Frequency- and circuit- specific effects of septohippocampal deep brain

stimulation in mice as measured by functional ultrasound imaging.

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Significance Statement

Deep brain stimulation (DBS) is a well-established treatment for neurological and

neuropsychiatric diseases, yet it's mechanism of action remains unknown. We recently

demonstrated that medial septal nucleus (MSN) DBS improves spatial memory in rodents

treated with the NMDA antagonist MK-801, a drug known to mimic cognitive impairment in

schizophrenia. Here we utilize functional ultrasound imaging (fUSI) in mice to visualize the

effects of MSN DBS on cerebral blood volume (CBV) following saline or MK-801

administration. We find that theta frequency-specific (7.7Hz) MSN DBS restored MK-801-

induced CBV reductions within the septohippocampal circuit (i.e., hippocampus) after

stimulation offset. These results demonstrate that MSN stimulation drives circuit-specific

neurovascular activity and may ultimately improve cognitive function in diseases with NMDA

hypofunction, such as schizophrenia.

Abstract

Deep brain stimulation (DBS) has shown remarkable success in treating neurological

and psychiatric disorders such as Parkinson's disease, essential tremor, dystonia,

epilepsy, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Despite this success, the underlying

mechanism of action remains unknown. DBS is now being explored as a means to

improve cognition and functional outcomes in other psychiatric conditions, such as

those characterized by reduced N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) function (i.e.

schizophrenia). While most DBS treatments for movement disorders require continuous

stimulation, there is evidence that intermittent stimulation in cognitive and psychiatric

conditions may have persisting effects beyond the period of stimulation. This suggests

that the effects of DBS on brain activity last beyond the time of its acute electrical

effects, necessitating a broader exploration of how neuromodulation alters brain

networks. In this study, we utilize a novel technology, functional ultrasound imaging

(fUSI), to characterize the cerebrovascular impact of medial septal nucleus (MSN) DBS

under conditions of NMDA antagonism (pharmacologically using Dizocilpine [MK-801])

in anesthetized male mice. Imaging from a sagittal plane across a variety of brain

regions, we find that MSN theta-frequency (7.7Hz) DBS had a larger effect on

hippocampal cerebral blood volume (CBV) after stimulation offset. This was observed

following an intraperitoneal (i.p.) injection of either saline vehicle or MK-801 (1 mg/kg).

This effect was not present using standard high frequency DBS stimulation parameters

(i.e. gamma [100Hz]). These results indicate the MSN DBS increases circuit-specific

hippocampal neurovascular activity in a frequency-dependent manner and does so in

manner that continues beyond the period of electrical stimulation.

Introduction

There is growing interest in utilizing neuromodulation to treat cognitive impairment associated with neurological and psychiatric disorders. Many of these disorders involve aberrant electrophysiology and cerebral blood perfusion [1,2]. Recent evidence demonstrates that electrical neuromodulation can improve functional outcomes [3,4]. Particularly, deep brain stimulation (DBS) has shown remarkable success in treating neurological diseases such as movement disorders and epilepsy, and there is increasing evidence for its efficacy in cognitive and psychiatric conditions.

Despite this growing utility, the underlying mechanism of DBS for cognitive outcomes remains largely unknown. Pre-clinical studies have been hindered by technological limitations, such as the inability to record electrical brain activity during stimulation and the low spatial resolution of electrographic measures. Functional ultrasound imaging (fUSI) is a relatively new technology that enables large-scale estimates of neural activity through measures of cerebral blood volume (CBV). fUSI provides a unique combination of high spatiotemporal resolution (~100 μm^3, up to 10 ms) and high sensitivity to slow blood flow (~1 mm/s velocity) across a large field of view. In fact, fUSI has already been proven to be an effective tool for imaging large-scale brain activity and pharmacodynamics [5–8]. As such, it is well-positioned to improve our understanding of the impact of DBS on large-scale brain networks during and immediately following stimulation.

In many disorders, cognitive dysfunction is accompanied by altered septohippocampal network activity. For instance, neural oscillatory patterns within the septohippocampal network, such as gamma- and theta-band activity, are

characteristically altered in disorders such as schizophrenia and Alzheimer's disease

and are often correlated with impaired memory [1,9–11]. Alterations in specific

neurotransmitter signal transduction pathways also play an important role in modulating

neural oscillatory activity. In particular, the glutamatergic *N*-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA)

receptor is crucial to regulating hippocampal theta and gamma oscillations and is the

predominant molecular control for synaptic plasticity and memory function [12–14] As

such, pharmacologic NMDA receptor antagonism (i.e. via MK-801) results in

characteristic changes to neural oscillatory patterns and memory dysfunction [15–19].

The medial septal nucleus (MSN) is a key structure in the septohippocampal

network that modulates sensory-motor processing and acts as a "pacemaker" for

hippocampal theta oscillations via dense glutamatergic, cholinergic, and GABAergic

projections to the hippocampus [20,21]. This makes the MSN a promising target for

DBS in cognitive disorders involving memory impairments [22]. Our recent work as well

as that of others suggest that modulating the septohippocampal network via MSN DBS

can restore cognitive impairment and memory dysfunction in preclinical models of

epilepsy, traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's disease, and schizophrenia [22–27].

In the current study, we utilize fUSI to characterize the effects of MK-801 on CBV

in the septohippocampal network (Fig. 1A) including the MSN, hippocampus, and

medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC). Within the same sagittal plane, we also image CBV

changes (ΔCBV) to regions of interest (ROIs) outside this network including the

striatum, thalamus, hypothalamus, and pallidum. Additionally, we determine the effect

of direct MSN stimulation on blood flow in these areas using two distinct frequencies,

theta (7.7Hz) and gamma (100Hz). Finally, we test the hypothesis that MSN theta-

frequency-specific stimulation can improve blood flow under conditions of reduced

NMDA function.

Figure 1

Figure 1. Experimental setup and fUSI recording protocol. A) Schematic illustration of connectivity between the MSN and ROIs. Arrowheads represent axonal projections to and/or from MSN. **B)** Experimental set-up showing the anesthetized mouse in a stereotaxic frame under the Iconeous One motorized probe mount. DBS stimulating electrodes were implanted on the left hemisphere and a sagittal plane of the right hemisphere was imaged**. C)** Diagram of the protocol for 60 minutes of continuous fUSI acquisition consisting of saline or 1.0 mg/kg MK-801 drug injection (at the 5-minute mark) and 5 minutes of gamma- or theta-frequency DBS (at the 45-minute mark).

Materials and Methods

Animals and surgical procedures

113   82 male 8–12-week-old C57BL/6 mice (Charles River Laboratories; Hollister, CA) were used in this study. fUSI data from two animals were excluded due to extreme values (Grubbs test for outliers, 98th percentile of all maximum change in pD intensities) that did not appear physiological [28,29]. The animals were divided into two main groups: saline vehicle control (n=46) and MK-801 drug-administered (n=34). Each group was then sub-divided into three categories: no stimulation (saline: n=14; MK-801: n=10), theta stimulation (saline: n=16, MK-801: n=12), and gamma stimulation (saline: n=14, MK-801: n=14).

Mice were anaesthetized with 5% isoflurane in O_2/N_2O (1:2) carrier gas and then maintained at a constant rate (1.5- 2%) through surgery and data acquisition. Body temperature was kept constant throughout recordings by placing animals on an electric heating pad. Hair was removed from the mouse's head for fUSI using a commercially available depilatory cream (Nair, Pharmapacks).

To implant DBS electrodes, mice were head-fixed in a stereotaxic frame (David Kopf instruments, Tujunga, CA) and a midline incision of the scalp was made to expose the skull. A 2mm burr hole was then drilled to implant bipolar stimulating electrodes (E363T/2/SPC ELEC .008"/.2MM, Plastics One Inc., Roanoke, VA) targeting the MSN (AP: +0.7mm, ML: -0.9mm, from bregma. Z: -4.39mm at 11.8 degrees) from the left hemisphere. Prior to implantation, the electrodes were connected to an electronic interface board (Neuralynx Inc., Bozeman, MT) and bent at 4.5mm from the tip to maximize the proximity of the fUSI probe to the skull. All procedures were approved by

the University of Southern California, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

(IACUC #21006).

Histology

Mice were euthanized immediately after the fUSI recording by isoflurane

overdose followed by transcardial perfusion using 50 mL of 0.1M sodium phosphate

buffer saline (PBS) and 50 mL of 4% paraformaldehyde. Brains were harvested and

stored in phosphate buffered saline at 4°C. To confirm electrode positioning within the

MSN, coronal sections were cut at 100µm thickness with a vibratome (Leica VT 1200;

Leica Biosystems, Buffalo Grove, IL) and then Nissl stained with Cresyl Violet (Fig.

2A,B).

Figure 2. Histological mapping of electrode placement in the MSN. A)
Representative Nissl stain of the mouse brain with a blood mark indicating the
electrode placement **B)** Annotation of the MSN from the Allen Reference Atlas –
Mouse Brain in the same slice position as A.

Data Acquisition

fUSI data were acquired using the *Iconeus One* system (Iconeus, Paris, France).

Image acquisition was performed using 128-channel linear ultrasound transducer array,

with 15 MHz center frequency and 0.1 mm pitch. This technique enables a large field of

view (12.8 mm width, 10 mm depth and 400 μm plane thickness) while maintaining high

spatial resolution (100 μm x 100 μm in-plane). The transducer was placed on the intact

skull and skin along a sagittal plane on the right side, contralateral to the implanted

stimulating electrodes (Fig. 1B). A 60-minute continuous fUSI signal acquisition

protocol was employed (Fig. 1C), after 5 minutes, an intraperitoneal (i.p) injection of

either 0.2cc of saline or MK-801 (1mg/kg) was given. At the 45-minute mark, mice

received either 5 minutes theta (7.7Hz), 5 minutes gamma (100Hz), or no stimulation in

the MSN, followed by an additional 10 minutes of fUSI recording (Fig. 1B). This

timepoint was chosen as the maximal concentration of MK-801 in the brain when given

systemically occurs 40-60 minutes after injection [30]. The MSN was electrically

stimulated at gamma and theta under the following parameters: 100 msec square wave

pulse width, and current of 80μA using a STG 4008 (Multi-Channel Systems, Baden-

Württemberg, Germany). These parameters were chosen because they have

previously been shown to improve memory function in animal models of spatial memory

impairment [23,25,27].

The target image plane was determined by co-registering a 3D whole-brain fUSI

image of each mouse with a standard Allen Mouse Common Coordinates Framework

brain atlas utilizing dedicated software available with the Iconeus One system (Fig. 3A)

[31]. The probe was fixed steadily throughout experiments on a motorized system with

the field of view (FOV) transverse and intersecting the co-registered sagittal plane.

Images were obtained from 200 compounded frames acquired with a 500Hz frame rate,

using 11 tilted plane waves separated by 2° (from -10° to +10° increment by 2°). These

were acquired at a 5500Hz pulse repetition frequency (PRF) using a real-time

continuous acquisition of successive blocks of 400ms (with 600ms pause between

pulses) of compounded plane wave images.

Data analysis

Data pre-processing:

The Iconeus One acquisition system generates power Doppler (pD) images pre-

processed with built-in phase-correlation based sub-pixel motion registration and

singular-value-decomposition (SVD) based clutter filtering algorithms [32]. These

algorithms were used to separate tissue signal from blood signal to obtain pD images

(Fig. 3B). To correct potential physiological and motion artifacts, we adopted rigid

motion correction techniques that have successfully been used in fUSI and other

neuroimaging studies [33–35]. These were combined with high frequency filtering

algorithms to eliminate noise artifacts. We employed a low-pass filter with normalized

passband frequency of 0.02 Hz, with a stopband attenuation of 60 dB that compensates

for delay introduced by the filter, to remove high-frequency fluctuations in the pD

signals.

Effects of MK-801 on CBV

We investigated the temporal effects of intraperitoneal MK-801 administration on

the septohippocampal circuit (hippocampus, mPFC) and surrounding regions (striatum,

pallidum, thalamus, hypothalamus). To do so, we generated event-related average

(ERA) time course curves of the CBV changes (ΔCBV) as a percentage change of the

pD signal from baseline activity for the selected ROIs. The average pD signal from 2

minutes prior to the saline or drug injection was used as the baseline. We utilized a

repeated measures analysis of variance (rmANOVA) to assess the effects and

interactions between drug (saline and MK801) and ROI factors over time. We fitted a

repeated measures '*within-design'* model to the CBV percentage change signals over

42-min interval (including 2 minutes just before the drug injection and the 40 minutes

after injection) for each mouse and ROI for the rmANOVA analysis. To further quantify

the relative differences in ΔCBV between saline-vehicle and MK-801-treated mice in

various ROIs, we used the last 2 minutes of recordings to compute the mean effects-

size differences in ΔCBVs and the 95% confidence interval of the effect size (if 95%

confidence interval contains zero, then the effect is not significant at the 0.05 level) in

each ROI. We also computed the Cohen's *d* value in each ROI as a measure of the

drug effect size that describes the standardized difference between the means of

ΔCBVs in the two groups of animals [36]. A Cohen's d value of 0.2 represents a small

effect size, 0.5 represents a moderate effect size, 0.8 represents a large size and

greater than 0.8 represents a very large size.

Effects of MSN DBS during stimulation on brain hemodynamics

We computed the ΔCBV for each ROI to investigate effects of MSN theta- and

gamma- frequency stimulation on the cerebral hemodynamics following saline control or

MK-801 injection. We observed ERA time-series of the ΔCBV of each selected ROI

relative to the average pD signal acquired 2 minutes prior to stimulation onset to

visualize the temporal dynamics of DBS effects to CBVs of the ROIs.   We utilized a

three-way rmANOVA to assess the effects and interactions between drug (saline and

MK801), stimulation (gamma, theta, no-stimulation) and ROI factors across time during

the stimulation process. Here, we fit a repeated measures '*within-design'* model to the

ΔCBV signals over the 7-min period (including 2 minutes prior to stimulation, 5 minutes

during stimulation) for each animal and ROI. Subsequently, we computed the mean

effects-size differences in ΔCBVs, the 95% confidence interval of the effect size, and

the Cohen's *d* value in each ROI as a measure of the stimulation effect size. We

measured the mean ΔCBVs during stimulation in theta [saline: n=16, MK-801: n=12],

gamma [saline: n=14, MK-801: n=14], and no-stimulation [saline: n=14; MK-801: n=10]

animal groups. The mean ΔCBVs were calculated utilizing the last 2 minutes of pD

signal during stimulation across animals in each of the three stimulation categories.

Effects of MSN DBS after stimulation offset on brain hemodynamics

We are also interested in assessing the effects of MSN DBS after stimulation offset. To

do so, we repeated the same analysis described above, but we used the 10 minutes of

pD signal after stimulation offset, plus 2 minutes prior to stimulation onset as a baseline.

The mean ΔCBVs were calculated utilizing the last 2 minutes of pD signal after

stimulation offset across animals in each of the three stimulation categories. Our goal is

to identify whether MSN DBS causes persistent and delayed changes in CBVs within

and/or outside the septohippocampal network.

Statistical analysis of drug and stimulation effects on ΔCBVs

All the analysis was performed using Matlab Version 9.13.0.2193358 (R2022b). We

assessed the drug and stimulation effects and interactions utilizing the Matlab functions

'fitrm' and *'ranova'* for the repeated measures model fitting and the rmANOVA

respectively. We utilized the Greenhouse-Geisser approximation to correct for the

possibility of non-compound symmetry (same variance in means and shared common

correlation in paired responses) in the ROI-time series assessed. The mean effect-size

differences and the *Cohen's d* values for the mean difference in ΔCBVs between saline

and MK801, as well as the between no-stimulation-gamma, no-stimulation-theta, and

gamma-theta were computed with the *'meanEffectSize'* Matlab function.

Figure 3. Functional ultrasound imaging (fUSI) of the mouse brain. A) 3D mouse brain model with fUSI probe positioning (white bar) and ROIs – hippocampus (HPF), medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC), hypothalamus (HYT), thalamus (TLM), pallidum (PDM), and striatum (STM), superimposed onto a mean grayscale fUSI vascular map of the sagittal mouse brain. **B)** pD image of cerebral blood volume (CBV) in a sagittal plane (max-min normalized relative scale).

Results

NMDA antagonist MK-801 reduced blood perfusion

We analyzed 40 minutes of pD signal from the septohippocampal circuit

(hippocampus, mPFC) as well as surrounding structures (hypothalamus, thalamus,

pallidum, and striatum) to assess the effects of MK-801 on cerebral hemodynamics (Fig.

1A). We quantified changes in CBV (ΔCBV) as a percent change relative to baseline

activity (average of 2 minutes pD signal acquired prior to drug injection). A repeated

measures ANOVA (factors treatment × ROI; where treatment is saline vs. MK-801 and

ROI is the 6 recorded brain areas) revealed that there was a statistically significant

effect over time ($F_{(2519, 56406)}$ = 8.76, p = 6.3 e-5) after Greenhouse-Geiser

approximation correction. To quantify the effect of MK-801 on CBV, we computed the

percentage change (i.e., ΔCBV) relative to baseline using the last two minutes before

stimulation onset (38-40 minutes after drug injection) and found a reduction of ΔCBV

(mean ± SEM) in the hippocampus (-3.6 ± 1.1 %), mPFC (-4.1 ± 0.61 %), hypothalamus

(-1.0 ± 0.2 %), pallidum (-1.5 ± 0.4 %), striatum (-1.7 ± 0.3 %), and thalamus (-3.0 ±

0.5 %). For saline-treated animals these values were: hippocampus (-0.7 ± 0.6 %),

mPFC (-0.1 ± 0.2 %), hypothalamus (-0.7 ± 0.6 %), pallidum (0.9 ± 0.4 %), striatum (-

0.3 ± 0.4 %), and thalamus (0.2 ± 0.4 %) (Fig. 4A-F, radar chart insert). The mean

effect-size difference in ΔCBVs and Cohen's d analysis comparing mean ΔCBV induced

by saline and MK-801 over a 2-minute interval (38 – 40 minutes post-drug injection),

revealed that MK-801 induces greater decreases in CBV than saline control in all ROIs

investigated (Fig. 4A-F, radar chart insert) - i.e., mPFC (ΔCBV mean difference

between saline and MK-801 animals ± confidence, Cohen's d; 3.96 ± 0.38 %, d= 0.42),

thalamus (3.17 ± 0.23 %, d= 0.55), hippocampus (2.82 ± 0.42 %, d= 0.27), pallidum

(2.42 ± 0.20 %, d= 0.49), hypothalamus (1.72 ± 0.12 %, d= 0.59) and striatum (1.33 ±

0.18 %, d= 0.29). Together, these results indicate that MK-801 reduces CBV both

within and outside of the septohippocampal network.

Figure 4. Event related average (ERA) temporal course curves prior to stimulation onset and mean ΔCBVs during the last 2 minutes in saline and MK-801 treated animals. A – F) Temporal course (42 minutes) of ΔCBV relative to baseline (2-minute average pD signal before saline or MK-801 drug injection) in the A) hippocampus, B) hypothalamus, C) mPFC, D) pallidum, E) striatum, and F) thalamus after saline [blue] and 1.0 mg/kg MK-801 [red] injection. The radar chart insert shows MK-801-induced decreases in CBV in all ROIs compared to saline over the last 2 minutes interval from 38-40 minutes post injection.

MSN stimulation increases CBV in saline control animals in a frequency- and region-

dependent manner.

We assessed whether theta- and gamma-frequency MSN stimulation has

disparate impacts on CBV measures in saline-treated control mice. ERAs of ΔCBV

reflect the temporal responses to theta, gamma, and no stimulation during and post

stimulation time periods (Fig. 5, 6). A three-way repeated measures ANOVA (factors,

treatment × ROI × DBS; where treatment is saline vs. MK-801, ROI is the 6 recorded

brain areas, and DBS is theta frequency vs. gamma frequency vs no DBS) was utilized

to examine the effects and interactions of drug, stimulation, and ROIs during the 5

minutes period after onset of MSN stimulation. The two-minute baseline period pre-

stimulation was included in the analysis. We found significant effects of drug over time

($F_{(419, 186036)}$ = 7.35, p = 1.85 e-8), stimulation over time ($F_{(823, 186036)}$ = 2.71, p =

7.20 e-4), as well as, interaction of drug and stimulation over time ($F_{(838, 186036)}$ =

1.96, p = 1.95 e-2) during the 5 minutes stimulation interval, after Greenhouse-Geisser

approximation correction. To further quantify the effects of DBS, we computed the mean

ΔCBV in the last 2 minutes during stimulation across animals in each stimulation

category and compared the mean-effect size differences in ΔCBVs between no

stimulation and stimulation in each ROI. We found that MSN theta stimulation increased

CBV compared to no-stimulation only in the mPFC (mean ΔCBV difference between

theta- and no-stimulation ± confidence, Cohen's d; 0.82 ± 0.12 %, d= 0.45) and

hippocampus (0.39 ± 0.12 %, d= 0.21). For the rest on ROIs the effect size magnitude

was either very small (i.e., Cohen's d <0.08) or theta-frequency stimulation caused

further reduction in CBVs compared to no-stimulation. On the other hand, MSN gamma

stimulation caused increases in CBV compared to no-stimulation in the mPFC (0.60 ±

0.11 %, d= 0.36), pallidum (0.38 ± 0.09 %, d= 0.30) and striatum (0.22 ± 0.06 %, d=

0.26). For the rest of the ROIs the effect size magnitude was either very small (i.e.,

Cohen's d < 0.095) or gamma-frequency stimulation resulted in further reduction in

CBVs compared to no-stimulation. When comparing the ΔCBV induced by the theta

and gamma stimulation in mPFC – the only ROI that exhibited moderate effect on both

types of stimulations – we found very small effect size on ΔCBV between the two types

of stimulations (mean ΔCBV differences between theta- and gamma-stimulation ±

confidence, Cohen's d; 0.22 ± 0.10, d= 0.14).

The next step was to assess the effects of DBS after stimulation offset (i.e., post-

stimulation). To do so, we conducted a three-way repeated measures ANOVA (factors,

treatment × ROI × DBS; where treatment is saline vs. MK-801, ROI is the 6 recorded

brain areas, and DBS is theta frequency vs. gamma frequency vs no DBS) over the 10

minutes period after the offset of MSN stimulation. We found significant effects of drug

over time ($F_{(1019, 452436)} = 5.28$, $p = 1.27$ e-4), stimulation over time ($F_{(2038,}$

$_{452436)} = 3.67$, $p = 1.17$ e-4), as well as, interaction of drug and stimulation over time

($F_{(2038, 186036)} = 3.09$, $p = 9.40$ e-4), after Greenhouse-Geisser approximation

correction, across the 10 minutes post-stimulation interval. We further quantified the

post-effects of DBS by computing the mean ΔCBV in the last 2 minutes of the

acquisition – i.e., 8-10 minutes post-stimulation and comparing the mean-effect size

differences on ΔCBV between no stimulation and stimulation in each ROI. The results

showed that MSN theta stimulation causes increases in CBV compared to no-

stimulation in the hippocampus (mean ΔCBV differences between theta- and no-

stimulation ± confidence, Cohen's d; 1.30 ± 0.21, d= 0.42), mPFC (1.20 ± 0.22 %, d=

0.37) and thalamus (0.97 ± 0.11 %, d= 0.58) (Fig. 6A, F – radar chart). On the other

hand, MSN gamma stimulation resulted in an increase in CBV compared to no

stimulation in the mPFC (2.01 ± 0.22 %, d= 0.60), striatum (0.77 ± 0.14 %, d= 0.37) and

pallidum (0.61 ± 0.16 %, d= 0.25). When comparing the differences in ΔCBVs induced

by theta and gamma stimulation in the mPFC – the only ROI that exhibited medium to

moderate effect on both types of stimulations – we found that gamma induces higher

ΔCBV than theta stimulation with medium effect size difference (mean ΔCBV

differences between gamma- and theta-stimulation ± confidence, Cohen's d; 0.81 ±

0.17, d= 0.31).

<u>Theta-frequency stimulation elicits stronger CBV increases than gamma-frequency</u>

<u>stimulation in MK-801 treated animals.</u>

Recently, our group showed that theta, but not gamma frequency DBS of the

MSN improves spatial memory in MK-801 treated rats [27]. Therefore, we sought to

determine if MSN theta and gamma frequency stimulation had differing impacts on

neurovascular activity measures within memory-associated regions including the mPFC

and hippocampus as well as neighboring regions outside the septohippocampal network

(striatum, pallidum, thalamus, hypothalamus) following MK-801 drug-administration.

Again, we assessed the mean effect-size differences in ΔCBV between MSN theta-,

gamma-, and no-stimulation in each of the selected ROIs, relative to 2 minutes of pD

signal recordings just prior to stimulation onset. The analysis was performed after

repeated measures ANOVA over the stimulation and post-stimulation time intervals to

examine the effects and interactions of drug, stimulation, and ROI (results presented in

previous section). Fig. 7 and 8 display the ERA curves for ROIs in response to theta,

gamma, and no DBS during and post stimulation periods in the MK-801 group. We

found that MSN theta stimulation in the MK-801 treated group caused increased ΔCBV

with respect to no-stimulation group with medium to large effect size in all ROIs except

mPFC – i.e., hippocampus (mean ΔCBV differences between theta- and no-stimulation

± confidence, Cohen's d; 2.01 ± 0.20 %, d= 0.78), thalamus (0.49 ± 0.07 %, d= 0.54),

pallidum (0.36 ± 0.07 %, d= 0.43), striatum (0.18 ± 0.04 %, d= 0.31) and hypothalamus

(0.14 ± 0.04 %, d= 0.30)   (Fig. 7). Intriguingly, we only found a medium effect-size

increase in ΔCBV for the pallidum (0.60 ± 0.08 %, d= 0.53) and striatum (0.23 ± 0.05 %,

d= 0.38) between MSN gamma- stimulation and no-stimulation groups, during the

stimulation period. For the rest of the ROIs, the effect-size was very small.

Importantly, we found that ΔCBV increased in theta- relative to no-stimulation

animals after stimulation offset with medium to larger effects in the pallidum (1.26 ± 0.15

%, d=0.66), hippocampus (2.8 ± 0.37 %, d=0.60) and thalamus (1.24 ± 0.17 %, d= 0.57)

and small to medium effects in the striatum (0.50 ± 0.13 %, d= 0.31), hypothalamus

(0.21 ± 0.06 %, d= 0.28) and mPFC (0.64 ± 0.22 %, d= 0.22) (Fig. 8). Importantly, we

found only small to medium effects of gamma MSN stimulation on ΔCBV in the

pallidum, relative to stimulation animals, and after stimulation offset (mean ΔCBV

differences between gamna- and no-stimulation ± confidence, Cohen's d; 0.66 ± 0.13

%, d=0.39) (Fig. 8). For the rest of the ROIs, the effect-size was either very small (i.e.,

Cohen's d < 0.1 in hippocampus, striatum and thalamus) or gamma-frequency

stimulation resulted in further CBV reduction (i.e., in hypothalamus and mPFC)

compared to no-stimulation.

Additionally, our results showed medium or large mean effect-size differences in

ΔCBVs between the theta and gamma stimulated MK801 groups after stimulation offset

in the hippocampus (2.67 ± 0.28 %, d= 0.70), mPFC (1.83 ± 0.23 %, d= 0.59), and

thalamus (1.15 ± 0.14 %, d= 0.56) (Fig. 8). Together these results demonstrate that

theta-frequency stimulation elicits the strongest CBV response in MK-801-treated mice

in the hippocampus and pallidum, while gamma stimulation had almost no effect on

hippocampal CBV (Cohen's d = 0.03) and decreased CBV in the mPFC compared to

no-stimulation mice.

Figure 5. DBS ERA curves after stimulation onset and mean ΔCBVs in saline mice *during* the last 2 minutes of stimulation period. A – F) Temporal course (theta [orange], gamma [blue], no-stimulation [black]) of mean ΔCBV relative to baseline (2 minutes average pD signal prior to DBS) for the A) hippocampus, B) hypothalamus, C) mPFC, D) pallidum, E) striatum, and F) thalamus regions in the saline-treated animals. Radar chart insert gives the mean percentage ΔCBVs during stimulation for theta [orange], gamma [blue], and no-stimulation [dark gray] animals in the ROIs investigated. Means were calculated utilizing the last 2 minutes of pD

signals acquired during stimulation (3rd – 5th minute after stimulation onset) across animals in each stimulation category.

Figure 6. DBS ERA curves after stimulation onset and mean ΔCBVs in saline mice *during* the last 2 minutes of recordings in the post-stimulation period in 6 ROIs. Similar to Figure 5, but the radar chart gives the mean percentage ΔCBVs during post-stimulation for theta [orange], gamma [blue], and no-stimulation [dark

gray] for the A) hippocampus, B) hypothalamus, C) mPFC, D) pallidum, E) striatum, and F) thalamus regions in the saline-treated animals. Means were calculated utilizing the last 2 minutes of pD signals acquired post stimulation (8th – 10th minute after stimulation offset) across animals in each stimulation category.

Figure 7. DBS ERA curves after stimulation onset and mean ΔCBVs in MK-801 treated mice *during* the last 2 minutes of stimulation period A – F) Temporal

course (theta [red], gamma [blue], no-stimulation [black]) of mean ΔCBV relative to baseline (2 minutes average pD signal prior to DBS) for A) hippocampus, B) hypothalamus, C) mPFC, D) pallidum, E) striatum, and F) thalamus regions in the MK-801 drug injected mice. Radar chart insert gives the mean percentage ΔCBVs during stimulation for theta [red], gamma [blue], and no-stimulation [dark gray] animals in the ROIs investigated. Means were calculated utilizing the last 2 minutes of pD signals acquired during stimulation (3rd – 5th minute after stimulation onset) across animals in each stimulation category.

Figure 8. DBS ERA curves after stimulation onset and mean ΔCBVs in MK-801 treated mice *during* the last 2 minutes of recordings in the post-stimulation period. Similar to Figure 7, but the radar chart gives the mean percentage ΔCBVs in post-stimulation period for theta [red], gamma [blue], and no-stimulation [dark gray] for the A) hippocampus, B) hypothalamus, C) mPFC, D) pallidum, E) striatum, and F) thalamus regions in the MK-801 treated animals. Means were calculated utilizing the last 2 minutes of pD signals acquired post stimulation (8th – 10th minute after stimulation offset) across animals in each stimulation category.

Discussion

The present study utilized the high spatiotemporal resolution and sensitivity of

fUSI to demonstrate that acute administration of MK-801 causes a significant reduction

in CBV across all ROIs. Furthermore, we demonstrated that theta frequency MSN DBS

alters regions within the septohippocampal network, with the strongest effect on the

hippocampus. Intriguingly, the observed increase in hippocampal CBV remain even

after cessation of DBS. On the other hand, structures outside the septohippocampal

network, such as the hypothalamus and striatum, show less of a response to DBS.

These effects were less pronounced with gamma frequency stimulation with very small

effects on the hippocampus. These findings suggest that MSN theta frequency DBS can

deliver precise neuromodulation to cognitive networks [27].

MK-801 reduced CBV in all ROIs

MK-801 and other NMDA antagonists have been widely used in preclinical

models to mimic the behavioral and electrophysiological deficits associated with

schizophrenia [16,18,38,39]. However, the regionally specific effects of MK-801 on

CBV in such models is not well known. We observed that MK-801 reduced CBV across

all ROIs. Importantly, previous fMRI studies have observed reduced BOLD signals in

hippocampal and prefrontal areas in schizophrenia patients [40–42]. In this context, our

findings support the use of MK-801 as a neurovascular model of schizophrenia.

Furthermore, our study demonstrates the feasibility of using fUSI to identify network-

specific hemodynamic changes as an additional modality for studying neurocognitive

disorders.

<u>MSN theta stimulation was relatively specific to cognitive networks.</u>

We observed that theta frequency MSN DBS resulted in an increase to CBV in

the hippocampus in both the saline- and MK-801-treated animals. Importantly, this

effect was greatest in the hippocampus, which receives direct projections from the

MSN, and is a primary target for neuromodulatory interventions to treat memory

dysfunction [23–25,27]. In saline control animals, significant increases to CBV were

also observed in the mPFC (during and after stimulation) and thalamus (after

stimulation), both of which play important roles in memory function and receive direct

projections from the MSN (Fig. 1A) [22]. Interestingly, gamma stimulation did not alter

hippocampal CBV, but did increase regions of the brain that were anatomically closer to

the MSN. Specifically, mPFC CBV was increased in saline- treated animals, while the

pallidum and striatum were increased to a lesser degree in MK-801-treated animals.

This suggests that MSN gamma stimulation may have a local response to stimulation

but is less specific to the neural circuitry being stimulated.

<u>MSN theta stimulation increased hippocampal CBV during and after stimulation despite</u>

<u>NMDA antagonism.</u>

A leading hypothesis is that reduced N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptor-

mediated glutamatergic transmission underlies psychiatric conditions involving cognitive

and memory dysfunction [16,18,38,39,43,44]. Reductions to NMDA activity either

pharmacologically or through genetic manipulation have been shown to decrease theta

activity, increase gamma activity and lead to deficits in spatial navigation and memory

[16,17,27,45,46]. Research by our group has found that theta frequency (7.7 Hz), but

not gamma frequency (100 Hz) stimulation of the MSN during the Barnes maze task

improves spatial memory in rodents following pharmacological NMDA antagonism [27].

Interestingly, previous studies have also demonstrated that MSN theta stimulation prior

to the task can also improve spatial memory [23]. However, the question remains open

as to how MSN DBS mediates these improvements.

<u>MSN theta stimulation may drive high frequency or spiking activity via hippocampal</u>

<u>interneurons.</u>

A number of studies utilizing various modalities in combination with fUSI have

found a strong relationship between pD signal and neuronal activity [47–49]. This

relationship was also true for high frequency oscillatory activity (~100Hz) but was much

weaker for lower frequency oscillations [49]. This suggests that the theta-induced

increases to hippocampal CBV may reflect increased hippocampal gamma or spiking

activity, rather than increases to theta oscillatory activity itself. However, given that

gamma band activity is often correlated with spiking activity, differentiating between

changes in oscillatory dynamics and spiking activity is not possible in the present study

[50].

GABAergic interneurons in the hippocampus play an important role in

synchronizing hippocampal oscillatory activity. Indeed, inhibitory neurons are

hypothesized to be a primary source of dysfunction in pathologies involving NMDA

dysfunction (for review see [51]) and are inhibited by NMDA-antagonists [52,53]. One

possibility is that theta frequency MSN stimulation may, by briefly stimulating afferent

populations at theta-frequency, act as a 'reset' and allow synchronous innervation of

hippocampal interneurons that regulate the activity of glutamatergic pyramidal cells.

Indeed, it has been previously shown that optogenetic stimulation of GABAergic

neurons decreases spontaneous neural activity and leads to an increase in local blood

flow [54]. This hypothesis is further supported by a recent study by Nunez-Elizadle and

colleagues who observed that the relationship between the fUSI signal and firing rates

were greatest for putative interneurons [49]. Future studies combining single unit

activity and fUSI could test this hypothesis.

<u>MSN gamma stimulation did not affect hippocampal CBV.</u>

Our previous work suggests that MSN theta, but not gamma stimulation can

improve spatial memory in MK-801-treated rodents [27]. While MSN theta stimulation

increased hippocampal CBV during and after stimulation in MK-801-treated animals,

this was not true of MSN gamma stimulation. Gamma stimulation resulted in delayed

increases to mPFC CBV in saline-treated animals and had no effect on MK-801-treated

animals in any of the ROIs. These results suggest that MSN gamma stimulation is not

sufficient to engage hippocampal activity and highlights the importance of frequency

parameters in DBS paradigms for spatial memory. This is further supported by our

previous study demonstrating no improvement to spatial memory in MK-801 treated

animals with MSN gamma stimulation [27].

<u>Implications for neuromodulation</u>

We observed that theta-frequency stimulation of the MSN increased blood

perfusion in the hippocampus following cessation of the stimulus. These effects were

not observed using gamma stimulation and were still present even under conditions of

pharmacologic NMDA antagonism. While the current study is in anesthetized animals,

futures studies will investigate these effects in awake, behaving animals to determine

the relationship between ΔCBV in the septohippocampal network and measures of

memory function. It is worth noting that arguably the most effective form of

neuromodulation is still electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), which is performed under

anesthesia and also results in increases to cerebral blood flow [55,56]. However, ECT is

very non-specific, this lack of specificity may well contribute to its detrimental effect on

memory [57]. Alternatively, transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) is most effective

when applied focally to awake, alert patients [58,59]. Because DBS can combine a

relatively high degree of modulation in deep structures with the spatial specificity of

TMS, it is plausible that DBS may have more benefits beyond that of ECT or TMS in

treating disorders of cognitive function.

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