

Chapter 5

Targeting Carbonic Anhydrase Isozymes in the Treatment of Neurological Disorders



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Abstract Carbonic anhydrases (CAs) are widely expressed in the nervous system where they play important physiological roles. In the brain and other parts of the system, different isozymes show unique distribution patterns, some of them being present in neurons (CA II, V, VII, XIV), capillary endothelium (CA IV), microglia (CA III), choroid plexus (CA II, III, XII, XIV), astrocytes (CA II and V), oligodendrocytes (CA II and XIII), and myelin sheath (CA II). Nervous tissues also express three carbonic anhydrase-related proteins (CARP VIII, X, XI), which may be involved in the brain development processes. Future research is needed to define the exact roles of these highly conserved CA isoforms and to design novel treatment strategies for the diseases caused by defects or abnormal regulation of CARPs. Enzymatically active CA isozymes are known drug targets to treat various neurological disorders including epilepsy, acute mountain sickness, pseudotumor cerebri, and brain edema. In this review article, we describe how the clinically approved CA inhibitors are used for the treatment of these diseases.

Keywords Brain · Carbonic anhydrase · Drug · Expression · Inhibitor · Neurology

5.1 Expression and Function of Enzymatically Active Carbonic Anhydrases in the Nervous System

The presence of carbonic anhydrase (CA) activity in the brain was described for the first time in 1943 (Ashby 1943). In the nervous system, CAs play various important roles, e.g., in fluid and ion compartmentation (Bourke and Kimelberg 1975), the formation of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) (Maren 1967), neuronal signal transduction

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Table 5.1 Distribution of CA isozymes in different cell types of the central nervous system

Cell type	Isozymes
Oligodendrocytes	II, XIII (Roussel 1979; Ghandour 1980,1979; Langley 1980; Kumpulainen and Korhonen 1982; Kumpulainen 1983; Kida 2006; Lehtonen 2004)
Astrocytes	II, V (Cammer 1991; Kimelberg et al. 1982; Snyder 1983; Ghandour 2000; Cammer and Tansey 1988a,b; Cammer and Zhang 1992; Jeffrey et al. 1991)
Myelin sheath	II (Roussel 1979; Kumpulainen and Korhonen 1982)
Choroid plexus	II, III, XII, XIV (Kumpulainen and Korhonen 1982; Kida 2006; Nogradi et al. 1993; Parkkila 2001; Kallio 2006; Halmi et al. 2006)
Microglial cells	III (Nogradi 1993)
Endothelial cells	IV (Ghandour 1992)
Neurons	II, V, VII, XIV (Ruusu vuori 2004; Kida 2006; Parkkila 2001; Ghandour 2000)

(Ruusu vuori 2004; Makani 2012), seizure activity (Anderson et al. 1984), the respiratory response to carbon dioxide (Ridderstrale and Hanson 1985), and the generation of bicarbonate for biosynthetic reactions (Cammer 1991).

The distribution of various CA isozymes in the brain is summarized in Table 5.1. In an early histochemical study, the highest CA activity was shown in the areas of mouse brains that were rich in myelinated fibers and glial cells (Korhonen et al. 1964). Several early immunohistochemical studies concluded that the mammalian brain contains CA mainly or exclusively in oligodendrocytes (Roussel 1979; Ghandour 1980,1979; Langley 1980; Kumpulainen and Korhonen 1982; Kumpulainen 1983). Myelin sheaths were also found to contain CA II (Roussel 1979; Kumpulainen and Korhonen 1982), which prompted the idea that CA II could be a biomarker for myelin degradation in demyelinating diseases (Kumpulainen 1985; Parkkila 1997).

The expression of CA II in astrocytes has been a controversial matter, and some findings suggested that these cells may contain CA II at relatively low levels (Roussel 1979; Kimelberg et al. 1982; Snyder 1983). The presence of CA II in astrocytes was questioned since *in situ* hybridization showed CA II mRNA expression in oligodendrocytes but not in astrocytes (Ghandour and Skoff 1991). Neurons have generally been considered to lack CA II, but there have been some exceptions to this notion, and obviously some subpopulations of neurons may express it (Kida 2006; Tanimoto et al. 2005).

Nogradi demonstrated CA II and CA III immunoreactivity in active brain macrophages, whereas resting microglial cells expressed only CA III (Nogradi 1993). The changes in CA II expression that occur in microglial cells during development and activation may correlate with the metabolic and immunological states of the cells.

The choroid plexus is one of the main sites of CA expression within the central nervous system, and the significance of CA activity for CSF formation is well documented (Maren 1967; Tschirgi et al. 1954; Brown 2004). CA II and CA III were found in the epithelial cells of the choroid plexus by Kumpulainen and Korhonen

(1982) and Nogradi et al., respectively (1993). In addition to these cytoplasmic forms, the choroid plexus contains at least three membrane-associated isozymes. First, CA XIV was found in a limited population of choroid plexus epithelial cells (Parkkila 2001). Another immunohistochemical study demonstrated strong expression of both CA IX and CA XII in the choroid plexus (Ivanov 2001). Later, the positive signal for CA XII was located to the basolateral membranes of the choroid plexus epithelial cells (Kallio 2006), and a role for CA XII in the recycling of carbon dioxide into the epithelial cells was proposed (Halmi et al. 2006).

The membrane-associated CA IV has been demonstrated on the luminal surface of capillary endothelial cells (Ghandour 1992). The strategic location on the luminal face of the blood-brain barrier suggests that CA IV may participate in the export of carbon dioxide from brain tissues. In 2006, it was shown that CA IV is expressed on the surfaces of astrocytes (Svichar 2006). Using CA IV and XIV double knockout mice, it was observed that both membrane-associated CAs contribute to extracellular buffering in the central nervous system, and CA IV seems to be the more important extracellular CA in the hippocampus (Shah 2005; Svichar 2009). It has been shown that thyroid hormone signaling regulates the expression of CA IV in the brain (Vujovic 2015).

There have been very few studies on the expression and role of mitochondrial CA VA and VB in the nervous system. In the first paper, Ghandour and coworkers demonstrated that the mitochondrial enzyme is present in both astrocytes and neurons (Ghandour 2000). At that moment, it was not known whether the neuronal isozyme was CA VA or CA VB. Western and Northern blot experiments later confirmed that the isozyme was indeed CA VB, which generally shows a wider expression pattern in tissues compared to CA VA (Shah 2000). Several potential functions have been proposed for the mitochondrial enzyme (Ghandour 2000): It could play a role in gluconeogenesis in astrocytes by providing bicarbonate ions for the pyruvate carboxylase, the neuronal CA V could be involved in the regulation of the intramitochondrial calcium levels, and it could also participate in bicarbonate ion-induced GABA responses by regulating the bicarbonate homeostasis in neurons. Kaila's group later reported that it is the other isozyme, CA VII, that is the key molecule in the generation of high-frequency stimulation-induced tonic GABAergic excitation (Ruusuvaori 2004).

Although the expression of CA IX seems quite limited and generally weak in the central nervous system, it may still carry out important functions in the regulation of behavior and maintenance of tissue integrity. Preliminary observations suggested mild behavioral changes and a morphological disruption of brain histology in CA IX-deficient (*Car9* (-/-)) mice. Therefore, a one-year follow-up study was conducted in which both the behavior and brain histology of *Car9* (-/-) and wild-type mice were monitored (Pan 2012). Morphological analysis revealed vacuolar degenerative changes in the brains of *Car9* (-/-) mice. The changes became visible at the age of eight to ten months. Behavioral tests showed that the *Car9* (-/-) mice exhibited abnormal locomotor activity and poor performance in a memory test. To further identify the transcriptomic responses to CA IX deficiency in the brain, genome-wide cDNA microarray analyses were performed. Functional annotation revealed

that the genes with increased expression were involved in several processes, such as RNA metabolism, and the genes with reduced expression were implicated in other important processes, including the regulation of cellular ion homeostasis. Notably, the biological processes “behavior” and “locomotory behavior” were the two prominent terms overrepresented among the downregulated genes.

The distribution and role of CA XIII are poorly known at this moment. The first article on CA XIII showed a positive mRNA signal in the mouse brain and located the enzyme to the oligodendrocytes and nerve fibers (Lehtonen 2004).

5.2 CA Inhibitors in the Treatment of Neurological Diseases

The classical CA inhibitor acetazolamide is clinically used for the treatment of acute high-altitude illness (AHAI), brain edema, pseudotumor cerebri, and epilepsy, in addition to the nonneurological indications. This inhibitor has also been tested for the treatment of hydrocephalus because there are no significant noninvasive treatment alternatives (Groat and Neumiller 2013), and the reduction of CSF production would be of interest as a treatment strategy. Some studies have indeed shown that both acetazolamide and a well-known diuretic, furosemide, could be useful to reduce CSF production by the choroid plexus. As with lumbar puncture, these agents are used in low-birthweight infants who will have a low success rate with shunt placement or endoscopic ventriculostomy. There is no evidence that either of these medications increases survival rates, and a Cochrane review concluded that therapy with acetazolamide or furosemide is neither effective nor safe for treating posthemorrhagic ventricular dilatation in infants (Whitelaw et al. 2001).

5.3 CA Inhibitors in the Treatment of Acute High-Altitude Illness

Acute high-altitude illness (AHAI) is an encompassing term for the range of pathology that the unacclimatized individual may develop when exposed to hypoxia at high altitude (Smedley and Grocott 2013). The term AHAI covers acute mountain sickness (AMS), high-altitude cerebral edema (HACE) and high-altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE). The symptoms of AMS include headache, dizziness, nausea, insomnia, anorexia, and difficulty sleeping. Progression to HACE is characterized by altered mental status, reduced consciousness and ataxia.

Acetazolamide is considered one of the key medications for both AMS prevention and treatment and can also be used as an adjunct to dexamethasone in HACE treatment (Table 5.2) (Luks 2010). The severity of additional diseases of high altitude may also be reduced by acetazolamide, including HAPE and chronic mountain sickness (CMS) (Swenson 2014). It is noteworthy that the beneficial effect of acetazolamide

Table 5.2 Recommended medications used in the prevention and treatment of AMS and HACE (Luks 2010)

Medication	Indication	Route	Dosage in adults
Acetazolamide	AMS, HACE prevention	Oral	125 mg twice per day
	AMS, HACE ^a treatment	Oral	250 mg twice per day
Dexamethasone	AMS, HACE prevention	Oral	2 mg every 6 h or 4 mg every 12 h
	AMS, HACE treatment	Oral, IV, IM	AMS: 4 mg every 6 h HACE: 8 mg once, then 4 mg every 6 h

IV intravenous; *IM* intramuscular; ^aAcetazolamide can be used at this dose as an adjunct to dexamethasone in HACE treatment, but dexamethasone remains the primary treatment for that disorder

in high-altitude illness may not be related to the reduction of CSF production only. It has been shown that acetazolamide also blocks aquaporin-4 (AQP4) water channels (Huber 2007), the main component of the glial-associated lymphatic pathway called the glymphatic system (Plog and Nedergaard 2018). Therefore, it is obvious that acetazolamide can reduce the swelling of the brain tissue in the hypobaric hypoxia condition by modulation of the glymphatic system.

5.4 CA Inhibitors in the Treatment of Pseudotumor Cerebri

Pseudotumor cerebri is a neurological disease where intracranial pressure increases for no obvious reason. Symptoms mimic those of a brain tumor, even though no tumor is present. When no underlying cause of the increased intracranial pressure is discovered, pseudotumor cerebri may also be called idiopathic or benign intracranial hypertension. It is almost exclusively a disease of obese young women (Wall 2014). The increased intracranial pressure associated with pseudotumor cerebri can cause swelling of the optic nerve and result in vision loss. The key factor for the pathogenesis of pseudotumor cerebri is the accumulation of CSF. This may be caused by either increased fluid production or decreased fluid reabsorption. Several CAs are expressed in the choroid plexus (Table 5.1), the site of CSF production. Therefore, it was reasonable to consider CA inhibitors as potential treatments for pseudotumor cerebri. In fact, it was first documented in the 1950s that acetazolamide reduces intracranial pressure (Atkinson and Ward 1958). Since then, it has been widely used in the first-line therapy of pseudotumor cerebri, although solid documentation of the effectiveness was lacking for many years (Thurtell and Wall 2013). A large, multi-center, randomized controlled trial was conducted in 2010–2014, comparing the efficacy of weight loss and placebo with weight loss and acetazolamide as treatments for mild to moderate idiopathic intracranial hypertension (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/>

[show/NCT01003639](#)). The main result indicated that the use of acetazolamide with a low-sodium weight-reduction diet compared with diet alone resulted in modest improvement in the visual field function of patients with idiopathic intracranial hypertension and mild vision loss (Committee et al. 2014). There is no standardized dosing regimen for acetazolamide as a treatment of pseudotumor cerebri. It has been suggested that a reasonable starting dose could be 500 mg twice daily, gradually increasing to a maximum of 4 g daily in twice-daily doses depending on the treatment outcome and potential side effects of the drug (Thurtell and Wall 2013). Methazolamide, another CA inhibitor, can be tried when the side effects of acetazolamide are intolerable (Thurtell and Wall 2013). In a recent review, Supuran predicted that no major changes would occur in the use of acetazolamide in the treatment of intracranial hypertension within the near future because it is a safe, nontoxic and inexpensive drug that is not protected by any patents (Supuran 2015).

Topiramate, a widely used anticonvulsant, is the third potential CA inhibitor that has been proposed as a treatment of pseudotumor cerebri (Thurtell and Wall 2013). It has a clear anti-obesity effect causing dose-dependent weight loss (Ben-Menachem 2003; Bray 2003), which is considered a desired outcome in the treatment of pseudotumor cerebri. Compared to acetazolamide, topiramate seems to show similar efficacy for improvement of visual field grades (Celebisoy 2007).

5.5 CA Inhibitors in the Treatment of Brain Edema

As discussed above, acetazolamide is clinically used to reduce intracranial pressure due to pseudotumor cerebri. Even though it has been used much less in other forms of neurological/neurosurgical diseases associated with increased intracranial pressure, it has been successfully applied in certain neurosurgical conditions for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes. Acetazolamide is anti-edematous and has neuroprotective properties that have been discussed in the literature (Szczygielski 2019).

Mild traumatic brain injury is a relatively common disease entity experienced in accidents, on the battlefield, and in sports. Astrocyte cellular edema, where AQP4 is involved, is an important factor leading to high morbidity after brain injury. As a blocking agent of AQP4, acetazolamide could represent a potential drug for the treatment of mild traumatic brain injury. Sturdivant and coworkers recently investigated whether acetazolamide could prevent AQP4-driven cell swelling using a 3D astrocyte model of mild traumatic brain injury (Sturdivant 2016). First, they proved that AQP4 expression was significantly increased 24 h after the procedure, mimicking mild traumatic brain injury. The procedure resulted in an increase in cell swelling within 30 min of mild traumatic brain injury, which was significantly reduced in the presence of acetazolamide. Cell death was also significantly reduced when acetazolamide was added shortly before the trauma procedure, supporting the neuroprotective role of the drug. To date, there are no clinical studies addressing the use of acetazolamide in this indication.

5.6 CA Inhibitors in the Treatment of Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a very common neurological disease, and seizures are possible in any individual in response to an appropriate stimulus. Different stimuli include lack of sleep, smoking, and reduced CO₂ levels in the brain (Aggarwal et al. 2013). Since CO₂ is involved, several CA inhibitors have been considered potential candidates for the treatment of seizures, as they could increase the CO₂ levels in the brain. In fact, CA inhibitors have been used as antiepileptic drugs (AEDs) in the 1970s, when acetazolamide and methazolamide were the most promising choices (Supuran 2018). The mechanisms by which CA inhibitors show antiepileptic action are complex. The inhibition of CA activity leads to a diminished formation of bicarbonate and changes the brain pH, thus contributing to an antiepileptic effect by several diverse pathways. However, the clinical significance of the inhibition of CA in the treatment of epilepsy is not well established, except in the case of acetazolamide, mainly because most of the AEDs in clinical usage with CA inhibition properties also have other, most likely more important, mechanisms of action.

Acetazolamide was the first CA inhibitor used as an anticonvulsant. Because of its numerous side effects, including alterations of taste, paresthesia, and tinnitus, acetazolamide is currently rarely used for this indication (Aggarwal et al. 2013). Catamenial epilepsy is a special subtype of epilepsy in which seizures are clustered around specific points of the menstrual cycle, most often around the perimenstrual or periovulatory period. Three types of catamenial seizures have been identified: perimenstrual (C1), periovulatory (C2), and inadequate luteal (C3) (Navis and Harden 2016). Acetazolamide has been used for decades as a treatment option in catamenial epilepsy, but there are no large-scale, randomized studies available on its efficacy (Aggarwal et al. 2013). In a retrospective analysis, 40% of the women patients reported lower seizure frequency, and 30% claimed a decrease in severity with acetazolamide treatment (Lim 2001). Based on previous studies and present treatment options, acetazolamide is still considered part of the algorithm for the treatment of female patients with suspected catamenial seizure patterns (Navis and Harden 2016).

AEDs with CA inhibitory characteristics, which are commonly used in the treatment of epilepsy, include topiramate, zonisamide and lacosamide. In the case of these three AEDs, CA inhibition has not been considered the defining characteristic as a mechanism of action for efficacy in the treatment of various forms of epilepsy, but it has relevance with regard to their side-effect profiles, especially with topiramate and zonisamide.

Topiramate is a sulfamate-substituted monosaccharide that was originally found to exhibit potent anticonvulsant activity similar to phenytoin (Maryanoff et al. 1987). In the first report, topiramate was described as a weak CA inhibitor (micromolar against erythrocyte CAs), but later Supuran and coworkers demonstrated that topiramate is, in fact, a very potent inhibitor of CAs with a K_i value of 5 nM against human CA II (Masereel 2002). Topiramate inhibits all CA isozymes present in the blood and brain, causing CO₂ retention, which is considered important for the anticonvulsant effect (Aggarwal et al. 2013). Other mechanisms may also be involved, such as the

blockade of Na⁺ channels and AMPA/kainate receptors, as well as the enhancement of GABAergic transmission.

Zonisamide is a sulfonamide antiepileptic drug that is a 1,2 benzisoxazole derivative with multiple mechanisms of action resembling topiramate. It was first used in Japan in 1972 to treat psychiatric disorders, and it has been in use to treat epilepsy since at least the 1990s.

Topiramate and zonisamide have a number of similar side effects attributed to CA inhibition. The most common of these are hypohidrosis (Cheshire and Fealey 2008), tubular acidosis and renal stones (Hamed 2017). Hypohidrosis signifies decreased sweating in response to a proportionate thermal or pharmacological stimulus with its complete form termed anhidrosis. Hypohidrosis is potentially hazardous to health since the inability to generate a thermoregulatory sweating response can seriously challenge one's ability to maintain core temperature in conditions of strenuous physical activity or in hot environments (Cheshire and Fealey 2008). CA inhibitors can interfere with sweat production, probably at the level of the secretory coil clear cell or apex of ductal cells. The risk of hypohidrosis in pediatric patients taking zonisamide or topiramate is significantly higher than that of adults (Cheshire and Fealey 2008). Hypohidrosis has been reported mainly during adjunctive topiramate therapy and is rare in patients on monotherapy (Cerminara 2006). When children who are severely disabled (i.e., neurologically impaired, nonambulatory) are treated with topiramate, they have a very high risk of renal stone formation (Ishikawa 2019).

In addition to epilepsy, zonisamide has been tested for the treatment of other symptoms and diseases, such as essential tremor, myoclonus-dystonia, mania, acute psychotic conditions, neuropathic pain, and Parkinson's disease symptoms (Kadian et al. 2019). A Cochrane review on essential tremor identified only one study with 20 eligible subjects (Bruno et al. 2017). The main conclusion was that there is insufficient evidence to assess the efficacy and safety of zonisamide for the treatment of essential tremor. In 2016, Hainque and coworkers investigated the efficacy and safety of zonisamide in a cohort of 24 patients with myoclonus-dystonia (Hainque 2016). Zonisamide significantly improved action myoclonus, myoclonus-related functional disability, and dystonia symptoms compared to the placebo.

Lacosamide, (2*R*)-2-acetylamino-*N*-benzyl-3-methoxypropanamide, is a relatively new antiepileptic drug that was first introduced into clinical practice in 2008. Although it does not have any of the moieties typically found in well-known CA inhibitors, such as sulfonamide, sulfamate, sulfamide or coumarin, lacosamide acts as an effective inhibitor of all mammalian CA isozymes CA I – XV. Based on crystallographic data, it binds to the active site of CA II similar to the hydrolyzed coumarins, not interacting with the metal ion (Temperini 2010). Experimental data have suggested a dual mechanism of action for lacosamide: (a) modulation of the slow inactivation of sodium channels and (b) modulation of collapsin-response mediator protein 2 (CRMP-2)-mediated neurotrophic signals (Kellinghaus 2009). It seems that the inhibition of CA activity may be the third relevant function, which may lead to the antiepileptic effect. In contrast to topiramate or zonisamide, lacosamide does not seem to have hypohidrosis, tubular acidosis or renal stones as part of its side effect profile (Kwok et al. 2017).

5.7 Carbonic Anhydrase-Related Proteins (CARPs)

The carbonic anhydrase-related proteins (CARPs) are CA isoforms that are evolutionarily well conserved but lack the classical CA enzymatic activity (Aspatwar 2014; Aspatwar et al. 2010). The CARPs occur either independently or as domains of other proteins. The catalytic inactivity of CARPs is due to the absence of one or more of the three histidine residues that are required for the coordination of zinc metal ions in the CA active site. There are three classical CARPs named CARP VIII, X and XI in the order of their discovery. In addition, in the family of protein tyrosine phosphatases (PTPs), there are two receptor-type protein tyrosine phosphatases, PTPR zeta (ζ) and PTPR gamma (γ), that contain an N-terminal CA-like domain (Barnea 1993; Levy 1993) known as the CARP XVI domain (Tolvanen 2012; Ortutay et al. 2010). The enzymatic activity of human CARPs can be regained by restoring the histidine residues (Nishimori 2013). Even though we have gradually learned more about the potential biological functions of CARPs and CA domains, the exact physiological roles of these proteins are still poorly understood.

5.8 Localization and Role of CARP VIII

CARP VIII is catalytically inactive due to the substitution of arginine at the first of the three histidine residues required for coordination of the zinc atom in the active site. CARP VIII was the first CARP isoform that was identified and found in the mouse brain by Kato (1990). Subsequent expression studies included detailed analyses during embryonic development and of adult tissues of humans and mice (Aspatwar et al. 2010; Taniuchi 2002a,b; Lakkis 1997). The expression of the *Car8* gene was studied using in situ hybridization, which localized the *Car8* gene to the cerebellar Purkinje cells (Lakkis et al. 1997). Immunohistochemistry showed that CARP VIII is expressed in both adult and fetal human brains, and the cellular distribution of the protein is shown in Table 5.3 (Taniuchi 2002b). The analysis of *CA8* gene expression in a panel of zebrafish tissues showed that it is predominantly expressed in the brain, similar to the expression in mice and humans (Aspatwar et al. 2010; Okamoto 2001; Aspatwar 2013). In the adult zebrafish tissues, immunohistochemistry of the cerebellar region showed an intense signal for CARP VIII in the Purkinje cells, which is analogous to the expression in mice and humans (Aspatwar 2014,2015).

The role of CARP VIII in neural development became obvious from the studies in waddles (*wdl*) mice that are characterized by a lifelong gait disorder (Jiao 2005). Analysis of *wdl* mice showed a 19 bp deletion in the *Car8* gene (autosomal recessive mutation), which is responsible for the *wdl* phenotype, and the mice showed a complete absence of CARP VIII protein (Jiao 2005).

Along with two reports on *CA8* gene mutations in members of Iraqi and Saudi Arabian families, the role of CARP VIII in neural development has gained renewed interest (Turkmen 2009; Kaya 2011). The affected members of an Iraqi family had

Table 5.3 Expression of CARPs in human adult and fetal brains (Aspatwar et al. 2013)

Adult brain					Fetal brain			
		CARP VIII	CARP X	CARP XI	Days of gestation	CARP VIII	CARP X	CARP XI
Brain part	Region	Level of expression				Level of expression		
Cerebrum	Cx	++	+w	+	84	+	+	+
	Medulla	+	++	–	95	+	+	+
	Hippocampus	++	–	+	121	+	+	+
	Basal ganglia	++	–	+w	141	+	+	+
Diencephalon	Thalamus	++	–	–	222	+	+	+
	Substantia nigra	++	–	–				
Cerebellum	Cx, molecular layer	++	–	–				
	Cx, Purkinje cells	++	+w	+w				
	Cx, granular layer	–	–	–				
Pons	Vestibular nuclei	++	–	+				
	Abducens nucleus	++	–	+				
	Pontine nuclei	++		++				
Medulla	Olivary nuclei	++	+w	–				
	Others	++	+w	–				
Choroid PX		++	+w	++				
Pia Arach		++	–	++				

++ strong expression; + moderate expression in most cells; +w weak expression; – no significant expression; *Cx* cortex; *Choroid PX*. choroid plexus; *Pia Arach*. pia arachnoid

mild mental retardation and congenital ataxia that was associated with quadrupedal gait (Fig. 5.1). In another study, the members of a Saudi Arabian family showed a novel homozygous (G162R) substitution in the CARP VIII protein (Kaya 2011). All the affected members of the family showed mental retardation and cerebellar ataxia similar to the affected members of the Iraqi family, but the Saudi Arabian patients did not exhibit quadrupedal gait (Aspatwar et al. 2013). Brain magnetic resonance imaging showed a loss of cerebellar volume and peritrigonal white matter abnormalities (Kaya 2011). Mild cognitive impairment, a variable degree of cerebellar ataxia, an absence of seizures, and a lack of dysmorphism were the common features that were found in both Saudi Arabian and Iraqi subjects. The absence of quadrupedal gait



Figure 5.1 A mutation in the *CA8* gene in members of an Iraqi family leads to mental retardation and quadrupedal gait. This figure is reproduced from Turkmen (2009) under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

in the members of the Saudi Arabian family could be due to environmental factors rather than being a genuine phenotypic variation of the disease.

A report on the interaction of CARP VIII with inositol trisphosphate receptor-1 (ITPR1) provides a plausible mechanism for the cerebellar disorders in humans and mice (Hirota 2003; Yan 2007). However, the precise mechanism of how the regulation of ITPR1 leads to the biological effects is still not known. Later studies in mice showed that *Car8* acts as an allosteric inhibitor of ITPR1 that regulates the intracellular calcium release essential for neuronal excitability, neurite outgrowth, neurotransmitter release (Lamont and Weber 2015), and the calcium pathway that is critical for nociception, inflammatory pain, and possibly other neuropathological states (Zhuang 2015).

Changes in the gene expression profile of human neuroblastoma cells expressing a repeat expansion mutant ataxin-3 showed a ninefold increase in *CA8* gene expression in the presence of mutant ataxin-3 compared to the cells expressing normal ataxin-3 (Hsieh 2012). It was shown earlier that defective ataxin-3 disturbs neuronal calcium signaling by binding to ITPR1 (Chen 2008). There are now many lines of evidence suggesting that CARP VIII plays a role in neural development and motor coordination function in the cerebellum (Shimobayashi et al. 2016).

To further elucidate the function of CARP VIII, we recently developed a zebrafish model by knocking down the *CA8* gene using antisense morpholino oligonucleotides (Aspatwar 2013). The amino acid identity between the human and zebrafish CARP VIII protein is 84%. Such a high degree of conservation between CARP VIII sequences of distant vertebrate species speaks for a conserved, essential function

(Aspatwar 2013). The developed zebrafish model will be helpful in investigating the mechanisms of CARP VIII-related ataxia and mental retardation in humans.

5.9 Distribution and Role of CARP X

The presence of CARP X was reported in the brain while screening CCG repeats in the cDNA libraries from the human brain (Okamoto 2001). The deduced CA-like amino acid sequence showed that two of the three amino acid residues required for binding to zinc were absent in CARP X, suggesting the lack of enzymatic activity (Aspatwar et al. 2013). *CA10* mRNA expression was reported in all parts of the central nervous system analyzed (Okamoto 2001). The studies of the cellular distribution of CARP X using antibodies also showed positive signals in many parts of the human brain (Table 5.3) (Taniuchi 2002b; Aspatwar et al. 2013). A developmental expression study in human brain specimens covering days 84–222 of gestation showed CARP X protein throughout the period (Taniuchi 2002b). In our laboratory, we showed the presence of *Car10* mRNA extensively in the mouse brain (Aspatwar et al. 2010), and similarly, *CA10* was predominantly expressed in both the larval and adult zebrafish brains (Aspatwar 2015). Knockdown studies of *CA10a* and *CA10b* genes using morpholinos in zebrafish larvae showed an abnormal movement pattern, which was later confirmed by inactivation of the genes with the CRISPR/Cas9 system, suggesting a role for these CARPs in motor coordination (Aspatwar 2015).

Recent studies have shown that both CARP X and XI are evolutionarily conserved neurexin ligands in mammals (Sterky 2017). Neurexins are presynaptic proteins that regulate neurotransmitter release. Notably, damage to these synapses precedes neuronal cell death in Alzheimer's disease (Hishimoto 2019). The above results have led to several persuasive hypotheses. First, CARP X and CARP XI may act primarily as neurexin chaperones. Second, they may function as adaptors that enable indirect interactions of neurexins with unknown postsynaptic target molecules, thus mediating the formation of novel transsynaptic complexes (Sterky 2017).

The presence of seven CCG repeats in the 5'-untranslated region of the *CA10* gene followed by two CCG repeats located 16 bp downstream may be associated with various neurological disorders (Kleiderlein 1998). The *CA10* gene with the CCG repeats might play a role in the development of neurodegenerative disorders, and therefore, it will be of interest to explore the expansion mutations of the *CA10* gene in patients with neurological symptoms (Aspatwar et al. 2010). It is of interest that there is a report on cerebellar hypoplasia and quadrupedal movement in members of a Turkish family (Turkmen 2006; Humphrey and Mondalas 2018) who showed a quite similar phenotype to the Iraqi and Saudi Arabian patients with mutations of the *CA8* gene (Turkmen 2009; Kaya 2011). However, the genetic defect in the Turkish family was mapped to chromosome 17p (Turkmen 2006; Humphrey and Mondalas 2018). Because the *CA10* gene is located on chromosome 17q, it may not be the affected gene in this phenotypic trait.

5.10 Distribution and Role of CARP XI

A characteristic feature of CARP XI is the absence of all three histidine residues required for the CA catalytic activity (Aspatwar et al. 2010). The cellular and developmental distribution of the human CARP XI protein is shown in Table 5.3. The expression of *Car11* mRNA in mouse tissues showed that the transcript is predominantly present in the central nervous system (Aspatwar et al. 2010).

Expansion mutations of CAG repeats in ataxin-3 are responsible for spinocerebellar ataxia/Machado-Joseph disease (SCA3/MJD), a neurodegenerative disease (Kawaguchi et al. 1994). Studies using neuroblastoma cells expressing mutant ataxin-3 showed an upregulation of *CA11* similar to that of *CA8* (Hsieh 2013). Further studies on the cellular distribution of CARP XI in cultured neuronal cells from the brain tissues of humans and mice with SCA3 showed altered localization of CARP XI compared to normal specimens (Hsieh 2013). These findings suggest that the altered localization of CARP XI in SCA3 may play a role in the progression of the disease and dysfunction of the nervous system.

5.11 Concluding Remarks

CAs are widely expressed in different cell types of the central nervous system. For decades, they have been important drug targets to treat certain neurological disorders, such as epilepsy, acute mountain sickness, pseudotumor cerebri, and brain edema. In several cases, the drug designers were not initially aiming to develop CA inhibitors, and it was only later that some of them were identified as efficient CA inhibitors.

The presence of highly conserved CARPs in the brain of various species suggests important roles for these proteins in brain development and/or neural functions. Although their exact functions in the developing brain remain uncertain, the findings suggest certain roles for CARPs in the early development or differentiation of neuroprogenitor cells. Screening of patients with unknown neurological disorders for variations in CARPs may reveal novel insights into these proteins. Future research on these inactive CA isoforms may provide us with information on how these proteins work, possibly by coordination with other proteins through protein–protein interactions and might also help us to design novel treatment strategies for the diseases caused by defects or abnormal regulation of these proteins.

We still believe in the same view stated by professor Robert E. Forster 30 years ago at the Carbonic Anhydrase Conference in Spoleto, Italy: “With so many questions about its functions, some about new problems and some about old problems freshly seen, research on CA has a bright future.”

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