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EFFECTS OF MODULATED AND CONTINUOUS MICROWAVE IRRADIATION ON PYROANTIMONATE PRECIPITABLE CALCIUM CONTENT IN JUNCTIONAL COMPLEX OF MOUSE SMALL INTESTINE

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(Received for publication November 17, 1993, and in revised form December 29, 1993)

Abstract

The pyroantimonate precipitable calcium content of intestinal epithelial cells was investigated in mice following total body irradiation with 2450 MHz continuous and low frequency (16 Hz) square modulated waves. In the control animals the reaction products appeared in the intercellular space of adjacent cells including intermediate junctions and desmosomes and were absent in the area of tight junctions. Immediately after low frequency modulated microwave irradiation at 0.5 and 1mW/cm2 power densities, a rapid distribution of pyroantimonate precipitable calcium content was observed. The pyroantimonate deposits were located on the cytoplasmic side of lateral membrane, in the area of junctional complex, including tight junction, and in other parts of lateral plasma membrane. These changes were reversible and 24 hours after the irradiation the distribution of pyroantimonate deposits was similar to the control. Continuous waves with same energy not altered the distribution of precipitable calcium. We conclude the low frequency modulated microwave irradiation can modify the calcium distribution without heat effects.

Key Words: Small intestine, modulated and continuous microwave fields, tight junction, pyroantimonate precipitable calcium, irradiation, electron microscopy.

Introduction

The biological effects of electric and magnetic fields as potentially hazardous environmental factors have been investigated extensively (Williams et al., 1984; Roberts et al., 1986; Adey 1990a, b; Blackman, 1990; Tenforde, 1991; Somosy et al., 1991). The mechanisms leading to subcellular effects of electromagnetic radiation depend on the dose and mode of irradiation (Adey, 1990a, b, Tenforde, 1991). The high intensity waves (>1mW/cm2) exert thermal effects (Roberts et al., 1986), however, weak, extremely-low-frequency (ELF) (below 100 Hz) electric and magnetic fields can interact with living material via non thermal interactions (Adey, 1990a, b, Tenforde, 1991; McLeod et al., 1992).

The plasma membrane is a sensitive target of ELF radiation (Blackman et al., 1979; Williams et al., 1984; Roberts et al., 1986; Adey 1990a, b, Somosy et al., 1991; Tenforde 1991). The ELF microwave and electromagnetic field irradiation modulate the amount of charged sites on the cell surfaces (Luben et al., 1988; Smith et al., 1991; Somosy et al., 1991), and the distribution of cell surface receptors and expression of cell surface markers (Wiktor-Jedrzejczak et al., 1977). They can modify the binding and/or response of biological active substances as mitogenic compounds (Roberts et al., 1987; Cossarizza et al., 1989, Walleczek, 1992), hormones (Luben et al., 1982; Adey, 1990a, b), alter the membrane hydrophobicity (Smith et al., 1991), and cause conformational rearrangement of membrane macromolecules (Bogolyubov et al., 1988). All these effects lead to the alteration of membrane-related cell functions, including the increase of the blood-brain barrier permeability (Williams et al., 1984), modify the potassium permeability (Liburdy and Penn, 1984; McLeod et al., 1992), change the transport of insulin, and other hormones (Roberts et al., 1986; Tenforde, 1991), and alteration some membrane bound enzyme activities (reviewed by Adey 1990a, b). Since calcium plays an essential role in a variety of cell activities, it is reasonable to suppose that the effects of ELF irradiation are somehow connected to disturbances in intracellular calcium homeostasis. Reports published on this subject support this notion. An increase of calcium efflux upon modulated microwave irradiation was observed in nervous tissues (Blackman et al., 1979; Lin-Liu and Adey 1982, Dutta et al., 1984; Blackwell and Saunders 1986; Roberts et al., 1986) and an elevated calcium uptake...
Table I. The applied averaged SAR and SA of the experiments as calculated for 200 µW/cm², 500 µW/cm² and 1000 µW/cm² power density respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power density (µW/cm²)</th>
<th>SAR* (mW/g)</th>
<th>SA** (J/g)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>0.33 ± 0.05</td>
<td>1.78 ± 0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>0.82 ± 0.12</td>
<td>4.43 ± 0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1.64 ± 0.25</td>
<td>8.86 ± 1.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* Calculated from the SAR measurement at 11 mW/cm²)
(** Calculated from SAR multiplied with exposure time)

induced by modulated electromagnetic fields was in the mucosa of the chick small intestine and lymphocytes (Walleczek and Liburdy, 1990, Klavinsh et al., 1991, Lyle et al., 1991, Liburdy, 1992). However, data on the redistribution of calcium inside the cells and in the areas of their contacts following either continuous or modulated microwave irradiation are not available in the literature. This prompted us to study the calcium content of low intensity microwave irradiated intestinal epithelial cells by electronmicroscopic histochemical methods.

Materials and Methods

Animals

Male CFLP mice were maintained under standard laboratory conditions for our experiments. Experimental groups consisting of 3 animals each were irradiated as indicated below. The experiments were carried out in three parallels.

Microwave exposure and dosimetry

The mice were total body microwave (CW) and a amplitude modulated mode (AM) irradiated for 3 hours with either 0.1, 0.5 and 1 mW/cm² energies, and were killed by cervical dislocation immediately, or 30 minutes, 1, 3 and 24 hours after irradiation. The irradiation were performed in anechoic room (2.55m x 1.8m x 2.9m) with a standard horn antenna (G=14 dB). The microwave generator (TKl model TR) was used in CW or external modulation mode. A function generator (OMKER model) was coupled to the microwave source. The carrier frequency was 2.45 GHz. The 16 Hz rectangular waveform (on/off ratio 50-50 %) amplitude modulated and CW microwave signal were amplified by a traveling-wave tube amplifier (TWT, Hughes model). The incident power toward the horn antenna was measured by directional coupler (NARDA model) and microwave power meter continuously (Fig. 1).

In order to quantify the Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) in the exposed objects a phantom model (e'= 48, e'' = 17, c = 1 cal/ Cg) was made according to Andreucetti et al. (1988) and Surowiec et al. (1992). In the mouse-shaped tissue equivalent polyacrilamide phantom (25.5 g +/- 4.5 g) the SAR was measured by triple-junction thermocouple (diameter 0.011 mm, constantine/manganin) (Hand and Johnson, 1984). The SAR measurements were made at 11 mW/cm² with 30 sec exposure duration. The multiprobe (3 junctions) thermocouple was inserted into the phantom tissue at 1.2 +/- 0.2 cm depth. The average SAR and specific absorption (SA) of phantom models in the plastic cage at the used power densities is shown in the Table I.

Electron microscopy, cytochemistry

From every single animal, two pieces of small intestine from the duodenal region (about 0.5 cm) were cut. One of them was fixed by 1 M phosphate buffered 5% glutaraldehyde (pH 7.3) at 4 C, and postfixed in 1% OsO₄. Another sample, was immersed in ice cold 2% glutaraldehyde (Merck) buffered with potassium acetate (Reanal) containing 0.05M potassium pyroantimonate (Merck) for 1-2 hours, rinsed in same buffer and postfixed in 1% osmium tetroxide containing 0.05 M potassium pyroantimonate for 1 hour (Eisenman et al. 1979). After fixations the pieces of tissues (five from one sample) were dehydrated through a graded
calcium content upon microwave irradiation ethanol series to propylene oxide and embedded in Durcupan AC (Fluka). The samples were cut with diamond knives on an LKB ultratome and the sections were examined in a JEOL 100CX transmission electron microscope.

Results

In the control animals the reaction products of the potassium pyroantimonate treatment appeared as dense deposits on the microvilli and in the intercellular space between adjacent cells as well as in the area of desmosomes and intermediate junctions (Figs. 2, 3). They were, however absent in the tight junctions (Fig. 3). Limited number of dense deposits were also seen in the cytoplasm and on the mitochondria. The goblet cells were heavily labeled by pyroantimonate precipitates (Fig. 2 insert).

Continuous microwave fields in the investigated energy range (Fig. 4) and modulated microwave irradiation with 0.1 mW/cm² (not shown) did not alter the morphology of junctional complex or distribution of calcium containing pyroantimonate deposits on small intestine. However of modulated microwave irradiation at higher energies (0.5 and 1 mW/cm²) caused marked changes in the distribution of pyroantimonate precipitates (Figs. 5, 6) which were localized on the cytoplasmic leaflet of plasma membranes, both in the junctional area, including tight junctions, and lateral plasma membranes. One day after modulated microwave irradiation, at either 0.5 and 1 mW/cm² power densities the distribution of pyroantimonate deposits became similar to that of the control (Fig. 7).

Discussion

The pyroantimonate method provides information about state of calcium in tissues and cells in pH range 7.2-7.8 as shown some microanalytical data (Simson and Spicer, 1975; Mentre and Escag, 1988; Mentre and Halperen, 1989; Eisenman et al., 1979; Bonhomme et al., 1993). The presence of calcium in the pyroantimonate deposits on small intestine was shown in our earlier electron spectroscopy and electron energy loss spectrometry results (Somosy et al., 1993).

Several reports have shown that calcium pyroantimonate precipitates are localized in the lateral membrane regions of a variety of epithelial cells, i.e. in hard tissue forming cells (Kogaya and Furushi, 1988), liver (Mentre and Halperen, 1989), intestinal membranes (Satir and Gilula, 1970; Oschman and Wall, 1972). The calcium probably binds to structural proteins of intermediate junctions and desmosomes (Garrod 1986; Geiger and Ginsberg, 1991), and to other less well characterized sites on the cell surface e.g. to cell surface's polycationic molecules (Ady et al., 1969, Matsukubo et al., 1981). According to theoretical models the interaction between ELF field and electrical double layer of cell surface may cause currents in pericellular fluids and may modify intrinsic conformational equilibrium of membrane domains (enzymes) (Ady 1990 a, b, Tenforde, 1991). These biophysical alterations may modify calcium content and/or distribution in the cell membrane and disturb cellular functions regulated by the calcium signal transduction pathway (Ady 1990 a, b). Our experimental data support these suggestions. The rapid redistribution of pyroantimonate precipitable
Calcium Content Upon Microwave Irradiation

Figure 4. Junctional complexes of continuous (A) and modulated (B) microwave irradiated small intestine. The power densities were 1 mW/cm², the animals were killed immediately after irradiation. Continuous wave did not cause any changes of morphology and distribution of pyroantimonate precipitable calcium, however pulsed waves with the same energy altered the distribution of reaction products. MV = microvilli, TJ = tight junction, IJ = intermediate junction, D = desmosome, M = mitochondria. Bar: A = 0.5 µm, B = 0.4 µm.

Figure 5. Junctional complexes of modulated microwave irradiated small intestine. Power densities were 1 mW/cm², the animals were killed immediately after irradiation. The sections were cut approximatively perpendicular (A) and parallel with the plane of the junctional complex (B). The pyroantimonate precipitates were localized at the outer side of tight junctions (TJ) and intermediate junctions (IJ) and at the cytoplasmic surface of lateral membranes (*), too. D = desmosome. Bar: A = 0.4 µm, B = 0.3 µm.

Figure 6. Junctional complex of modulated microwave irradiated small intestine. The power density was 0.5 mV/cm², the animals were killed 30 minutes after irradiation. The tight junctions (TJ) were also labeled by pyroantimonate precipitates (* insert), the amount of reaction products increased, and they also localized at the cytoplasmic surface of plasma membrane (→). IJ = intermediate junction, D = desmosome. Bar = 0.5 µm, insert = 0.2 µm.

Figure 7. Junctional complex of modulated microwave irradiated (1mV/cm²) small intestine after 24 hours. The distribution of reaction products was similar to the control. TJ = tight junction, IJ = intermediate junction, D = desmosome. Bar: 0.5 µm.

calcium upon exposure to low frequency-modulated, nonthermal microwave field observed in this study, points to an enhanced calcium uptake from the lateral extracellular space. Similar observations were recently published by Wałecek and Liburdy (1990); Klavins et al. (1991); Lyle et al. 1991; Liburdy (1992). The mechanism of rapid dislocation of calcium from intercellular space to the cytoplasmic side of plasma membrane remains to be elucidated as an effect of irradiation (similar to vinblastine effects) on Ca-pump enzymes, which normally maintain the low level of intracellular calcium (Eisenman et al., 1992). Since the local concentration of calcium modulates the structural stability and functions of the elements of junctional complex (Garrod 1986; Geiger and Ginsberg, 1991, Nilsson, 1991), the observed decrease of calcium content in the junctional area may explain the loss of tight junction mediated barrier functions (Bawin et al., 1975; Hecht et al., 1988; Nilsson, 1991). A similar explanation was suggested by Williams et al. (1984) for the increased permeability of the blood-brain barrier following microwave irradiation. Our preliminary data showing an increased ruthenium red permeability of an epithelial layer upon 1 mW/cm² irradiation with pulsed microwave are also in agreement with this suggestion.

Acknowledgment

The authors gratefully acknowledge the interest and support of Professors Drs L. B. Sztyanyik, Director-General and G. J. Koteles Deputy-Director of the Institute. This study was partially supported by the grant from PHARE ACCORD Found (0472 and 0492).

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Discussion with Reviewers

D.R. Eisenmann: What was the basis for choosing the level of radiation utilized in these experiments? How does this compare with environmental levels?

Authors: The basis for choosing the level of radiation was as follows: The radiation protection standards in the microwave frequency range are between 0.05 - 5 mW/cm$^2$ (as a permissible levels for public or occupational workers) depending on the country where it is applied. There are very large differences in the value of permissible exposure levels of standards between the US and European countries and inside the European region as well. The ANSI and NCRP guidelines recommend 5 mW/cm$^2$ for 8 hours, the standards in the European countries are about 1 mW/cm$^2$, the permissible level in the Hungarian standard is 0.1 mW/cm$^2$, and the guidelines of ICNIRP (former IRPA/INIRC) is 1 mW/cm$^2$. Only the NCRP pointed out that the permissible level of extremely low frequency (below 300 Hz) amplitude modulated exposure has to be reduced in comparison to the continuous wave exposure. The applied exposure level in our experiments is comparable to the permissible levels of guidelines and standards in the European countries and US. The above standards and guidelines are under very heavy debate concerning the permissible levels especially on the question of health risk of mobile phone systems (GSM). However, work place the environment (the area of radars, microwave industrial machines) and even the front of microwave ovens may create an exposure level comparable to that used in our experiments.

D.R. Eisenmann: Is it possible that the calcium dislocation is occurring because of an effect on Ca-pump enzymes which normally maintain the low level of intracellular calcium as compared to surrounding tissue fluids?

Authors: Yes. We plan to investigate Ca-ATP-ase enzyme activity upon irradiation.

W.R. Adey: There has been no consideration of possible diffusion of calcium away from the original in vivo cellular and subcellular compartments before fixation occurred.

Authors: The diffusion and/or distribution changes of any ions or molecules after fixation are a fundamental problem with some histochemical reactions. According to literature data (Simson and Spicer, 1975, Mentre and Escaig, 1988, Mentre and Halperen, 1989, Eisenman et al. 1979, Bonhomme et al, 1993) in case the precipitation of calcium is rapid and localization of calcium does not change after fixation procedure.

W.R. Adey: What quantification have the authors made of the reported disposition of increased calcium in the vicinity of tight junctions?

Authors: It is possible to quantify histochemical reactions by morphometric methods or direct measurement of calcium content by microanalytical (i.e., electron spectroscopy, or electron energy loss spectrometry) investigations. Taking in to consideration the fact that the tight junction area did not contain calcium in the control samples, our observations of calcium in this region upon irradiation, may be of significance without quantification.