Norepinephrine has been heavily implicated in neuroplasticity and motor learning. To continue this previous line of research during the year I shall be working with my mentor to elucidate the effect of norepinephrine in motor learning and Rett Syndrome, specifically in the MC, during a motor learning reinforcement task.

**Background**

The locus coeruleus (LC) is a small neuromodulatory structure located in the brainstem that has low density noradrenergic projections to most cortical and subcortical structures. LCNEneurons have been implicated in a wide variety of brain functions such as stress (Likhtik & Johansen, 2019), learning (Breton-Provencher et al., 2022), arousal (Sara & Bouret, 2012), and wakefulness mediation (Carter et al., 2010). As the primary source of norepinephrine (NE) in the brain (Breton-Provencher 2021), the LC is comprised of a dense core of noradrenergic neurons that establish far projections, as well as a shell that is made up of mostly glutamatergic and GABAergic neurons that receive various inputs and project locally to mediate LCNE. It has been previously shown that LCNE neurons participate in learning by reacting to behavior in learned tasks and to unexpected stimuli (Breton-Provencher & Sur, 2019; Takeuchi et al., 2016). Recent studies have focused on the role of LCNE neurons in reinforcement learning and have shown that norepinephrine release before task execution promotes reward-seeking behavior when stimulus evidence is low (Breton-Provencher et al., 2022). Additionally, they revealed a system of LC neuronal subpopulations that differentially project to the dorsal medial prefrontal cortex (dmPFC) and the motor cortex (MC) to mediate learning (Breton-Provencher et al., 2022).

[need to add motor stuff, def add the high NE/VIP early in learning, low in later, also all that stuff about NE in motor vs other places, etc]

[add stuff about plasticity, excitability, snr ratio, stimulus specificity, etc]

[now add stuff about rett, mecp2 pathways that intersect with either receptor or NE production]

Because the M1 receives projections from LCNEneurons in the motor cortex in learned behavior, this year will be dedicated to further elucidating the role of LCNE neurons in reinforcement learning. Water restricted mice will be trained [in a head-fixed go/no-go behavioral task. In this task mice will learn to press a lever in response to a “go” tone to receive a water reward and to not press in response to a distinct “no-go” tone to avoid an air puff punishment. Throughout the task the tones will vary in intensity ranging from 5 dB to 35 dB (Breton-Provencher, et al. 2022). Once the mice learn the task NE expression in the LC will be chemogenetically inhibited in every other trial and neuronal activity will be evaluated differently in two groups. The electrophysiological activity of the LC of one group will be monitored throughout the trial while the other group will have the activity in their DMPFC recorded with two-photon imaging. uhhh change to our task]

**Research Characteristics and Timeline**

* Electrophysiology mice
  + Mouse line
    - Purchased from Jackson labs
    - Adult Dbh-cre line mice
  + Surgery
    - Bilateral viral injections were performed in anesthetized mice in a stereotaxic frame.
    - Virus
    - Glued a head plate parallel to the bregma–lambda axis of the skull.
    - Recovery was monitored for 72 hours.
* Two-photon imaging mice
  + Mouse line
    - Purchased from Jackson labs
    - Adult C57BL/6J wild type
    - Adult CaMKII;mTTA;GCAMP6s [not sure]
  + Surgery
    - Performed under isoflurane in a stereotaxic frame.
    - Viruses
      * (AAV)8-GFAPhM3D(Gq)-mCherry [but for neurons, and also GiDREADD instead?]
      * Syn.GCaMP6s.WPRE.SV40 [not sure]
    - Cranial window glued on the skull allowing a view to the motor cortex.
    - Recovery was monitored for 72 hours.
* Training
  + After recovery mice will be put on a water restriction schedule only receiving 1.5mL of water per day
  + Mice will be trained to associate a lever press with reward and to detect a go tone until mouse made more than 80% of lever presses for 50 consecutive trials.
  + Then they were trained to not press the lever to avoid a punishment and to detect a no-go tone until they reached 85% hits and less than 30% false alarms
* Electrophysiology
  + Before recording a craniotomy will be preformed to insert the probe into the LC
  + Electrophysiological spikes will be recorded in trial with CNO or saline.
* Two-photon imaging
  + (Calcium activity) Imaging will be recorded with a Prairie Ultima IV two-photon microscopy system.
  + Two-photon excitation will occur at 920nm wavelength.
  + Will be recording GCaMP fluorescence.
* Histology
  + After perfusion and extraction brain will be sliced with a vibratome at 100µm
  + Slices will be washed with Phosphate buffer solution before application of antibodies.
  + Antibodies:
  + Slices will be mounted in mounting medium with DAPI.
* Confocal imaging
  + Utilized to capture fluorescence of cells.
* Two-photon imaging and electrophysiology spike data analysis
  + Two-photon data will be analyzed with software “Suite2p” and data run on IDE Spyder with an environment and code provided by post-doc Jennifer Shih.
  + Spike data will be preprocessed and analyzed in MATLAB with software developed and provided by Gabrielle Drummond.

I, as an undergraduate student, will be working directly with the training, imaging, data collection and data analysis. Training of mice will be done primarily in January while analysis of collected data will occur during January and my participation in the project should be completed in the first week of August.

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