Molecular Pharmacology Fast Forward. Published on December 7, 2009 as doi:10.1124/mol.109.060079
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MOL #60079

CHRONIC FLUOXETINE MODULATES CB_1 RECEPTOR-MEDIATED INHIBITION OF ADENYLYL CYCLASE IN THE RAT PREFRONTAL CORTEX THROUGH 5-HT_{1A} RECEPTOR-DEPENDENT MECHANISMS

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Running title: Fluoxetine modulates CB_1 receptor coupling to adenylyl cyclase

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22 Text pages

6 Tables

3 Figures

40 references

250 words in the Abstract

750 words in the Introduction

1789 words in the Discussion

Abbreviations: AC, adenylyl cyclase; AD, antidepressant drug; BSA, bovine serum albumine; cAMP, cyclic adenosine monophosphate; CB_1 receptor, cannabinoid type 1 receptor; [^{3}H]CP55,940, [^{3}H](1*R*,3*R*,4*R*)-3-[2-hydroxy-4-(1,1-dimethylheptyl)phenyl]-4-(3-hydroxypropyl)cyclohexan-1-ol; 8-OH-DPAT, 8-hydroxydi-n-propylaminotetralin; DTT, dl-dithiothreitol; [^{35}S]GTPγS, [^{35}S]guanosine-5'-*O*-(3-thiotriphosphate); IBMX, ixobutylmethylxanthine; PFC, prefrontal cortex,; SR141716A, *N*-(piperidin-1-yl)-5-(4-chlorophenyl)-1-(2,4-dichlorophenyl)-4-methyl-1*H*-pyrazole-3-carboxamide hydrochloride; SSRI, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor. Δ^9-THC, Δ^9-tetrahydrocannabinol; WAY100635, N-[2-[4-(2-Methoxyphenyl)-1-piperazinyl]ethyl]-N-2-pyridinylcyclohexanecarboxamide maleate; WIN55,212-2, (*R*)-(+)-[2,3-dihydro-5-methyl-3-(4-morpholinylmethyl)pyrrolo-[1,2,3-de]-1,4-benzoxazin-6-yl]-1-naphthalenyl-methanonemesylate;

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ABSTRACT

Increasing data indicate that brain endocannabinoid system plays a role in the effects of antidepressant medications. Here we examined the effect of *in vivo* exposure to the selective serotonin uptake inhibitor fluoxetine on cannabinoid CB_1 receptor density and functionality in the rat prefrontal cortex (PFC) and cerebellum. Chronic fluoxetine (10 mg/kg.day) enhanced CB_1 receptor inhibition of AC in the PFC and reduced it in the cerebellum, without altering receptor density and agonist-stimulation of [^{35}S]GTPγS in either area. Analysis of [^{35}S]GTPγS labeled Gα subunits allowed detection of upregulated CB_1 receptor coupling to $G\alpha_{i2}$, $G\alpha_{i3}$ in the PFC and reduced coupling to $G\alpha_{i3}$ in the cerebellum of fluoxetine-treated rats. Concomitant administration of the 5-HT_{1A} receptor antagonist WAY100635 (0.1 mg/kg.day) reduced fluoxetine-induced modulation of CB_1 receptor coupling to Gα subunits and AC in the PFC but not in the cerebellum. These results indicate that increased CB_1 receptor signaling at the $G\alpha_i$-AC transduction level is a long-term adaptation induced by fluoxetine in the PFC, and point to a role for 5-HT_{1A} receptors in this effect. Basal AC activity, PKA catalytic subunit expression and pCREB/CREB ratio were also upregulated in the PFC of fluoxetine-treated animals, while no differences were detected in the cerebellum. Interestingly, chronic Δ^9-THC did not elicit antidepressant-like effects neither modulated behavioural responses of fluoxetine in an animal model of depression (olfactory bulbectomy) . These data suggest that altered signal transduction through CB_1 receptors in the PFC may participate in the regulation of the AC-PKA-CREB cascade induced by fluoxetine in this brain area.

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Depression is a debilitating disease with a high prevalence and societal cost. Among antidepressant drugs (ADs), selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as fluoxetine are the most widely prescribed nowadays. Despite their well established efficacy, the molecular mechanisms underlying the therapeutic action of SSRIs remain unclear. At a short-term, SSRIs enhance the efficacy of 5-HT neurotransmission via the inhibition of 5-HT uptake. Nevertheless, clinical improvement results evident only after 2-3 weeks of treatment, suggesting a key role for long-term adaptations induced by these compounds, i.e., desensitization of presynaptic inhibitory 5-HT_{1A} receptors (Blier and de Montigny 1994; Castro et al., 2003). Other neurobiological theories propose that the efficacy of SSRIs is due to alterations in various signaling pathways regulating cellular plasticity and survival. It has been demonstrated that chronic treatment with ADs upregulates the cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP)-protein kinase A (PKA) cascade and increases neurogenesis in the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex (PFC) (Malberg and Blendy, 2005). 5-HT_{1A} receptors could be involved in the latest effect, as both proliferative and behavioral effects of fluoxetine are abolished by genetic deletion of the 5-HT_{1A} gene (Santarelli et al., 2003).

Cannabinoid CB_1 receptors, negatively coupled to adenylyl cyclase (AC) via $G_{i/o}$ proteins, mediate most of the actions of exogenous and endogenous cannabinoids in the central nervous system, (Howlett et al., 2002). CB_1 receptor knockout mice exhibit enhanced “depressive-like” behaviors in animal models (Martin et al., 2002; Mato et al., 2007). Pharmacological modulation of CB_1 receptors has led to more conflicting results, as both CB_1 receptor activation and blockade induce antidepressant-like responses in the same tasks (Griebel et al., 2005; Hill and Gorzalka, 2005; Witkin et al., 2005; Bambico et al., 2007; McLaughlin et al., 2007; Steiner et al., 2008; Morrish et al., 2009). These evidences strongly support the involvement of the brain EC system in the modulation of mood, suggesting that CB_1 receptors could play a role in the etiology of major depression (Vinod and Hungund, 2006). In favor of this hypothesis, CB_1 receptor mRNA (Bortolato et al., 2007), protein expression (Hill et al., 2008a) and signaling through $G_{i/o}$ proteins (Rodríguez-Gaztelumendi et al., 2009) have been shown to be upregulated in the PFC of rats subjected to different models of depression, as well as in PFC samples from major depression victims (Hungund et al., 2004).

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In addition, evidence for the contribution of brain endocannabinoid (EC) system to the long-term effects of ADs mainly comes from the fact that their chronic administration modulates CB_1 receptor expression (Hill et al., 2008b) and coupling to $G_{i/o}$ proteins (Rodríguez-Gaztelumendi et al., 2009), as well as the levels of the ECs anandamide and 2-arachidonoylglycerol (Hill et al., 2008b), in the PFC and/or hippocampus. Notably, information about the putative adaptations of brain CB_1 receptors at the cAMP signaling level in response to chronic antidepressants is lacking, despite the proposed importance of this transduction pathway for the long-term adaptations underlying antidepressants efficacy (Malberg and Blendy, 2005). Taking into account that 5-HT receptors are the primary targets of SSRIs, and the fact that experimental data support the existence of crosstalk mechanisms between brain EC and 5-HT systems (Marco et al., 2004; Gobbi et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2006b; Mato et al., 2007; Aso et al., 2009), it is noteworthy that the possible implication of 5-HT receptors in the adaptations of the EC system induced by chronic AD has not been addressed.

Thus, the main objective of this study was to investigate the possible contribution of 5-HT_{1A} receptors to the modulation of CB_1 receptor activity by chronic fluoxetine. We carried out two week treatments with fluoxetine and/or the 5-HT_{1A} receptor antagonist WAY100635, analyzing several steps of CB_1-associated signaling pathway (receptor expression, coupling to $G_{i/o}$ protein subunits and modulation of AC activity) in the PFC, an area that contains important levels of both CB_1 and 5-HT_{1A} receptors, and in the cerebellum, which contains high levels of CB_1 receptors but lacks 5-HT_{1A} receptors (Pazos and Palacios, 1985; Pompeiano et al., 1992). We also analyzed the effect of the different treatments on the expression of several components of the cAMP-dependent pathway. Finally, we studied the influence of chronic Δ^9-THC on the behavioural responses induced by fluoxetine in an animal model of depression (olfactory bulbectomy). Our data demonstrate that CB_1 receptor coupling to specific $G\alpha_i$ proteins and to the inhibition of AC are regionally modulated by chronic fluoxetine and indicate a role for 5-HT_{1A} receptors in these effects, strengthening the hypothesis that the EC system may play a role in the long-term adaptations induced by this SSRI.

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Materials and Methods

Materials. [^{3}H]CP55,940 (165 Ci/mmol) and [^{35}S]GTPγS (1250 Ci/mmol) were purchased from DuPont NEN (Brussels, Belgium). TRK 432 cyclic AMP [^{3}H] assay kit (1028 GBq/mmol) was obtained from Amersham Biosciences (Buckinghamshire, UK). WAY100635, DTT, GDP, GTP, GTPγS and Sigmacote were from Sigma-Aldrich (Madrid, Spain). WIN55,212-2 was obtained from Tocris Cookson (Bristol, UK). SR141716A was a generous gift from Sanofi Recherche (Montpellier, France). Δ^9-Tetrahydrocannabinol (Δ^9-THC) was purchased from THC Pharm GMBH The Health Concept (Frankfurt, Germany). Rabbit anti-G$\alpha i_{1,}$ anti-Gαi_2, anti-Gαi_3, anti-Gαz, anti-Gαo and anti-ERK1/2 and mouse anti-GAPDH, and anti-histone H1 were purchased from Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Inc. (Heidelberg, Germany). Mouse anti-pERK1/2 and goat anti-rabbit and anti-mouse peroxidase conjugated antibodies were purchased from Sigma (Spain). Rabbit anti-CREB and anti-pCREB (ser 133), from Upstate (Charlottesville, VA, USA). Fluoxetine-HCl was kindly donated by Lilly (Barcelona, Spain). All other chemicals used were from the highest commercial grade available.

Animals. Male Wistar rats (200-250 g) were maintained on 12/12 h light/dark cycle, with access to food and water *ad libitum*. All experimental procedures were done in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, the Spanish legislation and the European Communities Council Directive on 'Protection of Animals Used in Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes' (86/609/EEC).

Drug Treatment and Tissue Preparation. Rats were randomly assigned to one of the treatment groups, anaesthetised with ether and implanted the same day with an osmotic minipump Alzet 2002 (Alza Corp., Palo Alto, CA), which delivered 0.5 μl per hour. Animals (n = 9 per experimental group) were treated with fluoxetine HCl (10 mg/kg/day), WAY100635 (0.1 mg/kg/day), the combination of both drugs or with vehicle (50% propyleneglycol, 10% ethanol and 40% distilled water), and minipumps were removed after 14 days of treatment. Rats were killed by decapitation 24 hours after removing the minipumps. Two additional groups of trats (n = 4 rats randomly assigned to each experimental group) were treated with a single intraperitoneal injection of fluoxetine HCl (10 mg/kg) or vehicle, and killed 24 hours later. In all cases, rat brains were rapidly removed, brain areas dissected, frozen immediately in isopentane and stored at -80 °C until assay. For behavioural studies

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(olfactory bulbectomy), animals were treated with vehicle (5% ethanol, 5% emulphor, and 90% saline), fluoxetine HCl (10 mg/kg/day, 14 days, osmotic minipump, s.c.), Δ^9-THC (10 mg/kg/day, 14 days, i.p) and the combination thereof, as described below.

Bilateral Olfactory Bulbectomy (OBX) and Open Field Test. The OBX procedure was performed as previously described (Rodríguez-Gaztelumedi et al., 2009). Animals (sham = 8, OBX = 32) were anesthetized and the bulbs were excised and removed under stereotactic surgery. Sham-operated animals underwent the same procedure except for excision and aspiration of the olfactory bulbs. An open field test was conducted following a 15 post-surgery recovery period, as previously described, recording for a 5 min period the number of ambulations, rearings, grooming episodes, and defecations. The following day, OBX animals were randomly divided into five subgroups to receive vehicle-treated sham-operated (n = 8) vehicle-treated OBX (n = 8), fluoxetine-treated OBX (n = 8), Δ^9-THC-treated OBX (n = 8) or fluoxetine plus Δ^9-THC-treated OBX (n = 8). An open field session was performed at the end of the treatment. At the end of the experiments animals were killed and the success of the operation was confirmed anatomically.

Protein Content Determination. Membrane protein content was determined with the Bio-Rad Protein Assay Kit (Bio-Rad, Munich, Germany), using γ-globulin as standard.

cAMP Assays. For quantitation of endogenous cAMP levels, brain samples were homogenized (1:30 w/v) in ice-cold buffer (20 mM Tris-HCl, 300 mM sucrose, 1 mM EGTA, 5 mM EDTA, 5 mM DTT, 25 μM leupeptine; pH 7.4) using a Teflon tissue grinder (10 strokes, 800 rpm) and centrifuged (1500 rpm, 5 min, 4ºC). The resulting supernatants were incubated during 5 min at 100ºC and then centrifuged (14,000 rpm, 5 min). cAMP accumulation was quantified in 50 μl supernatant aliquots by using a [^{3}H]cAMP commercial kit (TRK 432, Amersham Amersham Signal Transduction Assays; GE Healthcare UK Ltd Buckinghamshire, England).

In order to analyze AC activity, brain samples were homogenized (1:100 w/v) in ice-cold buffer and centrifuged (1500 rpm, 5 min, 4ºC) as described above, and the resulting supernatants centrifuged again (14,000 rpm, 15 min, 4ºC). Pellets were resuspended (150 μg protein/ml) in ice-cold assay buffer (80 mM Tris-HCl, 60 mM sucrose, 2 mM $MgCl_2$, 0.2 mM EGTA, 1 mM EDTA, 100 mM

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NaCl, 1 mM DTT, 10 μM GTP, 0.5% mg/ml BSA, 0.5 mM IBMX, 5 mM phosphocreatine, 50 U/ml creatine phosphokinase, 5 U/ml myokinase and 5 μM forskolin; pH 7.4) and incubated (5 min at 37ºC) in the absence or presence of WIN55,212-2 (10 nM-100 μM). The specificity of the cannabinoid agonist was verified by incubation of 10 μM WIN55,212-2 with 10 μM SR141716A. Experiments assessing 5-HT_{1A} receptor-mediated inhibition of AC in the hippocampus were performed using 8-OH-DPAT (10 nM-100 μM) as specific agonist and WAY100635 (10 μM) as antagonist. The enzymatic reaction was started by addition of ATP to a final concentration of 200 μM. The mixture was then incubated (10 min at 37ºC) and the reaction was rapidly terminated by 5 min incubation at 100ºC. The samples were centrifuged (14,000 rpm, 5 min) and cAMP accumulation was quantified in 50 μl supernatant aliquots by using the [^{3}H]cAMP commercial kit described above. The assays were performed in triplicate Sigmacote-treated borosilicate tubes, and the results were confirmed in two independent experiments.

[^{3}H]CP55,940 Saturation Binding Assay. Frozen brain samples were homogenized (1:100 w/v) in ice-cold buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, 250 mM sucrose, 3 mM $MgCl_2$, 1 mM EGTA; pH 7.4) using a motor driven Teflon and glass tissue grinder (10 strokes, 1500 rpm). Homogenates were then centrifuged (1500 rpm, 5 min, 4ºC) with the resulting supernatants centrifuged again (14,000 rpm, 15 min, 4ºC). The obtained pellets were resuspended in assay buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, 1 mM EDTA, 3 mM $MgCl_2$; pH 7.4) and centrifuged again (14,000 x *g*, 15 min, 4ºC). Pellets were resuspended in assay buffer (50 μg protein/ml in the assay) containing 1 mg/ml BSA and incubated for 60 min at 30ºC in the presence of nine different concentrations of the cannabinoid agonist [^{3}H]CP55,940 (0.0125-3.2 nM). Non-specific binding was determined with 1 μM WIN55,212-2. Bound radioactivity was determined using a Beckman LS6000 liquid scintillation counter (Beckman Instruments Inc., CA), after overnight extraction in 5 ml Ecolite scincillation fluid. All assays were performed in duplicate Sigmacote-treated borosilicate tubes, and the results were confirmed in two independent experiments.

Agonist-stimulated [^{35}S]GTPγS Binding. Tissue samples were homogenized (1:100 w/v) in ice-cold buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, 250 mM sucrose, 3 mM $MgCl_2$, 1 mM EGTA, 1 mM DTT; pH 7.4) and processed as reported above for [^{3}H]CP55,940 binding assays. Membrane aliquots (200 μg

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protein/ml in the assay) were incubated for 120 min at 30ºC in assay buffer (100 mM NaCl, 50 mM Tris-HCl, 3 mM $MgCl_2$, 1 mM EGTA, 1 mM DTT, 50 µM GDP, 1 mg/ml BSA; pH 7.4) containing 0.1 nM [^{35}S]GTPγS. Cannabinoid agonist stimulation of [^{35}S]GTPγS binding was determined using 1 nM-100 µM WIN55,212-2. The specificity of the CB_1 receptor mediated-stimulation was verified by coincubation of 10 µM WIN55,212-2 with 1 µM SR141716A. Non-specific binding was determined in the presence of 10 µM GTPγS. Experiments were terminated by sample dilution in ice-cold buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, 1 mg/ml BSA; pH 7.4) and rapid filtration under vacuum (Cell Harvester M-12R, Brandel, MD) through GF/C glass fiber filters. [^{35}S]GTPγS binding assays were terminated and measured as described for [^{3}H]CP55,940 experiments. All assays were performed in duplicate Sigmacote-treated borosilicate tubes, and the results were confirmed in two independent experiments.

Immunoprecipitation of [^{35}S]GTPγS Labeled Gα Subunits. Membrane homogenates were obtained as reported for agonist-stimulated [^{35}S]GTPγS binding assays. Resuspended pellets (500 µg protein/ml in the assay) were incubated with 2 nM [^{35}S]GTPγS and 10 µM WIN55,212-2 in a final 100 µl assay volume for 30 min at 30ºC. Non-specific binding was determined in the presence of 10 µM of GTPγS. Membrane suspensions were then solubilized on ice with 1 % Igepal, 0.5 % sodium deoxycholate, 0.1 % SDS, 2.5 mM CHAPS, 0.1 mM phenylmethylsulfonylfluoride, 0.01 M aprotinin, 1 µg/ml leupetine, 1 µg/ml pestatin, 1 µl/ml antipain, 10 µg/ml chymostatin for 30 min. Solubilized membranes were incubated for 3 h at room temperature with 15 µl of specific rabbit anti$G\alpha i_1$, anti$G\alpha i_2$, anti$G\alpha i_3$, anti$G\alpha z$, anti$G\alpha o$ antibodies inmobilized to superparamagnetic Dynabeads® Protein A (overnight, 4ºC). After three washes with 1 ml de PBS the beads were pelleted and the entrapped radioactivity was counted in 4 ml of Ecolite scincillation cocktail. Antibody specificity was confirmed in our experimental conditions by western blot as reported (Valdizan et al Int J Neuropsychopharmacol, in press).

Western blot. Brain samples were homogenized (1:15 w/v) by using a Potter homogenizer provided with a loosely fitting Teflon pestle in ice-cold buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, 250 mM sucrose, 3 mM $MgCl_2$, 1 mM EGTA and 1 mM DTT; pH=7.4) containing the following protease and phosphatase inhibitors: 1 mM PMSF; 10 µl/ml aprotinin; 10 µg/ml leupetin; 10 µg/ml pepstatin A; 10

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µg/ml antipain; 10 µg/ml chymostatin; 5 µg/ml trypsin inhibitor; 1 mM NaV; 1 mM NaF; 1 mM cantharidin; and 10 µM E-64. After homogenization, 100 µl of homogenate were lysated in homogenization buffer containing 1% igepal; 0.1% sodium deoxycholate, 0.2% SDS, and 0.1% Triton X-100) 30 min on ice for the total cell lysate (TCL). The remaining homogenate was centrifuged at (1500 rpm, 5 min, 4ºC) and the resulting pellets were used to obtain the nuclear fraction (NF) by homogenization in 20 mM HEPES, 0.45 M NaCl, 1 mM EDTA (pH 7.9) containing protease and phosphatase inhibitors and incubation in ice for 30 min. Solubilized proteins were recovered in the supernatant after centrifugation (14,000 rpm, 10 min, 4 ºC). Protein preparations (30-50 µg per lane) were resolved on 12.5% SDS-PAGE and transferred to PVDF (non-phosphorylated proteins) or to nitrocellulose (phosphorylated proteins) membranes. Membranes were incubated in the following primary antibodies: rabbit anti-ERK1/2 (1:2000), mouse anti-pERK1/2 (1:10.000), rabbit anti-CREB (1:1000) and rabbit anti-pCREB (1:1000). After extensive washings in TBS-T (TBS+0.05% Tween 20) membranes were incubated with horseradish peroxidase conjugated secondary antibodies. Secondary antibodies were detected with ECL Advance kit (GE Healthcare Europe GmbH, Munich, Germany). Blot quantitations were performed by densitometric scanning using Scion Image Software. The densitometry values were normalized with respect to the values obtained with anti-GADPH (TCL) and/or anti-histone H1 (NF) antibodies. Data for every sample was the mean of at least two independent experiments.

Data Analysis. [^{3}H]CP55,940 saturation binding data were transformed using the method described by Scatchard (1949), and GraphPad Prism computer software Windows (GraphPad Software, San Diego, CA) was used to estimate maximal [^{3}H]CP55,940 binding sites (B_{max}) and dissociation constants (K_d). K_d values were normalized for comparison as -log K_d (pK_d). The effect of each concentration of cannabinoid agonist was expressed as percentage of stimulation (% = agonist effect x 100)/basal activity) in [^{35}S]GTPγS assays and percetage of inhibition in cAMP assays (% = agonist effect x 100)/forskolin effect-100). Analysis of concentration-effect curves was conducted by nonlinear regression using GraphPad Prism Software in order to estimate the theoretical maximal effect (E_{max}) and the potency (EC_{50}) in [^{35}S]GTPγS binding assays and the (I_{max}) and (IC_{50}) values in

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cAMP assays of the cannabinoid agonist in each assay. EC_{50} and IC_{50} values were normalized as -log EC_{50} and -log IC_{50} (pEC_{50} and pIC_{50}) for comparison. Levels of coupling of CB_1 receptors by WIN55,212-2 (10^{-5} M) to the diverse G protein subunits were obtained as the percentage over the value in the absence of agonist. The efficiency of coupling of CB_1 receptors was obtained from the control group. Statistical comparison of experimental groups was made using one-way ANOVA with Newman-Keuls post hoc tests. Differences were taken as statistically significant when $p < 0.05$. Data are presented as mean ± SEM.

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Results

Chronic Fluoxetine Modulates Basal and CB_1 Receptor-Dependent Inhibition of Adenylyl Cyclase Activity but not endogenous cAMP Levels. Endogenous cAMP levels were unchanged in the PFC or in the cerebellum after chronic treatment with fluoxetine, the combination of fluoxetine plus WAY100635 or WAY100635 alone (in pmol/mg protein; vehicle: PFC 1.76 ± 0.43, cerebellum 3.34 ± 0.44; fluoxetine: PFC 1.78 ± 0.20, cerebellum 3.57 ± 0.46; fluoxetine+WAY100635: PFC 1.79 ± 0.47, cerebellum 3.23 ± 0.18; WAY100635: PFC 1.81 ± 0.42, cerebellum 3.38 ± 0.23).

The effects of chronic treatment with fluoxetine, the combination of fluoxetine plus WAY100635 or WAY100635 alone on basal, forskolin-stimulated and CB_1 receptor-mediated inhibition of AC in the PFC and cerebellum are depicted in Fig. 1. Chronic fluoxetine significantly increased basal AC activity in the PFC, and this effect was not observed in the animals treated with fluoxetine+WAY100635 or with WAY100635 alone (Fig. 1A). One-way ANOVA for independent measures revealed an effect of the group ($F = 3.2$; $^{*}p < 0.05$), with significant differences between the vehicle and fluoxetine groups ($^{*}p < 0.05$), as well as between the fluoxetine versus WAY100635 alone groups ($^{\#}p < 0.05$). Differences in the ability of the AC activator forskolin to increase cAMP levels were no detected in any of the treated groups (in pmol/min/mg protein: vehicle 164 ± 34; fluoxetine 207 ± 42; fluoxetine+WAY100635, 181 ± 36; WAY100635, 172 ± 22). Incubation with the cannabinoid agonist WIN55,212-2 induced a concentration-dependent decrease of forskolin-stimulated AC in the PFC of vehicle-treated rats, with a maximal inhibition (I_{max}) of 30.0 ± 3.0% and a pIC_{50} of 5.7 ± 0.08. Chronic treatment with fluoxetine induced a significant increase in the maximal ability of WIN55,212-2 to inhibit AC in the PFC (I_{max} = 41.8 ± 3.7%) that was absent in those rats treated with fluoxetine plus the 5-HT_{1A} receptor antagonist WAY100635 (I_{max} = 25.5 ± 3.2%) or WAY100635 alone (I_{max} = 25.3 ± 2.5%) (Fig. 1B). One-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of the group ($F = 6.11$, $^{**}p < 0.01$), with significant differences between the vehicle and fluoxetine groups ($^{*}p < 0.05$), as well as between the fluoxetine versus fluoxetine plus WAY100635 ($^{\#\#}p < 0.01$) and WAY100635 alone groups ($^{\#\#}p < 0.01$). The potency of the cannabinoid agonist to inhibit AC was not altered by chronic treatment with fluoxetine, fluoxetine plus WAY10635 or WAY100635 alone

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(Fig. 1B). Noteworthy, the observed modifications in basal AC activity and WIN55,212-2 efficacy to inhibit AC in the PFC of rats chronically treated with fluoxetine were not detected following a single exposure to the SSRI (Table 1). In the cerebellum of the same groups of rats we did not observe modifications of basal (Fig. 1A) or forskolin-stimulated AC activity (in pmol/min/mg protein: vehicle 76 ± 9; fluoxetine 94 ± 21; fluoxetine+WAY100635, 78 ± 11; WAY100635, 88 ± 14). In contrast to the observed upregulation of CB_1 receptor coupling to AC in the PFC of fluoxetine-treated rats, the ability of WIN55,212-2 to inhibit cAMP production was reduced in the cerebellum following chronic fluoxetine (I_{max} = 23.5 ± 0.9% in fluoxetine-treated rats versus 38.7 ± 2.1% in vehicle-treated rats). This reduced coupling ability of CB_1 receptors to AC in the cerebellum of fluoxetine-treated rats was not prevented by cotreatment with the 5-HT_{1A} receptor antagonist WAY100635 (I_{max} = 18.1 ± 1.9%), that when administered alone did not modify WIN55,212-2 efficacy in cAMP assays (I_{max} = 39.6 ± 2.5%) (Fig. 1C). One-way ANOVA indicated a significant effect of the group (F = 25.2, ***p < 0.001), with significant differences between the vehicle versus fluoxetine (*p < 0.05) and fluoxetine+WAY100635 groups (*p < 0.05), as well as between the fluoxetine versus WAY100635 alone groups ($^{\#\#}p$ < 0.01). None of the treatments altered the potency of the cannabinoid agonist to inhibit AC in the cerebellum (Fig. 1C).

In order to determine the specificity of fluoxetine effect on CB_1 receptor coupling to AC we analyzed the inhibition of forskolin-stimulated cAMP levels by a $G_{i/o}$ protein coupled receptor with a well known implication in mood disorders, as is the case of 5-HT_{1A} receptors. Inhibition of AC by 5-HT_{1A} receptors was studied in the hippocampus of the same treated rats, given the high expression of 5-HT_{1A} protein in this brain area, and its involvement in the long-term effects of ADs. As reported above for the PFC, chronic fluoxetine increased basal AC activity in the hippocampus, and this effect was not observed in the animals treated with fluoxetine+WAY100635 or with WAY100635 alone (Table 2). Statistical comparison using one-way ANOVA indicated an effect of the group (F = 4.1; *p < 0.05), with significant differences between the vehicle and fluoxetine groups (*p < 0.05), as well as between the fluoxetine versus fluoxetine+WAY100635 and WAY100635 alone groups ($^{\#}p$ < 0.05 in both cases). Differences in the stimulatory effect of forskolin on cAMP levels were not detected in any

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of the treatment groups (Table 2). In contrast to the reported effect of fluoxetine on CB_1 receptor coupling to AC in the PFC, the I_{max} for AC inhibition by the 5-HT_{1A} receptor agonist 8-OH-DPAT was reduced in the hippocampus of the same treated rats. One-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of the group ($F = 4$, $^*p < 0.05$), with significant differences between the vehicle and fluoxetine groups ($^{**}p < 0.01$). The potency of 8-OH-DPAT to inhibit AC was not altered by any of the treatments (Table 2).

Chronic Fluoxetine Does Not Alter CB_1 Receptor Density or Agonist-Stimulated [^{35}S]GTPγS Binding. The observed alterations in the efficacy of WIN55,212-2 to inhibit AC in the PFC and cerebellum of fluoxetine-treated rats could reflect changes in CB_1 receptor expression and/or coupling to $G_{i/o}$ proteins. In order to test this hypothesis, we carried out saturation binding experiments with the cannabinoid agonist [^{3}H]CP55,940 as well as WIN55,212-2-stimulated [^{35}S]GTPγS binding assays following chronic treatment with fluoxetine, fluoxetine plus WAY100635 or WAY100635 alone. [^{3}H]CP55,940 binding to rat PFC and cerebellum membranes was saturated at 3 nM, the non-specific binding being about 30% of the total radioligand binding at a concentration close to the estimated apparent dissociation constant (K_d). Chronic *in vivo* treatment with fluoxetine, WAY100635 or the combination of both did not modify CB_1 receptor density or agonist affinity in either brain area (Table 3). In addition, none of treatments altered the maximal effect or the potency of WIN55,212-2 to stimulate [^{35}S]GTPγS binding (Table 3).

Chronic Fluoxetine Modulates CB_1 Receptor Coupling to Specific Gα Protein Subunits. Results from [^{35}S]GTPγS binding experiments suggest that the observed changes in CB_1 receptor signaling at the AC level induced by chronic fluoxetine in the PFC and cerebellum take place in the absence of any modification in the receptor coupling to $G_{i/o}$ proteins. Nevertheless, the possibility also exists that the administration of this SSRI affects the coupling ability of CB_1 receptors to specific Gα subunits in a complex manner, so that this modifications are overlooked when assessing global coupling to $G_{i/o}$ proteins in [^{35}S]GTPγS binding assays. To further clarify this point we performed immunoprecipitation of WIN55,212-2-stimulated [^{35}S]GTPγS labelled Gα protein subunits following chronic treatment with fluoxetine, WAY100635 or the combination of both compounds. The coupling

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efficiency of CB_1 receptors to Gα protein subunits induced by the agonist WIN55,212-2 in PFC was: $G\alpha_{i3}$ (173% ± 18) ≅ $G\alpha_{i2}$ (169% ± 6) > $G\alpha_o$ (145% ± 8) > $G\alpha_z$ (131% ± 14). In the cerebellum, coupling efficiency values were: $G\alpha_{i3}$ (335% ± 28) > $G\alpha_o$ (210% ± 36) ≅ $G\alpha_z$ (210% ± 20) > $G\alpha_{i2}$ (203% ± 3) ≅ $G\alpha_1$ (202% ± 15) (Figure 2). No significant coupling of CB_1 receptors to $G\alpha_{i1}$ was observed in PFC following activation with WIN55,212-2.

In the PFC, one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference in the efficacy of the cannabinoid agonist to activate $G\alpha_{i2}$ and $G\alpha_{i3}$ subunits among groups ($F = 3.5$, $^*p < 0.05$ and $F = 3.03$, $^*p < 0.05$ respectively), whereas no difference was detected regarding stimulation of $G\alpha_0$ and $G\alpha_z$ proteins. Post-hoc test revealed that the level of $G\alpha_{i2}$ and $G\alpha_{i3}$ subunits activation by WIN55,212-2 was significantly increased in the PFC of fluoxetine-treated rats ($^*p < 0.05$ versus vehicle). As reported above for fluoxetine effect on CB_1 receptor coupling to AC in this brain area, the $5\text{-}HT_{1A}$ receptor antagonist WAY100635 did not alter the profile of Gα protein activation by WIN55,212-2 when administered alone, but prevented the increased stimulation of $G\alpha_{i2}$ protein subunits when coadministered with the SSRI ($^{\#}p < 0.05$ versus fluoxetine) (Fig. 2A).

In the cerebellum of fluoxetine-treated rats we detected a selective downregulation of CB_1 receptor coupling to $G\alpha_{i2}$ subunits. This effect of the SSRI in the cerebellum was not prevented by concomitant administration of WAY100635, that by itself did not modify WIN55,212-2 activation of Gα subunits (Fig. 2B). One-way ANOVA indicated a significant effect of the group ($F = 21.9$, $^{***}p < 0.001$), with significant differences between the vehicle versus fluoxetine ($^{***}p < 0.001$) and fluoxetine+WAY100635 groups ($^{***}p < 0.001$).

Chronic Fluoxetine modulates PKA expression and CREB phosphorylation in the PFC. Chronic administration of ADs including SSRIs has been consistently shown to upregulate different components of the cAMP pathway, including PKA and the cAMP response element-binding protein (CREB) (Malberg and Blendy, 2005). On the other hand, CB_1 receptors are coupled to the activation of the extracellular signal regulated-kinase (ERK)-CREB transduction cascade in several brain areas, including the PFC and the cerebellum (Rubino et al., 2004). In an attempt to elucidate the functional consequences of the observed modulation of CB_1 receptor coupling to $G\alpha_i$ proteins-AC by chronic

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fluoxetine we analyzed the effects of the SSRI on the expression levels of PKA catalytic and regulatory 1α domains (PKA_c and PKA_r1α), as well as of pCREB/CREB, ERK1/2 and pERK1/2 and. One-way ANOVA indicated that PKA_c levels in total cell lysates (TCL) of PFC varied among treated groups ($F = 3.2$, $^{*}p < 0.05$), whereas PKA_r1α expression remanined unaltered. Post-hoc tests revealed increased PKA_c levels in fluoxetine-treated rats ($^{*}p < 0.05$ versus vehicle), that were not detected in rats treated with the combination of fluoxetine+WAY100635, or with the 5-HT_{1A} receptor antagonist alone (Fig. 3A and B). Chronic fluoxetine also modulated CREB and pCREB expression in TCL of rat PFC ($F = 2.8$, $^{*}p < 0.05$ and $F = 22.2$, $^{***}p < 0.001$ respectively), without altering ERK1/2 and pERK1/2 levels in the same area (Fig. 3A and Table 4). The expression of CREB was significantly enhanced in PFC lysates from fluoxetine-treated rats ($^{*}p < 0.05$ versus vehicle) and this effect was not observed in the fluoxetine+WAY100635 group. Increased pCREB levels were also detected in TCL of rat PFC following chronic fluoxetine ($^{***}p < 0.001$ versus vehicle), as well as after fluoxetine+WAY100635 ($^{***}p < 0.001$ versus vehicle) (Table 4). Consistently, pCREB/CREB ratio was found to be increased in PFC lysates from rats chronically treated with fluoxetine ($F = 4.7$, $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$ versus vehicle) and fluoxetine+WAY100635 ($^{*}p < 0.05$ versus vehicle) (Fig. 3C). Consistently, we detected enhanced pCREB expression in nuclear fractions of the same treated rats ($F = 6.5$, $^{**}p < 0.01$). Post-hoc analysis indicated that chronic treatment with fluoxetine and with fluoxetine+WAY100635 enhanced pCREB levels in nuclear fractions of PFC ($^{**}p < 0.01$ $^{*}p < 0.05$ versus vehicle respectively) (Fig. 3D). Treatment with WAY100635 alone did not modulate CREB, pCREB, ERK1/2 or pERK1/2 levels in the TCL and/or nuclear fractions of rat PFC (Fig. 3 and Table 4). In contrast to this observed upregulation of the PKA-CREB transduction cascade in the PFC by chronic fluoxetine, no modifications in PKA_c, PKA_r1α, pCREB/CREB or pERK/ERK levels were detected in the cerebellum of treated rats (Table 5).

Role of CB_1 receptors in the antidepressant efficacy of chronic fluoxetine in the OBX depression model. In order to test whether the observed modulation of CB_1 receptor coupling to specific $G\alpha_i$ protein subunits-AC in the PFC by chronic fluoxetine could participate in the therapeutic efficacy of this SSRI, we studied the behavioral consequences of chronic CB_1 receptor activation in

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the OBX depression model. Two weeks after sham (n = 8) or OBX (n = 32) surgery and before the initiation of the chronic treatments, OBX-induced hyperactivity was confirmed on the open-field test (data not shown). The following day, sham animals were treated with vehicle, and OBX animals were treated with either vehicle, fluoxetine (10 mg/kg/day), the CB_1 receptor agonist Δ^9-THC (10 mg/kg/day) or the combination of both compounds for another 14 days, and the behavioral effects of the treatments were evaluated in the open field (Table 6). In agreement with our previous observations (Rodríguez-Gaztelumendi et al., 2009), chronic fluoxetine induced a complete reversion of the increased number of ambulations in OBX rats relative to the vehicle-treated OBX group ($\#p < 0.05$). In contrast, we detected no difference in total ambulation scores between Δ^9-THC-treated and vehicle-treated OBX rats (Table 6). Finally, chronic treatment with Δ^9-THC did not modulate the ability of fluoxetine to reduce hyperactivity in OBX-rats (Table 6). Thus, chronic fluoxetine rectified the locomotor hyperactivity in the OBX rats whereas chronic Δ^9-THC was without effect, and did not affect the behavioral effects of fluoxetine in this depression model.

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Discussion

The present results constitute the first evidence that chronic treatment with an antidepressant compound enhances CB_1 receptor coupling to specific $G\alpha_i$ subunits and to AC inhibition in a brain area involved the pathogenesis of mood disorders and in the long-term effects of ADs, as is the case of the PFC.

Among the few studies that have addressed the effects of chronic antidepressants exposure on the activity of brain EC system, most of them have focused on CB_1 receptor density. Some of them suggest an enhancement of CB_1 receptor expression in brain areas with a well established role in depression (Hill et al., 2006a, Hill et al., 2008b, but see also Hill et al., 2007). Increased CB_1 receptor density in the rat PFC has been reported following long-term administration of the monoamine oxidase inhibitor tranylcypromine or with fluoxetine (Hill et al., 2008b), but not with the tricyclic desipramine (Hill et al., 2006a). Although the absence of CB_1 receptor expression modulation by fluoxetine reported here is in contrast to the findings of Hill et al. (2008b), probably due to differences in the treatment regimen between both studies, our data demonstrating upregulated CB_1 receptor coupling to $G\alpha_i$ proteins-AC strengthen the idea that long-term administration of chemical antidepressants enhance CB_1 receptor activity in this brain area. When interpreting these findings it must also be considered that reduced CB_1 receptor density has also been reported in the PFC following electroconvulsive shock (Hill et al., 2007). These data suggest that forebrain EC system may be important for the efficacy of antidepressant treatments, reinforcing the interest of simultaneously analyzing the effects of AD administration on the different levels of the CB_1 receptor transduction cascade.

Stimulation of CB_1 receptors by WIN 55212-2 resulted in the activation of at least five different $G\alpha_{i/o}$ proteins subunits in PFC and cerebellum, with slight differences in efficacy of subunit activation across brain regions, as previously described (Prather et al. 2000). Our results also indicate increased CB_1 receptor coupling to the activation of $G\alpha_{i2}$ and $G\alpha_{i3}$ subunits, and not to $G\alpha_o$ subunits, in the PFC of fluoxetine-treated rats. The absence of fluoxetine effect on CB_1 receptor-stimulated [^{35}S]GTPγS binding strengthens this idea, as these assays mainly detect the activation of $G\alpha_o$ subunits (Jiang et al., 2001), which might be related to the fact that $G\alpha_o$ are in significant excess over $G\alpha_i$ in brain

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(Sternweis and Robishaw, 1984; Spicher et al., 1992). Noteworthy, both CB_1 receptor stimulation of $G\alpha_{i2}$ and AC inhibition were significantly reduced in the cerebellum of the same fluoxetine-treated rats. Altogether, these data strongly suggest that fluoxetine-induced modulation of CB_1 receptor coupling to $G\alpha_i$ proteins may contribute to the observed changes in the level of CB_1 receptor-dependent modulation of AC activity. The fact that opposite modulation of CB_1 receptor coupling to $G\alpha_i$ proteins-AC by chronic fluoxetine was detected in the PFC and cerebellum of the same animals strengthens the emerging idea that the effects of long-term ADs on the activity of EC system differ among brain structures (Hill et al., 2008b).

A major finding of the present study is that pharmacological blockade of 5-HT_{1A} receptors with WAY100635 suppresses fluoxetine-induced upregulation of CB_1 receptor coupling to $G\alpha_{i2}$ proteins and to AC in the PFC. Noteworthy, WAY100635 did not prevent desensitization of CB_1 receptor signaling at the $G\alpha_{i2}$ proteins-AC level in the cerebellum, a brain area devoid of 5-HT_{1A} receptors (Pazos and Palacios, 1985; Pompeiano et al., 1992). These results reinforce the hypothesis that fluoxetine-induced modulation of CB_1 receptor signaling through $G\alpha_{i2}$ proteins underlies the observed changes at the AC level. In addition, these findings strongly suggest that the enhanced CB_1 signaling at the $G\alpha_{i2}$ proteins-AC in the PFC by chronic fluoxetine results from the activation of 5-HT_{1A} receptors. The efficacy of our WAY100635 administration protocol to block 5-HT_{1A} receptors during fluoxetine administration is supported by the ability of this compound to prevent the desensitization of 5-HT_{1A} receptor-mediated responses in the DRN (Castro et al., 2008), as well as in the hippocampus (present report). Another important question is whether chronic administration of other antidepressant compounds that inhibit 5-HT uptake induces a similar effect in brain areas expressing 5-HT_{1A} receptors. In this regard, data from our laboratory suggest that this is indeed the case, as administration of the dual 5-HT and NA inhibitor venlafaxine (40 mg/kg/day, 14 day-s.c. minipumps) also enhances CB_1 receptor-mediated inhibition of AC in the rat PFC (Valdizán et al., unpublished observation). Although the molecular mechanisms by which fluoxetine upregulates CB_1 receptor functionality remain to be elucidated, a growing body of evidence support the existence of interactions between brain EC and 5-HT systems, our results pointing out to a special involvement of 5-HT_{1A} receptors. Noteworthy, adequate CB_1 receptor functionality seems to be important for 5-HT_{1A} receptor-mediated

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biochemical and behavioral responses, as decreased efficacy of the 8-OH-DPAT to activate $G_{i/o}$ proteins (Mato et al., 2007), impaired anxiolytic (Urigüen et al., 2004) and hypothermic (Mato et al., 2007) effect of 5-HT_{1A} agonists, and reduced functionality of 5-HT_{1A} autoreceptors in the dorsal raphe nucleus (DRN) (Aso et al., 2009), have been detected in CB_1 knockout animals. In this context, the present report uncovers the possibility that modulation of CB_1 receptors participates in those effects of chronic fluoxetine that are triggered by 5-HT_{1A} receptors.

Regarding the observed increase in basal AC activity (without modification of endogenous cAMP levels), PKA_c subunit expression and pCREB/CREB ratio in the PFC by chronic fluoxetine, our findings are in good agreement with research carried out during the past decade, which provides strong support for the upregulation of the cAMP pathway following chronic antidepressant administration (for review see Malberg and Blendy, 2005). Results include increased coupling of stimulatory G protein ($G\alpha_s$) to AC (for review see Donati and Rasenick, 2003) in the presence of persistent activation of various $G_{i/o}$-coupled receptors, consistent with the partial reversion of the increase of basal AC activity and PKA_c subunit observed after association of fluoxetine with the 5-HT_{1A} receptor antagonist in the PFC and/or hippocampus. Although the modulation of CB_1 receptor functionality could be involved in the activation of the cAMP-CREB cascade by chronic fluoxetine, our methodological approach does not allow the clarification of this issue. It is noteworthy that WAY100635 completely prevented fluoxetine-induced increase in CB_1 receptor coupling to $G\alpha_{i2}$ proteins-AC and partially reversed upregulation of both basal AC activity and PKA_c subunit expression induced by the SSRI in the PFC. These findings suggest that upregulated CB_1 receptor signaling contributes to some extent to 5-HT_{1A} receptor-mediated modulation of the cAMP cascade following fluoxetine administration, although the involvement of other mechanisms cannot be discarded. In this scenario, the lack of ability of WAY100635 to prevent fluoxetine-induced increase in pCREB/CREB ratio would indicate that the upregulation of CB_1 receptor signaling does not contribute to this effect. Indeed, although studies addressing the effects of CB_1 receptor antagonists on the modulation of cAMP-CREB cascade by chronic ADs are lacking, we have observed no significant differences between control and CB_1 knockout animals with respect to pCREB upregulation by

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chronic fluoxetine (unpublished data). On the other hand, we have not found any significant modification in pERK/ERK expression in the PFC following chronic fluoxetine.

The role of the observed upregulation of CB_1 receptor coupling to AC in the behavioral adaptations induced by chronic fluoxetine is also difficult to interpret at the present time. In addition to the already mentioned possibility that CB_1 receptors participate in these effects via the modulation of fluoxetine-induced adaptations in cAMP cascade, recent data also suggest that upregulated CB_1 receptor signaling in the PFC could also elicit antidepressant effects by enhancing the activity of 5-HT neurons in the DRN (Gobbi et al., 2005; Bambico et al., 2007). Consistent with the idea that enhanced signaling through CB_1 receptors may result in antidepressant effects, CB_1 receptor knockout mice exhibit enhanced depressive-like behaviors (Martin et al., 2002; Mato et al., 2007) and low doses of cannabinoid agonists (Bambico et al., 2007; McLaughlin et al., 2007; Morrish et al., 2009) or inhibitors of EC degradation (Gobbi et al., 2005; Bortolato et al., 2007) produce antidepressant-like effects in rodents. Nevertheless, it should be noted that CB_1 receptor antagonists also behave as antidepressants in behavioral models (Griebel et al., 2005; Witkin et al., 2005; Steiner et al., 2008). When interpreting these controversial data an important consideration is that, although studies specifically addressing the antidepressant effects of CB_1 cannabinoid agonists and antagonists in humans are lacking, the high incidence of depression and anxiety in clinical trials with the CB_1 receptor antagonist rimonabant for the treatment of obesity, despite depressed mood being an exclusion criterion in these trials (Mitchell and Morris, 2007), has motivated its recent withdrawal from use or lack of approval. Along with preclinical data, these clinical findings strongly suggest that CB_1 receptors may represent a novel target for the treatment of mood disorders. In support of this, we have recently demonstrated in the PFC of OBX rats, an animal model of depression, a significant increase in CB_1 receptor density and coupling to G proteins in the PFC, together with the characteristic hyperactivity in the open field test: both neurochemical and behavioral responses were absent following fluoxetine (Rodríguez-Gaztelumendi et al., 2009). Noteworthy, exposure to a single Δ^9-THC injection before the initiation of chronic treatment with fluoxetine significantly decreased hyperactivity in OBX rats, indicating that direct activation of CB_1 receptors elicits antidepressant-like effects in this depression model (Rodríguez-Gaztelumendi et al., 2009). In contrast, here we report that

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chronic Δ^9-THC administration neither elicits antidepressant-like effects nor modulates the behavioral efficacy of chronic fluoxetine in this model. It could be hypothesized that sustained administration of Δ^9-THC is expected to induce adaptative changes in the CB_1 receptor signalling axis, including downregulation in many brain areas (Breivogel et al., 1999). These changes could strongly modify those here reported induced by fluoxetine, resulting in the lack of influence of Δ9-THC on the antidepressant responses. The full clarification of this issue goes beyond the scope of the present study.

In summary, this study demonstrates that chronic fluoxetine modulates the functionality of CB_1 receptors in the rat brain in a region-specific manner. Upregulated CB_1 receptor signaling at the $G\alpha_i$ protein-AC transdution level in the PFC, even in the absence of significant changes in receptor density, is one of the long-term molecular adaptations triggered by chronic fluoxetine. This response is mediated through the activation of 5-HT circuits implicating 5-HT_{1A} receptors, as it is prevented by coadministration of WAY100635 and does not take place in the cerebellum, a brain area devoid of these receptors. These results unveal the possible relevance of the EC/5-HT interactions for the therapeutic responses of ADs that inhibit the uptake of this monoamine. Further research will be necessary to fully clarify the extent to which modulation of EC system may play a role in the therapeutic efficacy of these compounds.

Acknowledgements

The technical assistance of Ms. Beatriz Romero and Ms. Rebeca Madureira is kindly acknowledged.

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Footnotes

This work was supported by grants from Ministerio de Education y Ciencia [CICYT SAF04-00941 and SAF07-61862]; Plan Nacional sobre Drogas; and Fundación Marqués de Valdecilla [API 05/23].

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Presented in part at the 35TH Annual Meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, Washington, USA, 12-16 november 2005.

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FIGURE LEGENDS

Fig. 1. Chronic fluoxetine modulates basal and/or CB_1 receptor-mediated inhibition of AC activity in the rat brain. A, Basal AC activity in the rat PFC and cerebellum following 14 days treatment with vehicle, fluoxetine (10 mg/kg.day), WAY100635 (0.1 mg/kg.day) or the combination of both compounds. B and C, Inhibition of forskolin-stimulated AC by the cannabinoid agonist WIN55,212-2 in the PFC (B) and cerebellum (C) of treated rats. Percentages of inhibition were calculated for each agonist concentration relative to forskolin-stimulated cAMP levels. GraphPad Prism Software was used to generate concentration-response curves and estimate pEC50 values in the PFC (vehicle, 5.7 ± 0.1; fluoxetine, 5.9 ± 0.2; fluoxetine+WAY100635, 6 ± 0.1; WAY100635, 5.9 ± 0.5) and cerebellum (vehicle, 5.7 ± 0.08; fluoxetine, 5.9 ± 0.21; fluoxetine+WAY100635, 6.2 ± 0.27; WAY100635, 5.7 ± 0.33). Data are mean ± SEM, n = 8-9 animals per group. *$p < 0.05$ versus vehicle; #$p < 0.05$ and ##$p < 0.01$ versus fluoxetine (Newman-Keuls post-ANOVA).

Fig. 2. CB_1 receptor-mediated activation of Gα subunits in the rat brain is modulated by chronic fluoxetine: stimulation of $G\alpha_0$, $G\alpha_{i1}$, $G\alpha_{i2}$, $G\alpha_{i3}$ and $G\alpha_z$ protein subunits by the cannabinoid agonist WIN55,212-2 (10 μM) in the PFC (A) and cerebellum (B) of rats chronically treated with vehicle, fluoxetine, WAY100635 or the combination of both compounds. Activation of G protein subunits was determined with anti-$G\alpha_0$, $G\alpha_{i1}$, $G\alpha_{i2}$, $G\alpha_{i3}$ and $G\alpha_z$ antibodies inmobilized to superparamagnetic Dynabeads as described under Materials and Methods. Data are mean ± SEM of stimulation percentages relative of basal binding. Two independent experiments performed in brain samples from 5 animals for each condition. *$p < 0.05$ versus vehicle; #$p < 0.05$ versus fluoxetine (Newman-Keuls post-ANOVA).

Fig. 3. Chronic fluoxetine modulates the expression of PKA catalytic subunit, CREB and pCREB in the rat PFC. A, Representative Western blot analyses of PKA catalytic subunit (PKA cat), CREB and pCREB levels in total cell lysates (TCL) from vehicle, fluoxetine, fluoxetine+WAY100635 or WAY100365 alone-treated rats. B, Increased PKA cat levels were detected in TCL following chronic fluoxetine, but not in the fluoxetine+WAY100635 or WAY100635-treated groups. None of the treatments modulated the expression of PKA regulatory 1α subunit (PKA 1α reg). C, Chronic fluoxetine and fluoxetine+WAY100635 upregulated pCREB/CREB expression ratio in TCL, and this

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effect was not observed in rats treated with WAY100635 alone. D, Increased pCREB levels were detected in PFC nuclear fractions from rats treated with fluoxetine and fluoxetine+WAY100635. Values are means ± SEM corresponding to densitometry levels of the different proteins in prefrontal cortex TCL or nuclear fractions from rats treated with fluoxetine, fluoxetine+WAY100635 or WAY100635 alone, expressed as percentage of the same proteins in vehicle-treated animals. Two independent experiments were performed in brain samples from 5 animals for each condition. *p < 0.05 versus vehicle; #p < 0.05 and ##p < 0.01 versus fluoxetine (Newman-Keuls post-ANOVA).

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TABLE 1

Effect of acute fluoxetine exposure on CB_1 receptor-mediated inhibition of AC in the rat prefrontal cortex.

I_{max} and pEC_{50} values correspond to the estimated maximal effect and half-maximal effect of the cannabinoid agonist WIN55,212-2 in AC assays. Values are means ± SEM of two independent experiments performed in brain samples from 4 animals for each condition.

	Vehicle	**Fluoxetine**
Basal AC activity (pmol cAMP/min/mg protein)	17.5 ± 2.4	18.6 ± 3.1
Forskolin-stimulated AC activity (pmol cAMP/min/mg protein)	160.5 ± 28.4	169.3 ± 50.1
WIN55,212-2 inhibition of forskolin-stimulated AC activity		
I_{max} (%)	33.9 ± 0.9	31.2 ± 0.8
pEC_{50}	6.1 ± 0.3	5.9 ± 0.3

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TABLE 2

Chronic fluoxetine modulates basal AC activity and 5-HT_{1A} receptor mediated inhibition of AC in the hippocampus.

I_{max} and pEC_{50} values correspond to the estimated maximal effect and half-maximal effect of the 5-HT_{1A} receptor agonist 8-OH-DPAT in AC assays. Values are means ± SEM of two independent experiments performed in brain samples from 8-9 animals for each condition. *$p < 0.05$ and **$p < 0.01$ versus vehicle; $^{\#}p < 0.05$ versus fluoxetine (Newman-Keuls post-ANOVA).

	Vehicle	**Fluoxetine**	**Fluoxetine + WAY10063**	**WAY100635**
Basal AC activity (pmol cAMP/min/mg protein)	11.5 ± 0.6	16.8 ± 1.2*	12.4 ± 1.3$^{\#}$	11.3 ± 1.8$^{\#}$
Forskolin-stimulated AC activity (pmol cAMP/min/mg protein)	92 ± 18	113 ± 15	101 ± 6	96 ± 10
WIN55,212-2 inhibition of forskolin-stimulated AC				
I_{max} (%)	27.1 ± 1.9	15.6 ±	21.8 ± 3.1	22.1 ± 2.4
pEC_{50}	7.8 ± 0.3	7.4 ± 0.4	7.5 ± 0.3	8.1 ± 0.4

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TABLE 3

CB_1 receptor density and agonist-stimulated [^{35}S]GTPγS binding in rat prefrontal cortex and cerebellum following chronic treatment with fluoxetine and/or WAY100635.

B_{max}, estimated maximal [^{3}H]CP55,940 binding sites. pK_d, estimated dissociation constants normalized as -log K_d. The E_{max} and pEC_{50} values correspond to the estimated maximal effect and half-maximal effect of the cannabinoid agonist WIN55,212-2 in [^{35}S]GTPγS binding assays. Values are means ± SEM of two independent experiments performed in brain samples from 8-9 animals for each condition.

	Vehicle	**Fluoxetine**	**Fluoxetine + WAY100635**	**WAY100635**
		Prefrontal cortex		
[^{3}H]CP55,940 binding				
B_{max} (fmol/mg protein)	580 ± 41	524 ± 37	463 ± 36	486 ± 37
pK_d	9.6 ± 0.06	9.6 ± 0.04	9.7 ± 0.05	9.6 ± 0.01
[^{35}S]GTPγS binding				
E_{max} (%)	140 ± 3.4	139 ± 2.8	144 ± 5.6	138 ± 6.7
pEC_{50}	5.7 ± 0.25	5.7 ± 0.16	5.7 ± 0.25	5.8 ± 0.28
		Cerebellum		
[^{3}H]CP55,940 binding				
B_{max} (fmol/mg protein)	2021 ± 184	1750 ± 132	2115 ± 154	1470 ± 118
pK_d	9.1 ± 0.2	9.2 ± 0.1	9.1 ± 0.1	9.4 ± 0.2
[^{35}S]GTPγS binding				
E_{max} (%)	530 ± 70	579 ± 39	656 ± 27	737 ± 70
pEC_{50}	4.9 ± 0.1	4.9 ± 0.2	5.0 ± 0.3	4.98 ± 0.1

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TABLE 4

Effect of chronic treatment with fluoxetine and/or WAY100635 on CREB, pCREB, ERK1/2 and pERK1/2 expression in total cell lisate fractions from rat prefrontal cortex.

Values are means ± SEM corresponding to densitometric analysis of the different proteins in total cell lysates of prefrontal cortex from rats treated with fluoxetine, fluoxetine+WAY100635 or WAY100635 alone, expressed as percentage of the same proteins in vehicle-treated animals. Two independent experiments were performed in brain samples from 5 animals for each condition. $*p < 0.05$ and $***p < 0.001$ versus vehicle; $^{\#}p < 0.05$ versus fluoxetine (Newman-Keuls post-ANOVA).

	Vehicle	**Fluoxetine**	**Fluoxetine + WAY100635**	**WAY100635**
CREB	100 ± 10	135 ± 11*	125 ± 19	109 ± 12
pCREB	100 ± 10	141 ± 7***	151 ± 8***	109 ± 6$^{\#\#\#}$
ERK1	100 ± 8	110 ± 8	103 ± 5	93 ± 5
ERK2	100 ± 3	107 ± 4	105 ± 5	107 ± 5
pERK1	100 ± 28	117 ± 25	97 ± 32	125 ± 25
pERK2	100 ± 16	108 ± 13	98 ± 13	112 ± 12

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TABLE 5

Chronic treatment with fluoxetine and/or WAY100635 does not modulate PKA_c, PKAr1α, CREB, pCREB, ERK1/2 and pERK1/2 expression in total cell lisate fractions of rat cerebellum.

Values are means ± SEM corresponding to densitometric analysis of the different proteins in in total cell lisate fractions of cerebellum from rats treated with fluoxetine, fluoxetine+WAY100635 or WAY100635 alone, expressed as percentage of the same proteins in vehicle-treated animals. Two independent experiments were performed in brain samples from 5 animals for each condition.

	Vehicle	**Fluoxetine**	**Fluoxetine + WAY100635**	**WAY100635**
PKA_c	100 ± 7	114 ± 13	92 ± 11	99 ± 7
PKA_r1α	100 ± 6	91 ± 9	96 ± 7	98 ± 5
CREB	100 ± 11	100 ± 20	97 ± 25	118 ± 18
pCREB	100 ± 5	102 ± 12	104 ± 10	113 ± 10
ERK1	100 ± 16	105 ± 7	119 ± 7	115 ± 11
ERK2	100 ± 12	90 ± 2	86 ± 5	94 ± 4
pERK1	100 ± 4	93 ± 8	102 ± 3	102 ± 6
pERK2	100 ± 4	93 ± 10	115 ± 12	114 ± 10

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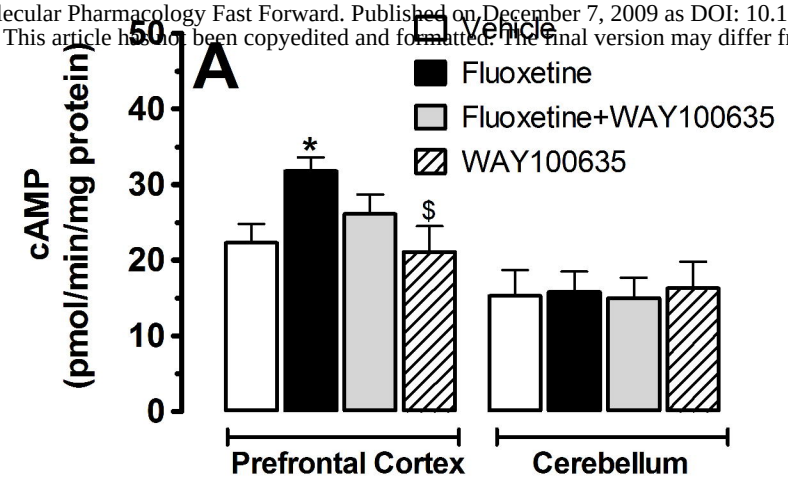
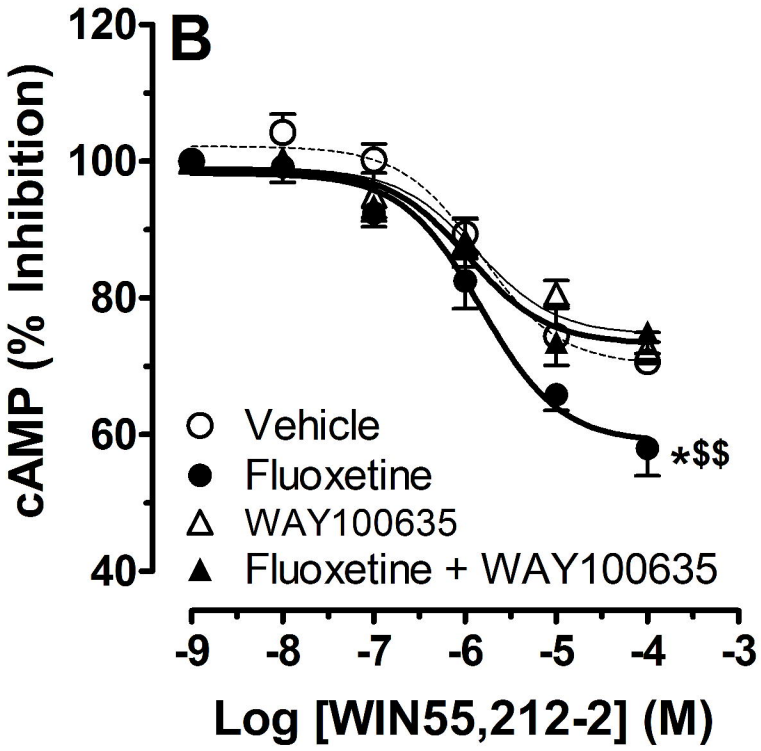
TABLE 6

Behavioural effects induced by chronic treatment with fluoxetine and/or Δ^9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in olfactory bulbectomized animals (OBX) assessed in the open-field test. Data represent mean ± SEM. F=7.8; p<0.001 (ANOVA). ***p<0.001 versus vehicle-sham rats and $^{\#}p$<0.05 versus vehicle-OBX rats (Newman-Keuls post-ANOVA).

	Ambulation scores
Vehicle-sham	70.3 ± 7.5
Vehicle-OBX	152.3 ± 15.3***
Fluoxetine-treated OBX	99.1 ± 9.5$^{\#}$
Fluoxetine + THC-treated OBX	101.7 ± 12.2$^{\#}$
THC-treated OBX	151.3 ± 18.2***





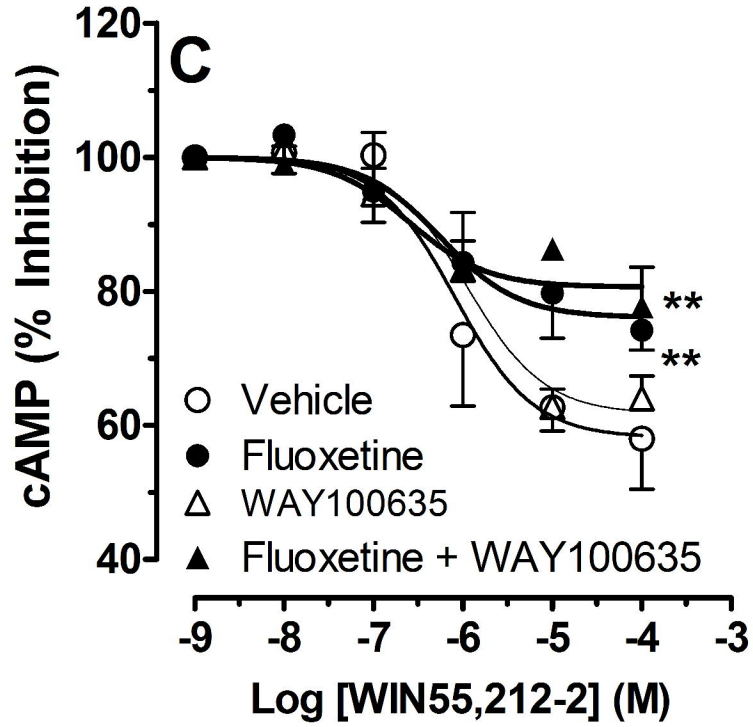


Fig1

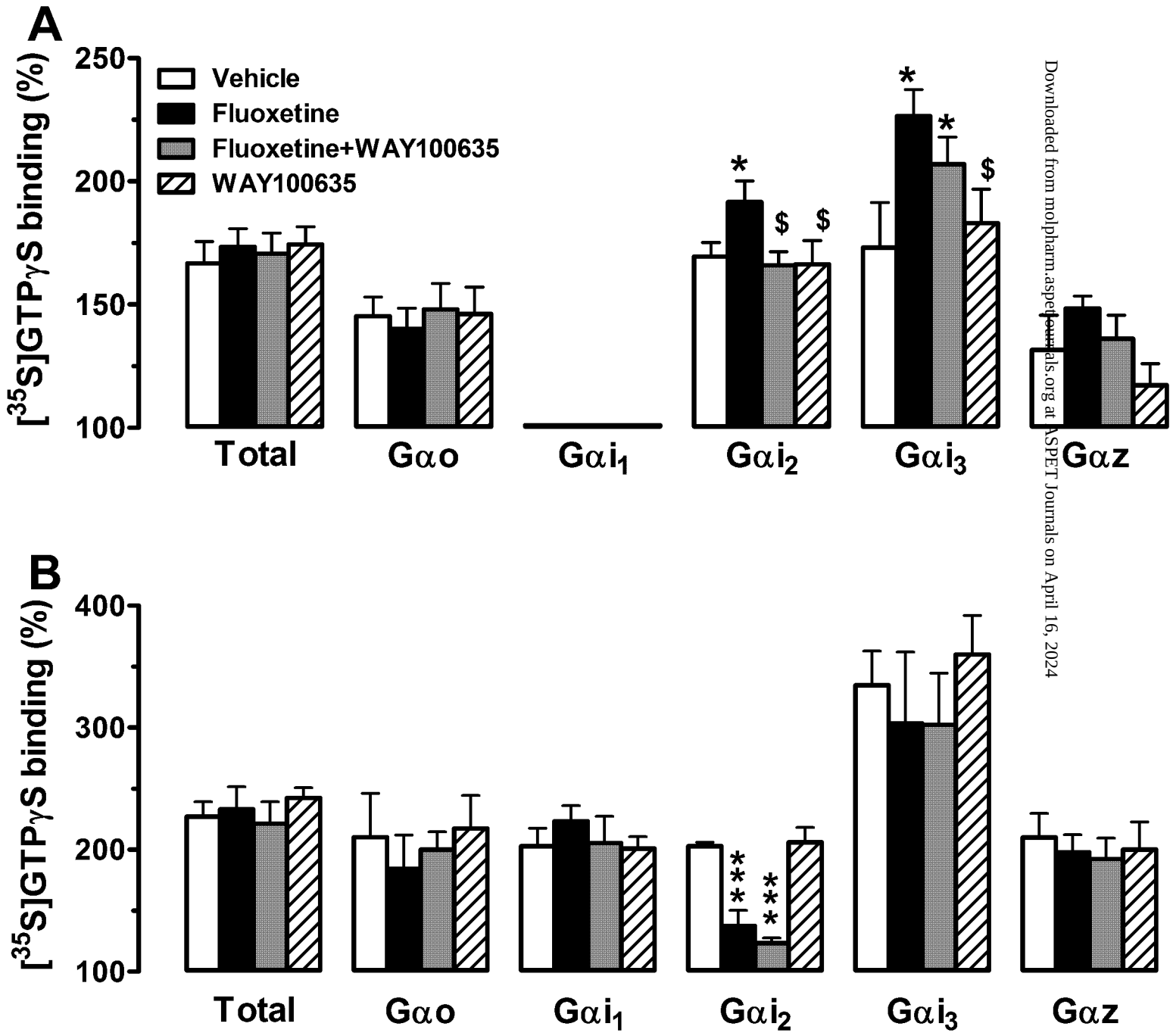


Fig2

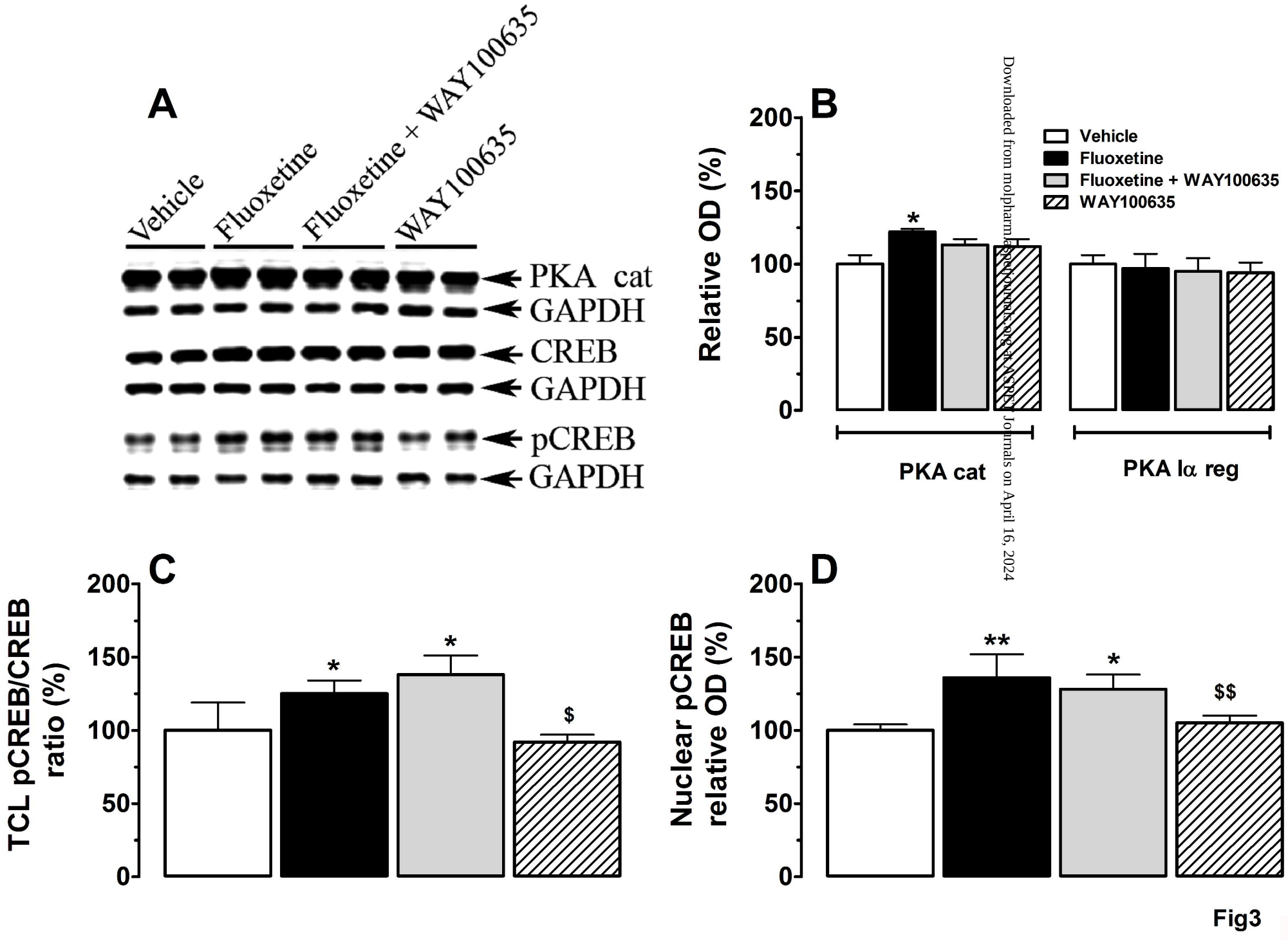


Fig3