IV. International Union of Pharmacology Nomenclature of Adrenoceptors

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I. Introduction

Adrenoceptors mediate the central and peripheral actions of the primary sympathetic neurotransmitter, nor-adrenaline, and the primary adrenal medullary hormone (and central neurotransmitter), adrenaline. Adrenoceptors are found in nearly all peripheral tissues and on many neuronal populations within the central nervous system. Several types of neuronal varicosities have pre-junctional (or presynaptic) adrenoceptors serving as...
auto- or heteroceptors that inhibit nerve-evoked release of a variety of neurotransmitters. Adrenoceptors mediate a variety of functions and have been of major interest for many years as targets for drug action. Both noradrenaline and adrenaline play important roles in the control of blood pressure, myocardial contractile rate and force, airway reactivity, and a variety of metabolic functions. Adrenoceptor activation in the locus coeruleus has direct and indirect effects on the activity of many other neuronal nuclei within the brain.

Adrenoceptors have divergent affinity for many synthetic drugs and, as new pharmacological tools have been identified, have been subdivided into an increasing number of distinct receptor subtypes. Drugs interacting with these subtypes have proven useful in a variety of diseases, involving all of the major organ systems. Some of these diseases include hypertension, angina pectoris, congestive heart failure, cardiac arrhythmia, asthma, depression, prostatic hypertrophy, and glaucoma.

For nearly a century it has been known that certain responses to adrenoceptor stimulation are insensitive to classical adrenoceptor antagonists such as the ergot alkaloids or \( \beta \)-haloalkylamines (Dale, 1906; Nickerson, 1949). In a manner analogous to the subclassification of the effects of acetylcholine as nicotinic or muscarinic, there were attempts to classify the effects of sympathomimetic amines as “excitatory” or “inhibitory.” This qualitative distinction was not helpful in identifying adrenoceptor subtypes and even led to proposals of different neurotransmitters for excitatory and inhibitory responses. In contrast to this qualitative analysis, Ahlquist (1948) used a quantitative approach to propose the existence of two adrenoceptor subtypes, based on different rank orders of potency, within a series of structurally related natural and synthetic agonists, when responses to these agonists were evaluated in different tissues. Ahlquist designated these two subtypes of adrenoceptors as \( \alpha \) and \( \beta \). This mode of receptor subclassification was consistent with that based on antagonist sensitivity, with those responses designated by Ahlquist as mediated by \( \beta \)-adrenoceptors being insensitive to ergots or \( \beta \)-haloalkylamines. Final proof for this subclassification scheme came in 1957, with the description of the partial agonist dichloroisoprenaline, the first agent capable of antagonizing \( \beta \)-but not \( \alpha \)-adrenoceptor-mediated responses (Powell and Slater, 1957; Moran and Perkins, 1958). Although there have been a few subsequent proposals for additional adrenoceptor subtypes mediating effects to sympathetic nerve stimulation (e.g., \( \gamma \)-adrenoceptors) it seems that many of these unexplained responses result from other neurotransmitters now known to be coreleased with noradrenaline.

In 1967, Lands and coworkers (1967), comparing rank orders of potency of agonists in a manner similar to that of Ahlquist, concluded that there were two subtypes of the \( \beta \)-adrenoceptor. The \( \beta_1 \)-adrenoceptor, the dominant receptor in heart and adipose tissue, was equally sensitive to noradrenaline and adrenaline, whereas the \( \beta_2 \)-adrenoceptor, responsible for relaxation of vascular, uterine, and airway smooth muscle, was much less sensitive to noradrenaline vis-a-vis adrenaline. Highly selective antagonists for both \( \beta_1 \) and \( \beta_2 \)-adrenoceptors have been developed, as well as many potent and selective \( \beta_2 \)-adrenoceptor agonists.

Soon after prejunctional \( \alpha \)-adrenoceptors were identified in the early 1970s, it became apparent that pre- and postjunctional \( \alpha \)-adrenoceptors had different pharmacological characteristics (Starke et al., 1974; Langer, 1974). Langer (1974) suggested the designation of \( \alpha_1 \) and \( \alpha_2 \) for pre- and postjunctional \( \alpha \)-adrenoceptors, respectively. Studies of the interactions of agonists and antagonists with these \( \alpha \)-adrenoceptors extended this subclassification scheme to a functional subdivision, as opposed to an anatomical subdivision, of \( \alpha \)-adrenoceptors into the \( \alpha_1 \) and \( \alpha_2 \) subtypes (Berthelsen and Pettinger, 1977). Finally, with the identification of potent and highly selective \( \alpha_1 \)- and \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptor agonists and antagonists, the subdivision of \( \alpha_1 \)- and \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptors, as well as further subdivisions of each of these \( \alpha \)-adrenoceptor subtypes (see sections II and III), has come to rely on a pharmacological subclassification rather than the anatomical or functional subdivisions used previously (for reviews, see Ruffolo et al., 1988, 1991).

With the development of additional pharmacological tools, as well as new techniques for studying drug-receptor interactions, such as radioligand-binding assays, it became apparent that the situation was significantly more complex, with further subdivision of both the \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptor (Morrow and Creese, 1986; Johnson and Minneman, 1987; Han et al., 1987) and \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptor (Bylund, 1985; Bylund et al., 1988; Michel et al., 1989b) being possible. Furthermore, it became apparent that not all of the \( \beta \)-adrenoceptor-mediated responses could be classified as either \( \beta_1 \) or \( \beta_2 \), suggesting the existence of at least one additional \( \beta \)-adrenoceptor subtype (Arch et al., 1984; Bond and Clarke, 1988). Finally, tissues initially thought to represent examples of pure subtype populations were found to contain mixed adrenoceptor populations, with the subtype distribution often being highly species dependent (Hieble and Ruffolo, 1991).

Even more recently, the rapidly developing molecular biological techniques have had a major impact on adrenoceptor subclassification. Genes have been recombinant for many of the \( \alpha \)- and \( \beta \)-adrenoceptor subtypes identified by functional or radioligand-binding studies in native tissues. Additional related subtypes have been identified by homologous hybridization of tissue mRNA with probes prepared from previously recombinant receptors. Transfection of genomic or cDNA clones into suitable mammalian cells has allowed the characterization of the pharmacology of pure populations of these recombinant receptor subtypes.
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Although in some cases there is excellent correlation between the characteristics of recombinant and native receptors, there are several examples of recombinant receptors that cannot be assigned to one of the adrenoceptors identified in an isolated tissue or, conversely, there are adrenoceptors that have been identified by functional or radioligand-binding studies but have yet to be cloned. In some cases there is controversy between different laboratories regarding the subtype assignment of a particular adrenoceptor clone. Furthermore, sub-classification schemes based on functional, radioligand-binding, and molecular biology studies are not completely consistent with one another. The existence of novel subtypes based on small differences in pharmacological properties is now being proposed with increasing frequency. One must be careful to assure that these differences are not a consequence of minor species differences in receptor characteristics or differences in accessibility of drug to the receptor (Kenakin, 1984).

Whereas the adrenoceptors have historically been divided into two major subtypes, the α- and β-adrenoceptors, it has recently become clear that it may be more useful to classify the adrenergic receptor into three major types: the α1-adrenoceptors, α2-adrenoceptors, and β-adrenoceptors. The rationale for this new classification scheme is based on three lines of evidence (Bylund, 1988). First, the difference in affinity of selective drugs is 3 to 4 orders of magnitude between major subtypes (e.g., α1, α2, and β), whereas the affinity ratios among subtypes of each of these major groups are generally only 10 to 100. Second, second-messenger responses are different for each of these three major types. Finally, the predicted amino acid sequences of the adrenoceptors are more consistent with three rather than two major types (Bylund, 1992).

It is the purpose of this review to present current knowledge regarding subtypes of α1-adrenoceptors, α2-adrenoceptors, and β-adrenoceptors and to present the rationale for the recommended nomenclature. Some α-adrenoceptor agonists and antagonists have affinity for the imidazoline moiety present in these compounds (Hieble and Ruffolo, 1992). Because noradrenaline and adrenaline have essentially no affinity for these sites, they cannot be considered adrenoceptors and will not be considered here. Furthermore, with the exception of the turkey erythrocyte β-adrenoceptor, which has been used widely as a model system, the discussion will be limited to mammalian adrenoceptors.

II. α1-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

It is clear that α1-adrenoceptors are heterogeneous, although the number of discrete subtypes is still controversial. The first suggestion of multiple α1-adrenoceptor subtypes was based on differences in potency of the antagonists, prazosin and phenoxybenzamine, in functional or radioligand-binding studies but have yet to diverge for this antagonist between different tissues (Flavahan and Vanhoutte, 1986). Functional subclassification of α1-adrenoceptors based on prazosin affinity remains an active field of investigation (see section II.A.); nevertheless, radioligand-binding and molecular studies have identified several α1-adrenoceptor subtypes all having similar high affinity for prazosin but varying affinity for other α-adrenoceptor antagonists. The initial subdivision of the α1-adrenoceptor into the α1A and α1B classes was based on differential affinity of the competitive antagonist, WB 4101, and the site-directed alkylating agent, chloroethylbenzamine (Johnson and Minneman, 1987). Three α1-adrenoceptor cDNAs have been isolated and the receptor proteins expressed. Although the relationship of the recombinant subtypes to those in native tissues is still unclear, the data suggest the possible existence of four subtypes, which have been designated α1A, α1B, α1C, and α1D.

In the subclassification of α1-adrenoceptors, both upper case subscripts (e.g., α1A, α1B) and lower case subscripts (e.g., α1a, α1b) have been utilized. Although there has been some inference that the upper and lower case subscripts refer to results from subclassification based on radioligand-binding and functional assays, respectively, the usage has now become random, with upper case being currently more common. It is now suggested that, until the discrepancies between the receptor subclassification based on either functional or radioligand-binding assays in native tissues and that based on the

† Abbreviations: ARC-239, 2-[2,4-(2-methoxyphenyl)piperazin-1-yl]ethyl-4,4-dimethyl-1,3-(2H,4H)-isoquinolindione; BAM-1303, 8[2-(phenylimidazol-1-yl)ethyl]-6-methylergoline; BE-2254 (HEAT), 2-[2-(4-hydroxyphenyl)ethyl]aminomethyl]tetralone; BRL 37344, 1-(3-chlorophenyl)-2-[2-(4-carboxyethoxy)phenyl]-1-methyl-ethylamino]ethanol; BRL 44408, 2-[4-(4,5-dihydro-1H-imidazol-2-yl)ethyl]-2,3-dihydro-1-methyl-1H-indolone (CGP 12177, (4S)-4-butyraminol-2-hydroxypropoxy)-benzimidazol-2-one; CPG 20721A, 1-[3-(3-carboxymethyl-4-hydroxy)phenoxy]ethylaminol-3-[2-(4-methyl-1-trifluoromethyl-2-imidazolyl)phenoxy]-2-propanol; CL 316,243: (R,R)-5-[2-[2-(3-chlorophenyl)-2-hydroxyethyl]amino]propyl]-1,3-benzodioxole-2,2-dicarboxylic acid; IBE-2254, 2-[2-(3-iodo, 4-hydroxyphenyl)ethyl]amino]-4-methoxyphenol]tetralone; ICI 118,551, etorph( ±)-1-(7-methylindane-4-yl)-3-isopropylamino-2-butanol; ICI 198,187, 1-[2-(2-carboxethoxyethoxy)phenoxy]ethylaminol-3-phenoxy-2-propanol; Kα, receptor dissociation constant; MK-912 (L-657,743), (2S,12bS)-1'-3'-dimethylisopropyl (1,3,4,5,6,7,12b) octahydro-2H-benzolo[b]furo[2,3-a]quinazoline-2',4'-pyrimidin-2'-one; RO 363, 1-(3,4-dihydroxyphenoxyl)-3-[2-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)ethylaminol-2-propanol; SB 105855, 197, (+)-(s-8a, 12a, 13a)-6,8,8a,9,10,11,12a,13,13a-decahydro-3-methoxy-12-methylbenzofonyl-6H-isoquinol[2,1-g][1,6]naphthyridine; SK&F 104078, 6-chloro-9-[3-(3-methyl-2-butenyloxy)-5-methyl-1H,2,3,4,5,6,7,8-octahydro-3-benzazepinol; SK&F 104586, 2-vinyl-7-chloro-3,4,5,6-tetrahydro-4-methylthieno [4,3,2ef] [3]benzazepinol; SLLS-49, 1-(4-amino-6,7-dimethoxy-2-quinazolinyl)-4-(2-bicyclo[2,2,2]octa-2,5-dienylcarbonol) -piperazine; YM617 (tamulosin), (±)-2-[2-(2-ethoxyphenyl)ethyl]amino]-propyl]-2-methoxybenzene sulfonamide; WB 4101, 2([2,6-dimethoxyphenoxyl] amino)methyl-1,4-benzodioxane.
cloning and expression of discrete receptor proteins have been resolved (see section II.D.), upper case subscripts be reserved for pharmacologically defined receptor subtypes and lower case be used for those recombinant receptors defined by molecular biology. This convention is also applicable to the \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptors and has precedent in the current nomenclature for native and recombinant muscarinic receptors. In view of the rapid progress in the cloning and expression of adrenoceptors from a variety of sources, and the identification of species-specific structural elements in these proteins controlling their pharmacology, it is likely that the pharmacological and molecular subclassification schemes will eventually converge.

A. Common \( \alpha_1 \)-Adrenoceptor Characteristics

All of the \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptor subtypes are activated by the sympathetic neurotransmitters, noradrenaline and adrenaline. There is no evidence for selective affinity of either of these catecholamines for any of the \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptor subtypes identified to date. Although the functional \( K_D \) values span a broad range, all \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptor-mediated responses are sensitive to blockade by prazosin, and all show low affinity for selective \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptor antagonists such as yohimbine or rauwolscine. All known subtypes can be labeled with \( [^{3}H] \) prazosin or \( [^{125}I] \) IBE-2254 (I-HEAT), and activation of each subtype is associated with an increase in intracellular calcium.

B. Pharmacologically Defined \( \alpha_1 \)-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

1. \( \alpha_{1A} \)- and \( \alpha_{1B} \)-Adrenoceptors. The \( \alpha_{1A} \)- and \( \alpha_{1B} \)-adrenoceptors were initially differentiated based on the affinities of phenolamine and WB 4101 (Morrow and Creese, 1986). An extensive series of \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptor assays, both biochemical and functional, were divided into those in which phenolamine showed a high (\( \alpha_{1A} \)) or low (\( \alpha_{1B} \)) affinity relative to prazosin. The proportion of high- and low-affinity sites for \( [^{3}H] \) WB 4101 was consistent with this subclassification scheme. Classification of \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptors into \( \alpha_{1A} \) and \( \alpha_{1B} \) subtypes has been supported by the identification of several antagonists showing at least 100-fold selectivity for the \( \alpha_{1A} \)-adrenoceptor, such as 5-methylurapidil (Gross et al., 1989) and (\(+\))-niguldipine (Boer et al., 1989; Han and Minneman, 1991), and by the discovery that chlorothyphonilidine selectively alkylates the \( \alpha_{1B} \)-subtype (Minneman et al., 1988). There is currently no competitive antagonist selective for the \( \alpha_{1B} \)-adrenoceptor, although spiperone has been reported to have a 10-fold higher affinity for \( \alpha_{1B} \)- than \( \alpha_{1A} \)-adrenoceptors (Michel et al., 1989a). \( \alpha_1 \)-Adrenoceptors are currently subclassified as \( \alpha_{1A} \) or \( \alpha_{1B} \) based on receptor dissociation constants for 5-methylurapidil or (\(+\))-niguldipine and on sensitivity to irreversible inactivation by chlorothyphonilidine.

Results of both functional and radioligand-binding studies suggest that the rat vas deferens contains a high density of \( \alpha_{1A} \)-adrenoceptors relative to the \( \alpha_{1B} \). Other tissues in which the \( \alpha_{1A} \)-adrenoceptor predominates include the rat anococcygeus and rat submaxillary gland. The rat spleen and liver appear to represent tissues in which the \( \alpha_{1} \)-adrenoceptor response is mediated primarily by \( \alpha_{1B} \)-adrenoceptors. Most tissues studied, including rat cerebral cortex, hippocampus, heart, and kidney, contain mixed populations of the two subtypes (Minneman et al., 1988). Although some studies have assigned receptors of blood vessels to the \( \alpha_{1A} \) or \( \alpha_{1B} \) subtypes (Han et al., 1990), several other reports have suggested that vascular \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptors have characteristics different from either of these subtypes (Muramatsu et al., 1990, 1991; Sulpizio and Hieble, 1991; Oriowo and Ruffolo, 1992).

2. \( \alpha_{1H}, \alpha_{1L}, \) and \( \alpha_{1N} \)-Adrenoceptors. It was noted above that there is a wide affinity range for prazosin as an antagonist of \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptors. Flavahan and Vanhoutte (1986) differentiated \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptors into two groups, designated \( \alpha_{1H} \) and \( \alpha_{1L} \) with high (\( \alpha_{1H} \)) and low (\( \alpha_{1L} \)) affinity for prazosin and yohimbine. This functional subclassification scheme has been recently extended by the addition of a third group, \( \alpha_{1N} \), which has a relatively low affinity for prazosin and a higher than expected affinity for yohimbine (Muramatsu et al., 1990). The use of phenylephrine as an agonist for determination of these affinity values would presumably eliminate contribution of a postjunctional \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptor. This subclassification scheme has thus far been mainly applied to vascular \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptors. It has been postulated (Muramatsu et al., 1991) that the \( \alpha_{1A} \)- and \( \alpha_{1B} \)-adrenoceptors are subtypes of the \( \alpha_{1H} \). Hence, blood vessels may contain additional \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptor subtypes (\( \alpha_{1L}, \alpha_{1N} \)) not found in many other tissues, which may explain why it is often difficult to reconcile vascular \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptor responses with the \( \alpha_{1A}/\alpha_{1B} \) classification scheme (Oriowo and Ruffolo, 1992). There does exist limited radioligand-binding data in support of this subclassification scheme, with some investigators reporting binding of \( [^{3}H] \) prazosin to two sites in membranes prepared from vascular smooth muscle, with \( K_D \) values consistent with those determined for \( \alpha_{1H} \)- and \( \alpha_{1L} \)-adrenoceptors in functional studies (Oshita et al., 1992).

The pharmacological tools used to characterize and subclassify \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptors are presented in table 1.

C. Recombinant \( \alpha_1 \)-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

1. \( \alpha_{1A}/\alpha_{1L} \)-Adrenoceptors. Screening of a rat brain library with a cDNA probe prepared from the hamster \( \alpha_{1L} \)-adrenoceptor (see section II.C.2) revealed a cDNA clone for another \( \alpha_1 \)-adrenoceptor subtype (Lomasney et al., 1991b). The amino acid sequence of the protein expressed by this clone is consistent with a seven transmembrane-spanning, G-protein-linked receptor. Northern analysis of the tissue distribution of mRNA transcribed by this clone suggested a similar distribution to that of the \( \alpha_{1A} \) subtype, and the expressed receptor had a high affinity...
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### TABLE 1
Pharmacological tools used to subclassify and characterize the α₁-adrenoceptor subtypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>α₁A&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>α₁B&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>α₁C&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>α₁D&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WB 4101</td>
<td>0.08 ± 0.02 (5)</td>
<td>8.0 ± 2.8 (11)</td>
<td>0.65 ± 0.20 (4)</td>
<td>1.6 ± 0.3 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Methyldipridil</td>
<td>0.70 ± 0.1 (5)</td>
<td>96 ± 26 (11)</td>
<td>7.5 ± 2.8 (4)</td>
<td>15 ± 0.4 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prazosin</td>
<td>0.13 ± 0.02 (4)</td>
<td>0.32 ± 0.09 (5)</td>
<td>0.54 ± 0.14 (4)</td>
<td>0.32 ± 0.01 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxytropazine</td>
<td>3.7 ± 0.83 (5)</td>
<td>280 ± 56 (12)</td>
<td>46 ± 20 (4)</td>
<td>2140 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiperone</td>
<td>7.2 (1)</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.72 (2)</td>
<td>22 (1)</td>
<td>No data available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloroethyliclindine (irreversible)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Affinity for α₁A-adrenoceptors was determined in tissue homogenates. Kᵢ values for WB 4101 and 5-methyldipridil represent either the high-affinity component of binding displacement in tissues containing both α₁A- and α₁B-adrenoceptors (e.g., rat cortex, rat vas deferens, human cortex) or the overall binding displacement in tissues containing the α₁A-adrenoceptor subtype only (rat submaxillary gland). Affinity represents mean ± SEM of several reported values. The number of experimental values used for the mean determination is noted in parentheses. Data from Michel et al., 1989a; Hanft and Gross, 1988; Gross et al., 1989; Hanft et al., 1989; Klijn et al., 1991.

† Affinity for α₁B-adrenoceptors was determined either in tissue homogenates or to membranes from cells expressing the rat, hamster, or human α₁B-adrenoceptor. Kᵢ values for WB-4101 and 5-methyldipridil represent either the low-affinity component of binding displacement in tissues containing both α₁A- and α₁B-adrenoceptors (e.g., rat cortex, rat vas deferens, human cortex) or the overall binding displacement in tissues containing the α₁B-adrenoceptor subtype only (rat spleen, rat liver). Data presented as for the α₁A-adrenoceptor obtained from Cotecchia et al., 1988; Michel et al., 1989; Hanft and Gross, 1988; Gross et al., 1989; Hanft et al., 1989; Lomasney et al., 1991a; Schwinn et al., 1990, 1991; Ramaro et al., 1992; Forray et al., 1993; Taddei et al., 1993.

‡ Affinity for α₁C-adrenoceptors was determined either in homogenates of rabbit liver or in membranes from cells expressing the recombinant bovine or human α₁C-adrenoceptor. Data presented as for the α₁A-adrenoceptor obtained from Schwinn et al., 1990, 1991; Taddei et al., 1993; Forray et al., 1993; Hirase et al., 1993.

§ Affinity for α₁D-adrenoceptors was determined in membranes from cells expressing the recombinant α₁D-adrenoceptor referred to as α₁D<sub>max</sub> from either a rat (Lomasney et al., 1991b) or human (Forray et al., 1993) source or the nearly identical recombinant rat receptor referred to as the α₁D-adrenoceptor (Perez et al., 1991). Data presented as for the α₁A-adrenoceptor.

|| Sensitivity to irreversible receptor inactivation by chloroethyliclindine determined by the degree in reduction in E<sub>max</sub> for α₁-adrenoceptor binding following treatment of homogenates of either native tissues or cells expressing a particular recombinant α₁-adrenoceptor. Ranking of sensitivity to chloroethyliclindine from Perez et al., 1991.

for WB 4101. This led to the conclusion that this clone represented the pharmacological α₁A-adrenoceptor (Lomasney et al., 1991b). However, Perez et al. (1991) studied an almost identical clone also isolated from rat brain, found low affinity for the more selective α₁A-adrenoceptor antagonists, 5-methyldipridil and (+)-niguldipine. They concluded that a clone for a novel α₁-adrenoceptor subtype had been isolated and denoted it as α₁B. Because the clones isolated by Lomasney et al. (1991b) and Perez et al. (1991) encode for 560 amino acid proteins differing in sequence at only two sites (99.8% amino acid identity), it seems likely that they represent the same subtype. Because the expressed cDNA has pharmacological properties substantially different from those found for the α₁A-adrenoceptor in native tissues, this recombinant receptor should be referred to as the α₁B-adrenoceptor until these discrepancies can be explained and a native receptor having similar pharmacology identified. The human homolog of this α₁-adrenoceptor subtype has been cloned recently (Forray et al., 1993).

2. α₁B-Adrenoceptors. The α₁B-adrenoceptor subtype was the first of the α₁-adrenoceptor family to be cloned. This clone was isolated from a hamster vas deferens cell line (DD<sub>1</sub>M<sub>2</sub>) and encoded for a protein having a sequence consistent with a G-protein-coupled receptor (Cotecchia et al., 1988). Expression of this cDNA resulted in a protein with radioligand-binding properties consistent with an α₁B-adrenoceptor, with a high affinity for prazosin and a low affinity for phentolamine, 5-methyldipridil, and yohimbine. Also consistent with the α₁B assignment was a high sensitivity to irreversible inactivation by chloroethyliclindine. Using a cDNA probe derived from the hamster α₁B-adrenoceptor, investigators (Voigt et al., 1990; Lomasney et al., 1991a) identified the rat α₁B-adrenoceptor and showed that it had a similar pharmacological profile and >98% amino acid identity with the hamster receptor. Northern analysis of rat tissues showed mRNA expression for this clone in a variety of tissues expected to express the α₁B-adrenoceptor, including liver, spleen, heart, and cerebral cortex. The human α₁B-adrenoceptor has been cloned recently and shown to have virtually identical pharmacology with the hamster α₁B-adrenoceptor (Ramarao et al., 1992).

3. α₁C-Adrenoceptors. Based on homology screening of a bovine cerebral cortex cDNA library with a probe derived from the hamster α₁C-adrenoceptor, an additional cDNA clone which apparently encoded for a novel α₁-adrenoceptor subtype was identified (Schwinn et al., 1990). The protein expressed by this clone is distinct from the α₁B-adrenoceptor, with 65% amino acid identity in the membrane-spanning domains. The pharmacological profile is also distinct from either the α₁B- or α₁A-adrenoceptors, with a relatively high affinity for 5-methyldipridil (but less than that observed in most α₁A systems), a high affinity for WB 4101, and a high sensitivity to irreversible inactivation by chloroethyliclindine. In
view of its distinct pharmacological profile, this receptor was designated the $\alpha_{1c}$-adrenoceptor. The cloning and expression of the human $\alpha_{1c}$-adrenoceptor has been reported recently (Forray et al., 1993; Hirasawa et al., 1993).

Northern analysis showed no $\alpha_{1a}$-mRNA in any rat tissue examined, with hybridization detected only in rabbit liver and human hippocampus (Schwinn et al., 1991). Despite the apparent lack of mRNA transcription, Southern hybridization suggests the existence of the $\alpha_{1c}$ gene in the rat, and a rat homolog of the bovine $\alpha_{1c}$-adrenoceptor has been cloned recently (Laz et al., 1993).

D. Relationship between Pharmacologically Defined and Recombinant $\alpha_1$-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

The close correspondence between the pharmacological properties of the expressed $\alpha_{1b}$-adrenoceptor cDNA from rat or hamster, or the gene fusion product constructed from the human clone, with those recognized for the $\alpha_{1b}$-adrenoceptor indicates that the protein encoded by this clone represents the $\alpha_{1b}$-adrenoceptor that has been identified by functional and radioligand-binding studies in native tissues.

On the other hand, there is currently some confusion regarding the assignment of the recombinant $\alpha_{1a,d}$- and $\alpha_{1b}$-adrenoceptors to one of the pharmacologically defined $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor subtypes. It is clear that the $\alpha_{1a,d}$-adrenoceptor clone does not correspond with the pharmacologically defined $\alpha_{1A}$-adrenoceptor. It is possible that this clone represents a novel subtype ($\alpha_{1D}$) and that the $\alpha_{1A}$-adrenoceptor remains to be cloned; alternatively, recent data suggest that the $\alpha_{1c}$ clone, at least its rat homolog, may correspond to the pharmacologically defined $\alpha_{1A}$-adrenoceptor (Laz et al., 1993). The recombinant rat $\alpha_{1c}$-receptor, when compared to the other two recombinant rat $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptors, has significantly lower sensitivity to irreversible inactivation by chloroethylclonidine and relative antagonist affinities correlating well with that of the native $\alpha_{1A}$-adrenoceptor (Laz et al., 1993).

Although a direct comparison between species homologs of the recombinant $\alpha_{1c}$-adrenoceptor has not been performed, there may be species differences in the sensitivity of this receptor subtype to chloroethylclonidine. Recently, mRNA for the $\alpha_{1c}$-adrenoceptor has been identified in human prostate (Price et al., 1993), and the contractile response induced by $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor activation in this tissue appears to be mediated by an adrenoceptor having pharmacological characteristics corresponding to those of the expressed recombinant $\alpha_{1c}$-adrenoceptor (Marshall et al., 1992; Forray et al., 1993). Interestingly, the functional pharmacological profile of the $\alpha_{1c}$-adrenoceptor in the rat aorta (high affinity for WB 4101, 5-methylurapidil affinity intermediate between $\alpha_{1A}$ and $\alpha_{1B}$, sensitivity to irreversible inactivation by chloroethylclonidine) is similar to that observed for the expressed bovine $\alpha_{1c}$-adrenoceptor clone (Muramatsu et al., 1991; Oriowo and Ruffolo, 1992).

A correlation, as yet incomplete, between recombinant and pharmacologically defined $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptors is shown in table 2.

E. Additional $\alpha_1$-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

A new $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor antagonist radioligand, $[^3H]$YM617, identifies two $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor sites in rat brain, one of which can be inhibited by several $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor antagonists, including 5-methylurapidil, WB-4101, and phentolamine, but is highly insensitive to prazosin (Yazawa et al., 1992). The affinity of prazosin for this novel site is several orders of magnitude lower that its functional $K_B$ at $\alpha_{1L}$-receptors. There is also some evidence for differential alkylation of $\alpha_{1L}$-adrenoceptors by the prazosin analog, SZL 49 (Piascik et al., 1990), although whether the alkylation pattern produced by this compound is inconsistent with the $\alpha_{1A}/\alpha_{1B}$ subclassification scheme, or indeed whether this agent shows true subtype selectivity, has yet to be established. The classical irreversible $\alpha$-adrenoceptor antagonist, phenoxybenzamine, can apparently produce a functional subclassification of $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor-mediated responses (Coates et al., 1982) and has recently been reported to block selectively one component of $[^3H]$prazosin binding to rat brain (Tsuchihashi et al., 1991).

III. $\alpha_2$-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

As described for the $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor, the $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor has been subdivided based on functional and radioligand-binding studies, and several distinct $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor proteins have been cloned and expressed. Although the relationships between the receptor subtypes identified by these three modes of subclassification have not been completely established, it is clear that there are multiple $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor subtypes, with distinct drug specificities.

The subclassification of $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptors was initially

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clone</th>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Pharmacology</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{1A/d}$</td>
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<td>Hamster</td>
<td>$\alpha_{1B}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{1C}$</td>
<td>Human</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rat</td>
<td>$\alpha_{1A}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bovine</td>
<td>$\alpha_{1A}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The pharmacology of these clones cannot be definitively assigned to one of the functional $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor subtypes based on currently available data. These expressed clones all show relatively high affinity for 5-methylurapidil and WB-4101 and are sensitive to irreversible inactivation by chloroethylclonidine.
based on the ability of prazosin to inhibit the binding of
$[^3H]yohimbine$ or $[^3H]rauwolscine$ to tissue homogenates
from a variety of isolated tissues or cell culture lines
(Bylund, 1985; Nahorski et al., 1985; Pettrash and By-
lund, 1986). Prazosin and another $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor
antagonist, ARC 239, have high affinity for one group of
$\alpha_2$-adrenoceptors, designated $\alpha_2B$, and low affinity for
another, designated $\alpha_2A$. The partial $\alpha$-adrenococeptor
agonist, oxymetazoline, and the recently discovered antag-
onist, BRL 44408, selectively inhibit binding to the $\alpha_2A-
adrenoceptor (Bylund et al., 1988; Young et al., 1989). Al-
though there is some functional evidence to support this
subclassification scheme (Bylund and Ray-Prenger, 1989),
it has been difficult to find functional responses clearly
showing an $\alpha_2B$-adrenoceptor pharmacological profile. By
correlation of antagonist affinity for inhibition of
$[^3H]rauwolscine$ binding in different cell and
tissue preparations, two additional $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor sub-
types have been proposed, designated $\alpha_2C$ and $\alpha_2D$.

Independent of the above $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor subclassifi-
cation, several novel antagonists, SK&F 104078 and
SK&F 104856, have been found to produce functional blockage
of certain $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor-mediated responses,
such as vascular contraction, while having no effect on
others, such as inhibition of adrenergic neurotransmis-
sion at atrial neuroeffector junctions (Ruffolo et al., 1987;
Hieble et al., 1991).

Three $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor cDNA clones have been iso-
lated from human libraries, and three highly homologous
clones, which appear to be species homologs of the three
human clones, have been isolated from the rat and the
mouse. Although some controversy remains regarding the
subtype assignment of one of the rat clones, the recombinant $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptors appear to correspond to the
$\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor subtypes identified by radioligand-
binding studies (Bylund et al., 1992).

A. Common $\alpha_2$-Adrenoceptor Characteristics

All known $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor subtypes can be activated
by noradrenaline and adrenaline, and there is no evi-
dence that these physiological catecholamines show sig-
nificant selectivity between any of the known $\alpha_2$-adre-
occeptor subtypes. All subtypes can be blocked by yohim-
bine and rauwolscine ($K_\text{B} < 40 \text{ nM}$) and labeled with $[^3H]$al-
ologs of these antagonists, although the affinity can vary
substantially between subtypes. All $\alpha_2$-adrenocep-
tors appear to be linked to inhibition of adenylate cyclase
as one, but not the only, mechanism of signal transduc-
tion.

B. Pharmacologically Defined $\alpha_2$-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

1. $\alpha_2A/\alpha_2B$-Adrenoceptors. Radioligand-binding studies
first established the presence of two distinct subtypes of
the $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor, based on differential affinity of
prazosin, which had previously been considered as a
selective antagonist of the $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor. Studies com-
paring human platelet and neonatal rat lung showed
each tissue to have a homogeneous $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor pop-
ulation, but the ability of prazosin to inhibit $[^3H]rau-
wolscine or $[^3H]yohimbine$ binding differed markedly
between the two tissues. The human platelet receptor
was designated as $\alpha_2A$ (low prazosin affinity) and that in
the neonatal rat lung as $\alpha_2B$ (high prazosin affinity). The
partial agonist, oxymetazoline, showed the opposite se-
l ectivity, with preferential affinity for the $\alpha_2A$-adreno-
cceptor. Subsequent experiments showed that this subclass-
cification scheme was not a result of species differences,
with both subtypes being detected in both rat (Kawahara
and Bylund, 1985) and human cortex (Pettrash and By-
lund, 1986), and several tissue culture lines have been
identified that have pure populations of either $\alpha_2A$-adre-
occeptors (HT 29) or $\alpha_2B$-adrenoceptors (NG 108). Al-
though this subclassification is based primarily on data
from radioligand-binding studies, the ability of prazosin
to produce functional blockade of $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor-me-
diated inhibition of adenylate cyclase in cells containing
$\alpha_2A$- or $\alpha_2B$-adrenoceptors correlates with its binding
affinity (Bylund and Ray-Prenger, 1989). Other antago-
nists have been shown to have selective action at $\alpha_2B$-
adrenoceptors (ARC 239, spiroxatrine, imilozan), and an
antagonist selective for the $\alpha_2A$ subtype, BRL 44408, has
been identified (Young et al., 1989). The physiological
catecholamines, adrenaline and noradrenaline, do not
discriminate between $\alpha_2A$- and $\alpha_2B$-adrenoceptors, and,
with the exception of oxymetazoline, selective agonists
have not been identified.

2. $\alpha_2C$- and $\alpha_2D$-Adrenoceptors. By the correlation of
the affinities for a series of $\alpha$-adrenoceptor antagonists
as inhibitors of $[^3H]rauwolscine$ binding in different tis-
sues, two additional $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor subtypes have been
identified. The $\alpha_2C$-adrenoceptor is similar to the $\alpha_2B$-
adrenoceptor with respect to a relatively high affinity
for prazosin, ARC 239, and spiroxatrine, but it has a higher
affinity for rauwolscine. There is some confusion in the
literature regarding assignment of a receptor to the $\alpha_2B$
or $\alpha_2C$ groups. A receptor must be subclassified using
more than one or even two selective drugs to identify
subtle but yet important differences. Several other an-
tagons are selective for $\alpha_2C$- versus $\alpha_2B$-adrenoceptors
(BAM 1303, WB 4101). The $\alpha_2C$-adrenoceptor was first
found in a tissue culture line derived from the opossum
kidney (Murphy and Bylund, 1988) but has now been
shown to be present in opossum kidney tissue (Blaxall
et al., 1991), and a human retinoblastoma cell line, Y79,
has been found to have similar pharmacological charac-
teristics (Gleason and Hieble, 1992). A fourth subtype,
designated $\alpha_2D$, has been found in bovine pineal, rat
submaxillary gland, and a cell line derived from a rat
pancreatic islet cell tumor (RINm5F) (Simonneaux et al.,
This subtype has a lower affinity for $[^3H]rauwolscine
than the other subtypes and, like the $\alpha_2A$-adrenoceptor,
a low affinity for prazosin, spiroxatrine and ARC 239.
Several other tissues possess an \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptor having low affinity for yohimbine or rauwolscine, including adipocytes from several species and rabbit jejunal enterocytes. Although the pharmacological profile of the \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptor in these tissues has not been studied extensively, these receptors may represent additional examples of the \( \alpha_2D \)-adrenoceptor. Other than yohimbine and rauwolscine, only BAM 1303 has moderate selectivity between \( \alpha_2D \) and \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptors, but the two subtypes can be distinguished when the potency ratios for several antagonist pairs are compared (Simonneaux et al., 1991).

Studies in the rat brain using two new highly potent and selective \( \alpha_2D \)-adrenoceptor radioligands, \([^3H]RS-15385\)-197 (MacKinnon et al., 1992) and \([^3H]MK-912\) (Uhlen et al., 1992) show the presence of a site having low affinity for yohimbine and rauwolscine, consistent with an \( \alpha_2D \)-adrenoceptor. This site is designated either \( \alpha_2D \) (MacKinnon et al., 1992) or \( \alpha_2A \) (Uhlen et al., 1992), demonstrating that confusion remains in the assignment between these two subtypes, although it now seems clear that the \( \alpha_2D \)-adrenoceptor is the rat homolog of the human \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptor.

The pharmacological tools used to characterize and subclassify \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptors are summarized in Table 3.

C. Recombinant \( \alpha_2 \)-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

An \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptor gene was first isolated from human platelet (Kobilka et al., 1987b). This clone was designated \( \alpha_2C10 \), based on its location on human chromosome 2 and 4. Southern analysis with a fragment of the \( \alpha_2 \) C10 cDNA revealed the presence of related genes on chromosomes 2 and 4. These genes have subsequently been cloned, expressed, and designated \( \alpha_2C2 \) and \( \alpha_2C4 \) (Regan et al., 1988, Lomasney et al., 1990). The pharmacological characteristics of these three receptor proteins are consistent with \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptors. A porcine analog of \( \alpha_2C10 \), showing >93% amino acid identity with the human receptor, and similar pharmacological characteristics, has also been isolated (Geyer et al., 1990).

Three \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptors have also been cloned from the rat. One, designated RNG, clearly appears to be an analog of \( \alpha_2C2 \), based on similar pharmacological profiles and the unique lack of consensus sequences for N-linked glycosylation on the amino terminus (although showing only 82% amino acid identity). Another receptor, designated either \( \alpha_2D \) (Voigt et al., 1991) or RC10 (Lanier et al., 1991), appears to be a species homolog of the \( \alpha_2C4 \)-adrenoceptor, with 88% identity of primary structure. The third rat clone, designated \( \alpha_2A-47 \) (Chalberg et al., 1991) or RC20 (Lanier et al., 1991) shares 89% amino acid identity with the \( \alpha_2C10 \) and key similarities in pharmacological profile, such as a low affinity for prazosin. However, some investigators suggest that, rather than being a rat homolog of the human \( \alpha_2C10 \), the RC20 clone represents a distinct \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptor subtype. This is based primarily on the low affinity of the expressed RC20 clone for yohimbine and rauwolscine.

Three \( \alpha_2 \)-adrenoceptors have been cloned from the

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>( \alpha_2A )</th>
<th>( \alpha_2D )</th>
<th>( \alpha_2A )</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rauwolscine</td>
<td>3.7 ± 1.6 (5)</td>
<td>33 ± 10 (7)</td>
<td>1.2 ± 0.5 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prazosin</td>
<td>1034 ± 403 (5)</td>
<td>1127 ± 337 (8)</td>
<td>30 ± 7 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC-239</td>
<td>256 ± 86 (3)</td>
<td>285 ± 135 (2)</td>
<td>4.6 ± 2.0 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAM-1930</td>
<td>48.1 ± 1 (3)</td>
<td>70 ± 16 (2)</td>
<td>21 ± 12 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRL 44408</td>
<td>3.6 ± 1.9 (2)</td>
<td>16 (1)</td>
<td>174 ± 30 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxymetazoline</td>
<td>5.6 ± 1.9 (6)</td>
<td>34 ± 14 (7)</td>
<td>350 ± 91 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imiloxan</td>
<td>1750 ± 1250 (2)</td>
<td>79 (1)</td>
<td>50 ± 6 (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Affinity for \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptors was determined as the ability to inhibit radioligand binding to the receptor, either in homogenates of tissues containing a relatively pure receptor subtype population (e.g., human platelet or HT29 cell line) or to membrane from cells expressing the recombinant human \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptor. Affinity represents mean ± SEM of several reported values. The number of experimental values used for the mean determination is noted in parentheses. Data from Michel et al., 1989b; Gleason and Hieble, 1991; Lomasney et al., 1991b; Link et al., 1992; Bylund et al., 1992; MacKinnon et al., 1992.

† Affinity for \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptors was determined in homogenates of tissues containing a relatively pure receptor subtype population (e.g., bovine pineal gland, rat sublingual gland, or RINm5F cell line) or from cells expressing the rat RG20 or mouse M2A-10H recombinant receptors. The \( \alpha_2D \)-adrenoceptor can be considered a species homolog of the human \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptor, with recombinant receptors from rat and mouse (\( \alpha_2D \) pharmacology) showing a high degree of amino acid identity with those from human and porcine sources (\( \alpha_2A \) pharmacology). Data presented as for the \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptor, obtained from Lanier et al., 1991; Harrison et al., 1991; Gleason and Hieble, 1992; Bylund et al., 1992; MacKinnon et al., 1992; Remaruy and Paris, 1992; Link et al., 1992.

‡ Affinity for \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptors was determined either in homogenates of tissues containing a relatively pure receptor subtype population (e.g., neonatal rat lung, rat kidney, or NG-108 cell line) or to membranes from cells expressing the human \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptor. Data presented as for the \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptor, obtained from Michel et al., 1989b; Weinshank et al., 1990; Gleason and Hieble, 1991; Bylund et al., 1992; MacKinnon et al., 1992.

§ Affinity for \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptors was determined either in homogenates of tissues containing a relatively pure receptor subtype population (e.g., opossum kidney or OK cell line) or in membrane from cells expressing the recombinant mouse, opossum, or human \( \alpha_2C4 \)-adrenoceptor. Data presented as for the \( \alpha_2A \)-adrenoceptor, obtained from Regan et al., 1988; Gleason and Hieble, 1992; Bylund et al., 1992; Link et al., 1992; Blazall et al., 1994.
mouse, having a high degree of amino acid identity with the human α2C2, α2C4, and α2C10. The mouse homologs of α2C2 (Chruscinski et al., 1992) and α2C4 (Link et al., 1992) have similar pharmacology to the human clones. As observed in the rat, the mouse homolog of the human α2C10 has a low affinity for yohimbine and rauwolscine (Link et al., 1992).

An opossum homolog of the human α2C4 receptor has recently been cloned from the OK cell line (Blaxall et al., 1994). This recombinant receptor, although having pharmacology characteristic of the α2C2-adrenoceptor, has a lower degree of amino acid identity (64%) with the human α2C4-receptor than does the corresponding rat homolog (RG10).

D. Relationship between Pharmacologically Defined and Recombinant α2-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

Several clear correlations between the α2-adrenoceptor subtypes identified in native tissues and cell lines have been established with the recombinant receptor proteins expressed from cDNA clones. These correlations are supported by hybridization of the α2-adrenoceptor clones with tissues known to contain a particular α2-adrenoceptor subtype. The α2C10 clone was isolated from human platelets. The expressed receptor has radioligand-binding characteristics in good agreement with those of the platelet α2A-adrenoceptor. Although the α2C4 clone was initially thought to correspond to the α2B-adrenoceptor, based on a high affinity for prazosin, comparison of affinities for an extensive series of antagonists shows this clone to correspond more closely to the α2C2-adrenoceptor (Bylund et al., 1992). Northern analysis shows a strong signal when the α2C4 gene is hybridized with mRNA prepared from OK cells, the source from which the α2C subtype was identified (Lorenz et al., 1990). The rat RG10 clone also appears to have the pharmacological characteristics of the α2C2-adrenoceptor (Zeng and Lynch, 1991; Uhlen et al., 1992). The α2C2 clone and the corresponding RNC correlate well to the α2B-adrenoceptor, based on protein structure and pharmacological profile. Furthermore, this clone is detected in neonatal rat lung and adult rat kidney, tissues known to possess the α2B subtype (Zeng et al., 1990; Lomasney et al., 1990).

The assignment of the rat RG20 clone remains unclear. As noted in II.C, this clone has 89% amino acid identity with the human α2C10; however, the pharmacological profile of the RG20, unlike that of α2C10, does not clearly correspond to the α2A-adrenoceptor. A consistent characteristic of the RG20 clone is a relatively low affinity (>10 nM) for yohimbine and rauwolscine. This has led some investigators to suggest that this clone represented the prejunctional, neuronal α2-adrenoceptor, which has also been postulated to have α2D characteristics (Bylund and Iversen, 1990). However, other investigators (Harrison et al., 1992) have not observed any substantial difference in SK&F 104078 affinity between rat α2-adrenoceptor clones.

It has been suggested that a single receptor subtype may have slightly different pharmacological characteristics in each species studied, thus causing a proliferation of subtypes. Although the RG20 (rat) and α2C10 (human) clones have distinct pharmacological profiles, the corresponding clones from the mouse (Link et al., 1992) and cow (D. B. Bylund, unpublished data) appear to resemble closely the rat RG20. The low affinity of the RG20 clone, and its mouse homolog, for yohimbine and rauwolscine has been demonstrated to result from a serine at position 201, as opposed to a cysteine in the human α2-C10 and its porcine homolog (Link et al., 1992). The bovine analog of this α2-adrenoceptor subtype also contains a serine at this position. Hence, evidence is accumulating in support of the premise that the α2A- and α2D-adrenoceptor are species variants.

The postulated relationships between recombinant and pharmacologically defined α2-adrenoceptor subtypes are shown in table 4.

E. Additional α2-Adrenoceptor Subtypes?

One antagonist, guanoxabenz, has been reported to differentiate the α2A-adrenoceptor into two subtypes (Uhlen and Wikberg, 1991), and it has recently been suggested that this antagonist can likewise subdivide the α2A-adrenoceptor but not the α2C-adrenoceptor (Uhlen et al., 1992).

In addition to α2-adrenoceptor subclassification based primarily on correlations between antagonist potency for inhibition of radioligand binding, a functional α2-adrenoceptor subclassification has been postulated, based on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clone</th>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pharmacology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>α2A</td>
<td>Human</td>
<td>α2-C10</td>
<td>α2A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>α2-C10</td>
<td>α2A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rat</td>
<td>RG20</td>
<td>α2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mouse</td>
<td>Mα2-10H</td>
<td>α2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>α2B</td>
<td>Human</td>
<td>α2-C2</td>
<td>α2B</td>
</tr>
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<td>Rat</td>
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<td>α2C</td>
<td>Human</td>
<td>α2-C4</td>
<td>α2C</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rat</td>
<td>RG10 (pA2d, RBα2B)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mouse</td>
<td>Mα2-4H</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Opossum</td>
<td></td>
<td>α2C</td>
</tr>
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</table>
novel α-adrenoceptor antagonists. SK&F 104078 and SK&F 104856 have such a profile, being capable of blocking some α2-adrenoceptor-mediated responses, such as constriction of peripheral blood vessels, while having no effect on the neuroinhibitory effect of α2-adrenoceptor agonists in atria from several species or in guinea pig ileum (Ruffolo et al., 1987; Hieble et al., 1991). In several in vivo models, neither SK&F 104078 nor SK&F 104856 produces evidence of prejunctional α2-adrenoceptor blockade. It was initially suggested that these compounds could differentiate between pre- or postjunctional α2-adrenoceptors. However, in the field-stimulated rat vas deferens, SK&F 104078 can produce relatively potent blockade of the neuroinhibitory action of some, but not all, α2-adrenoceptor agonists (Oriowo et al., 1991; Akers et al., 1991). It is possibly more appropriate to assume that these antagonists can discriminate between α2-adrenoceptors on a functional, rather than an anatomical, basis. SK&F 104078 has equal affinity for α2A- and α2B-adrenoceptors, as well as a relatively high affinity for the expressed human (Lomasney et al., 1991a) and rat (Harrison et al., 1991) α2-adrenoceptor clones. It has been suggested that the prejunctional α2-adrenoceptor has α2D characteristics, because SK&F 104078 has relatively low affinity against [3H]rauwolscine binding in the bovine pineal gland (Bylund and Iversen, 1990). However, SK&F 104078 has high affinity in other test systems assigned to the α2D subtype, and the other functionally selective α2-adrenoceptor antagonist, SK&F 104856, has relatively high affinity for the α2D-adrenoceptor in the bovine pineal or rat submaxillary gland (Simonneaux et al., 1991). Hence, no relationship can yet be established between the functional α2-adrenoceptor subclassification produced by SK&F 104078 and SK&F 104856 and the subclassification established by molecular and radioligand-binding assays.

IV. β-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

The existence of two subtypes of the β-adrenoceptor is generally accepted (Lands et al., 1967). The β1- and β2-adrenoceptor subclassification is supported by the development of subtype-selective agonists and antagonists and the therapeutic application of several of these pharmacological classes (i.e., selective β1-adrenoceptor agonists and selective β2-adrenoceptor agonists). The avian β-adrenoceptor, as exemplified by that of the turkey erythrocyte, has many similarities, but some significant differences, compared to mammalian β1-adrenoceptors (Neve et al., 1986). Evidence has accumulated throughout the years for the existence of a β-adrenoceptor that is insensitive to the commonly used antagonists. This receptor has often been referred to as the "atypical β-adrenoceptor," but with the identification of selective agonists, and the expression of a recombinant receptor having similar characteristics, it now is appropriate to refer to this receptor as the β3-adrenoceptor.

All of the β-adrenoceptors identified in pharmacological studies have been recombinant and expressed. β1- and β2-adrenoceptor cDNA has been obtained from a variety of tissue sources, including turkey, hamster, mouse, rat, and human. The human β3-adrenoceptor has recently been recombinant. The pharmacological characteristics of the recombinant receptors appear to correspond well with those of the three receptor subtypes identified in native tissues, although there are some differences in the case of the β3-adrenoceptor. The molecular pharmacology of the β-adrenoceptors has been studied extensively, serving as one of the prototypes for the use of techniques such as site-directed mutagenesis to study the mode of interaction between the receptor and either agonists/antagonists or second-messenger regulatory proteins.

A. Common β-Adrenoceptor Characteristics

All three β-adrenoceptor subtypes can be activated by noradrenaline and adrenaline. However, in contrast to the α-adrenoceptors, the endogenous catecholamines do have differential affinity for the β-adrenoceptor subtypes. A primary distinction between β1- and β2-adrenoceptors is the relative potencies of adrenaline and noradrenaline, with the two catecholamines being equipotent at the β1-adrenoceptor and adrenaline having up to 100-fold selectivity for the β2-adrenoceptor. Conversely, noradrenaline is more potent than adrenaline as a β1-adrenoceptor agonist. The synthetic catecholamine, isoprenaline, is a potent agonist at all β-adrenoceptor subtypes, with no consistent intrasubtype selectivity. Propranolol and its many analogs are potent antagonists at β1-adrenoceptors and β2-adrenoceptors; however, β3-adrenoceptor-mediated responses are much less sensitive to these antagonists. Both β1- and β2-adrenoceptors can be labeled with [3H]dihydroalprenolol or [125I]iodopindolol and its analogs. Although its affinity is approximately 10-fold lower than for the β1- or β2-adrenoceptors, [125I]iodocyanopindolol can be used to label the β3-adrenoceptor (Emorine et al., 1992). All three β-adrenoceptor subtypes activate adenylyl cyclase as a primary mechanism for signal transduction.

B. Pharmacologically Defined β-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

β1- and β2-adrenoceptors were originally distinguished by Lands and coworkers based on rank potency orders for a series of endogenous and synthetic agonists. Subsequently, selective antagonists have been identified for both β1-adrenoceptors (e.g., metoprolol, practolol, atenolol, betaxolol, CGP 20712A (Dooley et al., 1986) and β2-adrenoceptors (e.g., butoxamine, ICI 118,551) (O'Donnell and Wanstall, 1980). Synthetic agonists having high selectivity for the β2-adrenoceptor are also available (e.g., terbutaline, salbutamol, salmeterol, zinterol), but the selective β1-adrenoceptor agonists thus far identified (e.g., denopamine, Ro 363, and xamoterol) have limited utility as pharmacological tools because of low selectivity.
and/or efficacy. β1-Adrenoceptors mediate increases in cardiac rate and force of contraction, stimulation of renin secretion, relaxation of coronary arteries, and relaxation of gastrointestinal smooth muscle. β2-Adrenoceptors mediate smooth muscle relaxation at many sites, including the airways, most blood vessels, and uterus. The prejunctional β-adrenoceptor modulating noradrenaline release from sympathetic nerve terminals also appears to have β2-adrenoceptor characteristics.

Several agonists producing selective activation of the β2-adrenoceptor have been identified, including BRL 37344, ICI 198,157, and CL 316,243. Interestingly, the β1/β2-adrenoceptor antagonist, CGP 12177, is a partial agonist at the β2-adrenoceptor (Langin et al., 1991; Emorine et al., 1992). The β2-adrenoceptor is insensitive to blockade by most β-adrenoceptor antagonists, although β2-adrenoceptor-mediated stimulation of adenylyl cyclase in cells expressing the recombinant receptor can be antagonized by the β2-adrenoceptor antagonist, ICI 118,551. No selective β2-adrenoceptor antagonist has been identified to date. The primary actions mediated by the β2-adrenoceptor are lipolysis in white adipose tissue and thermogenesis in brown adipose tissue, although there is evidence that this receptor also contributes to the stimulation of insulin secretion from pancreatic islet cells, inhibition of glycogen synthesis in skeletal muscle, and inhibition of contractile activity in gastrointestinal smooth muscle. It has been suggested that activation of the β2-adrenoceptor contributes to the intrinsic sympathomimetic action of some β-adrenoceptor antagonists (Kaumann, 1989).

The pharmacological tools used to characterize and subclassify β-adrenoceptors are presented in table 5.

C. Recombinant β-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

1. β2-Adrenoceptors. Screening of a hamster genomic library with oligonucleotides complementary to peptide fragments of the purified hamster lung β2-adrenoceptor yielded a clone that, when expressed in a variety of systems, had functional and radioligand-binding characteristics consistent with those of the β2-adrenoceptor (Dixon et al., 1986). Probes derived from this cDNA have been used, and β2-adrenoceptors from mouse, rat, and human sources have been recombinant. There are only minor species differences between these clones, with 87 to 93% overall amino acid identity.

2. β1-Adrenoceptors. It proved difficult to clone the β1-adrenoceptor, because the human β1-adrenoceptor cDNA did not cross-hybridize with the β1-adrenoceptor, even when the full-length coding sequence was used. A related receptor was isolated using the β2-adrenoceptor as a probe (Kobilka et al., 1987a), which proved to be the 5-HT1A receptor (Fargin et al., 1988). Using the coding region of the 5-HT1A receptor DNA to probe a human placental cDNA library, Frielle et al. (1987) finally identified the β1-adrenoceptor clone. The overall amino acid identity of human β1- and β2-adrenoceptors is only 54%, although the amino acid identity between these receptors increases to 71% in the hydrophobic regions postulated to represent the membrane-spanning domains.

Again, using purified receptor protein as a source of oligonucleotide probes, the avian β-adrenoceptor of turkey erythrocyte was recombinant (Yarden et al., 1986). This clone closely resembles the mammalian β1-adrenoceptor (69% overall amino acid identity with the human receptor and 84% amino acid identity in the transmembrane-spanning region).

3. β3-Adrenoceptors. Screening of a human genomic library with probes prepared from the avian β-adrenoceptor and the human β2-adrenoceptor cDNA resulted in the identification of a novel clone having the predicted sequence for a G-protein-linked receptor (Emorine et al., 1989). The identity of primary structure was only 40 to 50% vis-a-vis the β1- or β2-adrenoceptors (64 to 69% in the putative transmembrane regions). Chinese hamster ovary cells expressing this DNA showed adenylyl cyclase activation in response to selective β3-adrenoceptor agonists and low affinity for propranolol, and several other classical β-adrenoceptor antagonists against isoprenaline-induced adenylyl cyclase stimulation. Also, studies of radioligand binding to these cells were consistent with the expression of a β3-adrenoceptor. Southern analysis showed expression of mRNA hybridizing with this clone in rat tissues where "atypical" β-adrenoceptor-mediated responses have been shown, such as adipose tissue, liver, and skeletal muscle.

D. Relationship between Pharmacologically Defined and Recombinant β-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

For both the β1- and β2-adrenoceptors, there seems to be an excellent correlation between the properties of expressed receptor clones and the corresponding receptor as found in native tissues. This correlation is found both with respect to the ability to inhibit radioligand binding and the ability of agonists to stimulate adenylyl cyclase activity.

The properties of the β2-adrenoceptor, expressed in mammalian cells, also appears to correspond to those pharmacologically defined for the β2-adrenoceptor. Although the clone was derived from a human genomic library, some of the properties of the expressed receptor, such as the potency and intrinsic activity of the selective β2-adrenoceptor agonist, BRL 37344, appear to correspond more closely to those of the rat adipocyte than those of the human adipocyte (Zaagsma and Nahorski, 1990). This may reflect species differences in the β2-adrenoceptor density.

E. Are There Additional β-Adrenoceptor Subtypes?

The properties of the avian β-adrenoceptor are sufficiently different from those of the mammalian β1-adrenoceptor to suggest that these two β-adrenoceptors should be considered different receptor subtypes. The
Selective constant (K<sub>1</sub>) homogenates from a tissue containing both fly-

Alternatively, binding can be studied in tissues containing a relatively pure population of fl (e.g., human atrium, rat ventricle) or of the subtype-selective 3-adrenoceptor antagonists to based on approximately equal potencies of noradrenaline

This subdivision is suggested, in part, by the observation that each of the three receptor groups is associated with a specific second-messenger system. 

It is unlikely that all of the “atypical” β-adrenoceptor responses observed have characteristics consistent with the β<sub>2</sub>-adrenoceptor, and hence, the possibility of additional subtypes cannot be excluded.

V. Signal Transduction

As noted in the Introduction, it has been suggested that the adrenoceptors be divided into three families, the α<sub>1</sub>-adrenoceptors, the α<sub>2</sub>-adrenoceptors, and the β-adrenoceptors (Bylund, 1988). This subdivision is suggested, in part, by the observation that each of the three receptor groups is associated with a specific second-messenger system. α<sub>1</sub>-Adrenoceptors increase intracellular calcium concentrations, whereas α<sub>2</sub>-adrenoceptors and β-adrenoceptors inhibit and stimulate adenylyl cyclase, respectively. Although the α<sub>2</sub>-adrenoceptors are consistently associated with inhibition of adenylyl cyclase, this does not necessarily represent the mode of signal transduction between receptor occupation and functional response in all tissues. There do not appear to be differences in signal transduction mechanisms between individual subtypes in each of the three major families.

<table>
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<th>Compound</th>
<th>Index*</th>
<th>β&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>β&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>β&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
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* Parameter used to express affinity for the β<sub>1</sub>-adrenoceptor. All dissociation equilibrium constants expressed in nM. Dissociation equilibrium constant (K<sub>i</sub>) for the inhibition of radioligand binding to the β<sub>1</sub>-adrenoceptor. Inhibition of the binding of a nonselective radioligand in membrane homogenates from a tissue containing both β<sub>1</sub>- and β<sub>2</sub>-adrenoceptor subtypes is biphasic and can be used to calculate the K<sub>i</sub> value at each subtype. Alternatively, binding can be studied in tissues containing a relatively pure population of β<sub>1</sub> (e.g., human atrium, rat ventricle) or β<sub>2</sub> (e.g., human or rat lung) adrenoceptors. EC<sub>50</sub> for induction of a functional response in a tissue containing a relatively pure population of β (e.g., rat atrium), β<sub>1</sub> (e.g., guinea pig trachea), or β<sub>2</sub> (e.g., rat white or brown adipocytes) adrenoceptors. Affinity constant (K<sub>90</sub>) for stimulation of adenylyl cyclase in Chinese hamster ovary cells expressing the β<sub>2</sub>-adrenoceptor. Receptor dissociation constant (K<sub>i</sub>) for blockade of a functional response to a β<sub>2</sub>-adrenoceptor agonist in a tissue having a relatively pure population of a particular β-adrenoceptor subtype. K<sub>ex</sub> for the interaction of [3H]CGP 12177 with rat cardiac membranes in the presence of subtype-saturating concentrations of a selective β<sub>1</sub>- or β<sub>2</sub>-adrenoceptor antagonist.

† ND, no data available.

‡ Partial agonist activity.
A. $\alpha_1$-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

Activation of all known $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor subtypes results in an increase of the intracellular calcium concentration. This is often a result of calcium release from intracellular stores by a mechanism involving G-protein-mediated activation of phospholipase C. This enzyme hydrolyzes phosphatidylinositol 4,5-bisphosphate into inositol 1,4,5-triphosphate, which acts, in turn, to release intracellular calcium stores, and diacylglycerol, which activates protein kinase C (Minneman, 1988). However, many $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor-mediated responses, particularly those in vascular smooth muscle, depend on the influx of extracellular calcium through voltage-gated channels (Tsujimoto et al., 1989). There is often a correlation between the relative contribution of intracellular versus extracellular calcium and the efficacy of an $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor agonist. It has been postulated that the $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor in vascular smooth muscle is linked to two G-proteins, one mediating protein kinase C activation and another linked to a membrane calcium channel. In this model, occupation of the $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor by a full agonist results in activation of both G-proteins, whereas partial agonists can only activate the G-protein linked to the calcium channel (Ruffolo and Nichols, 1988).

Although it has been postulated that these two signal transduction mechanisms are subtype specific, with the $\alpha_{1A}$-adrenoceptor acting via calcium influx and the $\alpha_{1B}$-adrenoceptor via intracellular calcium release (Minneman, 1988; Wilson and Minneman, 1990), it is now clear that there is at least partial overlap between the signal transduction mechanisms of these two $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor subtypes (Klijn et al., 1991; Minneman and Atkinson, 1991; Esbenshade and Minneman, 1992).

$\alpha_1$-Adrenoceptors have also been linked to other signal transduction mechanisms, including effects on cyclic nucleotides, activation of phospholipase A$_2$ and phospholipase D (Minneman, 1988). Whether these effects are secondary to effects on inositol phosphate levels and/or intracellular calcium, or whether they are selectively linked to any particular subtype, is not yet clear.

B. $\alpha_2$-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

Although it is clear that activation of $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptors results in an inhibition of adenylyl cyclase activity, mediated through an inhibitory G-protein (Limbird, 1988), this may not always represent the signal transduction mechanism responsible for the effect associated with receptor activation. For example, $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor-mediated platelet aggregation and inhibition of platelet adenylyl cyclase are not always associated (Clare et al., 1984), and $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor-mediated inhibition of neurotransmitter release is generally insensitive to inactivation of an inhibitory G-protein by pertussis toxin (Nichols et al., 1988). Furthermore, it is unlikely that the adenylyl cyclase of vascular smooth muscle could be sufficiently activated under basal conditions to account for $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor-mediated pressor effects as a result of inhibition of cyclase activity (Nichols, 1991). On the other hand, the action of $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor agonists on the renal collecting duct to produce functional antagonism of the action of vasopressin does appear to result from the inhibition of vasopressin stimulated adenylyl cyclase.

In vascular smooth muscle, the postjunctional $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor may be linked, in a manner similar to the $\alpha_1$-adrenoceptor, to a calcium channel, allowing translocation of extracellular calcium to mediate the vasoconstrictor response to receptor activation (Nichols, 1991). $\alpha_2$-Adrenoceptors have also been shown to activate other signal transduction mechanisms, including activation of potassium channels, phospholipase A$_2$, and Na$^+$/H$^+$ exchange.

There is no evidence for subtype selectivity in any of the signal transduction mechanisms associated with $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor activation. Subtype-selective antagonists have been used to demonstrate that both $\alpha_{2A}$- and $\alpha_{2B}$-adrenoceptors can mediate inhibition of adenylyl cyclase (Bylund and Ray-Prenger, 1989), and inhibition of adenylyl cyclase activity in OK cells is presumably mediated by the $\alpha_{2C}$-adrenoceptor (Murphy and Bylund, 1988). The subtype selectivity of the other signal transduction mechanisms associated with the $\alpha_2$-adrenoceptor has not been evaluated.

C. $\beta$-Adrenoceptor Subtypes

All three $\beta$-adrenoceptor subtypes appear to be linked to adenylyl cyclase activation through a stimulatory G-protein, with no evidence for subtype-related differences in receptor-cyclase interaction (Tate et al., 1991). The $\beta$-adrenoceptor has been the prototype for studies on the linkage between receptor, G-protein, and enzyme catalytic units, and much is known regarding the molecular interactions among these three proteins (Stadel, 1991). There is evidence to suggest that in certain tissues, such as cardiac muscle, there could be a direct coupling between a stimulatory G-protein and a voltage-sensitive calcium channel (Yatani et al., 1988).

VI. Conclusions

It is clear that there are multiple, closely related, adrenoceptor subtypes, although their exact number and the appropriate mode of grouping into major families is still controversial. The development of additional subtype-selective agonists and antagonists for use as pharmacological tools will help resolve some of the remaining discrepancies, as will additional correlation of the properties of recombinant and pharmacologically defined receptors.

Why there should be so many closely related subtypes is a great mystery. Multiple subtypes often coexist in a particular tissue or even on an individual cell and can mediate opposing mechanisms (i.e., $\alpha_2$- versus $\beta$-adrenoceptors), redundant ($\beta_1$- and $\beta_2$-adrenoceptors), or synergistic ($\alpha_1$-
and β-adrenoceptors) responses. Elucidation of the functions and interactions of these many subtypes remains a major challenge.

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