α_2 -adrenoceptors (60,172) and down-regulates binding to NE transporter (86). Hence, postmortem findings of LC biochemistry (e.g., elevated tyrosine hydroxylase and α_2 -adrenoceptor binding) and reduced NE transporter binding are predictive of pre-mortem increases in LC activity and decreases of NE availability. Decreased NE availability could also contribute to compensatory up-regulation of β -adrenoceptors in LC projection areas, such as has been observed in the frontal cortex from suicide victims (3). As mentioned, the link between reduced brain NE and depressive symptoms, at least in susceptible individuals, has been made (21). Moreover, the relevance of stress-induced biochemical abnormalities in the LC is underscored by studies demonstrating a relationship between life stress and development of depression (26), and

that stress plays a role in the etiology of depression (131). A shortcoming of the cited postmortem studies, however, is that most of the depressive subjects who have been studied died as a result of suicide, and the relationship between the biological abnormalities found in the central noradrenergic system and behaviors related to suicide that are distinct from those related to depression has not been investigated.

If one accepts that biological abnormalities in the noradrenergic LC are relevant to the symptoms of depression, then it follows that treatment with antidepressant drugs might reverse these abnormalities. Again, it is presently necessary to look to laboratory animal studies to examine this issue. Repeated treatment of rats with antidepressants from many different pharmacologic classes (including 5HT uptake inhibitors), but not with non-antidepressant drugs, down-regulates LC tyrosine hydroxylase (114). Antidepressant drug treatment blocks stress-induced elevation of tyrosine hydroxylase mRNA in the rat LC (154). Repeated antidepressant drug treatment also down-regulates α_2 -adrenoceptors in the rat LC (154). These findings demonstrate that repeated antidepressant treatment down-regulates tyrosine hydroxylase and α_2 -adrenoceptors, proteins that are apparently up-regulated in the LC of human major depressives. Returning to the suggestion that LC activity may be elevated in depressives, recent studies demonstrate that repeated treatment of rats with antidepressant drugs of many different pharmacologic classes (including 5HT uptake inhibitors) reduces LC activity (58,68). Hence, animal data strongly support the contention that drugs produce antidepressant effects, at least in part, by reducing demand for NE, that is, reducing biochemical measures of demand (reduced biosynthetic enzyme for NE) and reducing LC activity.

In summary, evidence of: 1) norepinephrine depletion-induced depression in susceptible human subjects, 2) abnormal levels of noradrenergic proteins in the LC of human major depressives, 3) the ability of antidepressant medication to produce effects that would be expected to reverse noradrenergic pathology in depression provide strong support for the venerable theory that norepinephrine plays a role in the pathobiology of depression.

SEROTONERGIC CIRCUITRY AND DEPRESSION

The biological basis for the indoleamine hypothesis was similar to that for the catecholamine hypothesis (178). That is, reserpine depletes not only catecholamines, but also 5HT. Since that time, several (but not all) studies have found reduced levels of CSF 5-hydroxyindole acetic acid (5-HIAA) in depressed patients (101,179); however, the degree of reduction of CSF 5-HIAA does not correlate with severity of depression. Oddly, many antidepressant medications, particularly 5HT reuptake inhibitors and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), reduce CSF 5-HIAA, possibly because

of feedback inhibition resulting from increased synaptic concentrations of 5HT. Levels of CSF 5-HIAA are lower in depressed patients with a history of serious suicidal behavior, as compared to depressed patients with no history of suicide attempts. (See ref. 99 for review.) CSF 5-HIAA levels appear to exhibit a bimodal distribution in depressed patients. CSF 5-HIAA is not distinguished by more severe depression, but by a history of serious suicide attempts (55). Rapid tryptophan depletion causes transient, mild, nonclinical increases in negative mood in healthy young men (36). In depressed patients who had recent therapeutic responses to antidepressant medications, tryptophan depletion causes a transient depressive relapse (35). Rapid tryptophan depletion of many, but not all, patients with a history of depression and that are antidepressant drug-free causes a depressive relapse (35,164). In symptomatic, medication-free patients with depression, tryptophan depletion causes no significant behavioral effects (36), perhaps because of a floor effect (36). Together, these findings suggest that depression is often, but not always, associated with a serotonergic deficit.

A number of neuroendocrine challenge tests have demonstrated impaired serotonergic activity in depressed patients (49,56,69), although conflicting findings have also been reported. (See ref. 98 for review.) Numerous researchers have utilized postmortem brain tissues to study the serotonergic system in depression. Measurement of both 5HT_{1A} and 5HT_{2A} receptors in the prefrontal cortex from suicide victims has yielded no clear conclusions. Most of the studies cited in a recent review of these data by Stockmeier and colleagues (165) utilized tissues primarily from victims of suicide. Because there is an association of serotonergic abnormalities with suicidal risk, it is difficult to determine what effects are attributable to the presence of major depression from those associated with suicidal behavior (98). Significant increases in 5HT_{2A} receptor binding and a decrease in 5-HIAA in major depressives dying of causes other than suicide have been reported (47,103).

Given substantial evidence that 5HT plays a role in the pathology of major depression, it is expected that neurons supplying affected areas of the brain would display neuronal or neurochemical pathology. Two major nuclei in the brain, from which the majority of brain serotonergic innervation originates, are the dorsal raphe and median raphe nuclei. These nuclei provide an extensive innervation of cortical and subcortical target areas. The dorsal and median raphe nuclei give rise to separate axonal pathways to different brain regions. For example, the septum and hippocampus are innervated predominantly by the median raphe nuclei. In contrast, the striatum and substantia nigra are innervated by the dorsal raphe nuclei. Serotonergic terminals densely innervate various components of the limbic system. The widespread innervation of the brain by serotonergic neurons is the anatomic basis for the influence of 5HT on many diverse brain functions.

Several recent studies have investigated the serotonergic raphe in depression. Using single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT), Malison and associates (97) reported a decrease in 5HT transporter availability in the brainstem of living subjects with major depression. Because of issues related to spatial resolution, it is difficult to conclude from this study that the reduction in 5HT transporter occurred in raphe nuclei and/or other brainstem nuclei where the 5HT transporter occurs (e.g., substantia nigra or VTA). Little and co-workers (90) found no significant change in mRNA for the 5HT transporter in the dorsal raphe and median raphe nuclei from depressed persons who had committed suicide. Consistent with these findings, Bligh-Glover and colleagues (25) found no significant differences between depressed suicide victims and normal control subjects in [³H]paroxetine binding to the 5HT transporter in the entire dorsal raphe or in its constituent subnuclei, as determined using postmortem tissues from psychiatrically characterized subjects. An increase in radioligand binding to 5HT_{1A} autoreceptors in dorsal raphe nuclei from depressed suicide victims has been observed (166). In apparent contrast, a decrease in the binding potential to 5HT_{1A} receptors in the midbrain raphe nuclei has been observed using positron emission tomography (PET) in patients with familial mood disorder (38). Recent studies also provide evidence of morphologic abnormalities of brainstem serotonergic nuclei. Underwood and associates (173) have demonstrated elevated numbers and densities of 5HT neurons in the dorsal raphe of suicide victims, most of whom had major depression. In addition, Becker and colleagues (18) have demonstrated significantly low echogenicity of the dorsal raphe nucleus in patients with major depression using a novel transcranial ultrasound technique. Together, these findings are strongly suggestive of a neuropathologic involvement of brainstem serotonergic nuclei in depression, but the study by Underwood and associates ruled out a loss of serotonergic neurons in depressed suicides, suggesting that the postulated hypofunction of the serotonergic system is not owing to fewer serotonergic neurons, but dysfunction of serotonergic neurons. As is the case with noradrenergic pathology, the specificity of serotonergic pathology for major depression versus suicidal behavior is yet to be clarified.

Evidence of a serotonergic deficit in depression predicts that drugs that are effective antidepressants should enhance serotonergic transmission. In fact, repeated treatment of rats with antidepressant drugs results in a net enhancement of serotonergic transmission (24). This effect is regardless of the primary pharmacologic site of action of the drug and includes selective 5HT transporter inhibitors, MAOIs, tricyclic antidepressants, and electroconvulsive shock. Selective 5HT transporter inhibitors and MAOIs enhance serotonergic transmission by desensitizing the somatodendritic 5HT_{1A} autoreceptors (23,24) and enhancing responsiveness of postsynaptic 5HT_{1A} receptors (63). Chronic administra-

tion of some tricyclic antidepressants or a course of electroconvulsive shock to rats does not appear to desensitize somatodendritic autoreceptors, although these treatments enhance the responsiveness of postsynaptic 5HT receptors (24,107). Hence, the mechanism by which different antidepressant drugs regulate serotonergic activity appears to differ, but the net effect of enhancing serotonergic transmission is similar. These preclinical findings are consistent with the hypothesis that there is a deficit in serotonergic transmission in depressive disorders that is normalized or corrected by antidepressant drug administration.

DOPAMINERGIC CIRCUITRY AND DEPRESSION

Since the discovery that tricyclic antidepressant drugs can block DA reuptake *in vitro* (66), and that elevation of the functional activity of DA has antidepressant efficacy (142, 143), there has been interest in the potential role of DA in the pathophysiology of depression. The contribution of DA to emotion-laden behaviors such as reward seeking, motivation, and environmental responsiveness also raises speculation that DA plays a role in the pathobiology of depression (48,167). In fact, clinical, pharmacologic, and laboratory animal evidence suggests that dopaminergic neurotransmission is decreased in depression. Lower concentrations of homovanillic acid (HVA), a DA metabolite, have been observed in CSF of patients with depression, and depression-inducing effects of DA-depleting agents or DA antagonists have been reported (143,144,189). In contrast, agents that enhance DA transmission, at least in part, such as bupropion, nomifensine, and amineptine, exert antidepressant effects in humans. Given that DA is intimately involved in motivational process and affect (73,167), these findings suggest that a deficiency of mesolimbic and/or mesocortical DA is a leading candidate for the etiology of core symptoms of depression, such as difficulty in the experience of pleasure (anhedonia), social isolation, loss of motivation (lack of interest), and psychomotor retardation (190).

At least three DA systems putatively involved in neurologic and psychiatric disorders have been extensively characterized in the brain: the nigrostriatal, mesolimbic, and mesocortical systems. A loss of nigrostriatal DA neurons causes the motor impairment of Parkinson's disease (PD), whereas dysfunction or activation of mesolimbic and/or mesocortical DA systems are implicated in psychiatric disorders, including depression, schizophrenia, and psychostimulant drug abuse disorders. However, some overlap in the pathology of PD and psychiatric disorders apparently occurs because cell loss in the VTA (in addition to substantia nigra) has been observed in patients with PD who have complications of co-morbid mood and cognitive disorders (171).

Anatomic, electrophysiologic, and neurochemical studies have delineated reciprocal pathways linking various limbic

and cortical regions with dopaminergic brainstem nuclei. Kalivas and Nakamura described the neuronal circuit that mediates the integration of reward perception and adaptive behavioral responses (75). This circuit includes the nucleus accumbens, amygdala, prefrontal cortex, mediodorsal thalamus, ventral pallidum, and midbrain neurons located in the VTA. Of brain limbic structures, the nucleus accumbens (ventral striatum) has been considered an important anatomic substrate of psychiatric illness, because of its established role in motivation and affect (167,75). Neurons in the nucleus accumbens receive a highly compressed input from the amygdala, hippocampus, cingulate gyrus, and prefrontal cortex (68,194). Ascending to synapse onto the same neurons in the nucleus accumbens are DA-containing fibers from the VTA (68), suggesting that the nucleus accumbens may integrate information coming from the prefrontal cortex and limbic regions with those originating from the VTA. Besides projecting to the nucleus accumbens, DA neurons ascending from the VTA project to other limbic structures, including discrete regions of amygdala, to cortical areas, and to the septum (116). Prefrontal, orbitofrontal, and cingulate cortices receive robust innervation from the VTA. Interestingly, most of the areas receiving DA projections from the VTA project back to the VTA.

If DA neurotransmission were disrupted in depression, then antidepressant drug treatment would be expected to produce effects on the brain dopaminergic system. Numerous studies demonstrate that antidepressant drugs enhance mesolimbic DA activity. Repeated treatment of rats with antidepressant drugs (tricyclics, mianserin, or citalopram) enhances DA agonist-induced locomotor hyperactivity, an effect observed when DA agonists are administered either systemically or injected directly into the nucleus accumbens (94–96). It is noteworthy that stereotypy (a behavioral effect reflecting the activity of nigrostriatal system) induced by D-amphetamine or apomorphine, is not increased by repeated treatment with antidepressant drugs (156); therefore, it has been assumed that the mesolimbic DA system mediates the increased behavioral responses to DA agonists following antidepressant treatments. Consistent with this effect, antidepressant drug treatment increases the affinity of D₂ receptors for their agonist in the limbic forebrain, but not in the striatum (78) and chronic treatment with antidepressant drugs results in postsynaptic DA receptor supersensitivity in the nucleus accumbens (40). Recent autoradiography studies confirm these findings by showing that when [³H]raclopride, an antagonist at D_{2/3} receptors, is used as a radioligand, no significant differences in the density of D_{2/3} receptors are observed after chronic antidepressant drug administration. In marked contrast, when [³H]quinpirole, an agonist at D_{2/3} receptors is used as a radioligand, a significant increase in its binding is observed in the caudate and NAC of antidepressant-treated rats (146).

The level of mRNA encoding the D₁ receptor and

[³H]SCH 23390 binding to D₁ receptors are decreased in the limbic regions following these antidepressant drug treatments (42,37). A lower density of D₁ receptors induced by chronic antidepressant medication might contribute to enhancement of D₂ receptor functions as a result of a reduction in the inhibitory interactions between these two receptors at the level of the βγ subunit of G proteins (182).

Behavioral models in laboratory animals also point to a role for DA in antidepressant drug action. Following exposure to uncontrollable foot shock, an animal model of depression, rats display a pronounced reduction of responding for electrical brain stimulation of the nucleus accumbens. This response is attenuated by repeated treatment with the antidepressant drug desipramine (193). Rats exposed to chronic mild stress, another animal model of depression, experience decreased responsiveness to rewards (anhedonia), which is antidepressant-reversible (191). These behavioral changes are accompanied by lower D_{2/3} receptor binding in the limbic forebrain that is reversed by 5 weeks of imipramine treatment (127). Overall, preclinical findings imply that a putatively important pharmacologic effect of antidepressant treatment is the augmentation of mesolimbic DA activity.

A few recent studies have measured the DA receptors in depressed patients *in vivo* using brain imaging techniques. Two studies demonstrate an increase of D₂ receptor density in the striatum in depression, possibly reflecting reduced DA function and a consequential up-regulation of these receptors (33,157). On the other hand, Ebert and associates, 1996 (43) found striatal D₂ receptor binding unchanged in major depression.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE MONOAMINE NUCLEI AND MONOAMINES AND OTHER NEUROTRANSMITTERS

Abnormalities of the biochemistry of one or more monoamine systems may cause depressive disorders. Alternatively, disrupted monoamine biochemistry may be secondary to other root biological, environmental, and/or psychological causes. A multitude of experimental approaches will be required to determine the core cause(s) of depressive disorders, even as considerable evidence of monoamine dysfunction in depression accumulates. Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider the relationship of the monoamines with other neurotransmitters that modulate monoaminergic chemistry. The LC, raphe nuclei and VTA receive a variety of neuronal inputs, including the monoamines themselves, that regulate their activity (Fig. 73.1). Several neurotransmitter inputs to monoamine nuclei are of particular relevance to major depression because of the accumulation of evidence that these systems are also disrupted in depression. For example, abnormalities in GABA, substance P, corticotropin releasing factor (CRF) and glutamate neurochemistry have been im-

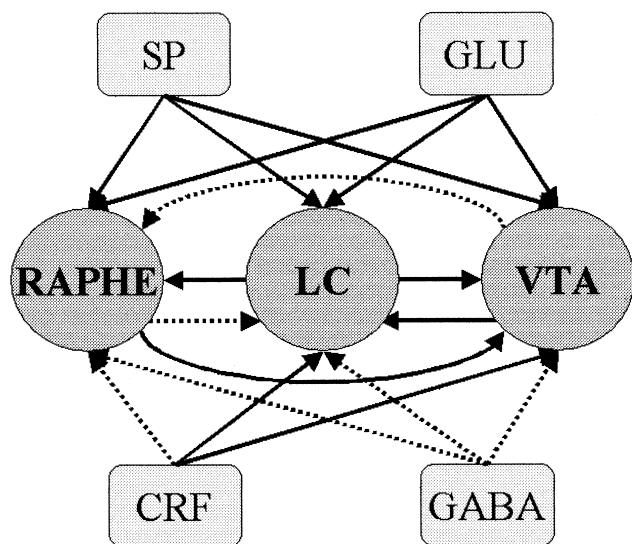


FIGURE 73.1. Neurotransmitter interactions at the level of monoaminergic cell bodies. Solid lines represent excitatory inputs to the raphe nuclei, LC, and VTA; dashed lines represent inhibitory inputs. In some cases, neurotransmitter inputs may be both direct and indirect via synapses with other neurons projecting to the nuclei. Neurotransmitter inputs shown are only those that are discussed in this chapter.

licated in depression. Theoretically, disruption of the activity of monoamine systems could result from disease-related abnormalities in neurotransmitter input to the monoamine nuclei. In addition, disruption of serotonergic activity in depression could be secondary to deficient noradrenergic input to the serotonergic raphe nuclei. That is, disruption of one monoamine would be expected to result in general monoamine imbalance because of the inter-connectivity between these nuclei. Hence, the relationship between the monoamine systems, and between monoamines and other neurotransmitter systems suspected of playing a role in depression biology, is worthy of discussion.

Monoamine Interactions at the Level of the Monoaminergic Nuclei

The monoaminergic nuclei are highly interconnected and physiologically integrated. For example, noradrenergic neurons innervate the serotonergic raphe nuclei and the dopaminergic VTA. Both the dorsal and median raphe nuclei receive noradrenergic innervation (15,121). In fact, the rat dorsal raphe receives one of the richest noradrenergic innervations in the brain (15,89,150). Overall, NE appears to be excitatory at serotonergic raphe neurons. For example, interruption of noradrenergic transmission by systemic administration of an α -adrenoceptor antagonist or iontophoretic application of an α -adrenoceptor antagonist in the vicinity of serotonergic neurons completely suppresses their spontaneous firing (14). Iontophoretic application of NE

during the suppression of serotonergic cell activity produced by phentolamine or WB-4104, antagonists of α -adrenoceptors, can rapidly restore firing of these neurons to their normal activity (14). Most of the noradrenergic innervation of the VTA arises from LC neurons and noradrenergic input to the VTA is excitatory, mediated by excitatory α_1 -adrenoceptors (59). In rats, chemical denervation of noradrenergic projections by DSP₄ treatment suppresses mesolimbic DA release (83) and reduces the effectiveness of positive reinforcers (109). Hence, if noradrenergic transmission is reduced, as has been hypothesized to occur in major depression, then reduced noradrenergic input to the raphe nuclei and VTA would be expected to contribute to reductions in serotonergic and dopaminergic transmission (109).

The LC and the VTA receive serotonergic terminals originating in the raphe nuclei. Serotonergic innervation to the LC originates from several sources including the dorsal and median raphe nuclei (93,108,181). The effects of 5HT on the activity of the LC are complex, and depend on whether drugs used to manipulate the serotonergic system are administered directly into the LC or whether they are administered systemically. Systemic administration of 5HT₁ and 5HT₂ receptor agonists or antagonists modulates the activity of the LC. These effects appear to be mediated indirectly, at least in part, rather than by actions at these receptors within the LC (30,57,64). 5HT affects LC activity, at least in part, by attenuating glutamatergic activation of the LC (8,159). Messenger RNAs encoding 5HT_{1A}, 5HT_{1C}, and 5HT_{2C} receptors are found in rat LC neurons (137,192). Interestingly, neurotoxic destruction of serotonergic terminals results in an increase in firing of the LC (71) and increases in LC mRNA and tyrosine hydroxylase activity (71). Based on these findings, the overall effect of 5HT release in the LC appears to be inhibitory.

The VTA receives afferent projections from 5HT-containing axon terminals originating in the dorsal and median raphe nuclei (70). Moreover, 5HT neurons innervate both dopaminergic and nondopaminergic (e.g., GABA) neurons in the VTA and may influence mesocortical and mesolimbic efferent systems through synaptic as well as nonsynaptic mechanisms (70). 5HT-induced release of [³H]DA from rat VTA slice preparations is blocked by methysergide, but not cyproheptadine, suggesting an involvement of the 5HT₁ receptor (17). Local application (in the VTA) of agonists at 5-HT_{1A} receptors increases the firing of DA neurons in the VTA (6,87) and administration of a 5HT_{1A} receptor agonist systemically increases DA release in the medial PFC (7). Microinfusion of 5HT into the VTA in rats results in an increased release of DA in the NAC (61). It is tempting to speculate that the firing mode of VTA DA neurons is dependent, among other factors, on the activity of serotonergic terminals originating in the raphe. Because 5HT increases extracellular DA (128), a serotonergic deficit, which has been suggested as one primary abnormality in depression, would also lead to a DA deficit.

High levels of DA are found in the dorsal raphe and LC (89). Moreover, D₂ receptors and D₂ receptor mRNA are expressed in both regions (185). Lesions of the VTA cause LC DA levels to fall by about 50%. DA neurotransmission is important for the rewarding effects of LC stimulation, without which such stimulation appears to be aversive (41). In the dorsal raphe nuclei, a moderate number of DA-immunoreactive fibers cover rather homogeneously all subdivisions of the region (136). It has been postulated that dopaminergic neurotransmission to the dorsal raphe inhibits the activity of dorsal raphe neurons by increasing extracellular concentrations of 5HT in the dorsal raphe and, consequently, by increasing somatodendritic 5HT autoreceptor stimulation in this nucleus (46).

Monoamine Systems and Other Neurotransmitters

CRF

Much evidence has accumulated implicating a state of CRF hypersecretion in major depression (112,113,125). Interestingly, the LC, raphe nuclei and VTA receive moderate to dense innervation by CRF neurons. The LC receives excitatory CRF input from several sources, and these afferents appear to be topographically organized with respect to the type of information conveyed (177). The nucleus paragigantocellularis and Barrington's nucleus sends afferents directly to the nuclear elements of the LC. The LC also receives CRF input from limbic brain regions, including the central nucleus of the amygdala, as well as the bed nucleus of the stria terminalis and hypothalamic subregions (177). These limbic CRF neurons project to the peri-cerulea area, and in particular to the rostralateral peri-LC. CRF terminals form direct contacts with noradrenergic dendrites (176). CRF, injected intracerebroventrically or directly into the LC, activates LC neurons and enhances release of NE in projection areas (163). Internal and external stressors are known to activate the LC via CRF, including colonic distension, hypotensive challenge, and foot shock. The ability of these stressors to activate the LC is blocked by CRF antagonists (32,85,104,174). In general, the pontine-medullary CRF projections to the LC are thought to coordinate cognitive and autonomic responses to internal physiologic challenges, whereas the limbic CRF projections mediate LC activation by external stressors that have emotional content (81). Interestingly, administration of a CRF antagonist blocks stress-induced increases in LC tyrosine hydroxylase (104), an effect shared by antidepressant drugs (105).

The serotonergic raphe nuclei also receive CRF innervation. CRF terminals in raphe nuclei originate from local and distant cell bodies (148,151). The effects of CRF on raphe firing are complex (77). At low doses, CRF produces primarily inhibitory effects on raphe discharge. In contrast, higher doses of CRF excite raphe neurons. Likewise, the

effects of intracerebroventricularly administered CRF on striatal 5HT release are biphasic (140). Low doses of CRF decrease 5HT release in the striatum, whereas high doses increase striatal 5HT. Price and associates (140) suggest that CRF has predominantly inhibitory actions at the level of the raphe. Hence, a putative hypersecretion of CRF in major depression could contribute to the deficit in serotonergic transmission at the level of the raphe nuclei.

The VTA is densely innervated by CRF-positive fibers, whereas the substantia nigra receives only scattered CRF innervation (11). Intracerebroventricular administration of CRF to mice produces behavioral activation and a "stress-like" increase in DA metabolism in several brain regions. Direct injections of CRF into the VTA produces dose-dependent increase in locomotor activity, an affect that is not antagonized by the DA receptor blocker, haloperidol (74). Intracerebroventricular or intraperitoneal administration of low doses of CRF increases DA and DA metabolite levels in the rat medial prefrontal cortex (84). Together, these findings suggest that CRF exerts an excitatory action in the VTA. The long-term effects of CRF administration on DA metabolism have not been studied.

Substance P

Recent studies suggest that substance P antagonists may have antidepressant properties (82), although there have been questions regarding their efficacy (45). Interestingly, there is a relatively dense network of substance P immunoreactive fibers in the human LC and surrounding regions (50). Many of these fibers may originate from the nucleus of the solitary tract (50,100,145). In addition, there is a high density of binding of radiolabeled substance P to neurokinin-1 receptors in the LC (34). Substance P potently stimulates the firing of LC neurons (62). There is considerable evidence that substance P plays a role in the central response to stress (13,65). Interestingly, substance P antagonists (in particular, selective neurokinin-1 receptor antagonists), when administered intracerebroventricularly, attenuate restraint stress-induced biochemical indices of LC activation (65). Repeated administration of rats with antidepressant drugs (perhaps not all types) down-regulates substance P in several brain regions (27,158).

Substance P is co-localized with 5HT in 25% to 50% of the neurons in the human median and dorsal raphe nuclei, respectively (12,155). Substance P-containing serotonergic neurons are not randomly located within the raphe nuclei, but are localized to specific subregions, suggesting that substance P co-releases with 5HT in specific brain regions. The dorsal raphe nuclei also receive innervation from substance P-containing neurons with cell bodies occurring outside the region of the raphe (92). There is a high density of substance P receptors in the region of the dorsal raphe nuclei (91). Substance P appears to activate raphe neurons and microin-

jection of substance P into the dorsal raphe increases hippocampal levels of 5HT.

Substance P receptor mRNAs (NK1 and NK3) are found in DA neurons of the human and rat midbrain (188); substance P-immunoreactive terminals, making synaptic contacts with TH-positive neurons in the VTA, also have been demonstrated (169). Infusion of a substance P receptor agonist into the VTA stimulates locomotor activity and increases DA turnover in the nucleus accumbens (149), indicating an excitatory action of substance P on DA neurotransmission.

Glutamate

NMDA receptor antagonists have antidepressant actions in animal models of depression (129) and demonstrated antidepressant effects in humans (20). High levels of serum glutamate levels in depressed subject have been reported (2,76) with exception (1). In addition, alterations in the allosterism of NMDA receptor binding in the frontal cortex of suicide victims (115), and elevated levels of CSF glutamine (glutamate metabolite/precursor) in depressed patients have been reported (88). Such findings have led to speculation that there may be excessive glutamate neurotransmission in depressive disorders. Glutamatergic neurons provide the major excitatory neurotransmitter input to the LC. Glutamatergic innervation of the LC derives largely from the nucleus paragigantocellularis (9). Glutamate activates the LC through activation of both NDMA and non-NMDA (aspartate) receptors (117). Handling and immobilization stress increases glutamate measured in the rat LC by microdialysis (161,170). Interestingly, noise stress-induced enhancement of glutamate release in the LC is abolished by superfusion of the LC with a CRF antagonist (160), demonstrating an important interaction between CRF and glutamate systems at the level of the LC (88). It is tempting to speculate that a deficit in noradrenergic transmission in major depression is secondary to a chronic elevation in glutamatergic input into the LC and a resulting depletion of central NE.

The raphe nuclei also receive glutamatergic input. At least part of the glutamatergic input to the dorsal raphe nuclei originates in the habenula (72). As is the case for the LC, glutamate is excitatory in the raphe nuclei. The activity of DA neurons in the mesolimbic and mesocortical circuitry can also be modulated by excitatory amino acids (73). DA neurons in the VTA receive direct glutamatergic innervation from the prefrontal cortex (73). Glutamate excites DA cell activity via inotropic and metabotropic receptors (167).

GABA

There is considerable preclinical and clinical evidence that depression is associated with reduced GABA function. Petty has reviewed this topic (135). To summarize, plasma GABA

is low in patients with major depression (133–135). GABA agonists have activity in animal models useful for identifying antidepressants (16,196). Finally, GABA agonists appear to have some antidepressant activity in humans (135).

GABA provides a major inhibitory input to the LC. GABAergic neurons arriving in the LC originate largely from the nucleus prepositus, stimulation of which inhibits the firing of LC neurons (44). There are apparently no GABA cell bodies intrinsic to the LC, but glutamic acid decarboxylase immunoreactive nerve terminals are present, closely juxtaposed to noradrenergic cell bodies and dendrites (22). GABA inhibits the firing of LC neurons primarily by activation of GABA_A receptors (123), and these receptors have been autoradiographically identified in the LC (29, 126). The dorsal raphe nuclei receive GABAergic innervation from local interneurons and from multiple distant sources (54,184) and dorsal raphe neurons express GABA_A receptors (53). Ionophoretic application of GABA strongly inhibits the firing of dorsal raphe nuclei neurons (52). DA neurons in the VTA are innervated by GABAergic afferents projecting mainly from the forebrain. GABA terminals also synapse on GABA interneurons that themselves synapse onto DA neurons (73). GABA inhibits the activity of DA neurons by acting through GABA receptors (GABA_B) on DA neurons (167).

INTEGRATION OF MONOAMINE AND OTHER NEUROTRANSMITTER THEORIES

Investigations of the neurochemical pathology of depressive disorders reveal abnormalities in monoamine systems as well as other neurotransmitter systems. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that a root cause of depression is a failure or deficit in a single neurotransmitter system. Because of the interconnectivity of the monoamine systems, it is likely that failure in one system to adequately respond to demand would quickly lead to compensations, or possibly failure, of the other monoamine systems, as well as changes and/or biochemical compensations of numerous systems that are directly regulated by the pathogenic neurotransmitter system. Hence, evidence suggesting that there is dysfunction of monoaminergic, as well as nonmonoaminergic, neurotransmitter systems in depression compels us to integrate neurotransmitter interactions into theoretical models of the neurochemical circuitry of depression. This is a difficult undertaking and requires translation and integration of clinical, preclinical, and basic research findings. The postulate that depression is associated with a deficiency of NE or an increase in the demand for NE (as discussed) provides a good example of concatenation of clinical/postmortem findings, experimental/laboratory animal findings, and basic research findings regarding transmitter interactions. That is, elevated tyrosine hydroxylase in the LC, as observed in major depressive suicide victims, can be experimentally pro-

duced by pharmacologically depleting NE or chronically stressing rats. Depletion of 5HT can also up-regulate tyrosine hydroxylase in the LC, as can chronic administration of CRF. Interestingly, CRF is reported to be elevated in depression, is released by stress, and CRF excites LC neurons. Together, these data suggest that elevated CRF in depression increases demand for NE, probably leading to elevated tyrosine hydroxylase expression. Elevated CRF may also contribute to reduce serotonergic transmission in depression, given the CRF can inhibit dorsal raphe neurons. Furthermore, it is conceivable that other excitatory inputs to the LC, such as substance P, might also exhibit elevated activity in depression. If so, substance P antagonists with antidepressant actions may elicit their effects on mood, at least in part, through actions at the LC. In contrast to excitatory transmitters, elevated demand for NE could also result from reduced inhibitory input to the LC. Here, of interest is the putative association of low levels of GABA with major depression (discussed in the preceding) and the fact that GABA provides an inhibitory input to the LC.

Another interesting possibility is that disruption of a single neurotransmitter system may be common to depressive disorders, whereas different mood disorders or subtypes of major depression itself may be a result of the type of altered neuronal input to that particular system. Using the hypothesis of increased demand for NE in depression as an example, elevated activity of the LC may be a result of elevated CRF input to the LC in some depressives, whereas others may experience elevated LC activity as a result of overactive substance P or glutamate input or decreased GABA input. Presently, there is little evidence to support the idea of serotonergic or noradrenergic depressives that respond selectively to serotonergic or noradrenergic antidepressant drugs, respectively. However, NE and 5HT containing neurons may be downstream of disrupted input systems that may actually differentiate subtypes of depressive disorders at a neurochemical/neuroanatomic level. Future research on neuropathology of psychiatric disorders should benefit greatly if designed to simultaneously measure multiple neurotransmitter systems. Ultimately, a thorough understanding of neurotransmitter interactions and integrated neuronal systems as they relate to the neurochemical pathology of depressive disorders will likely yield novel therapeutic interventions.

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