

Fall 2022

Modeling the binding of ω -conotoxin and other toxins to the N-type voltage-gated calcium channel

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Recommended Citation

Sha, Serena; Welch, Sophie; and Guillen-Tapia, Ashley, "Modeling the binding of ω -conotoxin and other toxins to the N-type voltage-gated calcium channel" (2022). *Protein Modeling Reports*. 9.

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Modeling the binding of ω -conotoxin to an N-type voltage-gated calcium channel

PDB File: 7MIX

Primary Citation:

Gao, S., Yao, X. & Yan, N. Structure of human Cav2.2 channel blocked by the painkiller ziconotide. *Nature* 596, 143–147 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-021-03699-6>

Format: Selective Laser Sintering (SLS)

RP: Nylon

Description:

Currently, 1.5 billion people in the world suffer from chronic pain, persistent pain that carries on for longer than 12 weeks despite medication or treatment. Management of chronic pain currently includes use of over-the-counter medicines like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or prescription pain medications like opioids. An alternative was approved for the treatment of severe chronic pain in 2004. Prialt, also known as ziconotide, is the brand name for this specific type of toxin (conotoxin) released by marine predatory snails in the family *Conidae*. Once ziconotide is in the body, it acts as a pore blocker of N-Type voltage-dependent calcium channels (Cav2.2). Our model showcases the various structural details that promote MVIIA specificity toward N-Type voltage-gated calcium channels and allow it to be used as an analgesic. Furthermore, our research aims to investigate other toxins as potential analgesics for pain and compare their binding energetics to MVIIA. Other conotoxins have been found to act as pore blockers of the N-Type calcium channel: MVIIC, GVIA, MoVIB, and ω -agatoxin IVA.

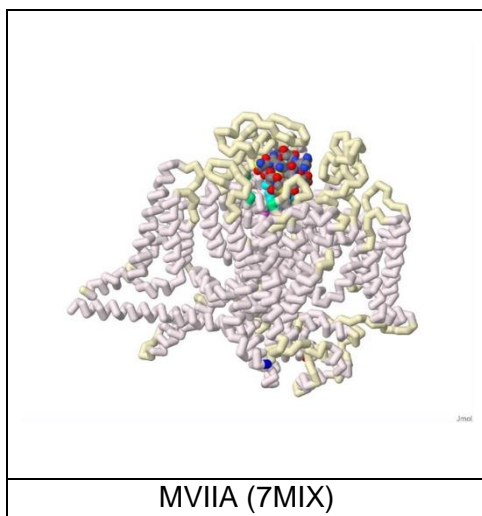
Specific Model Details:

General:

- Only subunit α -1B is shown of the N-type Ca^{2+} channel
- N and C terminus of the receptor are marked in blue and red, respectively
- Alpha helices in the receptor are pink
- The rest of the backbone of the receptor is lemonchiffon
- Calcium ion is green held in place with four spacefill glutamates (EEEE motif) of the receptor colored in orchid
- Ziconotide is colored in cpk spacefill
- An important ionic interaction between ziconotide and the receptor is colored cyan
- Eight ziconotide residues specific to this receptor are highlighted in mediumspringgreen

Ionic interactions				
Ziconotide (MVIIA)	Arg10		Tyr13	
N-type Ca²⁺ channel	Asp664			
EEEE Motif				
N-type Ca²⁺ channel	Glu314	Glu663	Glu1365	Glu1655
Ziconotide Coordinating Residues				
N-type Ca²⁺ channel	Thr643	Asp1345	Lys1372	Asp1629

A model was prepared to show the ω -conotoxin, MVIIA, bound to a human N-type voltage-gated calcium channel. The model highlights specific features that contribute to MVIIA's binding affinity, restricted to the calcium alpha 1B subunit and the bound conotoxin. Ziconotide contains 25 amino acids, 6 of which are cysteine residues linked in pairs by 3 disulfide bonds. The disulfide bond linkage pattern is a characteristic feature of ω -conotoxins and ensures correct folding of the peptide and stabilization of its structure. In ω -conotoxin MVIIA, the non-cysteine amino acids in the loops determine its binding affinity and calcium channel blocking activity, particularly the second loop located between cysteine-8 and cyseine-15 appears to be the most important in directing selectivity towards the N-Type channels and away from P/Q Type channels (McGivern, 2007). Ziconotide does not directly seal the entrance to the vestibule of the selectivity filter. Instead, it blocks ion entrance by neutralizing the outer electronegativity and sterically hindering the ion access path to the entrance of the selectivity filer. To neutralize the acidic residues, ziconotide engages Arg10 and Tyr13 to bind to Asp664. Four of the eight ziconotide-coordinating residues (Thr643, Asp1345, Lys1372, and Asp1629) in Cav2.2 are not conserved in other Cav channels which explains the subtype specificity of pore blockade by ziconotide. The EEEE motif (Glu314, Glu663, Glu1365, and Glu1655) determines the Ca²⁺ selectivity (Gao et al., 2021). Also included in the model are the receptor's alpha helices and the calcium ion in the receptor. The N terminus and C terminus of the receptor were marked to orient the model.



Additional References:

- McDonough, S. I., Boland, L. M., Mintz, I. M., & Bean, B. P. (2002). Interactions among Toxins That Inhibit N-type and P-type Calcium Channels. *Journal of General Physiology*, 119(4), 313–328. <https://doi.org/10.1085/jgp.20028560>
- McGivern, J. G. (2007). Ziconotide: a review of its pharmacology and use in the treatment of pain. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, 3(1), 69–85. <https://doi.org/10.2147/ndt.2007.3.1.69>