

Review

Methamphetamine neurotoxicity: necrotic and apoptotic mechanisms and relevance to human abuse and treatment

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Abstract

Research into methamphetamine-induced neurotoxicity has experienced a resurgence in recent years. This is due to (1) greater understanding of the mechanisms underlying methamphetamine neurotoxicity, (2) its usefulness as a model for Parkinson's disease and (3) an increased abuse of the substance, especially in the American Mid-West and Japan. It is suggested that the commonly used experimental one-day methamphetamine dosing regimen better models the acute overdose pathologies seen in humans, whereas chronic models are needed to accurately model human long-term abuse. Further, we suggest that these two dosing regimens will result in quite different neurochemical, neuropathological and behavioral outcomes. The relative importance of the dopamine transporter and vesicular monoamine transporter knockout is discussed and insights into oxidative mechanisms are described from observations of nNOS knockout and SOD overexpression. This review not only describes the neuropathologies associated with methamphetamine in rodents, non-human primates and human abusers, but also focuses on the more recent literature associated with reactive oxygen and nitrogen species and their contribution to neuronal death via necrosis and/or apoptosis. The effect of methamphetamine on the mitochondrial membrane potential and electron transport chain and subsequent apoptotic cascades are also emphasized. Finally, we describe potential treatments for methamphetamine abusers with reference to the time after withdrawal. We suggest that potential treatments can be divided into three categories; (1) the prevention of neurotoxicity if recidivism occurs, (2) amelioration of apoptotic cascades that may occur even in the withdrawal period and (3) treatment of the atypical depression associated with withdrawal. © 2001 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

Theme: Neural basis of behavior

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Clinical data.....	4
2.1. Abuse patterns.....	4
2.2. Psychopathology of withdrawal.....	4
3. Neuropathology in humans and non-human primates.....	4
4. Dosing regimen models and loss of monoamine function.....	5
4.1. Early preclinical background.....	5
4.2. Animal models of chronic methamphetamine abuse.....	5

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4.3. Acute toxic dosing (ATD) model.....	5
4.4. Serotonergic neurotoxicity.....	6
4.5. Neurodegeneration in other brain areas.....	6
5. Insights from transgenic and knockout mice.....	6
5.1. DAT and vMAT ₂ knockouts have opposite effects.....	6
5.2. nNOS knockout is neuroprotective.....	7
5.3. SOD over-expression is neuroprotective.....	7
5.4. cFos knockout exacerbates methamphetamine toxicity.....	7
5.5. Summary of knockout and transgenic data.....	8
6. Mechanisms of methamphetamine neurotoxicity.....	8
6.1. Dopamine oxidation.....	8
6.2. Methamphetamine and excitotoxicity.....	8
6.3. Effect of methamphetamine on mitochondria.....	10
6.4. A putative model of methamphetamine-mediated injury.....	10
6.5. Summary of oxidative mechanisms.....	12
7. Methamphetamine and hyperthermia.....	12
7.1. Effect of methamphetamine on body temperature.....	12
7.2. Effect of temperature on indices of dopamine function and neurotoxicity.....	12
7.3. Hyperthermia and NMDA receptor antagonists.....	12
7.4. Hyperthermia, NMDA receptors and neurotoxicity: exceptions to the rule?.....	13
8. Analogy to Parkinson's and other neurodegenerative disease models and putative treatments.....	13
8.1. Similarity to Parkinson's disease.....	13
8.2. Antioxidants, DAT and SERT inhibitors.....	14
8.3. Dopamine agonists.....	14
8.4. Monoamine oxidase inhibitors.....	14
8.5. The dilemma of drugs that may have both toxic and potential protective effects: tetrahydrobiopterin.....	15
8.6. Potential harm by certain treatments: disulfiram.....	15
9. Summary.....	15
Acknowledgements.....	15
References.....	15

1. Introduction

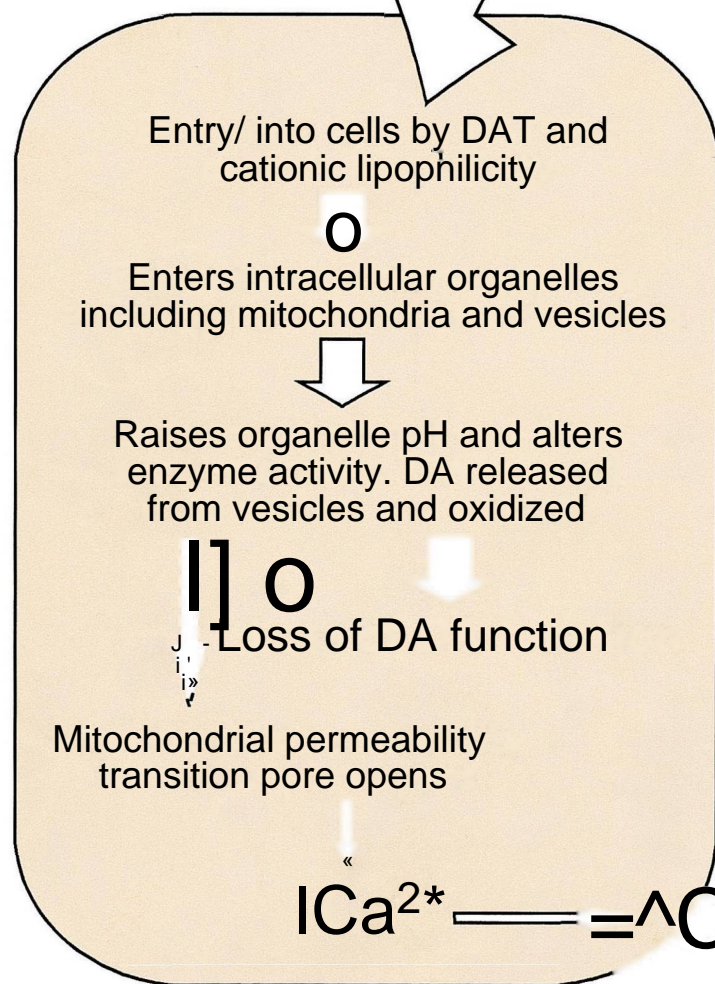
Methamphetamine (MA; /N-methyl-O-phenyl isopropylamine) is a cationic lipophilic molecule with potent action on the sympathetic and central nervous systems. Repetitious high-dose abuse of amphetamines (e.g., d-amphetamine (AMPH) or MA binges) result in near steady-state plasma levels and can lead to a prolonged (6-12 months) withdrawal period. This raises the question of whether neurotoxicity, or at least some long-term functional changes have led to the extended withdrawal rather than the usual, more moderate, anergia and psychoasthenia associated with stimulant withdrawal. PET imaging and post-mortem studies in humans have shown decreases in indices of dopamine (DA) function, however, more detail of MA neurotoxicity has been gleaned from animal studies. Such studies, currently are using predominantly one-day acute toxic dose (ATD) MA, have shown loss of DA and serotonin (5-HT) terminals and related pathology. The early prevailing view was that these neurotoxic effects were the result of a direct chemical insult. MA enters the terminals/neuron via the DA or 5-HT transporter (DAT and SERT, respectively) and displaces both vesicular and intracellular DA/5-HT. These displaced amines are oxidized (by MAO and auto-oxidation) to reactive oxygen species (ROS; [44,186]), with

further production of ROS via H₂O₂ and NO [20] resulting in necrotic cell death. However, over time other mechanisms have been added including glutamate- [131,228] and peroxynitrite- [14] mediated neurotoxicity. Thus both reactive oxygen and nitrogen species (RONS) may be involved. It has also been shown that MA, due to its lipophilicity, can diffuse through cell membranes including intracellular organelles, for example, mitochondria, where it disrupts the electrochemical gradient. It is thus possible that MA not only kills neurons by the direct production of free radicals but also by triggering a mitochondrial-dependent induction of apoptotic cascades [188]. It appears, therefore, that MA can kill neurons by multiple mechanisms over an extended time scale (Fig. 1). Therapeutic intervention should thus be directed at these mechanisms with due regard to the time after withdrawal.

MA neurotoxicity has been reviewed previously [9,19,110,155,175,186,187]. The current review mainly focuses on recent progress with specific regard to: (1) laboratory models that reflect the distinction between chronic bingeing versus ATD; (2) the different types and time course of neurodegenerative processes; (3) possible MA-induced mechanisms of neurotoxicity; (4) necrotic versus apoptotic mechanisms; (5) discussion of short and long-term tolerance versus neurotoxic structural changes; (6) potential for preventing later apoptotic cascades and

A: Acute overdose toxic model

e.g. 4X5 mg/kg



MA

B: Chronic binge (continuous) model

e.g. 15 mg/kg/day X 14 days

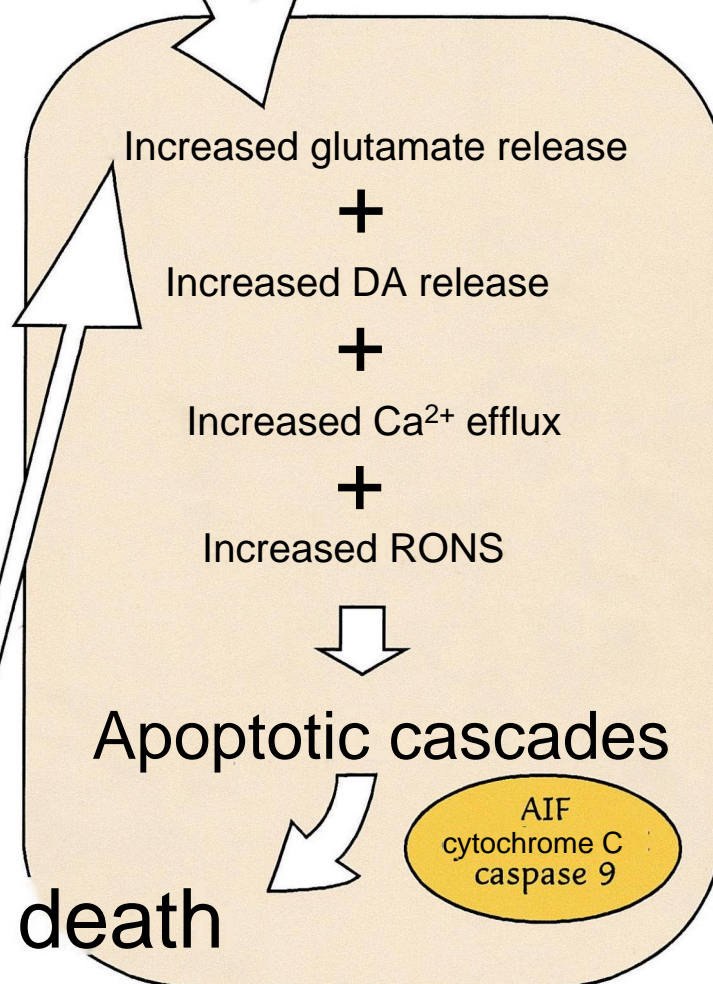


Fig. 1. Acute versus chronic methamphetamine models. A simplified cartoon of two models of MA dosing. These processes may actually take place in parallel or in series. The acute toxic model results in, essentially, loss of DA function whereas the chronic model results in apoptosis. However, both regimens can result in necrotic and/or apoptotic cell death. MA, methamphetamine; DAT, dopamine transporter; RONS, reactive oxygen and nitrogen species; AIF, apoptosis inducing factor.

facilitating remodeling and long-term recovery and (7) issues relating to the appropriate time after withdrawal for the initiation of potential treatments.

2. Clinical data

2.1. Abuse patterns

Stimulant binging is characterized by frequent (every 2 h) large doses over many days and compulsive repetitive MA abuse has been described many times. Previously, and even now in Japan and in the U.S. Mid-West, 'speed freaks' inject compulsively (8-10 times per day) at high doses (0.3-1.0 g) daily for three to 10 days [113,118]. The shortest $t_{1/2}$ of MA is 5-6 h ranging up to 34 h [6] dependent on urine pH. Yet compulsive MA abusers are administering it at short inter-dose durations (e.g., 2 h), thus near steady-state plasma levels are quickly reached with modest fluctuations. Massive tolerance to the lethal effects can develop since these doses are five to six times the LD_{50} in a naive user. Thus laboratory models that administer MA two or more times a day for a number of days or continuously may best reflect this clinical condition.

There are two common scenarios for MA overdose and death. Often, after an extended abstinence, an MA abuser will relapse and take a very high dose, which had previously been taken, when in a tolerant state. Having lost his tolerance (hyperthermia, hypertension, seizures) to MA during withdrawal, this high dose will be lethal. Similarly a new abuser will often take the same high dose of MA that an experienced (tolerant) associate is capable of taking, which will be lethal to the non-tolerant individual. Death is preceded by uncontrollable hyperthermia, seizures, hypoxic stress, and may be compounded by hypertensive crises and associated cardiovascular complications. This condition is reflected in the common laboratory model of administering ATD MA (e.g., 10 mg/kgX4 q. 2 h).

2.2. Psychopathology of withdrawal

The anergia including dysphoria and lack of mental energy associated with withdrawal from high-dose MA abuse is much more severe than that seen with cocaine and may wax and wane for months after withdrawal [57]. Psychosis is also common in MA abuse and a predisposition to paranoia can last for years, however, psychosis may not have a connection to neurotoxicity since cocaine can induce psychosis while having little, if any, neurotoxicity. Thus some long-term functional change, or neurotoxicity, may be superimposed on the usual stimulant withdrawal characterized by a 1-3 week period of anergia and psychoasthenia. The latter shorter-term symptoms are more frequently found in cocaine bingers and also in lower-dose

MA abusers [101]. Currently there is not a clear understanding of the contribution of long-term tolerance versus neurotoxicity to the long-term withdrawal syndrome (or indeed whether the two phenomena are related) yet clear understanding of these issues are critical in developing potential treatments during withdrawal.

3. Neuropathology in humans and non-human primates

A recent post-mortem study [223] reported that chronic MA users of unknown abuse intensity had significantly decreased levels of DA, tyrosine hydroxylase (TH), and DAT (the last assessed by [3 H]WIN 35428 and [3 H]GBR 12935 binding and immunological staining for DAT) in the caudate and putamen. In contrast, the vesicular monoamine transporter type-2 (vMAT₂) and DOPA decarboxylase levels showed no changes between controls and chronic MA abusers. The authors comment that the loss of DA nerve terminals as a consequence of neurotoxicity would be expected to reduce all of the measured presynaptic DA markers, as has been shown to occur in idiopathic Parkinson's disease (PD [222,223,230]). However, McCann et al. [137] makes a case for neurotoxicity: In the first PET study to examine MA abusers it was shown that caudate and putamen DAT ([125 I]WIN-35428) binding was reduced even after 3 years of abstinence. The authors questioned whether the reduction in DAT binding reflected neuroadaptation (i.e. fewer DAT sites on an unchanged number of DA terminals; e.g., [223]) or neurotoxicity (i.e. fewer DA terminals). Although differences in drug use patterns (acute versus chronic) could account for differences between these two studies, the large body of evidence from non-human primates (vide infra) showing MA-induced neurotoxicity with similar doses of MA, supports the view that neurotoxicity accounted for reduced DAT binding. Lieberman et al. [129] have made a case for extended tolerance/neurotoxic effects that may explain the chronic 'burn out' condition in former speed freaks. Wilson et al. [223] have also suggested that decreased DA levels (-50% of control), even if not indicative of neurotoxicity, are consistent with motivational changes reported by MA abusers in the early and intermediate withdrawal period. More recently, Voikow and colleagues have found detoxified MA abusers to have reduced DAT binding in the caudate and putamen [213], reduced glucose metabolism in the thalamus, caudate and putamen but an increased metabolism in the parietal cortex [214].

In an early study Seiden et al. [185], examined the early (24 h after) and long-term (3-6 months after) effects of chronic (3-6 months) MA in rhesus monkeys. Losses in the NE and DA systems were found, the most striking loss was that of DA in the caudate which was 80% depleted with little recovery by 6 months. Furthermore, as shown previously [67] this dosing regimen induced behavioral

tolerance to MA. The 'permanent' nature of these monoamine losses was shown by Woolverton et al. [225], who found a similar dosing regimen to have reduced DA and 5-HT concentrations in the caudate 4 years after MA withdrawal. Thus early studies with non-human primates emphasized the importance of chronic MA regimens in relation to neurotoxicity. Common findings include loss of markers for DA and 5-HT function with a relative sparing of the NE system (see [186] for a review).

Recently, Melega et al. [140], using 6-[¹⁸F]fluoro-L-DOPA PET, showed that 10 days of an escalating AMPH dose (4-18 mg/kg, i.m.) decreased DA synthesis capacity in Vervet monkeys 6 months after treatment. More recently the same group [141] have extended these studies and found a slow recovery (both neurochemical and behavioral) from the profound initial changes with almost complete recovery after 2 years. Villemagne et al. [211], reported in baboons a dose-dependent (0.5, 1 and 2 mg/kg, i.m., X4) decrease in [¹¹C]WIN-35,428 binding by PET scanning, a finding confirmed by post-mortem decreases in [³H]WIN-35428 and [³H]DTBZ binding and decreased DA and DOPAC levels in both the caudate and putamen. This study also showed a decrease in 5-HT and its primary metabolite 5-HIAA in the caudate and putamen. Importantly, and in contrast to a loss of DAT sites (which should actually inhibit further MA action (tolerance) and neurotoxicity) the loss of vMAT₂ in the terminals allows for increased oxidation of cytosolic DA and increased levels of oxidative species with enhanced susceptibility to oxidative damage [171,205,71]. More recently Melega et al. [143] has shown glial derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF) to be neuroprotective against MA-induced loss in DAT sites in the vervet monkey.

In summary, the human and non-human primate studies show long-term losses in DA and 5-HT function after chronic MA dosing. Future studies may use the vMAT₂ ligand [¹¹C]dihydrotrabenazine (DTBZ [111]), which, when compared to [¹⁸F]-DOPA and DAT ligands such as nomifensine and WIN-35,428, may be a more sensitive and selective indicator of neurotoxic changes and/or long-term tolerance by MA. Regardless, elucidation of the nature of chronically altered mechanisms will facilitate predicting which potentially therapeutic drugs will be most effective and the duration of treatment needed.

4. Dosing regimen models and loss of monoamine function

4.1. Early preclinical background

The early observations by Escalante and Ellinwood [63] that chronically treated AMPH cats had neuronal chromatolysis and by Seiden et al. [185] that rhesus monkeys administered chronic high doses of MA had a depletion of caudate DA for at least 6 months afterwards,

led investigators to speculate that MA was neurotoxic. Conclusive evidence of MA neurotoxicity was found by Ricaurte et al. [173,174], who showed DA terminal destruction using silver staining; the gold-standard for demonstrating neuronal degeneration [73]. Evidence of DA neuronal loss in the substantia nigra (SN) or ventral tegmental area (VTA) was not as convincing. Unfortunately, human post-mortem studies that follow months and years of high-dose abuse cannot use silver staining because the method is useful only in the days immediately after injury. Thus, in order to document neural degeneration in progress (using silver staining) and other measures of altered DA mechanisms, early post-mortem animal studies are necessary.

4.2. Animal models of chronic methamphetamine abuse

In rats, MA half-life is much shorter (<1 h; Melega et al. [139]); than in humans (6-34 h [6]); consequently, more sustained dosing models are needed to reflect the longer half-life and near steady-state plasma levels (and increased potential for neurotoxicity) in humans. Following continuous MA or AMPH infusion via osmotic minipumps, Ricaurte et al. [174] and Ryan et al. [180] found silver staining evidence for caudate neurotoxicity only at doses above 16-20 mg/kg/day; no significant toxicity was observed at lower doses. Ellison et al. [61] found that 12 mg/kg/day of MA, when given continuously by a silicon pellet, induced neurotoxicity but the pellet is a concentration-dependent release mechanism, probably releasing higher initial doses. In general, the chronic dosing models tend to provide more evidence of structural (neuronal cell body) damage.

4.3. Acute toxic dosing (ATD) model

ATD of MA (e.g., 4X10 mg/kg q. 2 h, s.c.) in naive animals is currently the most frequently used model in rats and is associated with hyperthermia and occasional seizures and also high mortality. This regimen provides: (1) excellent relevance to the acute high intravenous and smoked MA which induces extremely high brain levels on first pass extraction; (2) a model of the potential effects of MA in non-tolerant users and; (3) greater experimental control over variables.

Most recent studies have used ATD of MA and measured indices of DA function including TH, vMAT₂, DAT, DA, DOPAC and homo vanillic acid (HVA), using immunohistochemistry, high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) and microdialysis. Most data shows a loss of DA function in the dorsal striatum but a relative sparing in the accumbens shell [161]. This sparing may be related to a different density of DAT sites [23], an hypothesis supported by the protective effects of DAT blockers and DAT knockout (KO) mice. In a recent paper [34] it was shown that ATD of MA caused a reduction in evoked striatal DA

efflux and a reduction in rate of re-uptake as measured by voltammetry 1 week and 1 month after MA. These functional losses were much reduced by 6 months and have disappeared by 1 year after MA. The authors note that ‘the time course for recovery, 6 months to 1 year, is substantially longer than would be expected if down-regulation was entirely responsible’ and suggest that degenerating axons and terminals are responsible for their findings. A summary of chronic versus ATD, including DA depletion and structural changes, is found in Table 1.

4.4. Serotonergic neurotoxicity

The first studies to examine MA-induced 5-HT neurotoxicity found MA-treated (25 and 100 mg/kg/day, s.c., X4 days) rats to have a large depletion of 5-HT, with associated loss of SERT, 3 weeks after treatment [172] and a reduction in striatal and hippocampal tryptophan hydroxylase activity 30 days after ATD MA [94]. Originally it was thought that the regional specificity seen with DA terminals is not evident in the 5-HT system, with losses found in many disparate brain regions [172]. However Brown and Molliver [24] have recently shown selective damage in the caudate and accumbens core while, as with the DA system, 5-HT terminals appear to be spared in the medial shell 14 days after MA. This selective toxicity may be related to SERT density [24] and/or midbrain origin (DRN or MRN [116]). ATD of MA has been shown to decrease striatal synaptosomal 5-HT uptake by 50% 1 h after treatment [68] whereas cocaine, methylphenidate and fenfluramine were without effect suggesting that, as in the DA system, it is the intracellular actions of MA that appear to mediate its toxic effects. Cass [35] found ATD of MA to reduce evoked efflux of 5-HT in the striatum at 1 week and 1 month but to be normalized 6 months after treatment showing that restoration of the 5-HT system is possible. The SERT blockers (citalopram, clomipramine and fluoxetine) have been shown to be neuroprotective [94,183] as have DAT inhibitors in MA-induced DA neurotoxicity.

Serotonin toxicity could be related to the production of endotoxins such as tryptamine-4,5-dione (T-4,5-D), the major in vitro product of the superoxide-mediated oxidation of 5-HT [226]. This compound has been shown to uncouple mitochondrial respiration by irreversible inhibition of complex I and IV perhaps by covalent attachment to sulfhydryl residues [103]. The effect of MA on mitochondria is discussed below with respect to DA neurons. Thus MA-induced neurotoxicity of the 5-HT system has some similarities to that in the DA system.

4.5. Neurodegeneration in other brain areas

While this review, and the majority of the literature, focuses on changes in the DA system it should be noted that neurodegeneration may occur in other brain areas after MA or AMPH. For example, neurodegeneration has been found in the piriform and parietal cortex [21,184], thalamus and hippocampus [21,22,184], areas which receive only a sparse dopaminergic input, and in non-DA striatal elements [27]. Interestingly, a recent study in humans [213] shows lower glucose metabolism in the thalamus (–17%), caudate (–12%) and putamen (–6%) and an increase in the parietal cortex (+6%) in detoxified MA abusers

5. Insights from transgenic and knockout mice

5.1. DAT and vMAT₂ knockouts have opposite effects

Fumagalli et al. [70], using ATD of MA found that tissue DA content in wild-type (Wt) was 20% of controls with no loss in DAT KO mice. Levels of the metabolites fell dramatically in both KO and Wt suggesting that the lipophilic MA can enter the terminal regardless of DAT. Regardless it may be that a fully active DAT system is needed to produce DA neurotoxicity. There was a less marked decrease in 5-HT and its metabolites. Thus the

Table 1
Evidence of neurotoxicity due to acute or chronic toxic AMPH/MA dosing

Acute toxic dosing			Chronic toxic dosing		
Species	Effect on DA cell bodies and terminals	Evidence of recovery	Species	Effect on DA cell bodies and terminals	Evidence of recovery
Rat	TD ¹⁻⁴ , TSS ⁴	~8 months ^{3,4}	Rat	rppl3-19, rpQQ, 13-15,17,19, OSS ^{17,19}	Little
Mouse	TD ⁵⁻⁸ , ND ⁵ , NSS ⁵	?*	Cat	TD ²⁰ , ND ²⁰ , Tand NSS ²⁰	None
Primate	TD ^{9,12} , ND ⁹ , TSS ¹¹	3-9 months ^{9,10,12}	Primate	TD ^{21,27} , TSS ^{25,26} , ND ^{21,24,25} , NSS ²⁵	Modest ^{20,21} , None 4 years ¹⁹
			Human	rpj-28,29	?

A representative summary of the effect of either acute toxic dosing or chronic dosing on dopamine (and other) cell bodies and terminals. N.B. This is a sample not an exhaustive list. T, DA terminal; D, depletion (e.g., DA, TH, DOPAC); N, DA neuron; SS, silver stain, i.e. loss of structure; OSS, other silver staining (non-DA). *the majority of these studies sacrifice the mice only a few days after MA.¹ [50],² [20],³ [69],⁴ [34],⁵ [196],⁶ [70],⁷ [90],⁸ [100],⁹ [185],¹⁰ [141],¹¹ [211],¹² [143],¹³ [59],¹⁴ [173],¹⁵ [174],¹⁶ [215],¹⁷ [180],¹⁸ [178],¹⁹ [60],²⁰ [63],²¹ [185],²² [159],²³ [177],²⁴ [166],²⁵ [225],²⁶ [140],²⁷ [141],²⁸ [223],²⁹ [137].

DAT may only partially contribute to 5-HT neurotoxicity. These data suggest, therefore, that MA-induced DA neurotoxicity is partially mediated by efflux of DA to the extracellular space via the DAT. An alternative model suggests that intraneuronal oxidation is the primary cause of DA terminal neurotoxicity [45]. This view is consistent with Cappon et al. [32] who showed that 20-day-old rats were refractory to MA and had fewer DAT sites and lower tissue DA content. Interestingly DAT KO showed no increase in temperature after ATD of MA whereas both heterozygotes and Wt showed a 2°C elevation [70].

To further examine the question of whether MA-induced DA neurotoxicity is mediated via extra- or intracellular DA, Fumagalli et al. [71], examined heterozygous vMAT₁ KO (homozygotes are not viable after ~1 week). It was again found that ATD of MA resulted in decreased DA and metabolite levels in the striatum of Wt, however, heterozygotes displayed greater toxicity. Interestingly it had previously been shown that synaptosomal uptake of DA was the same in both Wt and heterozygote mice [72] supporting the hypothesis that differences found in MA neurotoxicity in vMAT₁ heterozygotes are linked to the vMAT₂ not the DAT. Thus vesicular functional capacity is important in the defense against DA oxidation and related neurotoxicity.

5.2. nNOS knockout is neuroprotective

It has been shown that NMDA receptor activation allows Ca²⁺ into the cell, binding of Ca²⁺ with calmodulin activates nNOS which produces NO and hence peroxynitrite [12]. Furthermore, inhibition of nNOS by 7-nitroindazole (7-NI) prevents MA-induced DA toxicity [54,99]. Given these findings Itzhak et al. [100], examined the effect of MA on nNOS KO mice. After ATD of MA it was found that KO nNOS mice showed no loss in mazindol binding or decreases in DA, DOPAC and HVA, further, these mice did not exhibit an MA-induced hyperthermia. Interestingly, at baseline, nNOS KO mice had reduced levels of DA that could be related to the lack of MA neurotoxicity. Regardless, nNOS activation appears crucial to MA neurotoxicity.

5.3. SOD over-expression is neuroprotective

A role for ROS in MA-induced neurotoxicity has been proposed. For example, inhibition of SOD by diethylthiocarbamate increases neurotoxicity [50]. Subsequently, Cadet et al., [29], using mice that overexpress SOD found chronic MA to induce no loss of DA or DOPAC in the striatum or cortex of SOD overexpressing Tg mice when compared to Wt. Similarly, Hirata et al. [90] found these transgenic (Tg) mice displayed a six-fold increase in SOD activity and showed only a small reduction in DAT

binding after ATD of MA when compared to Wt. Because increased SOD is neuroprotective against MA it was hypothesized that the superoxide ion was more important than the H₂O₂ or hydroxyl radical in MA-induced neurotoxicity (see section on 'MA and oxidative stress').

Because MA-induced toxicity is attenuated in SOD-overexpressing Tg mice, Jayanthi et al. [102] examined whether MA had a differential effect on antioxidant enzymes in these mice. ATD of MA caused a decrease in SOD, catalase and glutathione peroxidase in both cortical and striatal regions in Wt but an increase in SOD and catalase in Tg mice; furthermore lipid peroxidation was increased in both cortices and striata in Wt but not in Tg mice. Interestingly ATD of MA still causes an elevation of striatal and cortical c-fos and zif268 in both groups of mice [92]. This effect could be mediated by indirect activation of DA D₁ receptors [147] or glutamate receptors [219] although manipulations that cause oxidative stress in general also increase these immediate early genes (IEGs [46,84]). The elevations in c-fos and zif268 were, however, attenuated in SOD Tg mice. Nevertheless these data suggest that MA can activate IEGs in a superoxide-independent pathway.

5.4. cFos knockout exacerbates methamphetamine toxicity

Although MA has been shown to induce c-fos [92] it remains unclear whether the c-fos induction confers a neurotoxic or neuroprotective effect. It has also been shown that Tg mice that overexpress SOD showed a marked attenuation of IEG responses [92] and AP-1 binding activity [189,190]. Mice lacking c-fos [105,218] were given ATD of MA and killed 1 week after treatment. MA injections caused a marked decrease in [¹²⁵I]RTI-121 binding in striatum and this pathology was potentiated in c-fos KO mice [49]. There was also a concomitant loss of DAT and TH. Measurement of apoptotic DNA fragmentation (using TUNEL stain) 3 days after MA again showed potentiated MA-induced toxicity in c-fos KO mice both in striatum and non-DA neurons in the cortex. Conversely c-fos KO mice showed an attenuated increase in the number of astrocytes, which have been shown to synthesize and release neurotrophic factors [176], produced in response to MA as measured by glial fibrillary acidic protein (GFAP) immunoreactivity, c-fos can activate some antioxidant enzymes such as glutathione S-transferase [146,165] and stimulate the antioxidant response element in the human NADPH:quinone oxidoreductase gene [126]. c-fos can also increase levels of trophic factors such as nerve growth factor (NGF [88,191]). Thus c-fos induction by toxic doses of MA might serve as an oxidative stress response that could activate downstream molecular and cellular events that are neuroprotective and could be associated with increased tolerance.

5.5. Summary of knockout and transgenic data

An important caveat with regard to KO and Tg mice is that they are not just different from Wt with respect to loss of a particular protein; there are also numerous unknown compensatory developmental mechanisms working. In particular c-fos is involved in the regulation of numerous genes and, as such, c-fos KO mice are very different from Wt in many ways. Regardless, DAT KO mice were found to be refractory to MA which suggests that the DAT-mediated neurotoxic pathways are important, while the vMAT₂ KO data suggest that intracellular DA (oxidation) is more important in toxicity. However, nNOS KO are also refractory to MA, which highlights the importance of NMDA receptor activation in neurotoxic pathways. The SOD overexpressing Tg mice highlight oxidative mechanisms, specifically the superoxide and peroxynitrite radicals. Finally, the induction of IEGs by MA is probably the first stage in a number of neuroprotective mechanisms.

6. Mechanisms of methamphetamine neurotoxicity

As the previous section has shown there is an increasing body of evidence that MA-induced neurotoxicity is dependent upon the production of reactive species, irrespective of MA's mode of entry into the neuron. There are three basic mechanisms by which MA administration could result in the production of such species; (1) DA release and subsequent enzymatic oxidation, (2) DA auto-oxidation and (3) mitochondrial disruption. Aberrant release of DA can also induce oxidative stress by excitatory amino acid (EAA) excitotoxicity through increased glutamate release (Fig. 2).

6.1. Dopamine oxidation

As already mentioned DA and/or its metabolites can generate ROS. DA is metabolized by MAO to DOPAC and H₂O₂ [198]. In addition, DA can be non-enzymatically oxidized by molecular O₂ to form radical semi-ubiquinones and superoxide radicals [82]. Cheng [39] has demonstrated that anti-oxidants provide neuroprotection against DA-induced cell death in cell models. Treatment with antioxidants, ascorbic acid, or glutathione reduces the formation of protein-bound cysteinyl catechols, a further indication that DA oxidation products may contribute to toxicity [85].

6.2. Methamphetamine and excitotoxicity

Cadet and Brannock [30] recently reviewed the evidence that oxidative stress is involved in MA-induced toxicity. In addition to the already mentioned DA oxidation and ROS production, MA administration can lead to increased extracellular glutamate concentration [153,154,199,228].

The consequent NMDA receptor activation will lead to increased production of reactive species [131], in particular through the production of arachidonic acid and NO via the coordinated action of nNOS. Glutamate receptor antagonists attenuate MA toxicity, inhibiting the fall in DA content and TH activity [194,195] and inhibiting gliosis [144]. These neuroprotective effects may be related to glutamate receptor antagonist-induced hypothermia [3,4,145], although MA has been shown to produce hyperthermia at low doses [89,124,148,162,170]. In contrast, diethyldithiocarbamate inhibition of SOD increased neurotoxicity [50]. There continues to be compelling evidence that superoxide radicals are involved in neurotoxic effects of MA.

It is entirely probable that MA-induced toxicity occurs through the combined action of nitrosative and oxidative stresses. Perhaps most convincingly both nNOS KO and SOD overexpression are neuroprotective in response to MA (vide supra), implying that RONS are involved. In this context it is worth noting that selenium is a potent inhibitor of MA-induced neurotoxicity [96,109]. Selenium is most effective as a scavenger of two electron oxidants, such as peroxynitrite, and is not particularly reactive towards single electron oxidants, such as NO and superoxide. Therefore, it would appear that MA-induced toxicity is a result of the combination of these reactive species. Importantly, however, reactive species generation is not merely toxic in this process.

Wink and Mitchell [224] have described the biology of NO as divided into two categories: direct and indirect effects. The direct effects, in which NO interacts with biological targets, are generally rapid and require very low concentrations of NO, i.e. the physiological effects of NO. The indirect effects derive from the reaction between NO and other oxidants to form RONS.

Thus at low flux these reactive molecules can have a number of physiologically significant roles including transcription factor regulation and cellular signaling [227]. At higher rates of production these species are susceptible to a variety of cellular defense mechanisms such as SOD and glutathione. However, the interaction of NO and ROS generation can result in the formation of higher oxides of nitrogen, which are potent pathological mediators. Most prevalent among such oxides is the product of NO and O₂⁻, peroxynitrite. NO and O[•] are both free radicals, however, they are only mild one electron oxidants. Due to their radical nature they recombine rapidly, indeed production of peroxynitrite is close to diffusion limited (the reaction is three-fold faster than the reaction of O₂⁻ with SOD [13]). Peroxynitrite is a potent two-electron oxidant as well as being capable of nitrating biomolecules. The balance between oxidation and nitration of target molecules is dependent upon the presence of CO₂. Peroxynitrite will readily combine with CO₂ to form a nitryl carbonate, which is capable of nitration but not oxidation [78]. Thus the production of peroxynitrite can result in a number of

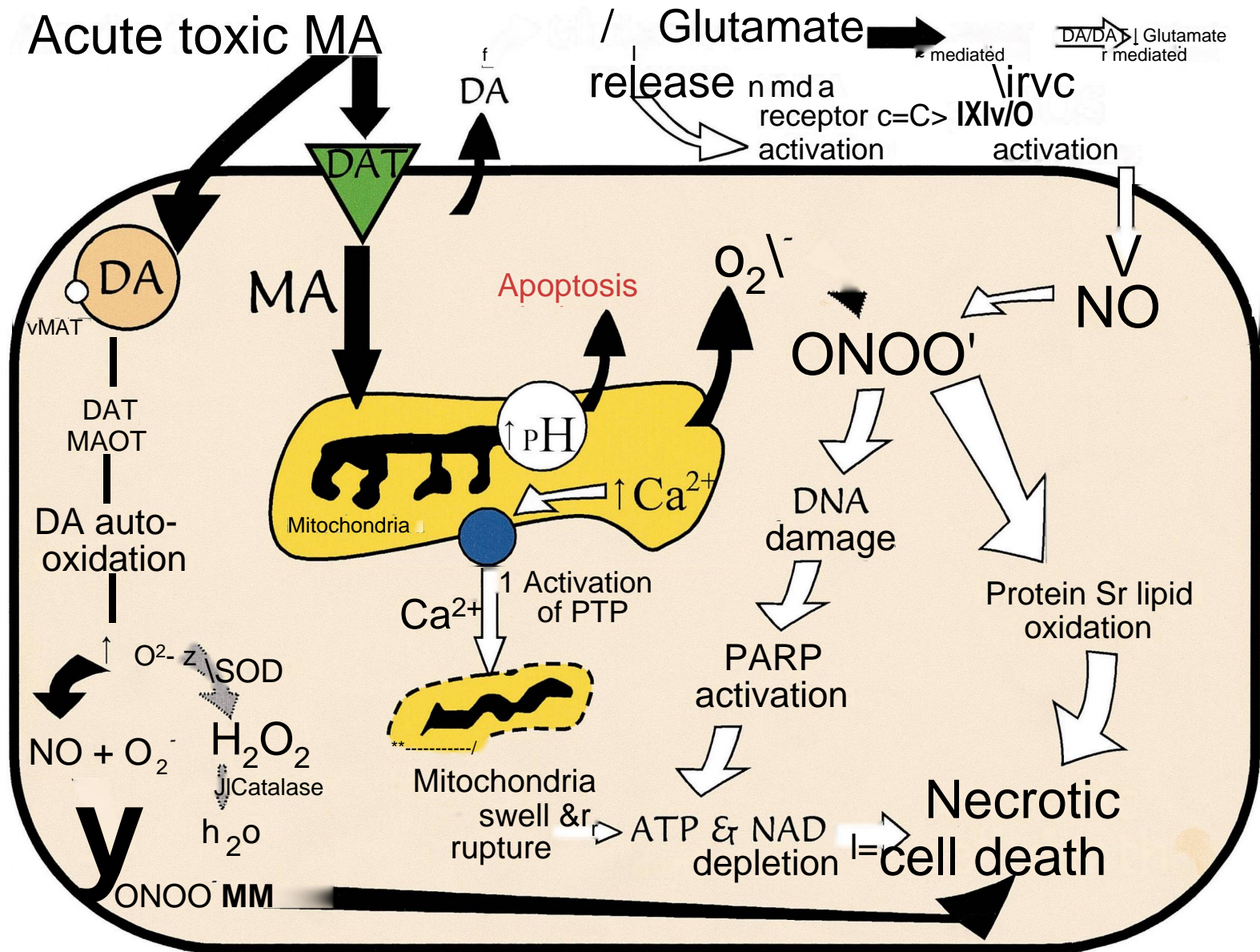


Fig. 2. Neurotoxic pathways of methamphetamine. MA enters the dopaminergic matrix and DA vesicles release DA which is oxidized by MAO and by auto-oxidation giving rise to superoxide (O_2^-). This reacts with nitric oxide (NO) to form peroxynitrite ($ONOO^-$) a highly reactive molecule which can cause necrotic cell death. There is considerable calcium release both by NMDA receptors and alterations in the mitochondrial permeability transition pore (PTP) which also results in cell death. Thus cell death can occur by both DA- and glutamate-mediated pathways. DA, dopamine; DAT, dopamine transporter; MA, methamphetamine; MAO, monoamine oxidase; PTP, permeability transition pore; PARP, poly (ADP-ribose) polymerase; ATP, adenosine triphosphate; NAD, nicotinic adenine dinucleotide; NOS, nitric oxide synthase; NMDA, A-methyl-D-aspartate.

reactions including DNA strand breaks, nucleic acid modification, lipid oxidation, protein oxidation and nitration [47,108,114], which, in general, lead to necrotic cell death [79,81]. These reactions have been previously reviewed [80].

When considering the role of reactive species in MA-induced injury it is worth considering the role of tetrahydrobiopterin (BH_4). Within the SN BH_4 plays a critical role as a cofactor to two major enzymes: TH and NOS. Low levels lead to an inactivity of TH, however, within NOS there is some indication that a lack of BH_4 leads not to inactivity but to an alteration in product [136,192]. NOS is capable of generating both NO and ROS, such as superoxide, and the balance between these products is critically dependent upon the supply of substrate, L-arginine, and the presence of BH_4 . When the intracellular concentration of BH_4 is low, TH activity will be inhibited, leading to an increase in the concentration of reducing equivalents. This increase, combined with low BH_4 levels, will result in NOS leaking electrons to molecular oxygen and increasing the flux of superoxide ions as well as NO, that is, a cytotoxic state. These proposals are supported by the observation that increased BH_4 levels are neuroprotective to DA neurons [115]. This issue is discussed further in a later section on tetrahydrobiopterin.

6.3. Effect of methamphetamine on mitochondria

Mitochondria have been implicated in both the necrotic and apoptotic cell death pathways with respect to neurodegenerative diseases [37]. Necrosis and apoptosis can occur: (1) either as distinct conditions alone, (2) in combination and (3) as sequential events. The necrotic pathway is usually induced by more severe toxic insults that result in ATP reserves being reduced beyond a critical level. For example, excitotoxins induce a prolonged mitochondrial membrane potential depolarization. Often when the insult is sufficient there is a depletion of energy reserves resulting in necrosis. When glutamate-induced excitotoxicity occurs the mitochondria accumulate Ca^{2+} [203]. There is a greater NOS production of NO following the increase in Ca^{2+} after stimulation of NMDA receptors versus stimulation of non-NMDA glutamate receptors [163].

MA administration can result in disruption of mitochondria via both direct and indirect mechanisms (Fig. 3). MA is a cationic lipophilic molecule that can diffuse into the mitochondria and be retained there. However, the accumulation of positively charged molecules in the cristae of the mitochondria will ultimately result in dissipation of the electrochemical gradient established by the electron transport chain (ETC). The gradient is essential to maintain ATP synthase (an acid pH enzyme) and also to sustain the integrity of the mitochondrial membrane [38]. Both of these functions are essential for cell survival and a failure in either result in the initiation of apoptotic processes [125]. The mitochondria possess calcium ATPase, which

pumps Ca^{2+} into the inner mitochondrial space for storage purposes. The release of these stores, through the permeability transition pore (PTP) will result in activation of the cell death cysteine proteases, caspases, in particular caspase-3, which is normally associated in its inactive state with the mitochondrial envelope [150]. Another proapoptotic factor, which can be released from dysfunctional mitochondria, is cytochrome-c which is an essential cofactor of complex IV within the ETC, and is released from the complex upon damage. Once these factors have been released and the apoptotic cascades have been initiated they are essentially irreversible (Fig. 3).

As previously mentioned there are a number of ways in which MA can result in the production of reactive species. The mitochondrion is itself a source of ROS through leakage from the ETC and is particularly susceptible to such molecules. The main sites for oxidative attack are the PTP and the four complexes of the ETC. The PTP is readily oxidized which results in pore opening and Ca^{2+} release. This may be one of the main sites of action of DA semiquinones as the PTP is structurally very close to the MAO enzyme. The ETC, while susceptible to oxidative attack, is much more sensitive to nitrogen oxides [87]. Cytochrome c oxidase of complex IV is a heme protein and as such rapidly combines with NO to produce a ferrous nitrosyl complex. Although this combination is reversible, the Iron NO bond is very strong and thus low levels of NO can effectively inhibit complex IV function [42]. Indeed, such inhibition has been proposed as a mechanism for NO control of oxygen consumption [120]. Complexes I—III are insensitive to NO, however, they are irreversibly modified by peroxynitrite both through oxidation and nitration [15]. Inhibition in this manner is likely to be catastrophic and result in mitochondrial explosion and cellular necrosis. It is worth remembering that DA neurons have a very high-energy demand and are thus particularly sensitive to mitochondrial damage. Indeed, they are extremely sensitive to the mitochondrial poison, rotenone [152].

6.4. A putative model of methamphetamine-mediated injury

There are thus a wide variety of mechanisms whereby MA administration can result in neuronal injury. However, examination of these mechanisms leads one to a time-dependent or sequential architectural model of the injury pattern. Initial insult with MA will result in a necrotic injury, most likely mediated by peroxynitrite, in those areas where MA accumulates, i.e. in those cells with the most abundant capacity (DAT) to take up MA. As a result of this necrotic cell death a number of species will be released into the surrounding interstitial space, including DA, glutamate, Ca^{2+} , NO, and ROS. This will then induce a more controlled sequential apoptotic cascade in the surrounding cells, and resistive adaptation in those cells

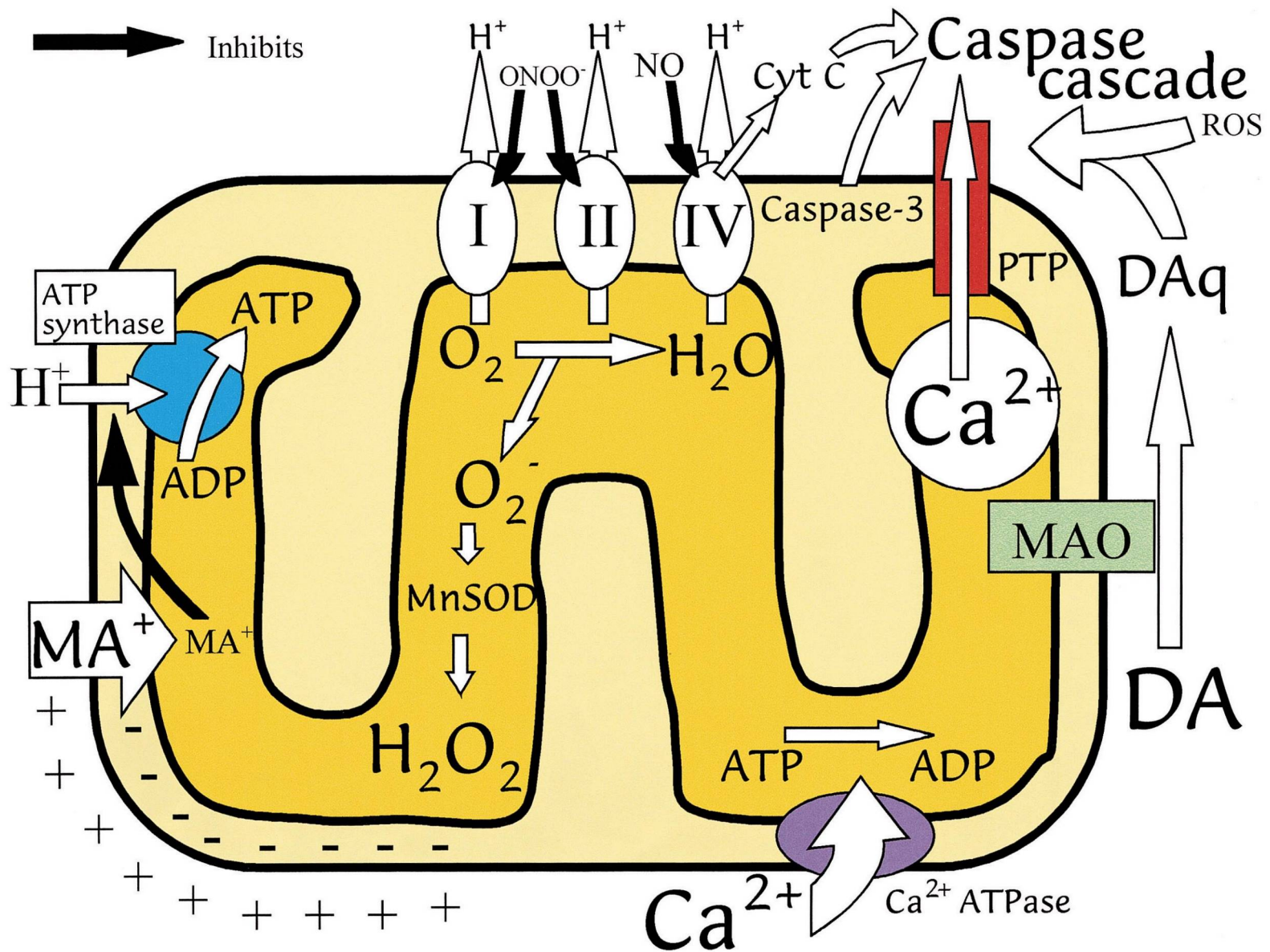


Fig. 3. Methamphetamine effects on mitochondria. MA enters mitochondria raising the pH of the inner membrane matrix; thus reducing the activity of the acid enzyme ATP-synthase. The capacity to maintain the mitochondrial membrane potential is thus reduced. Similarly (Fig. 2) MA inactivation of the vesicle proton (H⁺) pump releases DA and increases formation of DA-quinones which open the permeability transition pore (PTP). Glutamate release by MA activates NMDA receptors, which increase production of nitric oxide (NO) which inhibits complex IV activating the caspase cascade. The formation of peroxynitrite (ONOO⁻) from NO and superoxide (O₂⁻) inhibits complex I and II. PTP, permeability transition pore; MAO, monoamine oxidase; MA, methamphetamine; DAq, dopamine-O-quinone; ROS, reactive oxygen species; Cyt C, cytochrome c.

that survive (most likely glial cells). Following the apoptotic phase there will be a period of regrowth where those surviving cells will attempt to repair the injured process; a reactive gliosis. In this way it may be that MA-induced injury can be modeled after stroke models of brain injury, where an initial necrotic site is surrounded by an apoptotic penumbra and the growth of existing cells into the damaged region [56].

6.5. Summary of oxidative mechanisms

MA enters the neuron, most likely in a predominantly DAT-dependent manner and increases flux of RONS (derived from nNOS). This increased flux may result from either the direct effect of MA or through released DA. Furthermore, NMDA receptor activation can produce ROS. The combined stresses of both oxidative and nitrosative stress result in necrotic, delayed, and apoptotic neuronal cell death. One likely molecular mediator of this injury process is peroxynitrite formed from the diffusion-limited reaction of NO with superoxide. The production of peroxynitrite can result in a wide range of pathological modifications of proteins, sugars, and lipids and has been implicated in neurological diseases as wide ranging as stroke and ALS.

By increasing the flux of reactive species, MA inhibits the mitochondrial electron transport chain resulting in massive release of Ca^{2+} through the PTP and the induction of apoptosis via the cytochrome c, caspase cascade. These cascades are most likely directly induced by MA incorporation into mitochondria and disruption of the electron gradient. It is possible that different cascades/pathologies arise from different MA dosing regimens. The initial necrotic injury from MA results in a release of neurotransmitters and reactive species into the milieu, which will result in disruption of the control of Ca^{2+} and oxidative stress in the surrounding area via a variety of processes. These processes may result in a region of apoptotic cell death occurring during the intermediate phase and further long-term effects such as cellular reorganization.

7. Methamphetamine and hyperthermia

7.1. Effect of methamphetamine on body temperature

It has been known for some time that amphetamine-induced hyperthermia contributes to lethality in man, however, hypertensive cerebrovascular hemorrhage and cardiovascular collapse may also contribute to deaths [106,229]. In rats temperatures may reach $>40^{\circ}\text{C}$ after each injection (e.g., [27,28,112,122,181]) where hyperthermia-induced death can occur. Chronic MA (20 mg/kg/day \times 7 days) by osmotic minipumps is also hyperthermic for the first 2 to 3 days, and can also result in death (Davidson et al., unpublished observations). Indeed most

researchers now attempt to control their experimental animal's temperature by means of ice-baths, cold rooms etc. in order to (1) reduce hyperthermic deaths and (2) rule out hyperthermia as a contributing factor to neurochemical and other changes. It has been shown that enhanced temperatures can increase oxidative stress in other systems [130,158,193] and, in addition to neurodegeneration from cerebrovascular damage, may be a mechanism whereby hyperthermia mediates neurodegeneration.

7.2. Effect of temperature on indices of dopamine function and neurotoxicity

Bowyer and colleagues were the first to specifically examine the effects of temperature on MA-induced neuroadaptations/toxicity and their interrelationships [16-18]. For example, it has been reported that while $4 \times 10 \text{ mg/kg}$ MA at 4°C evokes greater extracellular DA efflux than $4 \times 5 \text{ mg/kg}$ at 23°C , it produces neither hyperthermia nor loss of caudate DA content 3 days after MA. Conversely, the rats treated with the lower MA dose at room temperature showed a 35% loss in caudate DA content [17]. Furthermore, MA-induced hyperthermia is associated with striatal terminal degeneration (as shown by silver staining) whereas hyperthermia alone does not produce degeneration [18]. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the degree of changes in the DA system, or the degree of neurodegeneration, are correlated to the degree of hyperthermia. For example a correlation between core body temperature and loss of DA uptake [181] and between MA-induced decreases in striatal DA concentration and maximum body temperature [18] have been shown. Interestingly, the temperature in the caudate itself has been measured via a thermistor in a microdialysis probe and has been shown to parallel core body temperature after MA [41]. These findings suggest that extreme MA hyperthermia is associated with neurodegeneration but mild MA hyperthermia may result in loss of DA without neurodegeneration.

7.3. Hyperthermia and NMDA receptor antagonists

Antagonists of the NMDA receptor have been shown to be neuroprotective against MA in the DA system [149,169,194,195,197] and may be related to attenuation of increased DA efflux [156,221] although this is not always shown [10,66]. Glycine receptor antagonists are, however, ineffective [123]. Thus an inhibition of NMDA-induced increases in extracellular DA concentrations and NOS activation (see Fig. 2) may represent one neuroprotective mechanism. Indeed hyperthermia has been shown to increase calcium entry into the cell [54,201,202] thus inhibition of calcium entry (through the NMDA receptor) may be important. The NMDA receptor antagonist MK-801 (dizocilpine) may also have direct hypothermic effects, for example, MK-801 was shown to reduce hypoxic damage by lowering body temperature [25,43]. In fact,

many drugs which were originally thought to block various mechanisms associated with the action of MA have been shown to merely induce hypothermia [2,4,18,65]. Interestingly, the NMDA antagonist ketamine is found to be hypothermic, not when given alone, but when given with MDMA [132]. MK-801 also protects against MA-induced 5-HT functional loss [64,75,104,157,169] again consistent with NMDA-mediated calcium and/or temperature regulation mechanisms of neuroprotection.

7.4. Hyperthermia, NMDA receptors and neurotoxicity: exceptions to the rule?

Hyperthermia is certainly involved in MA-induced neurotoxicity and there are a number of mechanisms whereby these effects can be mediated (e.g., cerebrovascular damage, increased oxidative stress, increased calcium entry). In stark contrast to most rodent studies, however, Melega et al. [142] found that MK-801 and the resultant hypothermia did not reduce MA-induced 'neurotoxicity' (decreased WIN35428 binding) in the vervet monkey. It should be remembered therefore, that findings in one species (e.g., rat) may not correlate well with what is found in others (e.g., mouse, monkey) and may be dependent upon differences in MA pharmacokinetics [40]. However it would appear that glutamate-mediated actions and hyperthermia are not necessary for neuroadaptations to take place, at least in the vervet monkey. Conversely others have found no neurotoxicity in the post-natal day 20 rat after 4X10 mg/kg MA even though hyperthermia was evident [32]. More recently it has been shown that intrastriatal injection of AMPH can produce hydroxyl radicals without hyperthermia, and MK-801 can inhibit production of these free radicals [217]. The amphetamines can, therefore, cause NMDA-mediated oxidative damage without hyperthermia.

8. Analogy to Parkinson's and other neurodegenerative disease models and putative treatments

8.1. Similarity to Parkinson's disease

MA toxicity like that of MPTP is frequently cited (e.g., [196]) as a potential model of Parkinson's disease (PD). Conversely, it may be possible to gain insight into MA pathology from PD models. Once the first sign of PD has developed, retardation of the progression of the disease should be a major goal of treatment research. The same issue in a different form applies to MA toxicity. Should MA bingers be prophylactically treated during the early withdrawal and afterwards in order to prevent further pathology? The question of the mechanism responsible for the disease progression falls into two camps: (1) DA neuron areas have marginalized numbers of neurons that

fail with the most severely affected areas being first, and the rest following in a more extended sequence [138] or (2) once an insult to one area of DA neurons has occurred, a secondary phenomenon, such as increased production of NO in glial cells continues to cause damage or apoptosis, not only to the original cells, but adjacent areas. A similar extended secondary damage is found in models of middle cerebral artery occlusion in which there are subsequent penumbral changes surrounding the infarct area [56]. We will primarily review the hypotheses based on the latter mechanisms.

If glial cells are involved in the progression over time after a neuronal insult, then an *in vivo* or *ex vivo* model rather than a cell line is essential. That is, the matrix support system around the DA neurons needs to be considered in treatment models. As one ages, or with toxic insult, the number of DA neurons decreases with a concomitant increase of astrocytes which contain higher levels of MAO-B. Thus one hypothesis is that the increased MAO-B relative to the DA neurons provides for an increased production of oxidative radicals.

It follows that drugs such as deprenyl, an MAOI as well as a ROS scavenger [74] may prevent the secondary cascades in MA toxicity. Other drugs that are utilized in the treatment of PD are direct DA agonists such as pramipexole, which also has antioxidant properties [36]. PD post-mortem histology reveals SN loss of DA neurons associated with a massive gliosis and the presence of active microglial cells [140] following DA neuron injury insults, such as with MPTP. The exaggerated SN gliosis [119], which is reported to be secondary to NO produced by glial cells, takes place in the neurons of mice in a time-dependent progression of events [128]. These authors found that iNOS was involved and that iNOS KO mice reduced the degeneration of the DA neurons following MPTP by 50%. Thus Liberatore et al. [128], demonstrated that the increased production of NO was a delayed response to MPTP, aggravating the original insult over time. The mechanism for MPTP neurotoxic activity is well known; it is taken up by glial cells where it is transformed by MAO-B to an active metabolite MPP⁺ which is taken up by the DA neurons and inhibits complex I of the mitochondrial ETC [121]. Thus a DAT inhibitor and/or MAOI could be useful in the original insult stage of PD or MA neurotoxicity. In the original study of addicts who mistakenly took MPTP, there was a progressive PD syndrome, evidenced by sequential PET studies [212]. At autopsy, these patients also had numerous active microglial cells in the SN [121]. The mechanism by which NO induces neurotoxicity is under intense research effort. Indeed, elevated concentrations of nitrotyrosine are reported in the SN at autopsy in PD [77]. An additional potential mechanism involves NO release of iron from the intracellular buffer ferritin and the induction of oxidative damage via the Fenton reaction and its increase in ROS [1,93]. Interestingly, DA fibers and DA content in the

striatum are not spared from the toxic effects of MPTP in iNOS KO mice, which differs from that observed in nNOS KO mice [167]. Thus a model that examines ROS-induced toxicity over time needs to be used to examine the mechanisms involved and their prevention by drug treatments that inhibit NO production, as well as drugs that protect DA neurons by other means, such as reduction of MAO and by oxidant radical scavenging. This is especially true if one considers that considerable MA toxicity probably does not come from acute overdose but by repeated multi-day binges.

As a caveat, it should be noted that chronic MA abusers rarely show an increased incidence of PD, but may do as they age, at least the ones that survive their abuse. It should be noted that PD symptoms are only expressed when ~90% of DA neurons are lost, thus MA could destroy many DA neurons with no PD symptomatology. Recent studies in detoxified MA abusers have, however, shown evidence for long-term neurotoxicity (reduced N-acetylaspartate, a neuronal marker) in the basal ganglia [62] and reduced metabolism [213] and DAT binding [214] in the caudate and putamen which is similar to that found in atypical PD [8]. Furthermore these patients have been shown to have motor and memory deficits [213]. To our knowledge there has been no long-term follow-up of the heavy MA abusers of the 1960s and 1970s, this group represents a population in which we would most likely be able to see PD develop if indeed MA contributes to this illness.

8.2. Antioxidants, DAT and SERT inhibitors

De Vito and Wagner [50,51] originally reported that ascorbate and vitamin E reduced MA neurotoxicity; thus along with the even more potent selenium [97,109] provide simple antioxidant treatments. The therapeutic use of uptake blockers for DA and 5-HT have been discussed above and multiple monoamine transport inhibitors are readily available (see Table 2).

8.3. Dopamine agonists

The loss of nigrostriatal DA neurons induced by ATD of MA is substantially blocked by pramipexole a DA D_{2/3} agonist and antioxidant (1 mg/kg, p.o., 1 h after the last MA dose, plus daily thereafter [83]). The fact that the effects were observed as early as 5 days after MA exposure suggests that this may be due to a direct effect of MA at the level of SN neurons as opposed to a retrograde terminal degeneration. Casserino et al. [36] reported that pramipexole reduced the levels of ROS produced by MPP⁺ when both were incubated with SH-SY5Y cells as well as when perfused into the striatum. Pramipexole also exhibited a concentration-dependent inhibition of opening of the mitochondrial PTP induced by Ca²⁺ and phosphate, or MPP⁺ [36]. Sawada et al. [182] reported that preincubation with D₂-type DA agonists bromocriptine and quinpirole provides neuroprotection against glutamate-induced neurotoxicity in cultured rat mesencephalic neurons. However, when bromocriptine or quinpirole are only co-administered with MA they did not provide neuroprotection. The protective effects were dependent upon the duration of the preincubation and were blocked by D₂ antagonists and a protein-synthesis inhibitor. In addition, preincubation with D₂ agonists provided neuroprotection against toxicity induced by Ca²⁺ overload and exposure to superoxide anions [182]. Thus autoreceptor reduction of DA synthesis and release may substantially reduce MA neurotoxicity.

8.4. Monoamine oxidase inhibitors

Deprenyl (selegiline), an irreversible inhibitor of MAO-B is a frequently used adjunct therapy for PD. It is thought that the desmethyldeprenyl metabolites are also associated with an anti-apoptotic action in tissue culture and in animal models and is stereo-specific to the L-form [160,206]. In a kainic acid-induced toxic model, deprenyl increased hippocampal neuronal survival and is thought to have antioxidant properties. An added indication for looking at

Table 2
Putative pharmacotherapies for acute toxic dose methamphetamine

Treatment type	Example and reference
Antioxidant	Ascorbic acid ¹ , Vitamin E ¹ , nicotinamide ^{2,3} , melatonin ^{4,6} , selenium ^{7,9}
DAT inhibitor	Amfonelic acid ^{10,11} , GB R12909 ¹² , indatraline ¹²
MAOI	Deprenyl ¹ (selegiline) ¹³ although see ^{14,15}
DA agonists	Pramipexole ¹⁶
NMDA antagonists	MK-801 (dizocarpine) ¹⁷⁻²⁰ although see ²¹ **
Adenosine agonists	Caffeine ²² , cyclopentyladenosine ²² , CGS21680 ²³
Opioid agonists	DADLE (8-opioid) ²⁴⁻²⁷ , U69593 (K-opioid) ²⁸
SERT inhibitors	Fluoxetine ²⁹ , citalopram ^{30,***} , clomipramine ³⁰
nNOS inhibitors	7-Nitroindazole (7-NI) ^{31,32}

Putative pharmacotherapies for acute toxic dose methamphetamine. *Metabolized to (–)MA and (–)AMPH. **This study done in vervet monkey. ***Also inhibits cytochrome P450 and thus MA metabolism.¹ [50],² [200],³ [95],⁴ [91],⁵ [100],⁶ [5]; ⁷ [96]; ⁸ [109]; ⁹ [97]; ¹⁰ [183]; ¹¹ [168]; ¹² [179]; ¹³ [220]; ¹⁴ [216]; ¹⁵ [105]; ¹⁶ [83]; ¹⁷ [194]; ¹⁸ [104]; ¹⁹ [221]; ²⁰ [169]; ²¹ [142]; ²² [46]; ²³ [76]; ²⁴ [208]; ²⁵ [86]; ²⁶ [209]; ²⁷ [204]; ²⁸ [55]; ²⁹ [94]; ³⁰ [183]; ³¹ [53];

³² [31]. DAT, dopamine transporter; MAOI, monoamine oxidase inhibitor; SERT, serotonin transporter; nNOS, neuronal nitric oxide synthase; DADLE, [D-Ala(2), o-Leu(5)]enkephalin.

deprenyl is that following 7 days of deprenyl treatment the magnitude of the subjective euphoria produced by cocaine infusions in humans was reduced by 40% [11]. It should be noted that all of the above putative treatments may not only work at the neuronal cell body level but may also provide protection at neuronal terminal sites

8.5. The dilemma of drugs that may have both toxic and potential protective effects: tetrahydrobiopterin

BH₄ presents the dilemma found not too infrequently with attempts to treat MA abusers for the withdrawal anergia and apathy but which may result in increased toxicity if they begin to abuse MA. Thus 6R-L-erythro-5,6,7,8 tetrahydrobiopterin (6R-BH₄) (which crosses the blood-brain barrier [98]) can augment TH in 6-OHDA-lesioned brains and could be useful for the withdrawal apathy; yet the synthesis-limited release of DA by MA would be augmented. Thus BH₄ presents a potential treatment dilemma which is also reflected in other potential treatments and underlines the need for interactive toxicology studies with MA before clinical testing. Liang and Kaufman [127], found that perfusion of rat striatal slices with L-arginine, which increases NO synthesis, induced a concentration-dependent increase of DA. This effect can be inhibited by SOD, whereas adding BH₄ induces a massive increase in DA release. The author suggests that the increase in DA release by BH₄ is dependent on its cofactor activity with NOS (nitric oxide synthase) and TH. Thus BH₄ is an active player in normal NOS and TH augmentation of DA release. Since BH₄ facilitates NOS, one might expect that its activation would promote neurotoxicity. However Kotsonis et al. [117], found that BH₄ reacted chemically with O₂ and enzyme-bound BH₄ was consumed under O₂-generating conditions in the absence of substrate [151]. DA neurons (which have high levels of BH₄) in culture are more resistant to the toxicity of both glutathione depletion and the treatment with peroxides than non-DA neurons regardless of their glutathione peroxidase status. Inhibition of BH₄ synthesis increased susceptibility of DA neurons to the toxicity of glutathione depletion, whereas increasing BH₄ levels completely protected non-DA neurons against toxicity. All these data are consistent with BH₄ serving to control NOS activity, in terms of product, i.e. reducing the aberrant production of ROS, and improving TH function. It is also possible that BH₄ itself serves to operate as an antioxidant. What is clear is that changes in the intracellular concentrations of BH₄ may contribute to some of the pathology found in the nigrostriatal system upon MA administration [207].

8.6. Potential harm by certain treatments: disulfiram

Currently many avenues to treatment of stimulant abuse are being explored to reduce craving and withdrawal symptoms. Carroll et al. [33] and Petrakis et al. [164] in double blind trials have documented that disulfiram, as a

treatment for alcohol abuse, decreases cocaine abuse and is currently being considered as a treatment of combined cocaine and alcohol abusers. Disulfiram at low concentrations inhibits striatal synaptosomal uptake of DA as well as MPP⁺, the toxic metabolite of MPTP [52], and there are other potential protective actions from ROS [48,134,135]. Despite these positive effects there are many reports indicating that disulfiram potentiates DA neurotoxicity. Originally it was demonstrated that disulfiram markedly potentiated the effects of MA leading to dystonia and potentiated seizure effects [58] and exacerbated MA depletion of DA [51]. More recent studies have demonstrated: (1) competitive inhibition at the peripheral benzodiazepine receptor, a component of PTP [107]; (2) striatal glutamate uptake inhibition and a decrease in Na⁺K⁺ ATPase [133]; (3) decreased DA uptake and increased release from vesicles [210]; (4) glutathione oxidation, DNA fragmentation and necrosis [26] and (5) inhibition of SOD [51]. Thus despite the evidence of protective effects, the majority of evidence is that disulfiram would aggravate neurotoxicity.

9. Summary

We suggest that acute toxic models of MA best represent acute overdose whereas chronic models represent the binging seen in many MA abusers. Following MA (especially chronic) treatment/abuse both short and long-term serial and parallel processes occur which result in apoptosis (Fig. 1). Further, we suggest that the MA-induced increase in extracellular glutamate promotes pathological NO synthesis with subsequent production of RONS which are the primary cause of neurotoxicity. Potential treatments could be directed at any stage in these pathways dependent upon length of abstinence. Finally it is interesting to note that MA neurotoxicity represents a good model of general EAA neurotoxicity and thus could be used to study PD, stroke, seizures and ALS.

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