

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE
NEUROPROTECTIVE EFFECTS OF MELATONIN
IN A MODEL OF ROTENONE-INDUCED
NEURODEGENERATION**

Thesis

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE (PHARMACY)

Of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

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December 2003



***ILLNESS IS SO LIMITED....
IT CANNOT
CRIPPLE LOVE,
SHATTER HOPE,
CORRODE FAITH,
DESTROY PEACE,
KILL FRIENDSHIP,
SUPPRESS MEMORIES,
SILENCE COURAGE,
INVADE THE SOUL,
STEAL ETERNAL LIFE,
IT CANNOT CONQUER THE SPIRIT***

disease

- A Patient Suffering from Parkinson's

ABSTRACT

Parkinson's disease, one of the most common neurodegenerative disorders associated with ageing, is characterised by abnormal and profound loss of nigrostriatal dopaminergic neurons. The cause of Parkinson's disease is unknown, but epidemiological studies suggest an association with pesticides and other environmental toxins, and biochemical studies implicate oxidative damage and mitochondrial impairment, particularly at the level of complex I enzyme. Recently, rotenone, a commonly used organic pesticide and a classical inhibitor of mitochondrial complex I has been reported to reproduce the specific features of Parkinson's disease in rodents.

The mitochondrial respiratory chain is one of the most important sites of reactive oxygen species production under physiological conditions. Toxic free radicals have been implicated in a variety of neurodegenerative diseases as well as ageing itself. Melatonin, a secretory product of the pineal gland is a multifaceted free radical scavenger and natural antioxidant. In the present study, the neuroprotective effects of melatonin against the environmental neurotoxin, rotenone was investigated.

Initial studies showed that inhibition of mitochondrial complex I enzyme by rotenone induced superoxide radical generation. Melatonin, administered to the rat *in vivo* and *in vitro* was able to offer neuroprotection by curtailing the production of superoxide radicals induced by rotenone. Mitochondria, being the major target of rotenone, the effects of melatonin were investigated at the mitochondrial level. Melatonin was able to increase the electron transport chain activity thus preventing the respiratory inhibition by

rotenone. The pineal hormone also counteracted the action of rotenone on complex I enzyme. These results suggest melatonin's ability to potentially limit the free radical generation and thereby modulate the mitochondrial functions.

The detection and measurement of lipid peroxidation is the evidence most frequently cited to support the involvement of free radical reactions in toxicology and in human disease. Melatonin also offered significant protection *in vivo* and *in vitro* against rotenone induced lipid peroxidation. Since iron plays a major role in oxidative damage and in the progression of Parkinson's disease, the effect of melatonin on both rotenone and iron induced lipid peroxidation was investigated, the results of which show that melatonin affords protection and this was suggested to be due to its interaction with the rotenone-iron complex that might have formed. Electrochemical studies were further used to characterise the interactions between melatonin, rotenone and iron (III). Melatonin was shown to bind with iron and thus reducing their toxicity.

Histological studies were undertaken to assess the effects of melatonin on rotenone induced toxicity on the dopaminergic neurons in the rat brain. Rotenone treated brains showed extensive neuronal damage whereas with melatonin less damage was observed. Rotenone induces apoptosis via reactive oxygen species production and apoptotic cell death has been identified in PD brains. Furthermore, the apoptotic cell death was detected and quantified by the TUNEL staining. Rotenone treated sections showed signs of apoptosis whereas with melatonin, less apoptotic damage was observed.

The findings of this study indicate that the neurohormone, melatonin may protect against rotenone-induced neurodegeneration. Since melatonin production falls substantially during ageing, the loss of this antioxidant is theorized to be instrumental in the degenerative processes associated with advanced age. Considering how devastating diseases such as Parkinson's disease, are to a patient and the patient's families, the discovery of protective agents are a matter of urgency. Further investigations using the pesticide model will help to determine the involvement of environmental exposure in the pathogenesis of human diseases as well as to test therapeutic strategies for the treatment of such diseases.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Title Page</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Quote</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Table of contents</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>List of figures and tables</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xvii</i>

CHAPTER 1 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	1
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1.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO NEUROSCIENCE	1
1.2 THE BRAIN.....	1
1.3 MECHANISMS OF NEURODEGENERATION.....	2
1.3.1 <i>FREE RADICALS AND OXIDATIVE STRESS</i>	2
1.3.1.1 Superoxide Radical	3
1.3.1.2 Hydroxyl radical	4
1.3.1.3 Nitric Oxide	4
1.3.1.4 Peroxynitrite.....	5
1.3.2 <i>LIPID PEROXIDATION</i>	6
1.3.2.1 STEPS IN LIPID PEROXIDATION	6
1.3.2.2 THE ROLE OF IRON IN LIPID PEROXIDATION	7
1.3.3 <i>THE ROLE OF MITOCHONDRIA IN OXIDATIVE STRESS AND AGEING</i>	8
1.3.3.1 Complex I and Neurodegeneration	8
1.3.4 <i>EXCITOTOXICITY</i>	10
1.3.5 <i>APOPTOSIS</i>	12
1.4 NEURODEGENERATIVE DISORDERS	14
1.4.1 <i>AGEING</i>	14
1.4.2 <i>ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE (AD)</i>	15
1.4.3 <i>PARKINSON'S DISEASE (PD)</i>	16
1.4.3.1 MODELS OF TOXIN-INDUCED PARKINSONISM.....	18
1.4.3.1.1 <i>The MPTP Model of PD</i>	18
1.4.3.1.2 <i>Rotenone Model of PD</i>	18
1.4.3.2 IRON AND PARKINSON'S DISEASE	19
1.5 ROTENONE	19
1.5.1 <i>INTRODUCTION</i>	19
1.5.2 <i>CHEMISTRY OF ROT</i>	20
1.5.2.1 STRUCTURE OF ROT.....	21
1.5.2.2 Physical and Chemical Properties of ROT	21
1.5.3 <i>MODE OF ACTION OF ROT</i>	22
1.5.4 <i>PHARMACOKINETICS</i>	22
1.5.4.1 Absorption	22
1.5.4.2 Distribution	22

1.5.4.3	Metabolism	22
1.5.4.4	Elimination.....	22
1.5.5	<i>TOXICITY</i>	23
1.5.5.1	Acute Toxicity.....	23
1.5.5.2	Chronic Toxicity	23
1.5.5.3	Clinical Effects of Rotenone	23
1.5.5.3.1	<i>Cardiovascular (CVS) Effects</i>	23
1.5.5.3.2	<i>Respiratory Effects</i>	24
1.5.5.3.3	<i>Central Nervous System Effects (CNS)</i>	24
1.5.5.3.4	<i>Gastrointestinal Effects (GIT)</i>	24
1.5.5.3.5	<i>Hepatic and Renal Effects</i>	24
1.5.6	<i>Overdose Management</i>	24
1.5.7	<i>ROtenone AND PARKINSON'S DISEASE</i>	24
1.6	NEUROPROTECTIVE STRATEGIES.....	26
1.6.1	<i>THE PINEAL GLAND</i>	26
1.6.1.1	History of the Pineal Gland	26
1.6.1.2	Pineal location and anatomy	27
1.6.1.3	Pineal Indole Metabolism	28
1.6.2	<i>MELATONIN (MEL)</i>	30
1.6.2.1	History	30
1.6.2.2	Structure of Melatonin.....	30
1.6.2.3	Synthesis	30
1.6.2.4	Circadian variation in melatonin synthesis.....	31
1.6.2.5	Secretion and Distribution of Melatonin	32
1.6.2.6	Metabolism of Melatonin	32
1.6.2.7	Melatonin Receptors.....	32
1.6.2.8	Functions of Melatonin.....	33
1.6.3	<i>FREE RADICAL SCAVENGING AND ANTIOXIDANT</i>	34
	<i>ACTIONS OF MELATONIN</i>	34
1.6.3.1	<i>In vitro</i> evidence.....	34
1.6.3.2	<i>In vivo</i> evidence.....	35
1.6.3.3	Effects of melatonin on the antioxidant defence system	35
1.7	OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY.....	37

CHAPTER 2 SUPEROXIDE RADICAL GENERATION..... 38

2.1	INTRODUCTION	38
2.2	EFFECT OF MELATONIN ON ROTENONE-INDUCED SUPEROXIDE RADICAL GENERATION IN RAT BRAIN HOMOGENATE	41
2.2.1	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	41
2.2.2	<i>MATERIALS AND METHODS</i>	41
2.2.2.1	Animals.....	41
2.2.2.2	Chemicals and Reagents	42
2.2.2.3	Brain Removal	42
2.2.2.4	Preparation of Brain Homogenate	42

2.2.2.5	Preparation of Standard Curve	42
2.2.2.6	Nitroblue Tetrazolium Assay	42
2.2.2.6.1	<i>In vitro</i> Exposure to Melatonin	43
2.2.2.6.2	<i>In vivo</i> Administration of Melatonin	43
2.2.2.7	Statistical Analysis	43
2.2.3	<i>RESULTS</i>	44
2.2.4	<i>DISCUSSION</i>	46
CHAPTER 3 BIOLOGICAL OXIDATION ASSAY.....		48
3.1	INTRODUCTION	48
3.2	EFFECT OF MELATONIN ON ROTENONE-INDUCED MITOCHONDRIAL RESPIRATORY INHIBITION.....	49
3.2.1	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	49
3.2.2	<i>MATERIALS AND METHODS</i>	50
3.2.2.1	Animals.....	50
3.2.2.2	Chemicals and Reagents	50
3.2.2.3	Isolation of Mitochondria from Rat Brain and Liver	50
3.2.2.4	Biological Oxidation Assay	51
3.2.3	<i>RESULTS</i>	51
3.2.4	<i>DISCUSSION</i>	58
CHAPTER 4 COMPLEX I ASSAY.....		60
4.1	INTRODUCTION	60
4.2	EFFECT OF MELATONIN ON ROTENONE-INDUCED COMPLEX I INHIBITION.....	63
4.2.	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	63
4.2.2	<i>MATERIALS AND METHODS</i>	63
4.2.2.1	Animals.....	63
4.2.2.2	Chemicals and Reagents	63
4.2.2.3	Isolation of Mitochondrial P ₂ fraction from rat brain.....	64
4.2.2.4	Complex I (NADH:ubiquinone oxidoreductase) Assay	64
4.2.2.5	Protein Determination	65
4.2.2.6	Statistical Analysis	65
4.2.3	<i>RESULTS</i>	65
4.2.2	<i>DISCUSSION</i>	66
CHAPTER 5 LIPID PEROXIDATION		69
5.1	INTRODUCTION	69
5.2	EFFECT OF MELATONIN ON ROTENONE-INDUCED LIPID PEROXIDATION IN RAT BRAIN HOMOGENATE.....	71

5.2.1	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	71
5.2.2	<i>MATERIALS AND METHODS</i>	71
5.2.2.1	Animals	71
5.2.2.2	Chemicals and Reagents	71
5.2.2.3	Preparation of the Brain Homogenate	72
5.2.2.4	Preparation of Standard Curve	72
5.2.2.5	Lipid Peroxidation Assay	72
5.2.2.5.1	<i>In vitro</i> Exposure to Melatonin	72
5.2.2.5.2	<i>In vivo</i> Administration of Melatonin	73
5.2.3	<i>RESULTS</i>	73
5.2.4	<i>DISCUSSION</i>	76
5.3	EFFECT OF MELATONIN ON ROTENONE AND IRON (Fe^{2+})	80
	INDUCED LIPID PEROXIDATION IN RAT BRAIN HOMOGENATE	80
5.3.1	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	80
5.3.2	<i>MATERIALS AND METHODS</i>	81
5.3.2.1	Animals	81
5.3.2.2	Chemicals and Reagents	81
5.3.2.3	Preparation of the Brain Homogenate	81
5.3.2.4	Lipid Peroxidation Assay	81
5.3.3	<i>RESULTS</i>	81
5.3.4	<i>DISCUSSION</i>	84
CHAPTER 6 ELECTROCHEMICAL ANALYSIS		85
6.1	<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	85
6.1.1	<i>Cyclic Voltammetry (CV)</i>	86
6.1.1.1	Reversible Processes	87
6.1.2	<i>Adsortive Stripping Voltammetry (ASV)</i>	89
6.2	<i>MATERIALS AND METHODS</i>	89
6.2.1	<i>Chemicals and Reagents</i>	89
6.2.2	<i>Apparatus</i>	90
6.2.3	<i>Technique</i>	90
6.2.3.1	Cyclic Voltammetry	90
6.2.3.2	Adsortive Stripping Voltammetry	90
6.3	<i>RESULTS</i>	91
6.3.1	<i>Voltammetric characterisation of Melatonin, Rotenone and Fe^{3+}</i>	91
6.3.1.1	Effect of melatonin on rotenone	93
6.3.1.2	Effect of rotenone on Fe^{3+}	95
6.3.1.3	The effect of rotenone and melatonin on Fe^{3+}	95
6.4	<i>DISCUSSION</i>	95

CHAPTER 7 HISTOLOGICAL ANALYSIS 97

7.1	INTRODUCTION	97
7.2	THE EFFECT OF MELATONIN AGAINST ROTENONE- INDUCED NEURONAL DAMAGE IN RAT BRAIN.....	99
7.2.1	INTRODUCTION	99
7.2.2	MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	99
7.2.2.1	Chemicals and Reagents.....	99
7.2.2.2	Animals.....	100
7.2.2.3	Treatment Regime	100
7.2.2.4	Histological Techniques	101
7.2.2.4.1	<i>Fixing the brain</i>	101
7.2.2.4.2	<i>Specimen Preparation and Embedding</i>	101
7.2.2.4.3	<i>Blocking Out</i>	101
7.2.2.4.4	<i>Sectioning</i>	102
7.2.2.4.5	<i>Transferring Sections to Slides</i>	102
7.2.2.4.6	<i>Staining</i>	102
7.2.2.4.6.1	<i>Nissl Staining</i>	103
7.2.2.4.6.2	<i>Haematoxylin and Eosin staining (H & E)</i>	103
7.2.2.4.7	<i>Mounting of Slides</i>	103
7.2.2.4.8	<i>Photo-microscopy</i>	104
7.2.3	RESULTS.....	104
7.2.3.1	Behavioral changes.....	104
7.2.3.2	Histological Analysis.....	104
7.2.3.2.1	<i>Nissl staining</i>	104
7.2.3.2.2	<i>Haematoxylin and Eosin staining</i>	106
7.2.4	DISCUSSION.....	108

CHAPTER 8 APOPTOSIS 111

8.1	INTRODUCTION	111
8.2	THE EFFECT OF MELATONIN ON ROTENONE-INDUCED APOPTOSIS IN RAT BRAIN.....	113
8.2.1	INTRODUCTION	113
8.2.2	MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	113
8.2.2.1	Chemicals and Reagents.....	113
8.2.2.2	Animals.....	113
8.2.2.3	Treatment Regime	114
8.2.2.4	Techniques involved in apoptosis	114
8.2.2.4.1	<i>Fixing the brain</i>	114
8.2.2.4.2	<i>Specimen Preparation and Embedding</i>	114
8.2.2.4.3	<i>Blocking Out</i>	114
8.2.2.4.4	<i>Sectioning</i>	114
8.2.2.4.5	<i>Transferring Sections to Slides</i>	115

8.2.2.5 Tunel Staining	115
8.2.2.5.1 <i>Pre-treatment of paraffin-embedded tissue</i>	115
8.2.2.5.2 <i>Labeling</i>	115
8.2.3 RESULTS.....	116
8.2.4 DISCUSSION.....	118
CHAPTER 9 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES	119
9.1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS	119
9.2 CONCLUSION.....	121
APPENDICES	123
APPENDIX 1 CALIBRATION CURVE FOR DIFORMAZAN ($R^2=0.9989$)	123
APPENDIX 2 PROTEIN STANDARD CURVE ($R^2 = 0.9995$)	124
APPENDIX 3 MALONDIALDEHYDE STANDARD CURVE ($R^2 = 0.9977$)	125
APPENDIX 4	126
APPENDIX 5	127
REFERENCES.....	128

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIG 1.1 Generation of oxygen free radicals	5
FIG 1.2 L-shaped appearance of complex I and its cofactor locations.....	9
FIG 1.3 Pathway representing the events in apoptosis	13
FIG 1.4 Schematic diagram showing the nigrostriatal dopaminergic pathway.	16
A cross-section of the human brain shows the caudate and putamen.....	16
and a section through the midbrain shows the substantia nigra.	16
Dopaminergic neurons are indicated in red.	16
FIG. 1.5 Chemical Structure of Rotenone	21
FIG. 1.6 Toxin-induced oxidative stress in dopaminergic neurons. Both rotenone and	25
paraquat (PQ) generate superoxide anions (O_2^-) by blocking mitochondrial.....	25
electron flow and redox cycling	25
FIG 1.7 Schematic representation of pineal indole metabolism	29
FIG. 1.8 Chemical structure of melatonin	30
FIG 2.1 Schematic diagram illustrating the major subunits of the electron transport chain (ETC) and sites of O_2^- production. Electrons enter the ETC at either complex I (NADH-ubiquinone oxidoreductase) or complex II (succinate dehydrogenase) following the oxidation of NADH and succinate, respectively. Ubiquinone is a lipid-soluble electron carrier and carries the electrons from complex I and complex II to complex III (ubiquinol-cytochrome c oxidoreductase). Superoxide (O_2^-) can be produced at both complex I and complex III.	39
FIG 2.2 Concentration-dependent effect of ROT on superoxide generation in	44
whole rat brain homogenate. Each bar represents the mean SD, n=5;.....	44
(*** p<0.001 in comparison to control). Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test.....	44
FIG 2.3 The effect of melatonin on ROT (50?M)-induced superoxide anion	45
generation in whole rat brain homogenate. Each bar represents the mean	45
SD, n=5; (** p<0.01 in comparison to control). Student-Newman-Keuls.....	45
Multiple Range Test.....	45
FIG 2.4 The effect of increasing concentrations of ROT on superoxide generation in.....	46
rat brain homogenate obtained from rats pretreated with melatonin 5mg/kg	46
i.p. for five consecutive days. Each bar represents the mean SD; n=5.....	46
(* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p < 0.001); Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple	46
Range Test.....	46

FIG 3.1 Schematic diagram of the mitochondrial Electron Transport Chain. The site of complex I inhibition by rotenone and MPP ⁺ , and ROS production is depicted by red arrows	49
FIG. 3.2 A comparison of the effect of melatonin (1M) alone and in presence of rotenone (50M) to that of rotenone alone and control, on the rat brain mitochondrial ETC using L-Malate as the substrate, after 0 minutes of incubation.[Data represents the mean SD; n=5].	52
FIG. 3.3 A comparison of the effect of melatonin (1M) alone and in presence of rotenone (50M) to that of rotenone alone and control, on the rat liver mitochondrial ETC using L-Malate as the substrate, after 0 minutes of incubation.[Data represents the mean SD; n=5].	53
FIG. 3.4 A comparison of the effect of melatonin (1M) alone and in presence of rotenone (50M) to that of rotenone alone and control, on the rat brain mitochondrial ETC using L-Malate as the substrate, after 30 minutes of incubation.[Data represents the mean SD; n=5].	54
FIG. 3.5 A comparison of the effect of melatonin (1M) alone and in presence of rotenone (50M) to that of rotenone alone and control, on the rat liver mitochondrial ETC using L-Malate as the substrate, after 30 minutes of incubation. [Data represents the mean SD; n=5].	55
FIG. 3.6 A comparison of the effect of melatonin (1M) alone and in presence of rotenone (50M) to that of rotenone alone and control, on the rat brain mitochondrial ETC using L-Malate as the substrate, after 60 minutes of incubation.[Data represents the mean SD; n=5].	56
FIG. 3.7 A comparison of the effect of melatonin (1M) alone and in presence of rotenone (50M) to that of rotenone alone and control, on the rat liver mitochondrial ETC using L-Malate as the substrate, after 60 minutes of incubation. [Data represents the mean SD; n=5].	57
FIG 4.1 Generation of ROS by complex I and its implicated consequences. O ₂ ⁻ is generated by a single electron reduction of O ₂ by bisemiquinone (SQ) or cluster N2. H ₂ O ₂ and OH ⁻ are formed by MnSOD and by Fenton's reaction in the presence of Fe or Cu, respectively. NO reacts with O ₂ ⁻ generating ONOO ⁻ . Changes in [NADH]/[NAD ⁺] ratio and decrease of [NAD ⁺] concentration are suggested to affect several cellular activities	61
FIG 4.2 The effect of rotenone on mitochondrial complex I activity in rat brain. Each bar represents the mean SD, n=5; (***) p<0.001 in comparison to control). Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test.	65

FIG 4.3 The effect of melatonin (10?M) on rotenone induced mitochondrial complex I	66
inhibition in rat brain. Each bar represents the mean SD, n=5; (* p<0.05	66
in comparison to rotenone treated brain. Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple.....	66
Range Test	66
FIG 5.1 The reaction of MDA with TBA to yield a pink TBA-MDA complex	70
FIG 5.2 Concentration-dependent effect of ROT on lipid peroxidation in whole	74
rat brain homogenate. Each bar represents the mean ± SD, n=5;	74
(***p<0.001 in comparison to control). Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple	74
Range Test.....	74
FIG 5.3 The effect of melatonin (in vitro administration) on ROT (50?M)-induced.....	75
lipid peroxidation in whole rat brain homogenate. Each bar represents the	75
mean ±SD, n=5; (**p<0.001) Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test.	75
FIG 5.4 The effect of increasing concentrations of ROT on MDA levels in rat brain.....	76
homogenate obtained from rats pretreated with 5mg/kg melatonin i.p. for 5	76
consecutive days. Each bar represents the mean ±SD; n=5. (**p<0.01;	76
***p<0.001) Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test.	76
FIG 5.5 Melatonin scavenges the hydroxyl radical (.OH) via electron donation,	78
thereby neutralizing the .OH and generating non-toxic nitrogen-centered radical, the ..	78
indolyl cation radical. It is then believed to scavenge the superoxide anion radical O ₂ ⁻ to ..	78
produce 5-MAFK, which is excreted in the urine	78
FIG. 5.6 A comparison of the effect of rotenone (0.1mM and 0.5mM) alone and in	82
presence of iron II (0.5mM) to that of control on lipid peroxidation in whole rat brain	82
homogenate. Each bar represents the mean ±SD; n=3. a vs. b and c (p<0.001);	82
b vs. b1 and c vs. c1(p<0.001) Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test.....	82
FIG. 5.7 The effect of melatonin (0.1mM and 0.5mM respectively) on rotenone and	83
iron (II) (combination) induced lipid peroxidation in whole rat brain	83
homogenate. Each bar represents the mean ±SD; n=3. (***p<0.001)	83
Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test.	83
FIG. 6.1 Schematic representation of a) the basic setup for a cyclic and square wave	86
voltammetric system and b) enlarged schematic of the reference electrode	86
(Ag AgCl). (WFG = waveform generator, P = potentiostat, WE = working	86
electrode, CE = counter electrode, RE = reference electrode)	86
FIG. 6.2 The current / potential (I / V) curves expected from an electroactive adsorbed	87
species in a reversible redox reaction. E is the potential at which the maxima (Ea)	87
and minima (Ec) in the current are observed	87
FIG. 6.3 Cyclic voltammogram of melatonin. Scan Rate 100 mV/s.	91

FIG. 6.4 Adsorptive stripping voltammogram of melatonin Scan Rate 25 mV/s.....	91
FIG. 6.5 Cyclic voltammogram of rotenone. Scan Rate 100 mV/s.....	92
FIG. 6.6 Successive CV scans for rotenone. Scans were run at 1.5-minute intervals over a period of 6 minutes. Scan rate 100 mV/s.....	93 93
FIG. 6.7 CV of melatonin and rotenone (in a 1:1 ratio) over a period of 35 minutes. Scan rate 100 mV/s.....	94 94
FIG. 6.8 CV of Fe ³⁺ . Scan Rate 100 mV/s.....	94
FIG. 6.9 ASV of melatonin and Fe ³⁺ (in a 1:1 ratio). Scan rate 25 mV/s.	95
FIG. 7.1 Nissl stained cells of the nigral region in the midbrain from an animal of the control group. Magnification x 1000.....	105 105
FIG. 7.2 Nissl stained cells of the nigral region in the midbrain from an animal treated with rotenone (0.3mg/kg i.p.) for fourteen days. Magnification x 1000.....	105 105
FIG. 7.3 Nissl stained cells of the nigral region in the midbrain from an animal treated with rotenone (0.3mg/kg i.p.) and melatonin (5mg/kg i.p.) for fourteen days. Magnification x 1000.....	106 106 106
FIG. 7.4 Cells of the nigral region in the midbrain from an animal of the control group. Haematoxylin and eosin staining. Magnification x 1000.....	107 107
FIG. 7.5 Cells of the nigral region in the midbrain from an animal treated with rotenone (0.3mg/kg i.p.) for fourteen days. Haematoxylin and eosin staining Magnification x 1000	107
FIG. 7.6 Cells of the nigral region in the midbrain from an animal treated with rotenone (0.3mg/kg i.p.) and melatonin (5mg/kg i.p.) for fourteen days Haematoxylin and eosin staining. Magnification x 1000	108 108 108
FIG. 8.1 TUNEL stained neurons from a rat treated with vehicle (control)	116
FIG. 8.2 TUNEL stained neurons from a rat treated with rotenone (0.3mg/kg)	117
FIG. 8.3 TUNEL stained neurons from a rat treated with melatonin (5mg/kg)	117
Table 1.1 Chain sequence for free radical auto-oxidation	7
Table 6.1 Data (rate constants and R ² values) obtained for the plot of peak current (i _a) versus square root of the scan rate of melatonin and rotenone.....	92
Table 7.1 Treatment regime for each group of animals.....	100

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- µA—Microamperes
µg—Microgram
µl—Microlitre
µM—Micromolar
4-HDA—4-Hydroxyalkenals
5-HT—5-Hydroxytryptamine (Serotonin)
AD—Alzheimer's disease
AIF—Apoptosis-inducing factor
ALS—Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis
ANOVA—Analysis of variance
ASV—Adsorptive stripping voltammetry
ATP—Adenosine triphosphate
BHT—Butylated hydroxytoluene
BSA—Bovine serum albumin
 Ca^{2+} —Calcium (II)
CE—Counter Electrode
CNS—Central nervous system
CV—Cyclic voltammetry
DA—Dopamine
DNA—Deoxyribonucleic acid
DPI—2,6-dichlorophenolindophenol
EAA—Excitatory amino acid
EDTA—Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
ETC—Electron transport chain
 Fe^{2+} —Iron II
 Fe^{3+} —Iron III
FMN—Flavin mononucleotide
GCE—Glassy carbon electrode
GSH—Glutathione
 H_2O_2 —Hydrogen peroxide
i.p.—Intraperitoneal
KCN—Potassium cyanide
LB—Lewy bodies
LC—Locus ceruleus
LHON—Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy
LPS—Lipopolysaccharide

MAO—Monoamine oxidase
MDA—Malondialdehyde
MEL—Melatonin
mg—Milligram
MPTP—1-methyl-4-phenyl-1, 2, 3, 6-tetrahydropyridine
MtDNA—Mitochondrial DNA
NAD—Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide
NADH—Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide
NAT—N-Acetyltransferase
NBD—Nitroblue diformazan
NBT—Nitroblue tetrazolium
NFT—Neurofibrillary tangles
NMDA—N-methyl-D-aspartate
NO—Nitric oxide
NOS—Nitric oxide synthase
 O_2^- —Superoxide radical
 OH^- —Hydroxyl radical
 $ONOO^-$ —Peroxynitrite
OXPHOS—Oxidative phosphorylation system
PBS—Phosphate buffered saline
PD—Parkinson's disease
Q—Ubiquinone
RE—Reference electrode
ROS—Reactive Oxygen Species
ROT—Rotenone
SCN—Suprachiasmatic nucleus
SEM—Standard error of mean
SN—Substantia nigra
SNpc—Substantia nigra pars compacta
SOD—Superoxide dismutase
TBA—Thiobarbituric acid
TBA-MDA—Thiobarbituric acid-Malondialdehyde
UV—Ultraviolet
WE—Working electrode
WHO—World Health Organisation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been completed if not for the motivation, encouragement and guidance that I have received right from its conceivement for which I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude.

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Santy Daya for his invaluable insight, guidance and support throughout the course.

I would like to thank Dr. Edith Antunes, for her support and expertise with the electrochemical part of this study. I would also like to extend my thanks to Emily, for her invaluable time and help with the immunohistochemistry and Saravanan for his advice with the complex I assay.

I am grateful to Sally and Dave Morley for always being there to help me and for their technical assistance. I am also thankful to Carmen Oltmann, my mentor and warden, for her good advice and encouragement along the way.

THANK YOU to my dear friends and my fellow NRG colleagues and the staff of the pharmacy department for their friendship, support and assistance.

I would like to express my indebtedness to my parents for their unconditional love, support, encouragement and faith in my ability.

I would like to express my sincere wholehearted gratitude to my husband, Gigme, for his loving support, advice and enthusiastic help, who has been a source of strength and motivation to me always.

A big THANK YOU to my brother, Roshan and my sisters, Renju and Rani for always being there and for their interest and encouragement in my work.

I am also grateful to the Chittayath family for the constant support and encouragement.

I would like to thank the National Research Foundation and Rhodes University for the financial assistance towards this study.

Above all, I give thanks to God for His wonderful provision and care, without whom, nothing is possible.