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Ecto-5'-nucleotidase marks amoeboid microglial cells in the rat model of neurodegeneration

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Adenosine 5'-triphosphate (ATP) and adenosine are versatile signaling molecules involved in many pathophysiological processes in the nervous system. They can be released from all types of brain cells in the extracellular space and activates purinergic receptors. Signaling via extracellular ATP is regulated by cell-surface located ectonucleotidases. Extracellular AMP resulting from the hydrolysis of ATP and ADP can in turn be hydrolyzed into adenosine by ecto-5'-nucleotidase (eN). We examined the involvement of purinergic signaling components in the rat model of trimethyltin (TMT)-induced hippocampal neurodegeneration (8mg/kg, single ip), which results in behavioral and neurological dysfunction similar as in Alzheimer's disease models. Enzyme histochemistry and immunohistochemistry (ir) showed that products of AMPase activity and eN-ir were accumulated in the neuronal strata, infiltrating within neuronal cell layers, depicting individual round-shaped elements that covered neuronal layers with pronounced cell death mostly at the late stage of TMT-induced neurodegeneration. Co-localization with Iba1⁺ specifically marked eN at amoeboid microglial cells. Neither of the tested pro-inflammatory cytokines (IL-1 β , TNF- α , IL-10) and C3 nor polarization marker iNOS was found in association with those Iba1/eN⁺-cells. Iba1-ir cells co-localized with Arg1-ir and phagocytic marker CD68ir. Marked induction of P2Y₁₂R-, P2Y₆R-, and P2X₄-mRNA at the early stage of TMT-induced neurodegeneration might reflect the migration, and chemotaxis of microglia, while induction of P2X₇R at amoeboid cells probably modulates their phagocytic role. These findings may contribute to a better understanding of the involvement of purinergic signaling components in the progression of neurodegenerative disorders that could be target molecules for development of novel therapies.

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