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A multiscale functional approach to assess pharmacologocal interactions between huwentoxin-IV spider peptide and sodium channel subtypes

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The Chinese bird spider huwentoxin-IV (HwTx-IV) is well-known to be a highly potent blocker of NaV1.7 subtype of voltage-gated sodium (NaV) channels, a genetically validated analgesic target, and thus promising as a potential lead molecule for the development of novel pain therapeutics. In the present study, the interaction between HwTx-IV and NaV1.6 channel subtype was investigated using multiscale (from in vivo to individual cell) functional approaches. HwTx-IV was approximatively 2 times more efficient than tetrodotoxin (TTX) to inhibit the compound muscle action potential recorded from the mouse skeletal neuromuscular system in vivo, and approximatively 90 times more effective to inhibit nerve-evoked than directly-elicited muscle contractile force of isolated mouse hemidiaphragms. These results strongly suggest that the inhibition of nerve-evoked skeletal muscle functioning, produced by HwTx-IV, resulted from a toxin-induced preferential blockade of NaV1.6, compared to NaV1.4, channel subtype. This was confirmed by whole-cell automated patch-clamp experiments performed on human embryonic kidney (HEK)-293 cells overexpressing hNaV1.1-1.8 channel subtypes. HwTx-IV was also approximatively 850 times more efficient to inhibit TTXsensitive than TTX-resistant sodium currents recorded from mouse dorsal root ganglia neurons. Finally, it seemed obvious that blockade of NaV1.6 channel subtype was involved in the in vivo toxicity of HwTx-IV, although this toxicity was more than 2 times lower than that of TTX. In conclusion, our results provide detailed information regarding the effects of HwTx-IV and allow a better understanding of the side-effect mechanisms involved in vivo and of channel subtype interactions resulting from the toxin activity.

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