Name: Ana Pombo Email: apombo1@ju.edu

A Single Exposure to Cocaine Rewires the 3D Genome Structure of Midbrain Dopamine Neurons

Dominik Szabó[1,2,#], Vedran Franke[3,#], Simona Bianco[4], Mykhailo Y. Batiuk[5], Eleanor J. Paul[6,7], Alexander Kukalev[1], Ulrich G. Pfisterer[5], Ibai Irastorza-Azcarate[1], Andrea M. Chiariello[4], Samuel Demharter[5], Luna Zea-Redondo[1,2], José P. Lopez-Atalaya[8], Mario Nicodemi[4,9], Altuna Akalin[3], Konstantin Khodosevich[5], Mark A. Ungless[6,7], Warren Winick-Ng[1,10,*], Ana Pombo[1,2,*]

[1]Max-Delbrück Centre for Molecular Medicine, Berlin Institute for Medical Systems Biology, Epigenetic Regulation and Chromatin Architecture Group, 10115 Berlin, Germany;
[2]Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 10117 Berlin, Germany;
[3]Bioinformatics & Omics Data Science platform, Max-Delbrück Centre for Molecular Medicine, Berlin Institute for Medical Systems Biology, 10115 Berlin, Germany;
[4]Dipartimentio di Fisica, Università di Napoli Federico II, and INFN Napoli, Complesso Universitario di Monte Sant'Angelo, 80126 Naples, Italy;
[5]Biotech Research and Innovation Centre, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, DK-2200, Denmark;
[6]MRC Laboratory of Medical Sciences (LMS), London W12 0HS, UK;
[7]Institute of Clinical Sciences (ICS), Faculty of Medicine, Imperial College London, London SW7 2AZ, UK;
[8]Instituto de Neurociencias, Universidad Miguel Hernández-Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (UMH-CSIC), 03550, Sant Joan d'Alacant, Spain;
[9]Berlin Institute of Health, 10178 Berlin, Germany;
[10]Donnelly Centre, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3E1, Toronto, Canada
#equal contribution
*corresponding authors

Midbrain dopamine neurons (DNs) respond to a first exposure to addictive drugs and play key roles in chronic drug usage. As the synaptic and transcriptional changes that follow an acute cocaine exposure are mostly resolved within a few days, the molecular changes that encode the long-term cellular memory of the exposure within DNs remain unknown. To investigate whether a single cocaine exposure induces long lasting changes in the 3D genome structure of DNs, we applied Genome Architecture Mapping and single nucleus transcriptomic analyses in the mouse midbrain. We found extensive rewiring of 3D genome architecture at 24 hours past acute cocaine exposure which remains or worsens by 14 days, outlasting transcriptional responses, which affects genes known to have major roles in cocaine-induced synaptic changes. Large genomic regions undergo structural changes in their compaction, including at post-synaptic and post-transcriptional regulatory genes. Polymer modeling revealed the progressive unfolding of Rbfox1, a regulator of alternative splicing, between 24 hours and 14 days past cocaine exposure, with increased structural variance at 14 days. Finally, detailed investigation of gene expression across DN subtypes showed that the genes that are structurally remodelled by cocaine are most expressed in a specific DN sub-type characterized by low expression of the dopamine auto-receptor Drd2, a key feature of cells highly sensitive to cocaine. These results reveal an important role for long-lasting 3D genome remodeling in the cellular memory of a single cocaine exposure, providing new hypotheses for understanding the inception of drug addiction and 3D genome plasticity.