

SECTION NEUROBIOLOGY 2

Part A

ligand-gated sodium channels

voltage-gated calcium channels

voltage-gated sodium channels

ATP driven sodium/potassium exchangers

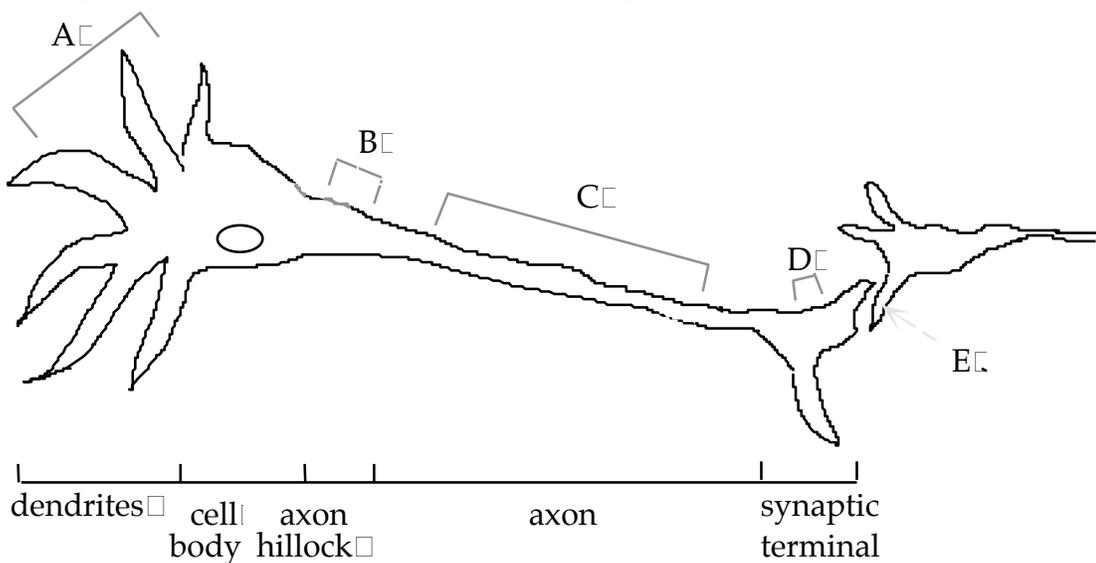
voltage-gated potassium channels

resting potassium channels

a) The above membrane protein complexes are required for generation and propagation of action potentials. Circle the protein complexes that you would expect to find **evenly** distributed over the entire surface of the neuron. Why?

*You would expect to find resting potassium channels and ATP driven sodium/potassium exchangers **evenly** distributed over the entire surface of the neuron. They function in maintaining the resting membrane potential which is uniform across the cell.*

b) The following questions (i-iv) refer to the drawing below.



i) At what region(s) on the drawing above would you expect a high density of voltage-gated sodium channels?

Regions B and C

ii) At what region(s) on the above drawing would you expect a high density of ligand-gated sodium channels?

Region E

iii) At what region(s) on the above drawing would you expect a high density of voltage-gated potassium channels?

Regions B and C

iv) At what region(s) on the above drawing would you expect a high density of voltage-gated calcium channels?

Region D

c) Influx of what ion plays a central role in converting an electrical signal to a chemical signal? Ca^{2+}

d) Outline the steps involved in neurotransmitter release after the action potential invades the terminal of the pre-synaptic cell.

Depolarization triggers the opening of voltage-gated calcium channels. Calcium enters the cells and binds to and activates a calcium-dependent protein kinase. The protein kinase phosphorylates synapsin which triggers fusion of synaptic vesicles and release of neurotransmitters.

e) What would happen if the presynaptic neuron in d) were exposed to Ca^{2+} channel blockers?

Without calcium entry into the cell, neurotransmitter release is blocked.

Acetylcholine (abbreviated ACh) is one of the most common neurotransmitters in both invertebrates and vertebrates. Its function is varied. At the neuromuscular junction, acetylcholine is released from the terminal of a presynaptic motor axon. The effect on the postsynaptic skeletal muscle cell is excitatory. In the heart, however, acetylcholine can be inhibitory, so that it slows the heart rate.

f) How can the same neurotransmitter trigger the opposite responses in different cell types?

TWO POSSIBILITIES: 1) DIFFERENT ACh RECEPTORS, or 2) DIFFERENT SIGNALING MOLECULES DOWNSTREAM OF THE ACh RECEPTOR.

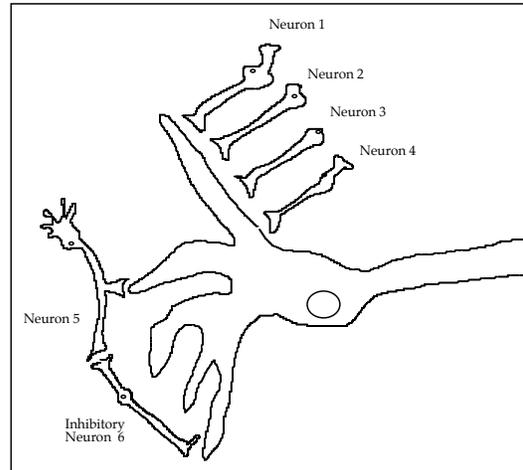
To study the function of ACh, one can isolate an entire neuromuscular junction. You can study synaptic transmission by wrapping a wire around the presynaptic neuron, stimulating it with an electrical current, and then measuring the effects of this stimulation in the postsynaptic muscle cell. You can also apply ACh directly onto the muscle cell to get the same effect.

g) In your studies you find that ACh receptors are localized to a specific point in the muscle cell. (Applying ACh elsewhere on the muscle has no effect.) Where on the muscle cell would ACh receptors need to be to function properly?

AT THE POINT WHERE THE NEURON SYNAPSES. THE MUSCLE CELL WILL BE SENSITIVE TO ACh ONLY AT THIS POINT.

Part C

You create the following arrangement of cells *in vitro*.



The large neuron receives 4 synaptic inputs from cells 1-4 that are identical in every way except for their location. Each neuron releases the same amount of neurotransmitter when stimulated.

- When neuron 1 is stimulated, the post-synaptic cell does **not** fire an action potential.
- When neuron 3 is stimulated, the post-synaptic cell fires an action potential.

a) When neuron 4 is stimulated, would you predict that an action potential is generated in the post-synaptic cell? Explain why or why not.

Yes, you would predict that an action potential is generated. The response of each neuron is identical. Stimulating neuron 3 generates an action potential, so stimulating neuron 4, which is closer to the axon hillock should allow sufficient depolarization to reach threshold.

b) What would determine whether neuron 2 would result in an action potential in the post-synaptic cell?

Neuron 2 would result in an action potential in the post-synaptic cell if the local depolarization on the post-synaptic cell spreads enough to depolarize the membrane at the axon hillock to threshold.

c) When an inhibitory neuron is stimulated and releases neurotransmitter, neurotransmitter binds to and opens ion channels on the post-synaptic cell. What ion might move through these channels? What is the effect on the post-synaptic cell?

A likely ion would be Cl⁻. Cl⁻ would move into the cell and hyperpolarize the membrane.

d) Neuron 5 releases only one kind of neurotransmitter, and synapses onto two distinct cell types. Circle the statements that are true.

- The neurotransmitter released by neuron 5 could be excitatory at both synapses.
- The neurotransmitter released by neuron 5 could be inhibitory at both synapses.
- The neurotransmitter released by neuron 5 could be inhibitory at one synapse and excitatory at the other.
- The neurotransmitter receptors on the post-synaptic cells could be the same as each other.
- The neurotransmitter receptors on the post-synaptic cells could be different from each other.
- The neurotransmitter released by neuron 5 at one synapse could diffuse and affect the other synapse.