Hepatic Antioxidant Effect of Paroxetine in Rats Exposed to Chronic Restraint Model.

Short running title:

Paroxetine and hepatic oxidative markers

Abstract

Depressed mood could affect the progression and severity of several diseases e.g. hypertension, myocardial infarction, gastritis, peptic ulcer etc… Liver is one of the major organ that could be affected by chronic exposure to stress because stress may result in hepatic inflammation in particular due to accumulation of reactive oxygen species (ROS). The present study was done to investigate the potential antioxidant effect of paroxetine, as a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI), to protect against chronic restraint stress-induced oxidative damage in the liver.

Thirty albino rats were divided into 3 equal groups. Group 1 was control, non-stressed non-treated group. Group 2 was exposed to chronic restraint model by placing them in wire mesh cages exactly fit to their size for 6 hours daily for 21 days. Group 3 were also exposed to chronic restraint model for 21 days while they were administered by paroxetine 1 mg/kg/day ip during the restraint period. At the end of the study, liver transaminases (ALT and AST) were determined by commercial kits. The hepatic levels of GPx, catalase and TBARS were also determined by spectrophotometric methods. Glutathione repletion ability by hepatic cells with and without paroxetine treatment was also determined in all tested groups.

The results showed a significant ($p<0.05$) increase in serum levels of ALT & AST and liver levels of GPx and catalase enzymes while levels of TBARS were significantly ($p<0.05$) reduced in paroxetine-treated group compared with non-stressed non-treated control rats. Glutathione repletion ability was also significantly ($p<0.05$) increased in treated group to a level comparable to the control non-stressed non-treated values.

Paroxetine could possess a protective effect to liver tissue of chronic restrained rats. This hypothesis may help its use to reduce oxidative stress caused by exposure to chronic stress.

Keywords: Paroxetine, Chronic restraint model, rats, anti-oxidant, liver.

Introduction

Paroxetine is one of the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). It is commonly used in the treatment of patients with depressive disorders since the late 1990s [1]. It is generally preferred over tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) due to lesser adverse effects, good compliance, and comparable efficacy with these older drug groups [2].

Chronic stress exposure is associated with neurodegeneration and a marked change in anti-oxidant enzymes. These enzymes are known to have an important role in the prophylaxis against damage of any cell in the body by oxidative stress. Generation of free radicals and reactive oxygen species (ROS) is an ordinary result of metabolic processes that occur regularly in human body. However, in case of exposure to chronic stress, they are produced in a very high levels that lead to toxic effects on intracellular components such as DNA, proteins and lipids [3]. These toxic effects result in abnormalities in the signaling processes in the body and increase the incidence of apoptosis of cells of vital organs [4]. Liver and other body's systems are exposed to damaging effects by oxidative stress associated with depressed mood and disorders of important mediators of central nervous system [5-7].

Depressed mood in human and exposure of animals to chronic restraint model are associated with an increase in incidence of lipid peroxidation and production of ROS [8,9]. Newer generations of antidepressant drugs as venlafaxine were found to have the ability to combat the oxidative stress with their abilities to normalize or even increase the activities of potent antioxidant markers [10,11].

The aim of the present study is to investigate the possible protective effect of paroxetine, as an SSRI used in treatment of depressed mood, on the liver of albino rats exposed to chronic restraint model.

Material and methods

Animals

Albino rats (150-200 g body weight) were purchased from the animal house (Bilharzial Center of Research, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt), housed in controlled environmental conditions. They were left for one week for acclimatization. They were housed in cages with a natural light-dark cycle and fed on a standard pellet diet and water ad libitum.

Chemicals

Paroxetine HCl (Glaxo SmithKline, U.K.) was purchased as an odorless, off-white powder whose molecular weight is 329.4, N-(l-naphthyl)ethylenediamine dihydrochloride (ICN Biomedicals Inc., Egypt) and diethyl maleate (Merck Biochemicals, Egypt). Serum alanine & aspartate transaminases (ALT, AST) spectrum diagnostic kits were obtained from Biodiagnostics, Cairo, Egypt. All other chemicals were purchased from Sigma chemicals co.

Animal Grouping

Albino rats were divided into 3 groups (N= 10 rats in each group). They were classified as follows:

Group 1: non-stressed non-treated control group which received normal diet

Group 2: non-treated group but exposed to chronic restraint model and administered only by saline ip as a solvent of paroxetine

Group 3. Paroxetine-treated group: was administered paroxetine dissolved in saline (1 mg/kg b.wt./day ip) for 21 days. This dose was selected according to many studies [12, 21, 22]

Ethics

All procedures were in accordance with the National Institute of Health's Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, as well as the guidelines of the Animal Welfare Act (www.nih.gov).

Justification of Sample size

Number of rats in each group = 10 was determined by sample size determination using program of Microlab, version 2005 so as the α value is < 0.05 and β value is > 80%. The 10 rats/group is the minimal number sufficient to produce these statistical values determined by the pilot study done before the full experimental research. Values will be statistically analysed using Prism version 3.0 to calculate ANOVA between different studied groups and to determine which group is responsible for the significant changes.

Chronic restraint stress procedure

Each rat of both groups 2 &3 was placed in a wire mesh restrainer 6 hours daily for 21 days. At the end of the restraint period, rats were moved to their cages.

At the end of the experimental period, the animals were weighted, anesthetized with urethane (1 g/Kg). Blood samples were collected from the abdominal aorta as follows: the rat was fixed on a wooden plate and the abdominal cavity was opened, then the abdominal aorta was explored at its bifurcation after gentle traction of the viscera using soft tissue. Blood was centrifuged at 5000 rpm for 10 minutes for serum separation, and kept at -80°C until measurements of bot ALT & AST.

Body weight of all tested rats were constant all over the study. Serum corticosterone was significantly ($p<0.05$) increased in stressed non-treated rats of group 2 [22.5± 2.3 µg/mL, mean ±SD] compared to control (group 1) and paroxetine-treated group (3) [0.9± 0.01 & 1.2±0.03 µg/mL respectively, mean ±SD].

Biochemical Measurements

Serum levels of alanine and aspartate transaminases (ALT &AST)

They were measured using biochemistry automatic analyzer (Hitachi 7600)

Determination of Glutathione Peroxidase [GPx] Enzyme Activity

Glutathione peroxidase (GPx) activity in the liver homogenates was measured by the method described by Rotruck, et al [13].

Determination of Catalase Enzyme Activity Catalase (CAT) activity in the liver homogenates was assayed colorimetrically as described by Sinha, et al [14] at 620 nm.

Hepatic lipid peroxidation Hepatic lipid peroxidation was assayed by measurement of the concentration of TBARS in nmoles/ milligram protein of hepatic tissues according to the method described by Fraga et al.[15]

The absorbance of the precipitate of hepatic tissue was measured spectrophotometrically at 532 nm using 1,1,5,5-tetraethoxypropane as standard.

Determination of Glutathione Repletion Ability by Hepatic Cells of Tested Rats

Diethyl maleate (DEM.), a carbonyl compound that rapidly depletes cytosolic glutathione was used to compare glutathione-replenishing abilities of hepatic cells of all tested groups according to Saville [16]. The concentration of glutathione in different samples were expressed in nmoles per milligram of protein.

Protein determination

The protein content of the liver homogenates was measured spectrophotometrically by Bradford method [17]. Activities of both catalase and glutathione peroxidase enzymes were expressed in Unit/mg tissue protein.

Data Analysis

Results are expressed as mean ± SD [Standard Deviation]. Statistical analysis was performed by analysis of variance followed by Tukey's post hoc using GraphPad Prism version 3.00 for Windows 97 (Graph Pad Software, San Diego, CA, USA). Differences with $p < 0.05$ were considered to be statistically significant.

Results

I. Effect of treatment with paroxetine on the serum level of alanine and aspartate aminotransferase (ALT & AST) enzymes

Chronic restraint of rats of group (2) significantly ($p < 0.05$) reduces the levels of serum ALT & AST . While, paroxetine administration, in a dose of 1 mg/kg/day ip for 21 days, significantly ($p<0.05$) restores them to levels comparable to control non-stressed, non-treated group (1) (Fig.1)

Figure 1

Figure (1): Effect of treatment with paroxetine on the serum level of alanine and aspartate aminotraminase (ALT & AST) enzymes of rats compared to both groups 1 &2 .

* Significant ($p< 0.05$) reduction in levels of both enzymes compared to control non-stressed group 1 and paroxetine-treated stressed group 3.

II. Table (1): Mean ± SD changes in the activities of liver CAT, GPx in rats of all tested groups expressed as unit/mg tissue protein of liver homogenates.

	Control group	Stressed non-treated group	Stressed paroxetine-treated group
Glutathione peroxidase Unit[b]/mg tissue protein	12.33± 1.5	0.55± 0.01*	10.96± 0.65**
Catalase Unit[a]/mg tissue protein	65.43± 3.2	3.12± 0.42*	57.65± 4.5**

Table (1)

[a] = Moles of hydrogen peroxide consumed per minute.

[b] = μg of glutathione consumed per minute.

*P < 0.05, significant reduction in activity of both enzymes in stressed non-treated group versus control group.

**P , 0.05, significant increase in activity of both enzymes by paroxetine administration versus stressed non-treated group.

A significant ($p < 0.05$) decrease in the activities of these enzymes was demonstrated in stressed non-treated rats. Paroxetine-treated group showed that their activities were significantly ($p < 0.05$) increased compared to stressed non-treated group and reached levels comparable to that recorded with control group (1).

This suggests that paroxetine owns a possible antioxidant action in case of chronic restrained albino rats with a significant ($p < 0.05$) decrease in their liver transaminases.

III. Effect of 21 days administration of paroxetine on thiobarbituric acid-reactive substance (TBARS) in nmol/mg tissue protein of the liver tissue homogenates of all tested albino rats

Figure (2)

Figure 2: Effect of 21 days administration of paroxetine on thiobarbituric acid-reactive substance (TBARS) in nmol/mg tissue protein of the liver tissue homogenates of the tested rats.

Results are expressed as mean ± SD (n = 10 albino rats/group).

A significant (*p < 0.05) decrease in TBARS levels of paroxetine-treated group (3) in comparison to the stressed non treated group (2).

- * $p<0.05$= significant increase in TBARS levels in group (2) compared to the control non-stressed non-treated rats group (1)
- ** $p<0.05$ = significant decrease in TBARS levels in paroxetine-treated group (3) compared to the stressed non-treated rats group (2)

185 IV.Table (2): Effect of treatment with paroxetine on Glutathione repletion ability of hepatic
186 cells expressed nmoles of glutathione per milligram of protein

187 The table shows changes in glutathione levels expressed as nmol/ mg protein before and 4 hrs.
188 after exposure to 0.5 mM diethyl maleate (DEM). Data were obtained from hepatic cells
189 isolated from either control, stressed non-treated or stressed+paroxetine-treated group.

Groups	Change in glutathione level in hepatic cells		
	Before exposure to DEM	4 hours after exposure to DEM	% change in glutathione level
Control	54.5 ±2.4	55.4 ±3.2	+1.65%
Stressed non-treated	53.5± 3.4	2.1 ±0.03*	-96.07%
Stressed paroxetine-treated	51.2 ± 3.1	55.7 ±3.7**	+8.79%

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191 There is significant (*p<0.05) reduction in glutathione levels in stressed non-treated rats
192 compared to control group. However, treatment of chronic restrained rats with paroxetine for 21
193 days significantly (**p< 0.05) is likely to protect hepatic cells against acute depletion of
194 glutathione in comparison to group 2 suggesting that ip paroxetine administration would
195 enhance glulathione replenishing ability in hepatic cells of chronic restrained rats.

196 * $p<0.05$= significant reduction in hepatic glutathione replenishing ability in group (2)

197 compared to the control non-stressed non-treated rats group (1)

198 ** $p<0.05$ = significant increase in hepatic glutathione replenishing ability in paroxetine-treated

199 group (3) compared to the stressed non-treated rats group (2)

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Discussion

Exposure of albino rats, in the present study, to chronic restraint model significantly decreases serum levels of liver transaminases (ALT &AST) and reduces activities of CAT and GPx anti-oxidant enzymes in hepatic homogenates of these stressed rats. It also decreases hepatic replenishing ability of glutathione. Ip Administration of paroxetine for 21 days reverses all these changes to almost the levels of control non stressed group.

Intraperitoneal (ip) administration of paroxetine for 28 days for anhedonic rats, either due to acute dexamethasone administration or due to exposure to chronic mild stress (CMS) model of anhedonia, reversed the anhedonic effect. These results provide a strong evidence of antidepressant effect of paroxetine as already well-known. Its antidepressant effect against anhedonia-induced by glucocorticoids could be related to suppression of oxidative stress that is associated with dexamethasone administration [18].

Corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF) plays a central role in the stress response by regulating the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. In response to stress, CRF initiates a cascade of events that causes the release of glucocorticoids from the adrenal cortex. As a result of the great number of physiological and behavioral effects exerted by glucocorticoids, several mechanisms have evolved to control HPA axis activation and integrate the stress response. Glucocorticoid feedback inhibition plays a prominent role in regulating the magnitude and duration of glucocorticoid release. In addition to glucocorticoid feedback, the HPA axis is regulated at the level of the hypothalamus by a diverse group of afferent projections from limbic, midbrain, and brain stem nuclei. The stress response is also mediated in part by brain stem noradrenergic neurons, sympathetic andrenomedullary circuits, and parasympathetic systems. The HPA axis has an integrated role in the adaptive responses to stress via neuronal and endocrine systems to maintain body's homeostasis in a stand-by condition to combat any stressful stimuli [19].

There is a reported relationship between depression and immune system. Results of previous studies revealed that depressed mood is often associated with an activation of the immune system functions with a marked secretion of inflammatory cytokines [20]. This increase in immune functions was thought to be related to damaging actions of exposure to oxidative stress. As it was found that activation of immune system results in stimulation of marked synthesis of ROS, instability of anti-oxidant enzymes and down-regulation of their synthesis [8]. Proper

234 control of the functions of immune system leads to a positive impact on the synthesis and
235 activities of the antioxidant enzyme mitochondrial manganese superoxide dimutase (SOD2)
236 [21].
237 Chronic paroxetine administration to stressed adult rats produces protective effects against
238 apoptosis and oxidative stress in their hippocampus [22]. These findings could be applied to the
239 results of the present study in relation to the possible hepatoprotective effect of paroxetine in
240 chronic restrained rats by its preservation of antioxidant enzymes and a significant reduction in
241 hepatic TBARS, as a marker of lipid peroxidation.

242 Male Sprague-Dawley rats were exposed to chronic unpredicted stress with administration of
243 Paroxetine (1.8 mg/kg once daily) by an intragastric gavage. The study recorded any change in
244 rat behaviors, activites of some anti-oxidant enzymes : superoxide dismutase and catalase and
245 lipid peroxidation in the form of malondialdehyde level in the serum in addition to the
246 expression of serotonin transporter (5-HTT) in the hippocampus and norepinephrine transporter
247 (NET) in the pons. Results demonstrated that pparoxetine produced a significant reduction in
248 depression-like behaviors and in the malondialdehyde level. Additionally, it increased the
249 activities of superoxide dismutase and catalase anti-oxidant enzymes with an increase in 5-HTT
250 and NET expression. The study concluded that the antidepressive effect of paroxetine could be
251 related partly to overcoming oxidative stress disorders and increasing the expression of 5-HTT
252 and NET that elevated mood of depressed rats [23] .

253 Clinically, chronic administration of paroxetine would protect against apoptosis, oxidative stress
254 and improve cytoskeletal functions, intracellular signaling and serotonergic and
255 catecholaminergic neurotransmission. Paroxetine preserves antioxidant enzymes and plays a
256 vital role in the protection of cells from oxidative stress and hence, it will protect intracellular
257 components such as DNA, proteins and lipids and will prevent disrupting signaling pathways
258 that render each cell in the body susceptible to apoptotic or necrotic cell death. It would also
259 protect the central nervous system from the damaging effect of oxidative stress that accompany
260 exposure of human being to depressed mood, stressful conditions or systemic diseases as
261 diabetes and its cardiovascular complications [24].

In conclusion, the results of the present study would provide a suggestion that paroxetine possesses an anti-oxidant action that helps in protection of livers of chronic restrained rats.

Disclosure

The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work.

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1. Figure (1): Effect of treatment with paroxetine on the serum level of alanine and aspartate aminotransferase (ALT & AST) enzymes

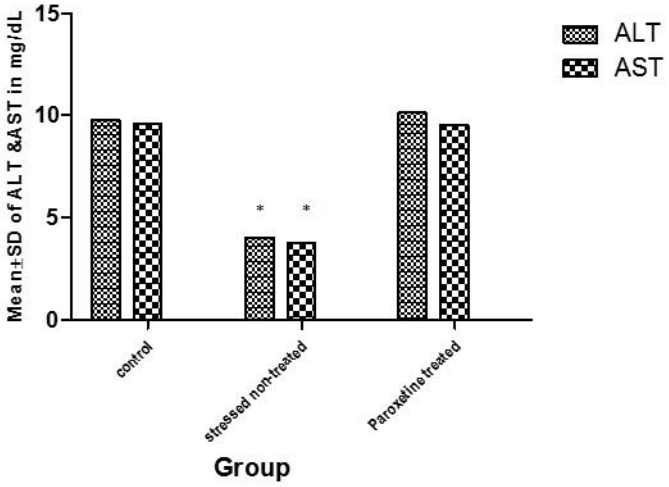

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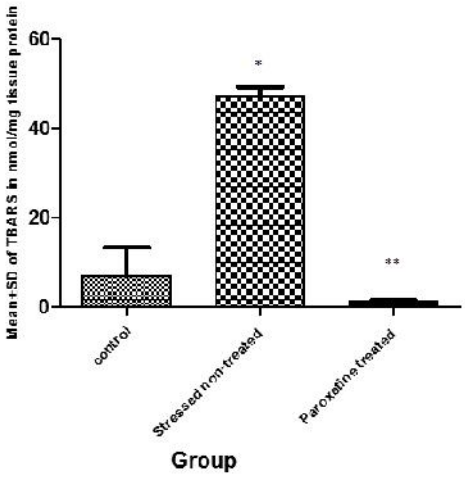
Figure (2): Effect of 21 days administration of paroxetine on thiobarbituric acid-reactive substance (TBARS) in nmol/mg tissue protein of the liver tissue homogenates of all tested albino rats



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