# A comparison of the ability of Leu[8]- and Pro[8]-oxytocin to regulate intracellular Ca$^{2+}$ and Ca$^{2+}$-activated K$^{+}$ channels at human and marmoset oxytocin receptors

Marsha L. Pierce, Suneet Mehrotra, Aaryn C. Mustoe, Jeffrey A. French, Thomas F. Murray

Department of Pharmacology, Creighton University School of Medicine, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178, USA (MLP, SM, TFM).

Department of Psychology, University of Nebraska Omaha, 6001 Dodge St., Omaha, NE 68182, USA (ACM, JAF).

1

**Running Title:** A comparison of Leu8- and Pro8-oxytocin signaling

**Corresponding Author**: Thomas F. Murray, Department of Pharmacology, Creighton

University School of Medicine, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE, 68178, U.S.A. Phone: 402-

280-4076. Fax: 402-280-5762. E-mail: tfmurray@creighton.edu

Number of text pages: 27

Number of tables: 2

Number of figures: 4

Number of references: 75

Abstract word count: 249

Introduction word count: 703

Discussion word count: 1484

Supplementary tables: 5

Supplementary figures: 11

**ABBREVIATIONS**  AA, amino acid; BAPTA-AM, 1,2-Bis(2-aminophenoxy)ethane-N,N,N′,N′-

tetraacetic acid tetrakis(acetoxymethyl ester); BSA, bovine serum albumin; $Ca^{2+}$, calcium; CHO,

Chinese hamster ovary; CI, confidence interval; CNS, central nervous system; $EC_{50}$, the half-

maximal response; $E_{MAX}$, is the maximum response achievable; FMP, FLIPR membrane

potential; GIRKs, G protein-coupled inwardly-rectifying potassium channels; GPCR, G protein-

coupled receptor; hOTR, human oxytocin receptor; $IC_{50}$, is the half-inhibitory response; κOR-

CHO, Kappa-opioid receptor expressing Chinese hamster ovary cells; $Leu^8$-OT, consensus

mammalian oxytocin sequence; mOTR, marmoset oxytocin receptor; NWM, new world

monkeys; OT, oxytocin; OTR, oxytocin receptor; $K^+$, potassium; $Pro^8$-OT, oxytocin sequence

with proline in $8^{th}$ position; PKC, protein kinase C; PTX, pertussis toxin; Tg, thapsigargin

## ABSTRACT

The neurohypophyseal hormone oxytocin (OT) regulates biological functions in both peripheral tissues and the central nervous system (CNS). In the CNS, OT influences social processes including peer relationships, maternal-infant bonding and affiliative social relationships. In mammals, the nonapeptide OT structure is highly conserved with leucine in the 8th position (Leu$^8$-OT). In marmosets (*Callithrix*) a nonsynonymous nucleotide substitution in the *OXT* gene codes for proline in the 8th residue position (Pro$^8$-OT). OT binds to its cognate G protein-coupled receptor (OTR) and exerts diverse effects, including stimulation ($G_s$) or inhibition ($G_{i/o}$) of adenylyl cyclase, stimulation of potassium channel currents ($G_i$) and activation of phospholipase C ($G_q$). CHO cells expressing marmoset (mOTR) or human (hOTR) oxytocin receptors were used to characterize OT signaling. At mOTR Pro$^8$-OT was more efficacious than Leu$^8$-OT in measures of $G_q$ activation with both peptides displaying subnanomolar potencies. At hOTR, neither potency nor efficacy of Pro$^8$-OT and Leu$^8$-OT differed with respect to $G_q$ signaling. In both mOTR- and hOTR-expressing cells Leu$^8$-OT was more potent and modestly more efficacious than Pro$^8$-OT in inducing hyperpolarization. In mOTR cells Leu$^8$-OT-induced hyperpolarization was modestly inhibited by pretreatment with pertussis toxin (PTX) consistent with a minor role for $G_{i/o}$-activation; however, the Pro$^8$-OT response in mOTR and hOTR cells was PTX-insensitive. These findings are consistent with membrane hyperpolarization being largely mediated by a $G_q$ signaling mechanism leading to $Ca^{2+}$-dependent activation of $K^+$ channels. Evaluation of the influence of apamin, charybdotoxin, paxilline and TRAM-34 demonstrated involvement of both intermediate and large conductance $Ca^{2+}$-activated $K^+$ channels.

**INTRODUCTION**

Oxytocin (OT) is a nonapeptide that regulates a host of physiological functions both peripherally (e.g., uterine contraction, lactation) and centrally (e.g., social behavior). OT is synthesized in the magnocellular neurons of the supraoptic and paraventricular nuclei of the hypothalamus, and OT neurons primarily project to the posterior pituitary where OT is released into the bloodstream (Ludwig & Leng, 2006). OT neurons also project to multiple regions within the 'social brain' (Stoop, 2014). These latter OT projections are thought to be responsible for the modulation of many behaviors including social recognition/memory, sexual behavior, parental care, pair-bond formation and maintenance, and cooperation and aggression (Insel et al., 2010; Johnson & Young, 2015). Dysfunction in OT signaling has also been widely reported in mental health outcomes where social deficits are commonly observed such as schizophrenia, and depression/anxiety. Consequently, OT has received considerable interest as a therapeutic for these disorders with mixed success (Guastella & Hickie, 2016; Parker et al., 2017; Young & Barrett, 2015).

OT-like nonapeptides are highly conserved signaling molecules that activate G-protein coupled receptors (GPCRs). OT binds primarily to the oxytocin receptor (OTR), and to a lesser extent the related nonapeptide vasopressin receptors (Gimpl & Fahrenholz, 2001; Manning et al., 2008). OTR promiscuously couples to and activates multiple G-proteins producing diverse effects on cellular function including inhibition of adenylyl cyclase ($G_{i/o}$), stimulation of potassium channel currents ($G_i$) and activation of phospholipase C ($G_q$) (Reversi, Cassoni, & Chini, 2005). OTR activation also leads to a variety of signaling responses that suggest OT activation may preferentially bias specific

G-protein pathways that vary across cell types both within the brain and in the periphery. For example, activation of neural OTRs that generate pulsatile OT secretion is mediated by $G_q$ activation (Wang & Hatton, 2007), while in myometrial cells the mobilization of $Ca^{2+}$ and GTP hydrolysis are mediated by both $G_{i/o}$ and $G_q$ activation (Phaneuf et al., 1993).

Despite the high degree of conservation of the OT ligand among most mammals, many New World monkeys (NWMs) possess OT sequence modifications that have evolved from the ancestral mammalian OT sequence (Cys-Tyr-Ile-Gln-Asn-Cys-Pro-**Leu**-Gly; $Leu^8$-OT). Thus far, five additional OT-like variants have been identified with variability in amino acids (AA) mainly at position 8, but also at positions 2 and 3 (Lee et al., 2011; Ren et al., 2015; Vargas-Pinilla et al., 2015; Wallis, 2012). The most common OT variant is a Leu-to-Pro substitution at the $8^{th}$ AA position ($Pro^8$-OT). This substitution significantly alters the linear portion of the ligand's three-dimensional architecture, whereby the formation of Pro-Pro polyproline helix in the linear portion of the OT ligand could potentially lead to changes in OT interaction with the OTR with attendant alteration in potency and/or efficacy (Geisler & Chmielewski, 2009; Zingg & Laporte, 2003).

Differences between OT and the related nonapeptide vasopressin (which differs in AA positions 3 and 8) show select ligand recognition with specific portions of the OTR and V1aR, potentially suggesting important OTR recognition features that could change as a function of a Leu-to-Pro substitution in position 8 (Chini et al., 1995; Chini et al., 1996; Zingg & Laporte, 2003). OT ligand variants are also of interest because these ligands show significant co-evolution with corresponding OTR sequence structures, and a significant association with the presence of social phenotypes including social monogamy and paternal care in primates (Ren et al., 2015; Vargas-Pinilla et al., 2015),

and these social phenotypes are known to be influenced by exogenous OT treatments (French et al., 2016). The association between OT/OTR structures with social behavior in NWMs raises the possibility that OT-related phenotypic differences might be a consequence of functional selectivity with respect to the signaling properties associated with OT analog (e.g., $Pro^8$-OT) activation of OTRs. Currently, there is limited information regarding signaling profiles of OT analogs at human and marmoset oxytocin receptors.

To assess whether OT/OTR variability results in altered pharmacological properties of OT ligands, we stably transfected CHO cells expressing human (hOTR) or marmoset OTRs (mOTR) and examined the resulting activation of OT-OTR signaling pathways. We evaluated whether OT ligand variation resulted in distinct activation of different G-protein mediated cell-signaling pathways ($G_{i/o}$ and $G_q$) in hOTR and mOTR expressing cells as assessed by elevation of intracellular $Ca^{2+}$ or alteration in membrane potential.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cell cultures.** Wild-type Chinese hamster ovarian-K1 (CHO-K1) cells were purchased from ATCC (CCL-61) and cultured in Ham's F12 (Hyclone SH30026.01), 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) (Atlanta Biologicals S11550), 1.5% HEPES 1M Solution (Hyclone SH30231.01), 1% Penicillin-Streptomycin (10,000 U/mL; Life Technologies 15140-163). Human oxytocin receptor (hOTR) expressing CHO-K1 cell lines were purchased from Genscript (M00195). Marmoset oxytocin receptor (mOTR) plasmid was purchased from Genscript and stably-transfected into CHO-K1 cells. hOTR and mOTR expressing cells were cultured in Ham's F12 (Hyclone SH30026.01), 10% FBS (Atlanta Biologicals S11550), 1.5% HEPES 1M Solution (Hyclone SH30231.01), 1% Penicillin-Streptomycin (10,000 U/mL; Life Technologies 15140-163) and 400 mg/mL G418 (RPI Corp. G64000-5.0). Kappa-opioid receptor (κOR) expressing CHO cells (κOR-CHO) were cultured in RMPI-1640 medium supplemented with 10% FBS (Atlanta Biologicals S11550). Cells were cultured at 37°C in 5% $CO_2$ and 90% humidity.

**CHO cell stable transfection and selection of clones.** CHO-K1 cells (1 x $10^6$) were electroporated with 1.5 µg of vector encoding marmoset oxytocin receptor (mOTR) plasmid (Genscript). After transfection, cells were seeded on 10 cm plates, and grown under antibiotic pressure 400 mg/mL G418 (RPI Corp. G64000-5.0) for 72 hours. The clones were picked using cloning cylinders (Corning 3166-10), 50 µl of 0.05% trypsin (GIBCO 25300-054) added to the cells/colony and detached by pipetting 2-3 times. Dissociated cells diluted in 100 ml media and plated in 24 well plates (~ 1 cell/well). The cells were allowed to grow under antibiotic pressure for 3 weeks, with media change

every 72 hours. Five clones were picked for FMP assay. Among all five clones, Clone 2

showed maximum responses to Leu$^8$-OT and Pro$^8$-OT in decreasing the FMP blue

fluorescence and was selected for further studies.

**Drugs.** Leu$^8$-OT (American Peptide Company 66-0-52) and Pro$^8$-OT (Anaspec 58863)

was reconstituted in DMSO (Sigma-Aldrich D4540). Charybdotoxin (Sigma-Aldrich

C7802) was reconstituted in ultrapure water.  BAPTA-AM (Sigma-Aldrich A1076),

M119K (Developmental Therapeutics Program, National Cancer Institute 1198893), NS-

1619 (Sigma-Aldrich N170), Paxilline (Sigma-Aldrich P2928), SKA-31 (Sigma-Aldrich

S5573), thapsigargin (Sigma-Aldrich T9033), and TRAM-34 (Sigma-Aldrich T6700)

were reconstituted in DMSO.  Pertussis toxin (Sigma-Aldrich P7208) was reconstituted

in ultrapure water with 5 mg/mL bovine serum albumin (Fisher Scientific BP1600-100).

Dynorphin A (1-13) amide (American Peptide 26-4-51A) was dissolved in 25 mM Tris at

pH 7.4. Apamin (Sigma-Aldrich A1289) was reconstituted in 0.05 M acetic acid.

**Intracellular Calcium Mobilization Assay.** The effect of oxytocin addition on

intracellular calcium mobilization was examined using Fluo3-AM fluorescence

(Molecular Probes F1241) monitored with a FLIPR2 plate reader (Molecular Devices,

Sunnyvale, CA). FLIPR operates by illuminating the bottom of a 96-well microplate with

an air-cooled laser and measuring the fluorescence emissions from cell-permeant dyes

in all 96 wells simultaneously using a cooled CCD camera. This instrument is equipped

with an automated 96-well pipettor, which can be programmed to deliver precise

quantities of solutions simultaneously to all 96 culture wells from two separate 96-well

source plates.

Cells were plated at 0.3 million cells/mL in 96-well plates (MidSci P9803) and cultured overnight in culture media at 37°C in 5% $CO_2$ and 95% humidity. On the day of assay, growth medium was aspirated and replaced with 100 μl dye-loading medium per well containing 4 μM Fluo-3 AM and 0.04% pluronic acid (Molecular Probes P3000MP) in Locke's buffer (8.6 mM HEPES, 5.6 mM KCl, 154 mM NaCl, 5.6 mM glucose, 1.0 mM $MgCl_2$, 2.3 mM $CaCl_2$ pH 7.4). Cells were incubated for 1 h at 37°C in 5% CO2 and 95% humidity and then washed four times in 180μl fresh Locke's buffer using an automated microplate washer (Bio-Tek Instruments Inc., VT). Baseline fluorescence was recorded for 60 s, prior to a 20 μl addition of various concentrations of Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT. Cells were excited at 488 nm and $Ca^{2+}$-bound Fluo-3 emission was recorded at 538 nm at 2 s intervals for an additional 200 s.

To assess the role of intracellular calcium in the OT mobilization of calcium, the sarco/endoplasmic reticulum $Ca^{2+}$ ATPase (SERCA) inhibitor thapsigargin was used to rapidly deplete intracellular calcium stores. Thapsigargin inhibition of calcium mobilization in prostrate cancer cells is complete in less than five minutes (Sehgal et al., 2017). Cells were incubated in 100 μl dye-loading medium per well containing 4μM Fluo-3 AM and 0.04% pluronic acid in Locke's buffer (8.6 mM HEPES, 5.6 mM KCl, 154 mM NaCl, 5.6 mM glucose, 1.0 mM $MgCl_2$, 2.3 mM $CaCl_2$, 0.5 mM probenecid; pH 7.4). Cells were incubated at 37°C in a 5% CO2 and 95% humidity for 60 min prior washing four times in 180 μl Locke's buffer and 10 μl addition of thapsigargin (1 μM final concentration) and incubated for an additional five minutes. Intracellular calcium mobilization assays were performed as described above.

**Membrane Potential Assay.** To assess changes in membrane potential the FLIPR

Membrane Potential Assay (FMP blue; Molecular Probes F1241) was used. Confluent

cells plated at 0.3 million cells/ml in 96-well plates (MidSci P9803) and cultured

overnight in culture media at 37°C in 5% $CO_2$ and 95% humidity. Growth medium was

removed and replaced with 190 µl per well of FMP Blue in Locke's buffer (8.6 mM

HEPES, 5.6 mM KCl, 154 mM NaCl, 5.6 mM glucose, 1.0 mM $MgCl_2$, 2.3 mM $CaCl_2$ pH

7.4). Cells were incubated at 37°C in 5% $CO_2$ and 95% humidity for 45 min. Baseline

fluorescence was recorded for 60 s, prior to a 10 µl addition of log concentrations of

$Leu^8$-OT and $Pro^8$-OT. Cells were excited at 530 nm and emission was recorded at 565

nm at 2 s intervals for an additional 200 s.

To ensure the veracity of comparisons of $EC_{50}$ and $E_{MAX}$ values of OT variants, all

compounds were evaluated in parallel on the same 96-well plate, with the same split of

cells and with identical reagent solutions. This experimental design was used for all OT

peptide comparisons throughout this study using both human and marmoset OTR

expressing cells. Inasmuch as all assays were performed in the same CHO cell line, we

can exclude differences in cellular context as a source of observed differences in

peptide potency or efficacy.

To assess the role $G_{i/o}$ in the OT ligand-induced membrane hyperpolarization

cells were incubated overnight with pertussis toxin (PTX) to inactivate $G_{i/o}$ (Zhou et al.,

2007). Cells were plated at 125,000 cells/mL in 96-well plates. PTX (150 ng/ml) was

added 24 hours after plating and incubated for an additional 24 hours. Membrane

potential assay was performed as described above. To confirm the influence of PTX on

a known $G_{i/o}$ mediated response, the effect of PTX on kappa-opioid receptor mediated

10

hyperpolarization was used as a positive control (Murthy & Makhlouf, 1996). $\kappa$OR-CHO

were used for these experiments. The PTX assays were performed as described above

for mOTR- and hOTR-expressing CHO cells, except for stimulation with dynorphin

rather than OT analogs.

M119K is a G$\beta\gamma$ inhibitor (Kirui et al., 2010). If Leu[8]-OT ligand-induced membrane

hyperpolarization cells is partially mediated by downstream G$\beta\gamma$ activation of GIRK

channels, then it should be partially sensitive to M119K. Cells were incubated at 37°C

in a 5% CO2 and 95% humidity for 35 min prior to a 10 µl addition of M119K. Cells were

incubated for an additional 10 min after drug addition. Membrane potential assays were

performed as described above.

To assess potential OT ligand-induced membrane hyperpolarization through

$Ca^{2+}$-activated potassium channels, we tested four inhibitors targeting distinct $Ca^{2+}$-

activated potassium channel subtypes. $G_q$-mediated activation of protein kinase-C

(PKC) causes an increase in cytosolic calcium (Ritter & Hall, 2009) with attendant

activation of $Ca^{2+}$ sensitive potassium channels. $Ca^{2+}$-activated potassium channels are

separated into three subtypes of large ($BK_{Ca}$), intermediate ($IK_{Ca}$), and small

conductance ($SK_{Ca}$) channels (Vergara et al.,1998). Paxilline is a selective inhibitor of

the $BK_{Ca}$ channel (Sanchez & McManus, 1996), while charybdotoxin is an inhibitor

various $IK_{Ca}$ (Anderson, Harvey, Rowan, & Strong, 1988; Ishii et al., 1997) and $BK_{Ca}$

channels (Qiu et al., 2009). TRAM-34 is a selective inhibitor of the $IK_{Ca}$ channel, $K_{Ca}3.1$

that has been shown to reach maximum blockade in 3-6 minutes (Nguyen et al., 2017;

Staal et al., 2017). In COS-7 cells, 100 nM TRAM-34 blocked ~90% of $IK_{Ca}$ currents

(Wulff et al., 2000). Apamin is a selective inhibitor of $SK_{Ca}$ channels (Blatz & Magleby,

11

1986; Lamy et al., 2010). In HEK cells expressing $SK_{Ca}$ channels $K_{Ca}2.2$ and $K_{Ca}2.3$ addition of 100 nM concentrations of apamin blocked ~70% and 80% of of $K_{Ca}2.2$ and $K_{Ca}2.3$-mediated currents (Lamy et al., 2010). Cells were incubated at 37°C in a 5% CO2 and 95% humidity for 35 min prior to a 10 µl addition of charybdotoxin, paxilline TRAM-34, and/or apamin. Cells were incubated for an additional 10 min after drug addition. Membrane potential assays were performed as described above.

NS-1619 is a $BK_{Ca}$ channel activator (Edwards, et al. 1994; Lee, Rowe, & Ashford, 1995). NS-1619 (30 µM) opens $BK_{Ca}$ channels in horizontal cells of rats and mice (Sun et al., 2017). If changes in intracellular calcium are responsible for activation of the $BK_{Ca}$, the response should be NS-1619 sensitive. Cells were incubated at 37°C in a 5% CO2 and 95% humidity for 35 min prior to a 10 µl addition of paxilline. Cells were incubated for an additional 10 min after paxilline addition. Membrane potential assays were performed as described above, with the exception of challenge with NS-1619 rather than OT analogs.

SKA-31 is an activator of $IK_{Ca}$ channel $K_{Ca}3.1$ (Christophersen & Wulff, 2015; Sankaranarayanan et al., 2009). If changes in intracellular calcium are responsible for the activation of $K_{Ca}3.1$, the response should be SKA-31 sensitive. Cells were incubated at 37°C in a 5% CO2 and 95% humidity for 35 min prior to a 10 µl addition of TRAM-34. Cells were incubated for an additional 10 min after TRAM-34 addition. Membrane potential assays were performed as described above, with the exception of stimulation with SKA-31 rather than OT analogs.

1,2-Bis(2-aminophenoxy)ethane-N,N,N′,N′-tetraacetic acid tetrakis(acetoxymethyl ester) (BAPTA-AM) is an intracellular calcium chelator (Strayer, Hoek, Thomas, &

White, 1999). If changes in intracellular calcium are responsible for activation of the

$Ca^{2+}$-activated potassium channels, the response should be BAPTA-AM sensitive. Cells

were incubated at 37°C in a 5% CO2 and 95% humidity for 35 min prior to a 10 µl

addition of BAPTA-AM. Cells were incubated for an additional 10 min after drug

addition.

To assess the role of intracellular calcium in OT ligand-induced changes in

membrane potential, thapsigargin was used. Cells were incubated at 37°C in a 5% CO2

and 95% humidity for 40 min prior to a 10 µl addition of thapsigargin. Cells were

incubated for an additional 5 min after drug addition.

**Data Analysis.** All concentration-response data were analyzed and graphs generated

using GraphPad Prism (San Diego, CA, U.S.A.) software. $EC_{50}$ and $E_{MAX}$ values for OT

peptide-stimulated increases in fluo-3 fluorescence or decreases in FMP Blue

fluorescence were determined by nonlinear regression least-squares fitting of a logistic

equation to the peptide concentration versus fluorescence area under the curve data.

The 95% confidence intervals for all $EC_{50}/IC_{50}$ and $E_{MAX}$ were used to assess

differences in potency/efficacy. $R^2$ was used to assess goodness of fit. A one-way

ANOVA was performed with Sidek's multiple comparisons to determine statistical

significance and the adjusted p-values reported.

## RESULTS

### OT Analogs Induce $G_q$-mediated Intracellular Calcium Mobilization

$G_q$-mediates intracellular calcium mobilization by activation of PLC$\beta$ with attendant inositol phosphate and diacylglycerol production (Ritter & Hall, 2009). To assess OTR activation of $G_q$, functional assays were performed using fluo-3 AM as a calcium indicator dye. We asked whether Leu[8]-OT, found in most mammals, and Pro[8]-OT, found in many NWMs, show differential mobilization of intracellular $Ca^{2+}$ upon activation of mOTRs. In mOTR CHO cells, we found that the two OT ligands produced a concentration-dependent elevation of intracellular calcium with similar potencies ($EC_{50}$), but the cognate ligand Pro[8]-OT was more efficacious ($E_{MAX}$) than Leu[8]-OT (Figure 1A-C; Table 1). In contrast, in hOTR CHO cells we found that the two OT ligands showed similar potencies and efficacies in increasing intracellular calcium concentration (Figure 1D-F, Table 1). The absence of a Leu[8]-OT effect on calcium concentration in non-transfected CHO-K1 cells demonstrated that the OT peptide effects observed in transfected cell lines required mOTR and hOTR expression (Supplementary Figure 1).

Thapsigargin is a potent inhibitor of the sarco/endoplasmic reticulum calcium ATPase (SERCA), that is responsible for maintaining the gradient between the low calcium cytosol and the sarco/endoplasmic reticulum high calcium storage. Inhibition of the SERCA pump results in a depletion of intracellular calcium stores (Dravid & Murray, 2004; Quynh Doan & Christensen, 2015). To confirm the role of intracellular calcium stores in OT-mediated calcium influx, cells were pretreated cells with thapsigargin. In control mOTR and hOTR CHO cells Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT again produced concentration-dependent increases in intracellular calcium; however, pretreatment with

14

thapsigargin abrogated this response in CHO cells expressing both mOTR and hOTR

for both OT analogs (Supplementary Figure 2). Together these data demonstrated that

intracellular calcium stores represent the source of OT-mediated elevation cytosolic

calcium levels.

**OT Analog-Induced Changes in Membrane Potential are Dependent on $G_q$**

**Mediated Calcium Mobilization**

OT analog activation of OTR and coupling to $G_i$ have been shown to stimulate $K^+$

channel conductances with attendant cellular hyperpolarization (Gravati et al., 2010;

Phaneuf et al., 1993; Ritter & Hall, 2009). To assess potential OTR activation of $K^+$

channel conductance we performed functional assays using the membrane potential-

sensitive dye, FMP blue. The FMP blue dye is a lipophilic, anionic, bis-oxonol-based

dye that distributes across the cell membrane as a function of membrane potential and

displays depolarization-induced increased fluorescence emission after binding to

intracellular proteins, or decreased fluorescence following hyperpolarization-induced

egress from cells (Baxter et al., 2002; Whiteaker et al., 2001). In mOTR CHO cells both

Leu$^8$-OT and Pro$^8$-OT produced concentration-dependent decreases in FMP Blue

fluorescence consistent with a hyperpolarization response. Leu$^8$-OT showed

substantially greater potency compared to Pro$^8$-OT in the observed changes in

membrane potential with the two OT ligands showing comparable efficacies (Figure 2A-

C; Table 2).  A similar pattern was observed in hOTR CHO cells with Leu$^8$-OT

displaying greater potency than Pro$^8$-OT with regard to changes in membrane potential

(Figure 2D-F; Table 2). The absence of Leu$^8$-OT and Pro$^8$-OT effects on membrane

15

potential in non-transfected CHO-K1 cells again demonstrated the requirement for

mOTR and hOTR transfection in the observed hyperpolarization responses to OT

ligands (Supplementary Figure 3).

Several classes of G-protein alpha subunits including, $G_i$ and $G_o$, can be mono-

ADP-ribosylated by the exotoxin from the gram-negative bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*.

Pertussis toxin (PTX) catalyzes the covalent transfer of an ADP-ribose from NAD+ to a

cysteine residue four amino acids from the carboxytermini of these alpha subunits

(Murray, 1993). This ADP-ribosylation disrupts the coupling between G-protein coupled

receptors (GPCR) and PTX-sensitive G-proteins and therefore potentially interfering

with responses to agonists such as OT.  We tested mOTR CHO cells and observed that

PTX treatment partially affected Leu[8]-OT-mediated hyperpolarization with a significant

31.9% reduction in efficacy, In control cells, the Leu[8]-OT $E_{MAX}$ was 3590 (95% CI 3088

to 4093), whereas in PTX-pretreated cells the $E_{MAX}$ was 2446 (95% CI 1893 to 2999;

Supplementary Figure 4A,C; Figure 3A).  In contrast, in hOTR CHO cells pretreatment

with PTX did not significantly inhibit Leu[8]-OT-mediated hyperpolarization (Figure 3C;

Supplementary Figure 4E,G; Supplementary Table 1).  PTX treatment did not affect

Pro[8]-OT-induced hyperpolarization in either mOTR expressing (Figure 3B;

Supplementary Figure 4B,D) or hOTR CHO cells (Figure 3D; Supplementary Figure

4F,H). These data demonstrate that in mOTR CHO cells Leu[8]-OT-induced

hyperpolarization is partially sensitive to PTX. The insensitivity of Pro[8]-OT in mOTR and

hOTR CHO cells to PTX indicates a lack of involvement of $G_i$ mediated activation of G

protein-coupled inwardly-rectifying potassium channels (GIRKs) in the observed

changes in membrane potential. In contrast, the partial sensitivity of Leu[8]-OT-induced

changes in membrane potential in mOTR-expressing cells suggests that both $G_i$-mediated and PTX-insensitive pathways are involved in the hyperpolarization in response to this peptide.

We used a kappa-opioid receptor expressing CHO cell line ($\kappa$OR-CHO) as a positive control to demonstrate the ability of PTX to disrupt G-protein coupling to a GPCR. $\kappa$ORs couple to the PTX substrate $G_i$. Dynorphin A 1-13-$NH_2$ was used as the $\kappa$OR agonist for these experiments. Dynorphin A 1-13-$NH_2$ produced a robust hyperpolarization response in control $\kappa$OR-CHO cells, and this response was abrogated in PTX pretreated cells (Supplementary Figure 5). These data demonstrate the effectiveness of PTX in disrupting GPCR coupling to $G_i$.

PTX disrupts GPCR interaction with sensitive G proteins thereby interrupting downstream $G\alpha$ and $G\beta\gamma$-dependent signaling. To further assess the partial $G_i$ mediation of Leu[8]-OT-induced changes in membrane potential in mOTR CHO cells, the $G\beta\gamma$ inhibitor M119K was used. M119K binds to $G\beta\gamma$ with high affinity and *in vitro* studies demonstrate it inhibits $G\beta\gamma$ function (Bonacci et al., 2006; Kirui et al., 2010)  $G\beta\gamma$ subunits can directly activate GIRK channels, and reassociation with $G\alpha$ subunit terminates this signaling (Lin & Smrcka, 2011; Petit-Jacques, Sui, & Logothetis, 1999). In mOTR and hOTR CHO cells, pretreatment with M119K did not produce a statistically significantly reduction in Leu[8]-OT-induced membrane hyperpolarization (Supplementary Figure 6; Supplementary Table 2). Together, these data suggest that in mOTR-expressing cells, but not hOTR CHO cells, Leu[8]-OT modulation of membrane potential is partially mediated by GIRK channels, but a role for $G\beta\gamma$-dependent signaling was not established.

Given that Pro$^8$-OT-induced changes in membrane potential were insensitive to PTX and Leu$^8$-OT-induced changes were only partially sensitive in mOTR-expressing cells, we next considered the possibility that OT peptide-induced hyperpolarization may involve coupling to $G_q$ with activation of phospholipase C (PLCβ) and calcium-dependent $K^+$ channel activation. To explore the role of $Ca^{2+}$-activated $K^+$ channels in OT-analog induced changes in membrane potential, we used a pharmacological approach with compounds that discriminate between subtypes of $Ca^{2+}$-activated $K^+$ channels. To assess the role of $SK_{Ca}$ channels in OT-mediated membrane hyperpolarization in mOTR and hOTR cells, cells were pretreated with the $SK_{Ca}$-selective blocker apamin. Molecular modeling and mutational studies suggest apamin functions to block $SK_{Ca}$ channels through an allosteric mechanism rather than a classical pore block (Lamy et al., 2010). In mOTR and hOTR CHO cells, apamin produced very modest inhibition of Leu$^8$-OT -induced changes, 16.4% and 6.6%, respectively (Figure 4A,C; Supplementary Figure 7A, 8A), and did not affect Pro$^8$-OT-induced changes in membrane potential (Figure 4B,D; Supplementary Figure 7B, 8B). To confirm that OT-analog vehicle DMSO (0.02%) and apamin solvent acetic acid (5 μM) did not affect membrane hyperpolarization, additional controls were performed. Neither DMSO nor acetic acid vehicles alone affected membrane potential in mOTR and hOTR expressing cells (Supplementary Figure 9). These data indicate that the acetic acid vehicle did not substantially affect membrane hyperpolarization and that $SK_{Ca}$ channels provide minimal contribution to OT analog induced changes in membrane potential in either mOTR or hOTR expressing CHO cells.

Charybdotoxin exhibits blocking effects on both $IK_{Ca}$ and $BK_{Ca}$ (Anderson et al., 1988; Ishii et al., 1997; MacKinnon & Miller, 1988; Qiu et al., 2009). Charybdotoxin binds to the $BK_{Ca}$ channel in either the open or closed conformation and dissociation from the $BK_{Ca}$ channel is voltage-dependent (MacKinnon & Miller, 1988), In mOTR CHO cells, charybdotoxin did not affect changes in membrane potential produced by either Leu[8]-OT (Figure 4A; Supplementary Figure 7C) or Pro[8]-OT (Figure 4B; Supplementary Figure 7D); however, in hOTR CHO cells charybdotoxin modestly reduced Leu[8]-OT- and Pro[8]-OT-induced hyperpolarization by 17.0% (Figure 4C; Supplementary Figure 8C) and 24.3% (Figure 4D; Supplementary Figure 8D) respectively.  These results suggested that $IK_{Ca}$ and/or $BK_{Ca}$ channels may partially contribute to OT-mediated changes in membrane potential. To further assess the role of $BK_{Ca}$ channels mOTR and hOTR cells were pretreated with the $BK_{Ca}$ blocker paxilline. Paxilline produces inhibition by stabilizing the $BK_{Ca}$ channels in the closed conformation (Y. Zhou & Lingle, 2014). In mOTR CHO cells paxilline did not affect Leu[8]-OT-induced changes in membrane potential (Figure 4A; Supplementary Figure 7C), whereas the Pro[8]-OT response was reduced by 40.5% (Figure 4B; Supplementary Figure 7D). In hOTR CHO cells, paxilline modestly inhibited hyperpolarization by both Leu[8]-OT (20.6%) (Figure 4C; Supplementary Figure 8C) and Pro[8]-OT (26.5%) (Figure 4D; Supplementary Figure 8D), suggesting that $BK_{Ca}$ channels do contribute to OT-mediated changes in membrane potential by hOTR. To confirm the involvement $BK_{Ca}$ channels in hyperpolarization of mOTR and hOTR CHO cells we next used the $BK_{Ca}$ activator NS-1619. In mOTR and hOTR CHO cells, paxilline inhibited the NS-1619-induced membrane hyperpolarization in a concentration-dependent manner with a 30 $\mu$M paxilline concentration inhibiting the

19

response by 77.8% and 79.0% respectively (Supplementary Figure 10A-B, E-F),

confirming a role for $BK_{Ca}$ channels in the regulation of CHO cell membrane potential.

TRAM-34 is an $IK_{Ca}$ $K^+$ channel blocker that specifically blocks $K_{Ca}3.1$ by

occupying the site that $K^+$ binds to before entering the selectivity filter (Nguyen et al.,

2017). TRAM-34 produced the most robust inhibition of OT-mediated changes in

membrane potential. In mOTR CHO cells TRAM-34 inhibited the Leu[8]-OT response by

59.2% (Figure 4A; Supplementary Figure 7E) and the Pro[8]-OT response by 72.9%

(Figure 4B; Supplementary Figure 7F). Similarly, in hOTR CHO cells TRAM-34

inhibited Leu[8]-OT by 59.2% (Figure 4C; Supplementary Figure 8E) and Pro[8]-OT by

58.9% (Figure 4D; Supplementary Figure 8F). To confirm participation of $K_{Ca}3.1$

channels in the regulation of membrane potential in mOTR and hOTR expressing cells,

we next challenged cells with the $K_{Ca}3.1$ activator SKA-31. In mOTR and hOTR CHO

cells, TRAM-34 inhibited SKA-31-induced membrane hyperpolarization in a

concentration-dependent manner with 300 nM inhibiting the response by 73.4% and

91.5% respectively (Supplementary Figure 10C-D, G-H). These data document an

important role for $K_{Ca}3.1$ as a mediator of the response to OTR driven $Ca^{2+}$-dependent

hyperpolarization in mOTR and hOTR expressing CHO cells. To demonstrate the

combined contribution of $BK_{Ca}$ and $K_{Ca}3.1$ channels in the observed OT-mediated

changes in membrane potential, cells were pretreated with both paxilline and TRAM-34.

In mOTR and hOTR CHO cells the combined exposure of paxilline and TRAM-34

inhibited both Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT induced hyperpolarization by approximately 85%

(Figure 4; Supplementary Figure 7G-H, 8G-H) indicating an additive effect. These data

confirm that $BK_{Ca}$ and $IK_{Ca}$ channels are largely responsible for OT-induced changes in membrane potential.

To directly assess the role of calcium in OT-mediated membrane hyperpolarization, cells were pretreated with the intracellular calcium chelator BAPTA-AM. In both mOTR and hOTR CHO cells, BAPTA-AM exposure blocked hyperpolarization of membrane potential with either Leu[8]-OT or Pro[8]-OT (Supplementary Figure 11A-B; E-F). Interestingly, in BAPTA-AM treated hOTR CHO cells, a Leu[8]-OT-induced depolarization was observed, (Supplementary Figure 11E) indicating a possible dual modulation of $K^+$ channel currents by the OTR (Gravati et al., 2010).

We next confirmed the role of intracellular calcium stores in OT-mediated changes in membrane potential by pretreating cells with thapsigargin and measuring membrane potential responses to OT analogs in mOTR and hOTR CHO cells. As expected, pretreatment with thapsigargin eliminated hyperpolarization produced by either Leu[8]-OT (Supplementary Figure 11C, G) or Pro[8]-OT (Supplementary Figure 11D, H). Interestingly, in thapsigargin pretreated hOTR CHO cells, Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT both produced a depolarization response (Supplementary Figure 11G-H) again indicating potential dual modulation of currents by the hOTR.

## DISCUSSION

Previous studies demonstrated promiscuous activation of various G-proteins by OT peptides in a variety of cell types (Busnelli et al., 2016; Busnelli et al., 2012; Gravati et al., 2010; Parreiras-e-Silva et al., 2017; Phaneuf et al., 1993; Reversi et al., 2005). In

this study we compared a natural variation in OT ligands in mOTR and hOTR

expressing CHO cells to assess downstream activation of G-protein signaling pathways.

Our findings initially confirmed that at both the mOTR and hOTR Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT

activated $G_q$ signaling in a concentration-dependent manner resulting in an increase

intracellular calcium concentration. Notably, in mOTR CHO cells the cognate ligand

Pro[8]-OT was more efficacious than Leu[8]-OT which may reflect ligand-receptor co-

evolutionary changes observed in NWMs (Ren et al., 2015).  Alignment using the

National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) basic local alignment search tool

(BLAST) indicates human and marmoset (*Callithrix jacchus*) OTR are 94% conserved

(Boratyn et al., 2012). OT ligands interact with the three-dimensional environment of the

extracellular region and transmembrane domains. Amino acid changes are considered

radical or conservative based on the magnitude of their physiochemical differences.

There are 20 amino acid changes between human and marmoset OTR, six of which are

located in the extracellular and transmembrane regions (Supplementary table 5; Ren et

al., 2015), that may affect ligand binding. The increased efficacy observed with Pro[8]-OT

in mOTR CHO cells may contribute to sociobehavioral responses in marmosets.  In

contrast to the superior efficacy of Pro[8]-OT in the calcium mobilization assay at the

mOTR, no significant differences in efficacy were observed between Pro[8]-OT and Leu[8]-

OT using the same assay in hOTR CHO cells. Similarly, no significant differences in the

potency of either Leu[8]-OT or Pro[8]-OT were observed in the $Ca^{2+}$ mobilization assay in

mOTR and hOTR CHO cells. The observed $EC_{50}$ values were consistent with those

found previously in hOTR expressing cell lines  (Busnelli et al., 2012; Parreiras-e-Silva

et al., 2017), and comparable to results from hOTR expressing HEK cells where Leu[8]-

OT, Pro[8]-OT, and Val[3]- Pro[8]-OT function as full agonists at a $G_q$ signaling pathway (Parreiras-e-Silva et al., 2017). The results of these previous studies with hOTR were extended in the present investigation by comparing mOTR and hOTR signaling responses.

Given a previous report that Leu[8]-OT exerts a dual modulation of inward rectifier K[+] currents in olfactory neuronal cells (Gravati et al, 2010), we next assessed the ability of OT ligand to trigger a hyperpolarization response. G protein-gated inwardly rectifying potassium (GIRK) channels are regulators of cellular excitability, and stimulation of a variety G-protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) that couple to $G_{i/o}$ G proteins, such as the µ-opioid receptor, activate GIRK channels via G protein Gβγ subunits (Rifkin, Moss, & Slesinger, 2017). Both OT-ligands induced membrane hyperpolarization in mOTR and hOTR expressing cells in a concentration-dependent manner. The membrane hyperpolarizing responses displayed significant OT peptide-specific differences in potency. In both mOTR and hOTR expressing cells Leu[8]-OT was approximately 100-fold more potent than Pro[8]-OT in inducing membrane hyperpolarization.

PTX inhibits its $G_\alpha$ protein substrate from coupling to receptors, thus blocking $G_{i/o}$-mediated responses including membrane hyperpolarization mediated by GIRK channels. The efficacy of Leu[8]-OT in the FMP Blue assay was only modestly reduced by PTX in mOTR CHO cells. This suggested a minor $G_{i/o}$ and GIRK contribution to Leu[8]-OT-induced hyperpolarization of membrane potential. In contrast to the partial sensitivity of Leu[8]-OT, the Pro[8]-OT-induced hyperpolarization response was completely insensitive to PTX in both mOTR and hOTR expressing CHO cells, demonstrating a bias against $G_i$ activation. This pattern of Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT producing primary coupling of OTRs to

$G_q$, with minor activation of $G_i$ by Leu[8]-OT is consistent with previous reports for these peptides in human OTR expressing HEK293 cells (Parreiras-e-Silva et al., 2017). At the hOTR Leu[8]-OT has been shown to produce a robust internalization, while the response to Pro[8]-OT was modest (Parreiras-e-Silva et al., 2017).

OT has also previously been shown to exert a dual action in olfactory GN11 cells both stimulating and inhibiting $K^+$ conductances belonging to the inward rectifier (IR) family of $K^+$ channels (Gravati et al., 2010). The OT-mediated IR current inhibition was mediated by a PTX-resistant G protein, presumably of the $G_{q/11}$ subtype, and by PLC activation, whereas the activation of a $K^+$ conductance was mediated by a PTX-sensitive $G_{i/o}$ (Gravati et al., 2010). These differences in G protein subtype regulation of $K^+$ conductances observed previously in the GN11 cell line underscore the importance of cellular context in measurements of signaling pathways. The partial PTX sensitivity observed at the mOTR with Leu[8]-OT, but not Pro[8]-OT, appears to represent an agonist functional selectivity where the two OT ligands activate a single receptor but produce distinct signaling outcomes (Rankovic, Brust, & Bohn, 2016).

A variety of hormones and neurotransmitters acting at G-protein coupled receptors (GPCR) are capable of producing $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ elevation typically mediated by $Ca^{2+}$ release from endoplasmic reticulum via the Gq/phosphoinositide-phospholipase C (Gq/PI-PLC) pathway. This $G_q$-siqnaling pathway affords another potential mechanism for hyperpolarizing responses through activation of $Ca^{2+}$-dependent potassium channels. A role for $Ca^{2+}$-activated $K^+$ channels in the hyperpolarization responses observed in mOTR and hOTR expressing CHO cells was therefore assessed using $BK_{Ca}$ ($K_{Ca}1.1$), $IK_{Ca}$ ($K_{Ca}3.1$) and $SK_{Ca}$ channel blockers. Paxilline selectively blocks

$BK_{Ca}$ channels, and pretreatment with this inhibitor resulted in a significant reduction in the hyperpolarization response observed with $Pro^8$-OT in mOTR cells, and the response to both $Leu^8$-OT and $Pro^8$-OT in hOTR expressing cells. Paxilline also inhibited the hyperpolarizing response to the $BK_{Ca}$ channel opener NS-1619 in both mOTR and hOTR CHO cells, further supporting a role for a $BK_{Ca}$ channel contribution to the observed membrane hyperpolarization. These results agree with those of an earlier report demonstrating that $Leu^8$-OT hyperpolarized myenteric intrinsic primary afferent neurons by activating $BK_{Ca}$ channels via the OTR-PLC-IP3- $Ca^{2+}$ signaling pathway (Che et al., 2012).

TRAM-34 inhibited between 58-73% of the hyperpolarizing responses to both OT-ligands, suggesting $K_{Ca}3.1$ is largely responsible for membrane hyperpolarization produced by OT peptides in mOTR and hOTR expressing CHO cells. TRAM-34 also inhibited the hyperpolarizing response to $K_{Ca}3.1$ opener SKA-31, further demonstrating the involvement of $K_{Ca}3.1$ in observed membrane hyperpolarization. The critical role of $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ elevation in the hyperpolarization was demonstrated using BAPTA-AM to chelate intracellular $Ca^{2+}$ (Strayer et al., 1999). Pretreatment with BAPTA-AM eliminated membrane hyperpolarization in response to both OT analogs in mOTR and hOTR cells. Similarly, passive depletion of endoplasmic reticulum $Ca^{2+}$ stores by the endoplasmic reticulum $Ca^{2+}$-ATPase inhibitor, thapsigargin (Dravid & Murray, 2004; Quynh Doan & Christensen, 2015) also inhibited OT-induced membrane hyperpolarization produced by both OT analogs in both cell lines. These data confirm that the observed OT ligand induced membrane hyperpolarization in mOTR and hOTR expressing CHO cells was

primarily mediated by intracellular $Ca^{2+}$ mobilization with subsequent activation of $Ca^{2+}$-dependent $K^+$ channels, including $K_{Ca}3.1$.

OT is a fundamental mediator of sociobehavioral processes including social cognition (Crespi, 2016), interpersonal trust (Baumgartner et al., 2008; Kosfeld et al., 2005), anxiety (Missig et al., 2010), and stress response (Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Light et al., 2000), generating interest in OT as potential therapeutic mediator of sociobehavioral deficits in conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (Anagnostou et al., 2012; Andari et al., 2010), post-traumatic stress disorder (Frijling, 2017; Sack et al., 2017), and schizophrenia (Brambilla et al., 2016; Pedersen et al., 2011). One major challenge is connecting pharmacologic signatures to sociobehavioral processes. Identification of the mechanisms by which OT analogs affect OTR-mediated signaling is crucial to translating signaling activation at the cellular level to effects of OT ligands on social behaviors. In clinical trials for sociobehavioral deficits, intranasal OT is used because peripheral administration does not cross the blood-brain barrier (Born et al., 2002). Intranasal OT appears to be safe and well-tolerated (Anagnostou et al., 2012) and imaging evidence suggests OT induces increased activity in the 'social brain' (Bethlehem, van Honk, Auyeung, & Baron-Cohen, 2013). However, clinical trials for OT treatment of sociobehaivioral deficits with various dosing schedules (single vs. multiple) and routes (IV vs. intranasal) have shown mixed results (Alvares, Quintana, & Whitehouse, 2017) suggesting that greater understanding of OT triggered signaling pathways downstream of the OTR could facilitate interpretation of sociobehavioral effects leading to more refined therapeutic targeting.

26

The present results show that Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT display functionally distinct responses when activating either the mOTR or hOTR. These distinct characteristics included peptide potency and efficacy, and G-protein subtype coupling. Pro[8]-OT was shown to be more efficacious than Leu[8]-OT in activating the $G_q$ $Ca^{2+}$ mobilization assay in mOTR cells. Uniquely, Leu[8]-OT was much more potent than Pro[8]-OT in producing a hyperpolarization in both mOTR and hOTR. A final salient difference in the observed pharmacologic signatures of the two peptides was that the Pro[8]-OT-induced hyperpolarization responses in both mOTR and hOTR were PTX insensitive whereas the response to Leu[8]-OT in mOTR was partially sensitive. Further functional characterization of OT analogs may therefore provide insight into the structural requirements for functionally selective or biased agonists that open new possibilities for drug discovery and the advancement of OT-mediated therapeutics.

MOL # 114744

## AKNOWLEDGMENTS

## AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

Participated in research design: Murray, Pierce, Mehrotra

Conducted experiments: Pierce, Mehrotra, Mustoe

Performed data analysis: Pierce, Mehrotra, Mustoe

Wrote or contributed to the writing of the manuscript: Murray, Pierce, Mehrotra, Mustoe,

French

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MOL # 114744

**FOOTNOTES**

Pierce, M.L., Mehrotra, S., Toews, M.L., French, J.A., and Murray, T.F., Comparison of

Leu[8]- and Pro[8]-oxytocin potency, efficacy and functional selectivity at the human and

marmoset receptors. Program No. 35.13.2016 Neuroscience Meeting Planner, Society

for Neuroscience, Online.

## LEGENDS FOR FIGURES

**Figure 1.** Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT induced intracellular calcium mobilization in marmoset oxytocin-receptor expressing (mOTR) expressing or human oxytocin-receptor expressing (hOTR) CHO cells. Leu[8]-OT time-response (A) Pro[8]-OT time-response (B) and concentration-response relationships (C) in mOTR cells. Leu[8]-OT time-response (D) Pro[8]-OT time-response (E) and concentration-response relationships (F) in hOTR cells. N=6 experiments (five replicates per concentration per experiment).

**Figure 2.** Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT induced changes in membrane potential in mOTR- or hOTR- expressing CHO cells. Leu[8]-OT time-response (A) Pro[8]-OT time-response (B) and concentration-response relationships (C) in mOTR cells. Leu[8]-OT time-response (D) Pro[8]-OT time-response (E) and concentration-response relationships (F) in hOTR cells. N=6 experiments (five replicates per dose per experiment).

**Figure 3.** Effects of pretreatment with PTX on Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT induced changes in membrane potential in mOTR and hOTR-expressing CHO cells. Control Leu[8]-OT and PTX-pretreated concentration response relationships (A) and control Pro[8]-OT and PTX-pretreated concentration-response relationships (B) in mOTR-expressing cells. Control Leu[8]-OT and PTX-pretreated concentration-response relationships (C) and control Pro[8]-OT and PTX-pretreated concentration-response relationships (D) in hOTR-expressing cells. Control and PTX-pretreated replicates were run in parallel on the same plates, at the same time and with the same split of cells. N=6 experiments (five replicates per dose per experiment).

43

**Figure 4.** Effects of pretreatment with $Ca^{2+}$-activated $K^+$ inhibitors on $Leu^8$-OT or $Pro^8$-OT induced changes in membrane potential in mOTR and hOTR-expressing CHO cells. Inhibitor fluorescence was normalized to $Leu^8$-OT or $Pro^8$-OT-induced membrane hyperpolarization. Area under the curve (negative peaks only) was assessed and a one-way ANOVA was performed with Sidek's multiple comparisons to determine statistical significance. N=3 experiments for each inhibitor (10 replicates per dose per experiment). Raw data (Supplementary Figures 7-8). Adjusted p-values (Supplementary Table 3).

## TABLES

**Table 1**.

| Line | Parameter | Ligand (nM) | | Rank order potency |
|------|-----------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| | | $Leu^8$-OT | $Pro^8$-OT | |
| mOTR | $EC_{50}$ | 0.5 | 0.4 | $Pro^8$-OT = $Leu^8$-OT |
| | 95% CI | 0.3 to 1.0 | 0.2 to 0.7 | |
| | $R^2$ | 0.90 | 0.92 | |
| hOTR | $EC_{50}$ | 0.7 | 1.6 | $Leu^8$-OT= $Pro^8$-OT |
| | 95% CI | 0.4 to 1.5 | 0.7 to 3.6 | |
| | $R^2$ | 0.87 | 0.84 | |

Potency of $Leu^8$-OT and $Pro^8$-OT at inducing calcium mobilization in mOTR and hOTR

CHO cells.

**Table 2**.

| Line | Parameter | Ligand | | Rank order potency |
|------|-----------|--------|--|--------------------|
| | | Leu[8]-OT | Pro[8]-OT | |
| mOTR | $EC_{50}$ | 11.6 pM | 1.1 nM | Leu[8]-OT > Pro[8]-OT |
| | 95% CI | 3.1 to 47.3 pM | 0.2 to 5.6 nM | |
| | $R^2$ | 0.71 | 0.53 | |
| hOTR | $EC_{50}$ | 25.6 pM | 13.23 nM | Leu[8]-OT > Pro[8]-OT |
| | 95% CI | 4.4 to 150.0 pM | 2.4 to 73.6 nM | |
| | $R^2$ | 0.53 | 0.54 | |

Potency of Leu[8]-OT and Pro[8]-OT at inducing membrane hyperpolarization in mOTR and hOTR CHO cells.
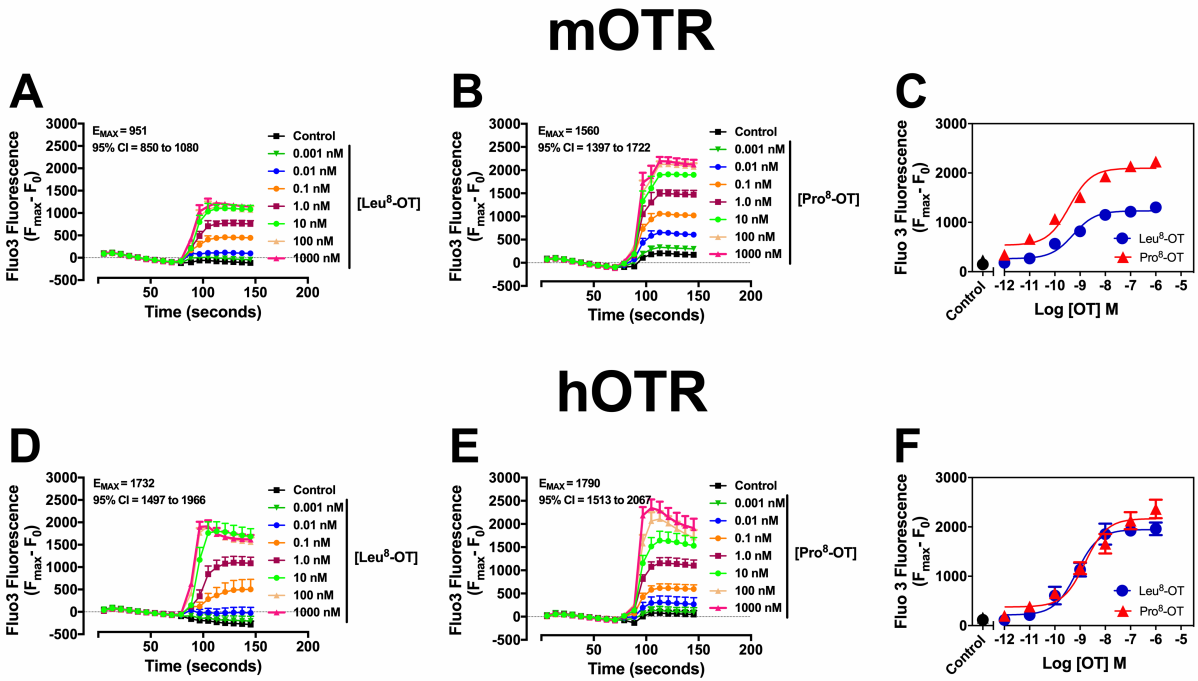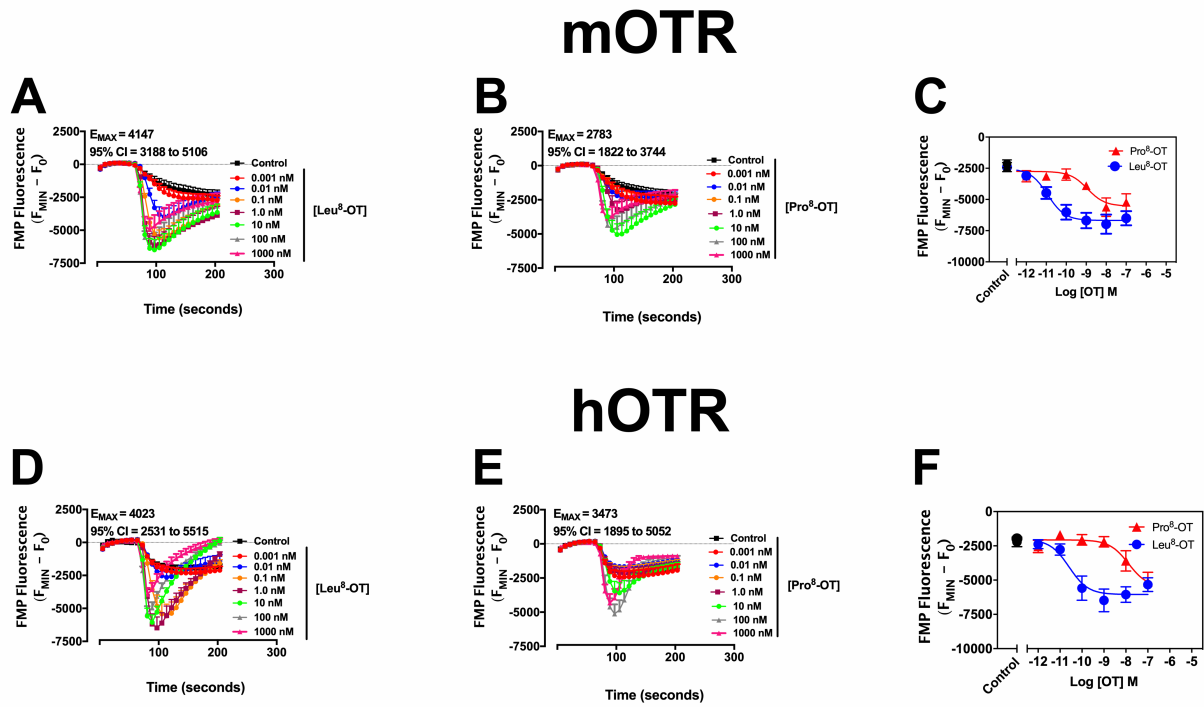
**FIGURES**

**Figure 1.**
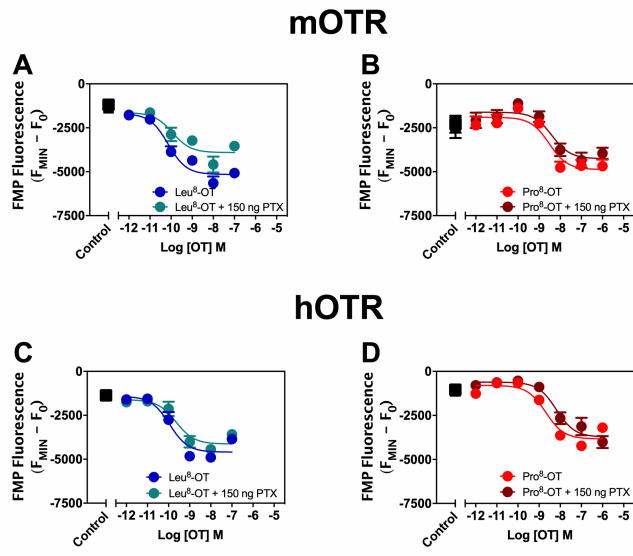
**Figure 2.**

**Figure 3.**

**Figure 4.**