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Neuronal endoplasmic reticulum acts as a single functional Ca^{2+} store shared by ryanodine and inositol-1,4,5-trisphosphate receptors as revealed by intra-ER $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]$ recordings in single rat sensory neurones

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Abstract We addressed the fundamentally important question of functional continuity of endoplasmic reticulum (ER) Ca^{2+} store in nerve cells. In cultured rat dorsal root ganglion neurones we measured dynamic changes in free Ca^{2+} concentration within the ER lumen ($[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$) in response to activation of inositol-1,4,5-trisphosphate receptors (InsP_3Rs) and ryanodine receptors (RyRs). We found that both receptors co-exist in these neurones and their activation results in Ca^{2+} release from the ER as judged by a decrease in $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$. Depletion of Ca^{2+} stores following an inhibition of sarco(endoplasmic)reticulum Ca^{2+} -ATPase by thapsigargin or cyclopiazonic acid completely eliminated Ca^{2+} release via both InsP_3Rs and RyRs. Similarly, when the store was depleted by continuous activation of InsP_3Rs , activation of RyRs (by caffeine or $0.5 \mu\text{M}$ ryanodine) failed to produce Ca^{2+} release, and vice versa, when the stores were depleted by activators of RyRs, the InsP_3 -induced Ca^{2+} release disappeared. We conclude that in mammalian neurones InsP_3Rs and RyRs share the common continuous Ca^{2+} pool associated with ER.

Keywords Calcium signalling · $\text{InsP}_3\text{R/RyR}$ · Endoplasmic reticulum calcium stores · Sensory neurones

Introduction

The endoplasmic reticulum (ER), represented by a three-dimensional intracellular network of tubules and cisternae, serves as an integrating signalling organelle, which co-ordinates fast physiological Ca^{2+} signalling and long-lasting adaptive responses controlled by post-translational

protein processing within the ER lumen [2, 4, 6, 9, 14]. Many ER-resident chaperones responsible for correct folding of proteins are regulated by the concentration of free Ca^{2+} within the ER lumen ($[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$), and therefore the latter bestows the link between fast physiological events and protein turnover [28, 51]. Fluctuations of $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ are determined by the balance between Ca^{2+} release and Ca^{2+} uptake.

Two types of ligand-gated Ca^{2+} channels, the inositol-1,4,5-trisphosphate receptors (InsP_3Rs) and ryanodine receptors (RyRs), provide the route for Ca^{2+} release and underlie the excitability of the ER membrane [3, 32, 36, 47]. Both types of Ca^{2+} release channels are abundantly expressed in nerve cells [50, 52], although their intracellular distribution shows considerable heterogeneity. That is, dendritic spines of Purkinje neurones are rich in InsP_3Rs but are devoid of RyRs, although the latter are found in quantity in the dendritic shafts and in the cell body [27, 37]. In contrast, RyRs are predominant in dendrites of CA1 hippocampal neurones [38]; they are also preferentially expressed in axons and synaptic terminals of cerebellar basket neurones [25]. In agreement with such peculiar distribution, different types of Ca^{2+} release are activated upon physiological stimulation in distinct neuronal sub-compartments. Stimulation of synaptic inputs triggers InsP_3 -mediated Ca^{2+} release in the spines of Purkinje cells [13, 46], whereas Ca^{2+} -induced Ca^{2+} release generated through RyRs plays an important role in postsynaptic Ca^{2+} signalling in hippocampus ([1, 12] but see [24]) and controls multivesicular neurotransmitter release in cerebellar synaptic terminals [25].

Therefore heterogeneous localization of Ca^{2+} release channels provides for a spatial control of Ca^{2+} signals, which is particularly important for highly polarized nerve cells. Yet, such a heterogeneity does not implicitly entail the existence of separate Ca^{2+} pools associated with different Ca^{2+} release mechanisms. This particular issue recently became a matter of controversy [5, 34].

Experiments on neuronal preparations have shown that depletion of RyR-sensitive Ca^{2+} store in Purkinje neurones completely abolished responses to photoreleased

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InsP₃ suggesting that both receptors share the same interconnected Ca²⁺ pool [21]. Similar overlap between InsP₃-sensitive and caffeine-sensitive Ca²⁺ pools was suggested for hippocampal [19], cerebellar granule [20, 39] and cultured myenteric [23] neurones. In contrast [Ca²⁺]_i imaging in adrenal chromaffin cells revealed two distinct Ca²⁺ pools sensitive to caffeine and InsP₃ respectively [8]. Finally the existence of separate Ca²⁺ pools in nerve cells was recently suggested by Blaustein and Golovina [5], who based their theory on a direct measurements of [Ca²⁺]_L in astrocytes and atrial myocytes [15, 16, 17]. In the present paper we addressed the question of internal continuity of the ER Ca²⁺ pools in mammalian sensory neurones using direct monitoring of [Ca²⁺]_L. Our evidence suggests that in this preparation the InsP₃Rs and RyRs share the same functional Ca²⁺ pool.

Materials and methods

Real-time imaging of Ca²⁺ concentration in the store

Dorsal root ganglion neurones were enzymatically isolated from new-born (1–3 days old) Sprague-Dawley rats using a conventional treatment with 0.1% protease (type XIV) in HEPES-buffered MEM for 8 min at 37°C. Individual cells were separated mechanically and plated on poly-L-ornithine (1 mg/ml) and laminin (0.01 mg/ml) covered glass coverslips. Neurones were maintained in culture media (DMEM, supplemented with 10% horse serum, 50 U/ml penicillin/streptomycin mixture and 6 µg/ml insulin) at 37°C in an atmosphere of air supplemented with 5% CO₂ for 1–2 days prior to the experiment. In the present study we investigated only large (proprioceptive) neurones with somas larger than 35 µm in diameter.

For [Ca²⁺]_L recordings we have used Mag-Fura-2 (*K_D*~50 µM) suitable for detecting high intraluminal [Ca²⁺]_L levels [7, 31, 42]. The neurones were incubated with 5 µM Mag-Fura-2 for 30 min at 37°C, and washed at 37°C for 1 h prior to the experiment (loading at 37°C promotes dye compartmentalization within the ER lumen [49]).

The cytoplasmic portion of the dye was removed either via intracellular dialysis through the patch pipette (as described in our previous paper [43]) or by permeabilization of the plasmalemma with saponin [41, 42]. In the latter case the cellular membrane was permeabilized by brief (7–10 s) application of saponin (0.001%) in “intracellular” solution. The permeabilization technique was used exclusively for probing the neurones for InsP₃-induced Ca²⁺ release as InsP₃ does not penetrate through intact plasmalemma.

Calibration of Mag-Fura-2 signals

The [Ca²⁺]_L values were calculated using the 340/380 nm ratio with the equation $[Ca^{2+}]_L = K^*(R - R_{min}) / (R_{max} - R)$. *R_{min}*, *R_{max}* and *K** were determined using exposure of Mag-Fura-2/AM loaded intact neurones or saponin-permeabilized neurones to 20 µM ionomycin and four calibrating solutions with [Ca²⁺]_L < 10 nM (10 mM EGTA); 100 µM; 400 µM and 10 mM; solutions were prepared as described previously [43]. The calibration procedure on permeabilized cells consistently yielded higher (~40%) values for *K**, most likely due to a higher Mag-Fura-2 *K_D* within the ER lumen. As we assumed this being more accurate, the values from the latter procedure were used throughout. Values of *R_{min}*, *R_{max}* and *K** were 0.3, 1.9 and 287 µM respectively.

Real-time video-imaging

Fluorescence images were captured using an Olympus IX70 inverted microscope (40× UV objective) equipped with a charge-coupled device (CCD) cooled intensified camera (Pentamax Gene IV, Roper Scientific, UK). The specimen was alternately illuminated at 340, 380 and 488 nm by a monochromator (Polychrom IV, TILL Photonics, Germany) at a cycle frequency 0.5–5 Hz. Control over the experiment, image storage and off-line analysis was performed by use of MetaFluor/MetaMorph software (Universal Imaging Corporation, USA) running on a Windows 98 workstation.

Electrophysiology and solution exchange

Whole-cell recordings were made by using EPC-9 amplifier run by the PC-based PULS software (both from HEKA, Germany). The pipette resistance was 3–5 MΩ. All solutions were applied using a fast local superfusion technique [53] which ensured complete exchange of the milieu surrounding the cell within 100 ms.

Solutions and reagents

The extracellular bathing solution contained (in mM): NaCl 135, KCl 3, CaCl₂ 2, glucose 20, HEPES/NaOH 20, pH 7.4. The Ca²⁺-free solution contained 5 mM EGTA with no CaCl₂ added. The “intracellular” solution used in permeabilization experiments contained (in mM): KCl 140, Na₂ATP 3, MgCl₂ 2, CaCl₂ 0.4, BAPTA 5, HEPES/KOH 20, pH 7.2, free Ca²⁺ concentration ~70 nM. The intra-pipette solution used for intracellular dialysis contained (in mM): CsCl₂ 122, TEA-Cl 20; Na₂ATP 3, HEPES/CsOH 10, EGTA 0.1, pH 7.3. All reagents were purchased from Sigma (Dorset, UK), and fluorescent probes were obtained from Molecular Probes (Ore., USA).

Results

Sensory neurones co-express functional InsP₃Rs and RyRs

We monitored intraluminal Ca²⁺ dynamics in single sensory neurones using low-affinity Ca²⁺ probe Mag-Fura-2 compartmentalized within the ER lumen. The cytosolic portion of the dye was removed either by intracellular dialysis under whole-cell patch-clamp configuration [43], or by permeabilization of the plasmalemma by brief application of saponin [41, 42]. We used the latter technique to permit direct activation of InsP₃Rs by InsP₃, which otherwise cannot penetrate through the cell membrane.

The resting [Ca²⁺]_L determined with both techniques varied between 100 and 400 µM. Since [Ca²⁺]_L is an important determinant of the velocity and magnitude of Ca²⁺ release [43] we restricted our analysis to neurones with [Ca²⁺]_L higher than ~300 µM.

Brief extracellular applications of both InsP₃ (3–10 µM; 10 s) and caffeine (20 mM, 5 s) to permeabilized neurones triggered transient fall in [Ca²⁺]_L, which recovered to the pre-stimulated level after washout (Fig. 1). We found these responses in all neurones subjected to such an application protocol (*n*=12). The InsP₃-induced [Ca²⁺]_L decrease was substantially slower as compared to that induced by caffeine: on average maximal velocity of

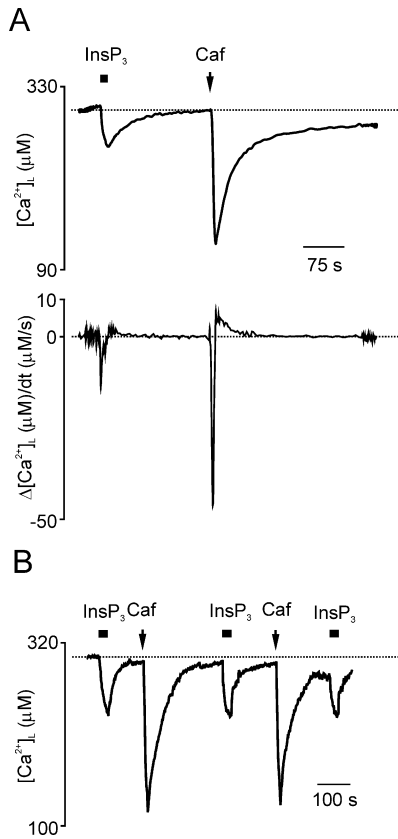


Fig. 1A, B InsP₃R and RyR coexist in DRG neurones. **A** The endoplasmic reticulum lumen [Ca²⁺] ([Ca²⁺]_L) recording (*top trace*) and its first derivative (*bottom trace*) obtained from permeabilized DRG neurone pre-loaded with Mag-Fura-2/AM. The neurone was challenged by 10 μM InsP₃ and 20 mM caffeine as indicated on the graph. **B** The [Ca²⁺]_L recordings from another permeabilized DRG neurone alternately treated with 10 μM inositol-1,4,5-trisphosphate (InsP₃) and 20 mM caffeine as indicated on the graph

[Ca²⁺]_L decrease induced by InsP₃ was about three times lower as compared with [Ca²⁺]_L decrease induced by caffeine (12±6 μM/s versus 41±10 μM/s, respectively; *n*=12, see also Fig. 3). Quite obviously the depletion of ER store by InsP₃ required much more time as compared with caffeine (see for example Fig. 5). Such a difference may result from either lower density of InsP₃R or from denial of Ca²⁺-induced potentiation of IICR in heavily buffered “intracellular” solution in permeabilized experiments.

Both agents, caffeine and InsP₃, triggered [Ca²⁺]_L decrease in a dose-dependent fashion (Fig. 2). The responses to InsP₃ saturated at 10 μM, i.e. at a rather high concentration, which might reflect either hampered diffusion of InsP₃ towards ER membrane even in permeabilized preparation, or generally lower sensitivity of neuronal InsP₃R to InsP₃ [22]. Responses to caffeine saturated at concentrations higher than 10 mM. Therefore, these experiments demonstrate that ER membrane in DRG neurones possesses both InsP₃-induced and Ca²⁺-induced Ca²⁺-release mechanisms (IICR and CICR, respectively).

Inhibition of SERCA pumps and direct activation of RyR deplete the Ca²⁺ store

The ability of the ER Ca²⁺ store to generate Ca²⁺ signals is regulated by intraluminal free Ca²⁺ concentration, so that store depletion prevents development of Ca²⁺ release. We have already demonstrated that the store replenishment following CICR (induced either by caffeine or by Ca²⁺ entry) is determined by thapsigargin (TG)-sensitive sarco(endoplasmic)reticulum Ca²⁺-ATPase (SERCA) pumps [43]. Here we investigated the mechanisms of

Fig. 2A–D Dose-dependence of InsP₃-induced and caffeine-induced Ca²⁺ release in DRG neurones. **A** The changes in [Ca²⁺]_L measured from permeabilized DRG neurone in response to applications of increasing concentrations of InsP₃. **B** The concentration dependence of InsP₃-induced decrease in [Ca²⁺]_L. The data are mean±SD from 5 cells. **C** The changes in [Ca²⁺]_L measured from dialysed DRG neurone in response to applications of increasing concentrations of caffeine. **D** The concentration dependence of caffeine-induced decrease in [Ca²⁺]_L. The data are mean±SD from 5 cells

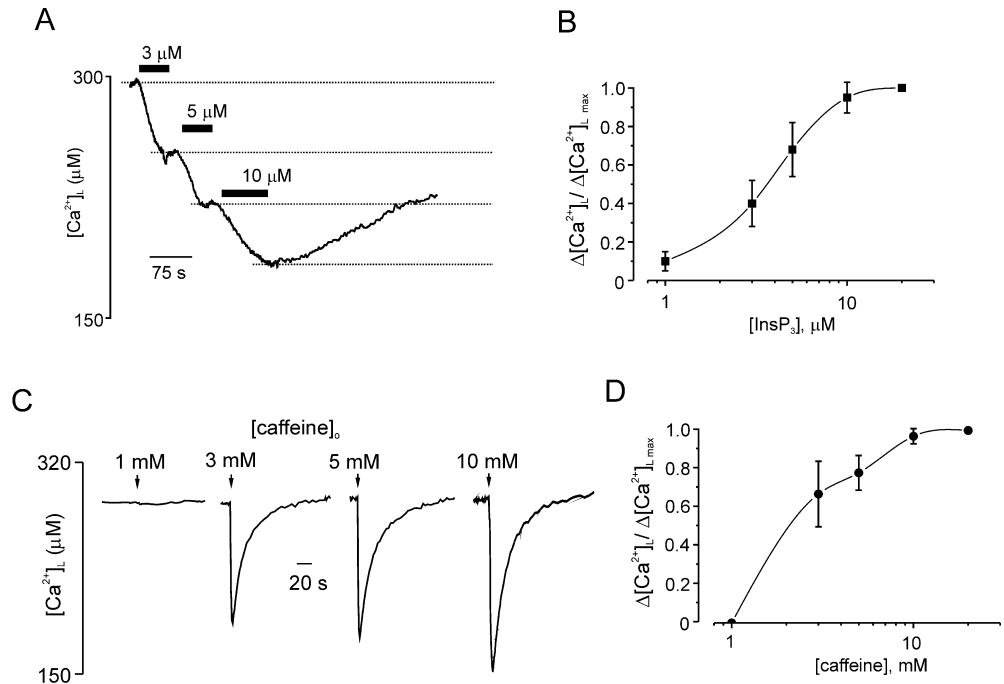
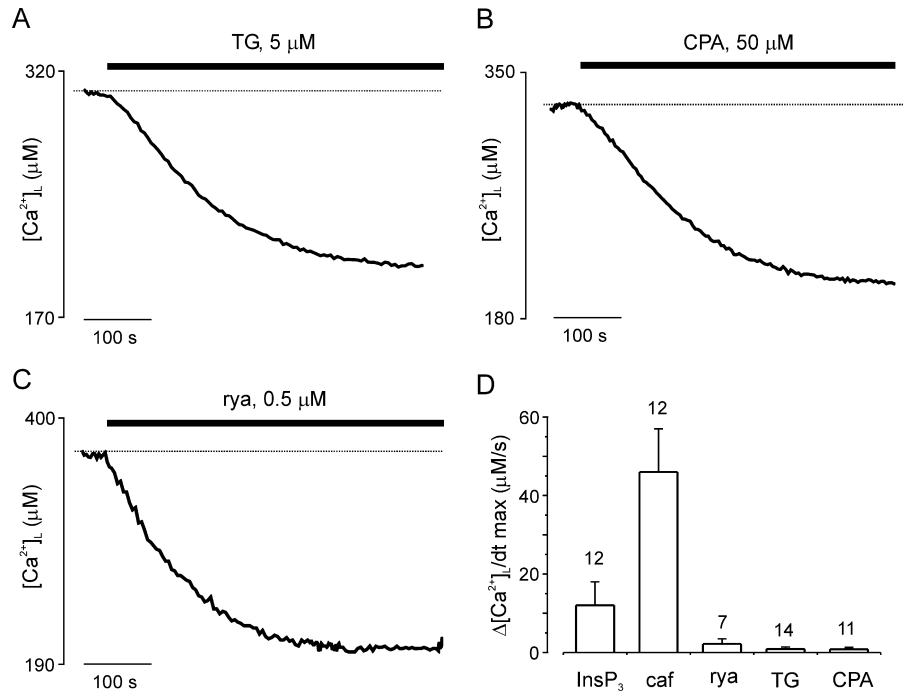


Fig. 3A–D Activation of RyRs and inhibition of SERCA pumps deplete the Ca^{2+} store. **A–C** Examples of $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ recordings from Mag-Fura-2 pre-loaded dialysed DRG neurones in response to extracellular application of thapsigargin (TG), cyclopiazonic acid (CPA) and ryanodine (rya). **D** Average values (mean \pm SD, n is indicated on the graph) of maximal rate of $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ decrease induced by 10 μM InsP_3 , 20 mM caffeine, 0.5 μM ryanodine, 5 μM TG and 50 μM CPA



store depletion in greater detail. Conceptually the stores can be depleted either by inhibition of Ca^{2+} uptake, which leaves the resting Ca^{2+} leakage unopposed, or by stimulation of Ca^{2+} release channels. In DRG neurones the inhibition of SERCA pumps by both TG (5 μM ; $n=14$) and cyclopiazonic acid (CPA, 50 μM ; $n=11$) triggered a progressive decrease in $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ which stabilized after complete depletion of the store (Fig. 3A, B). Alternatively the stores can be depleted by activation of the Ca^{2+} -release route. For this purpose we incubated the neurones with a low (0.5 μM) concentration of ryanodine. At this concentration the latter is known to promote opening of RyRs either by direct interaction with gating mechanisms [40] or by a dramatic ($\sim 1,000$ -fold) increase in RyRs sensitivity to cytosolic Ca^{2+} [26]. As shown in Fig. 3C, application of 0.5 μM of ryanodine effectively decreased $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$, thus indicating the depletion of the ER store. The maximal velocities of $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ decrease initiated by various pharmacological agents (caffeine, InsP_3 , ryanodine, TG and CPA) are compared in Fig. 3D.

RyRs and InsP_3 Rs share the common pool sensitive to TG and CPA

The experiments described above have evidently demonstrated that the ER in DRG neurones is endowed with functional InsP_3 Rs, RyRs as well as with TG and CPA-sensitive SERCA pumps. These data enabled us to address the central question of this study, i.e. whether all these mechanisms operate within a single Ca^{2+} pool or the ER Ca^{2+} store is represented by several independent compartments. For this purpose we utilized the ability of the agents described above to deplete the ER store. After

Ca^{2+} pool was depleted by one of these agents, we tested the ability of others to initiate a further decrease in $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$. The appearance of such a decrease would indicate the coexistence of separate Ca^{2+} pools.

First we tested the ability of TG and CPA to deplete the caffeine-sensitive Ca^{2+} pool. As shown in Fig. 4A, dialysed neurones were initially challenged with caffeine to probe for the existence of a caffeine-sensitive pool. Subsequently the neurones were incubated with 5 μM TG which resulted in a decrease in $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$. After complete depletion of the pool (as was judged by stabilization of $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ in the presence of TG) the cells were challenged with 20 mM caffeine and 50 μM CPA. In all nine neurones exposed to such a protocol neither caffeine nor CPA were able to affect $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ after the stores were depleted by TG. Similar results were obtained when Ca^{2+} pool was initially depleted by 50 μM CPA: both caffeine and TG applied in the presence of CPA failed to affect $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ (Fig. 4B, $n=8$). Likewise, depletion of stores with 0.5 μM ryanodine rendered caffeine, CPA and TG, applied in the presence of ryanodine, totally ineffective ($n=7$; Fig. 4C, D).

After completion of these experiments we switched to permeabilized neurones, thus gaining the possibility to test for InsP_3 -induced Ca^{2+} release. The cells were initially incubated with 10 μM InsP_3 , which resulted in a drop in $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$. The $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ stabilized at a steady-state level after complete depletion of the InsP_3 -sensitive pool. Application of caffeine performed at this moment failed to further affect $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ (Fig. 5A, $n=7$). Vice versa, when the stores were depleted in the presence of 20 mM of caffeine, application of 10 μM InsP_3 did not induce any changes in $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ (Fig. 5B, $n=6$). Despite the clarity of the traces resulting from the protocols described above,

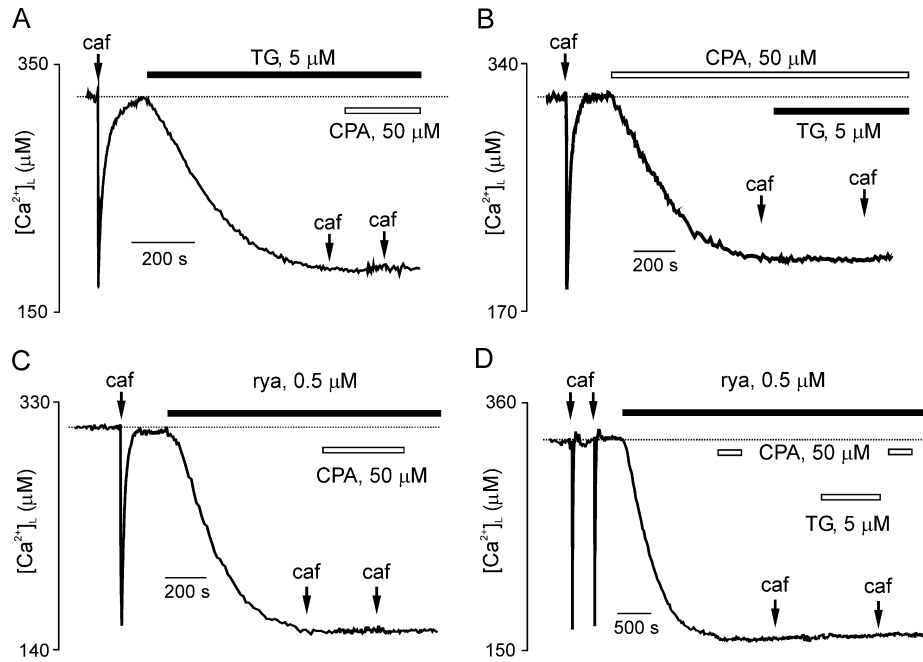
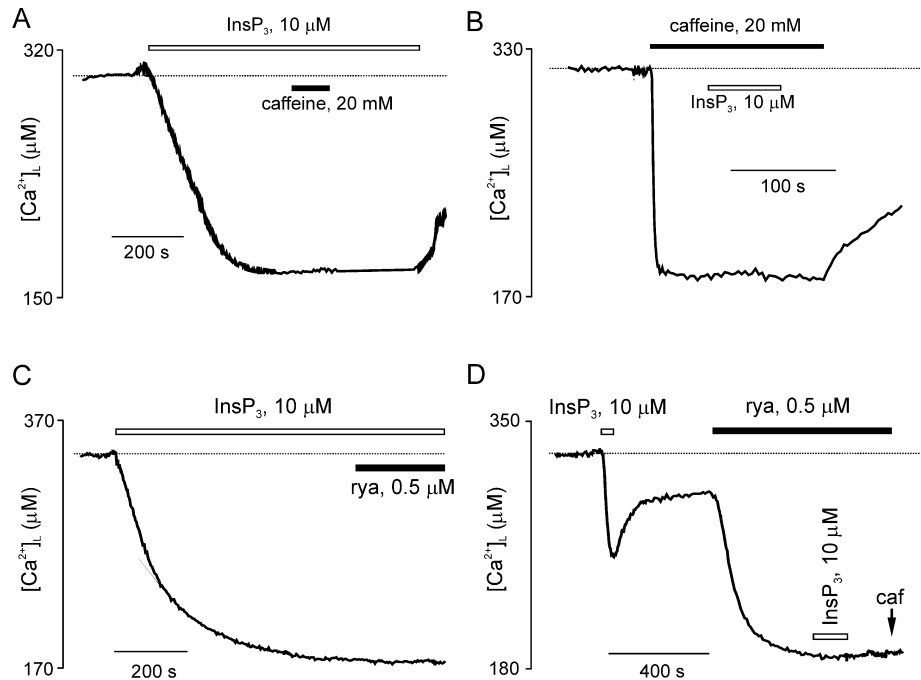


Fig. 4A–D Ryanodine- and caffeine-releasable Ca^{2+} pool is sensitive to sarco(endoplasmic)reticulum Ca^{2+} -ATPase (SERCA) inhibition by TG and CPA. All traces represent $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ recordings from Mag-Fura-2 pre-loaded dialysed DRG neurones. **A** $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ recording in response to applications of 20 mM caffeine, TG and CPA.

Depletion of Ca^{2+} store by TG completely eliminates responses to caffeine and CPA. **B** Similarly to **A** depletion of Ca^{2+} store by CPA prevents $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ responses to 20 mM caffeine and to TG. **C, D** Activation of RyRs by 0.5 μM ryanodine depletes Ca^{2+} store and abolishes $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ responses to CPA, TG and 20 mM caffeine

Fig. 5A–D InsP_3 Rs and RyRs share a common Ca^{2+} pool in sensory neurones. All traces represent $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ recordings from Mag-Fura-2 pre-loaded permeabilized DRG neurones. **A** Depletion of Ca^{2+} store by incubation with 10 μM InsP_3 completely abolishes $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ response to 20 mM caffeine. **B** Similarly, depletion of the Ca^{2+} store in continuous presence of caffeine eliminates the InsP_3 -induced Ca^{2+} release. **C** Depletion of Ca^{2+} store by incubation with 10 μM InsP_3 completely abolishes $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ response to ryanodine. **D** When the Ca^{2+} store was depleted by 0.5 μM ryanodine neither InsP_3 nor caffeine (20 mM) were able to produce further Ca^{2+} release



doubt remained, as caffeine is known as an effective inhibitor of InsP_3 Rs [11, 33, 54]. Therefore, we looked for alternative means to specifically activate RyRs, and used 0.5 μM ryanodine for this purpose. Once more, after the Ca^{2+} pool was depleted by incubation with 10 μM of InsP_3 , ryanodine was unable to induce any further

fluctuations in $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_{\text{L}}$ (Fig. 5C; $n=5$). Likewise, when the permeabilized neurone was treated with 0.5 μM ryanodine to achieve full exhaustion of the Ca^{2+} pool, neither InsP_3 nor caffeine were able to activate any additional Ca^{2+} release (Fig. 5D, $n=5$).

It has to be noted that SERCA inhibitors, caffeine and InsP_3 all decreased $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_L$ to the same, relatively high residual level. As we have demonstrated before [43] application of ionomycin in Ca^{2+} -free extracellular solution following TG and/or CPA treatment reduced $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_L$ to zero (R_{\min}). This high residual $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_L$ can reflect a limitation of the method, suggesting that part of the signal comes from an intracellular compartment not connected with the caffeine- or TG-sensitive portion of the ER. Nonetheless, as we already discussed in our previous paper [43] it may also represent an intrinsic property of the ER store, when severe depletion of the later may inhibit further release through Ca^{2+} -release/k leakage channels.

Discussion

Here we report the first direct measurements of intraluminal Ca^{2+} dynamics in mammalian neurones during Ca^{2+} release produced by activation of InsP_3 Rs and RyRs. We found that these two types of Ca^{2+} release, the IICR and the CICR, not only coexist in sensory neurones but they share a common Ca^{2+} pool. Our suggestion contradicts a recent hypothesis postulating the existence of functionally separate ER Ca^{2+} pools in both excitable and non-excitable cells, including neurones [5]. The idea of separate Ca^{2+} pools was instigated by experiments employing direct imaging of intra-ER Ca^{2+} movements in astrocytes and atrial myocytes [15, 16, 17]. These studies concluded that excitable and non-excitable cells have at least two separate Ca^{2+} pools sensitive to InsP_3 and caffeine, respectively. This was based on the finding that inhibition of SERCA pumps by TG and CPA depletes the InsP_3 -sensitive Ca^{2+} stores and abolishes responses to metabotropic agonists; however, this manipulation does not affect Ca^{2+} release triggered by caffeine. Although this finding explicitly implies the existence of a specific Ca^{2+} -uptake pathway replenishing the caffeine-sensitive pool, the authors of the cited studies failed to hypothesize on it.

The experiments described in this paper do not support the hypothesis of separate Ca^{2+} pools. On the contrary, in a series of direct approaches, we have demonstrated that depletion of Ca^{2+} stores by either opening of RyRs or InsP_3 Rs or by SERCA inhibition is always complete, and it precludes any further Ca^{2+} release irrespective of its mechanism. The most direct evidence for a common Ca^{2+} pool was obtained from the protocols shown in Fig. 5. These experiments show that depletion of the Ca^{2+} store due to an activation of RyRs by caffeine or ryanodine completely abolishes InsP_3 -induced Ca^{2+} release, and vice versa, when the stores are depleted following InsP_3 Rs activation, the RyR-mediated Ca^{2+} release is fully blocked.

Our suggestion of the continuity of the neuronal ER Ca^{2+} store is in line with a multitude of morphological evidence which describes neuronal ER as a continuous interconnected network [44]. Furthermore, a direct ap-

proach aimed at investigating the continuity of the ER in Purkinje neurones with a lypophylic fluorescent dye travelling exclusively in ER membranes [48] has clearly demonstrated the continuity of the ER. Similarly, a wealth of experimental data obtained in non-neuronal cells favours, to a very large extent, the idea of ER continuity. For instance, relatively large molecules, such as ER-targeted GFP, were reported to rapidly diffuse within the ER luminal space [10, 45]. In addition, a series of refined experiments on pancreatic acinar cells [30] have convincingly demonstrated that (1) fluorescent Ca^{2+} probes can diffuse freely within the ER lumen, and (2) even more importantly that $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_L$ rapidly equilibrates within the ER lumen following local photorelease of caged calcium.

The existence of a continuous Ca^{2+} pool connected through the ER lumen could be very important for neuronal function. First, rapid Ca^{2+} diffusion through the ER "Ca²⁺ tunnels" [29] supports Ca^{2+} release in cell sub-compartments by preventing severe store depletion following intensive local stimulation. Second, the same intraluminal Ca^{2+} diffusion may be instrumental in conveying Ca^{2+} signals from distal neuronal processes toward the nucleus [34], as was suggested by recent findings showing the importance of ER Ca^{2+} uptake in nuclear Ca^{2+} signalling [18, 35]. Third, intra-ER Ca^{2+} equilibration could facilitate clearance of local excessive Ca^{2+} loads. Finally, the existence of a continuous ER Ca^{2+} store can be very important in guarding against profound store depletion (which may happen more easily in small, separated Ca^{2+} pools), thus protecting normal functioning of intraluminal chaperones and therefore supporting cell functioning.

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