

Regulation of H⁺ and K⁺ Gradients by *In Vitro* 3,5-Diiodothyronine in Hepatocyte Explants of Hypoxic Air-Breathing Fish *Anabas testudineus* Bloch

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Abstract

Thyroid hormone metabolite 3, 5-diiodothyronine (T₂) has been shown to possess physiological actions in vertebrates including fishes. It is, however, not certain if T₂ has a role in cation transport in fish hepatocytes, particularly in a stressed condition. We, therefore, tested the *in vitro* action of T₂ on the activities of ion transporters such as Na⁺/K⁺ ATPase, H⁺/K⁺ ATPase, Na⁺/NH₄⁺ ATPase, vacuolar H⁺-ATPase, Plasma Membrane Ca²⁺ ATPase (PMCA), mitochondrial Ca²⁺ and mitochondrial H⁺-ATPase as these ATPases are known for their roles in maintaining systemic and cellular cation gradients including proton and potassium gradients. Hepatocyte explants of air-breathing fish (*Anabas testudineus*, Bloch), either in non-stressed or hypoxic condition, were incubated with varied doses of T₂ (10⁻⁹, 10⁻⁸ and 10⁻⁷ M) for 15 min and the specific activities of these cation-dependent ATPases were analyzed. We found that T₂ exposure evoked higher sensitivity to vacuolar and mitochondrial H⁺-ATPases and H⁺/K⁺ ATPase and not to PMCA or mitochondrial Ca²⁺ ATPase. The data also indicated that T₂ has a similar sensitivity to vacuolar and mitochondrial H⁺-ATPases and H⁺/K⁺ ATPase in the hepatocytes of both non-stressed and hypoxia-stressed fish. The data thus provide evidence for a direct action of T₂ on the regulation of proton and potassium gradients in the hepatocytes of both non-stressed and hypoxic air-breathing fish.

Keywords: Diiodothyronine, Fish, Hypoxia Stress, T₂, Na⁺/K⁺-ATPase, H⁺-ATPase, Ca²⁺-ATPase, Na⁺/NH₄⁺-ATPase

1. Introduction

Thyroid Hormones (THs) are critical in the regulation and coordination of many vital physiological processes in all vertebrates including fishes. They engage in genomic mechanisms that are mediated by the involvement of nuclear TH receptors^{1,2} or non-genomic mechanisms that are initiated by the binding of hormone molecules to the receptors present in the plasma membrane, mitochondria or cytoplasm³. In addition, sharing of both non-genomic and genomic actions of THs have also been documented⁴. Thyroxine (T₄) and triiodothyronine (T₃) are the leading hormones of Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Thyroid (HPT) axis and are involved in many physiological actions in fishes including osmotic and ionic regulations⁵⁻⁷. THs

perform both fundamental and modulator roles in the regulation of water and mineral balance in fishes particularly during stress conditions⁸. During stress response, many hormonal signals interact with an array of ion transporters that regulate ionic homeostasis in fishes⁹. As an important ion-transporter regulator and a stress modifier, THs have the ability to modify the stress-induced physiological responses in fishes. Furthermore, non-genomic actions of TH particularly on plasma membrane ion transporters and cytoskeleton have been found associated with homeostatic mechanisms¹⁰. However, a role for 3, 5- diiodothyronine (3, 5-T₂ or T₂) that mimics several biological effects of T₃^{11,12} has not yet been delineated in fishes.

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Thyroid hormones are key regulators of cellular metabolism, and have influence over metabolic processes in almost all tissues. As the important metabolic center, hepatocytes are one of the major target cells of TH, a prime regulator of energy metabolism^{13,14}. Moreover, hepatocytes play a crucial role in TH metabolism. THs are known for their metabolic and ion-regulatory actions where they utilize their differential and integrative mechanisms⁵, involving regulation of ion transporter protein abundance and modulation of activity patterns¹⁵⁻¹⁸. Hepatic function has been found associated with TH function and, naturally, any alteration in TH status would affect hepatic activity¹⁹. Furthermore, THs would modulate ion cycling by altering membrane permeability, expression and characteristics of ion pumps²⁰⁻²². Liver is an important site for the stress acclimation, demanding high energy requirement for homeostasis particularly during stress^{23,24}. Induction of stress could influence the liver physiology of fishes and could alter the carbohydrate and lipid metabolism²⁵ and there exists an intricate relationship between THs and liver function^{19,26,27}.

Bioenergetic mechanisms appear to be a main machinery target of T₂^{12,28,29} particularly in hepatocytes³⁰⁻³³. However, the action of T₂ on ion transporters that regulate cationic gradients necessary for normal hepatic functioning has not yet been studied especially in fishes. In the present study we, thus, examined the *in vitro* action of T₂ on ion-dependent ATPases such as Na⁺, K⁺-ATPase (NKA), H⁺, K⁺-ATPase (HKA), Na⁺, NH⁴⁺ ATPase (NNA), vacuolar H⁺-ATPase (vHA), plasma membrane Ca²⁺ ATPase (PMCA), mitochondrial Ca²⁺ ATPase and mitochondrial H⁺-ATPase in the hepatic explants of the air-breathing fish *Anabas testudineus* which were kept either in non-stressed or hypoxia-stressed state to address how T₂ modulates cationic gradients in hepatocytes during hypoxia-stress condition.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Fish Holding Conditions

Climbing perch (*Anabas testudineus* Bloch), an obligate air-breathing tropical freshwater fish belonging to order Perciformes and family Anabantidae, was selected as the test species. This fish that inhabit the backwaters of Kerala in Southern India, have well defined physiological and biochemical mechanisms to live in demanding

environmental conditions^{34,35}. As an excellent model to study the advanced physiological mechanisms^{6,34,36,37}, wild *Anabas* (approx. 40 ± 5 g body weight) were collected locally and held for three weeks in the laboratory conditions. They were kept under natural photoperiod (12 L/D cycle) at water temperature ranging from 28°C to 29°C, with a mean water pH of 6.2. Before the start of the experiments, fish were transferred to 50 L glass tanks and kept for another two weeks of acclimation. They were fed with dry commercial fish feed at 1.5% of body mass, and feeding was discontinued for 24 h prior to experiment, and care was taken to minimize the effect of stress such as handling to ensure standardized experimental conditions. The regulations of Institutional Animal Ethics Committee of the University were followed and we found no mortality during the course of the experiments.

2.2 Animal Care and Experiments

Two independent experiments were carried out. The first experiment tested the dose-responsive *in vitro* action of T₂ on the specific activity of ion-dependent ATPases such as Na⁺, K⁺-ATPase (NKA), H⁺, K⁺-ATPase (HKA), Na⁺, NH⁴⁺ ATPase (NNA), vacuolar H⁺-ATPase (vHA), plasma membrane Ca²⁺ ATPase (PMCA), mitochondrial Ca²⁺ ATPase (mit.CA) and mitochondrial H⁺-ATPase (mit.HA) in the hepatocyte explants of fish. Hepatocyte explants were prepared from laboratory-acclimated fish (n=24). A set of fish hepatocyte explants (n=6) were kept as control and the remaining three sets of explants were exposed to various doses of T₂ such as 10⁻⁹, 10⁻⁸ and 10⁻⁷ M, respectively, for 15 min under *in vitro* conditions. T₂ (Sigma-Aldrich, USA) was dissolved in 0.04 M NaOH and subsequently diluted with 0.65% saline solution. This stock solution was kept at 4°C³⁸.

In the second experiment, the *in vitro* action of T₂ on the activity of hepatocyte ion-dependent ATPases was analyzed either in non-stressed or immersion-stressed fish. Twenty four laboratory-acclimated fish were held as four groups (4×6). Fish in the first and second groups were kept as non-stressed fish. Fish in the third and fourth groups were subjected to immersion-stress for 30 min before *in vitro* treatment. Induction of stress was practiced in these fish by placing them in water under an iron-mesh that prevented them from gulping air as reported earlier^{9,39}. To ensure standardized experimental conditions, feeding was discontinued for 24 hours prior to the experiment, and care was taken to minimize the effect of handling stress on experimental fish.

2.3 Preparation of Hepatocyte Explants and *In Vitro* Conditions

After the experimental treatment, fish were anesthetized using 0.2% 2-phenoxyethanol (SRL, Mumbai, India) solution for a brief period of two minutes and blood was immediately drawn from the caudal vein. The fish were sacrificed immediately by spinal trans-section and the lower lobes of liver tissue were extracted and placed in Cortland saline (CS) containing 119 mM NaCl, 5 mM NaHCO₃, 5.4 mM KCl, 0.35 mM Na₂HPO₄, 0.44 mM KH₂PO₄, 0.81 mM MgSO₄, 1.25 mM CaCl₂ and 5 mM D-glucose of pH 7.4^{40,41}. The hepatic explants were cut into small pieces (5 mm²) that provided enough surface area for the absorption. The explants were washed thrice in Cortland saline to remove the tissue debris before the treatment. Then, these explants were held for 10 min in Cortland saline for equilibration on an orbital shaker platform at room temperature (28°C) as described earlier⁴². In the first dose-responsive experiment, graded concentrations of T₂ (10⁻⁹, 10⁻⁸, or 10⁻⁷ M) prepared in Cortland saline were added to the medium *in vitro* that contained the hepatic tissue explants and incubated for 15 min. In the second stress experiment, a selected dose of T₂ (10⁻⁷ M) was added *in vitro* to the explants obtained from both non-stressed and hypoxia-stressed fish. Similarly, control hepatocyte explants were maintained concurrently in incubation medium. After *in vitro* exposure of T₂ or vehicle, incubation was terminated by placing the hepatic explants at 4°C and the explants were washed with ice-cold Cortland saline three times. These explants were then stored in 0.25M Sucrose-EDTA-Imidazole (SEI) buffer (pH 7.1) and kept at -80°C for further analysis.

2.4 Sample Preparation and Quantification of Ion-specific ATPases

Frozen hepatocyte explants were thawed on ice and a homogenate was prepared in SEI buffer (0.05 M; pH 7.1) using a glass homogenizer (Remi, Mumbai) with Teflon pestle giving three strokes, as described previously⁷. A portion of the homogenate was centrifuged at 700×g for 10 minutes at 4°C (Eppendorf 5430R, Germany) to obtain membrane fraction (H₀) for quantifying the activity of NKA, HKA and NNA. The remaining portion of the supernatant was centrifuged at 10,000 × g for 10 min at 4°C to separate mitochondrial fraction and post-mitochondrial (PMS) fraction. Vanadate-sensitive

PMCA and bafilomycin-sensitive HA-specific activities were quantified in PMS as described earlier^{7,43}. The mitochondrial pellets thus obtained were centrifuged and repeatedly washed and suspended in fresh ice-cold 0.25 M SEI buffer (pH 7.1)⁴³. Vanadate-sensitive mitochondrial Ca²⁺ ATPase- and bafilomycin-sensitive mitochondrial H⁺ATPase-specific activities in the mitochondrial suspension were quantified. Modified Biuret assay was used to determine protein concentration in sample preparations utilizing bovine serum albumin as the standard⁴⁴.

2.4.1 NKA-Specific Activity

The ouabain-sensitive NKA-specific activity was quantified adopting the method of Peter *et al.* (2000) modified for microplate assay³⁴. To optimize substrate accessibility, saponin (0.2 mg protein⁻¹) was added and samples in duplicates containing 1.0 µg protein were added to a 96-well microplate containing 100 mM NaCl, 30 mM imidazole (pH 7.4), 0.1 mM EDTA, and 5 mM MgCl₂. KCl 0.13 mM and ouabain 0.14 mM were used as the promoter and inhibitor, respectively, for NKA. The assay mixture was vortexed and then incubated at 37°C for 15 min. The reaction was initiated by the addition of 0.3 mM ATP and terminated with the addition of 8.6% TCA. The liberated inorganic phosphate (Pi) was measured against phosphate standard at 700 nm in Synergy HT Biotek Microplate Reader, USA. The change in absorbance was calculated and regression analysis was used to derive the rate of activity of NKA and expressed in micromoles of Pi liberated per hour per milligram of protein.

2.4.2 HKA-Specific Activity

SCH28080-sensitive HKA-specific activity was quantified based on the NKA microplate assay³⁴. Saponin-treated samples in duplicates (1.0 µg protein) were added to a 96-well microplate containing the above reaction mixture, and the reaction was initiated by the addition of 0.3 mM ATP and incubated at 37°C for 15 minutes. About 0.1 mM SCH28080 (2-methyl-8-(phenylmethoxy)-imidazo [1,2-a] pyridine-3-acetonitrile) was used as inhibitor and 0.13 mM KCl was used as promoter. The inorganic phosphate content was measured in Synergy HT Biotek Microplate Reader after termination of reaction by adding 8.6% TCA and the change in absorbance at 700 nm between promoter and inhibitor assays was calculated using regression analysis. The rate of HKA activity was

expressed as micromoles of Pi liberated per hour per milligram of protein.

2.4.3 NNA-Specific Activity

An ouabain-sensitive NNA-specific activity was quantified based on the NKA microplate assay³⁴ but here 0.02 mM NH₄Cl, instead of 0.13 mM KCl, was used as promoter and 0.14 mM ouabain was used as inhibitor. Saponin (0.2 mg protein⁻¹) treated samples in duplicates, containing 1.0 µg protein, were added to a 96-well microplate containing 100 mM NaCl, 30 mM imidazole, 0.1 mM EDTA, and 5 mM MgCl₂. After vortexing, the assay mixture was incubated for 15 minutes at 37°C and the reaction was initiated by the addition of 0.3 mM ATP and terminated with addition of 8.6% TCA. The inorganic phosphate liberated was measured against phosphate standard at 700 nm in Synergy HT Biotek Microplate Reader. The change in absorbance between promoter and inhibitor assays was calculated. The rate of activity was derived by regression analysis and expressed in micromoles of Pi liberated per hour per milligram of protein.

2.4.4 PMCA and Mitochondrial Ca²⁺-ATPase-Specific Activity

The specific activity of PMCA and mitochondrial Ca²⁺-ATPase was measured in post-mitochondrial and mitochondrial fractions, respectively, as described for NKA-specific activity. Here, 10 mM CaCl₂ was used as the promoter. Sodium deoxycholate (1% DOC; Sigma-Aldrich)-treated samples in duplicates were added to a 96-well microplate containing 60 mM imidazole, 0.2 mM EGTA and 75 mM KCl. The reaction was initiated by the addition of 0.3 mM ATP and the inorganic phosphate liberated was measured against phosphate standard at 700 nm in Synergy HT Biotek Microplate Reader. The rate of activity was expressed in micromoles of Pi liberated per hour per milligram of protein⁴³.

2.4.5 H⁺-Dependent vs HA- and Mitochondrial HA-Specific Activities

The bafilomycin-sensitive H⁺-ATPase activity was measured as described for NKA microplate assay using an inhibitor 32 nM or 64 nM bafilomycin A⁷. Samples in duplicates containing 1.0 µg protein were added to a 96-well microplate containing 100 mM NaCl, 30 mM imidazole (pH 7.4), 0.1 mM EDTA, 5 mM MgCl₂ and 0.14

mM ouabain. The assay mixture was incubated with 0.3 mM ATP for 15 min at 37°C. The inorganic phosphate content released was determined as above and expressed in micromoles of Pi liberated per hour per milligram of protein.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

Data, after checking for normal distribution and variance homogeneity, were subjected to one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) followed by Student-Newman-Keuls test (SNK comparison test). Significance between the groups was analyzed with the help of GraphPad InStat-3; GraphPad Software, Inc., San Diego, CA, USA, and statistical differences between the means were accepted as significant if $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

3.1 Dose-Responsive *In Vitro* Action of T₂ on Hepatocyte Explants of Non-Stressed Fish

In vitro exposure of varied doses (10⁻⁹, 10⁻⁸, 10⁻⁷M) of T₂ for 15 min showed no response to the activities of NKA, HKA and NNA in hepatocyte explants collected from non-stressed fish (Figure 1A). Likewise, PMCA activity in hepatocyte explants remained unaffected after varied doses of T₂ exposure (Figure 2A). In contrast, vacuolar H⁺-ATPase activity in hepatocyte explants showed substantial increase after T₂ treatment (Figure 2A). Likewise, mitochondrial Ca²⁺-ATPase activity showed significant ($p < 0.001$) decline after the treatment of low and medium doses of T₂, whereas the high dose did not affect its activity (Figure 2B). Similarly, high dose of T₂ treatment produced a significant increase ($p < 0.05$) in mitochondrial H⁺-ATPase activity in hepatocyte explants of non-stressed fish (Figure 2B).

3.2 *In Vitro* Action of T₂ in Hepatocyte Explants of Immersion-Stressed Fish

The activity of NKA increased significantly ($p < 0.05$) in hepatocyte explants of hypoxia-stressed fish and its activity significantly increased ($p < 0.05$) further by T₂ addition (Figure 1B). In contrast, the NNA activity in hepatocytes remained unaffected after T₂ addition in both non-stressed and hypoxia-stressed fish (Figure 1C).

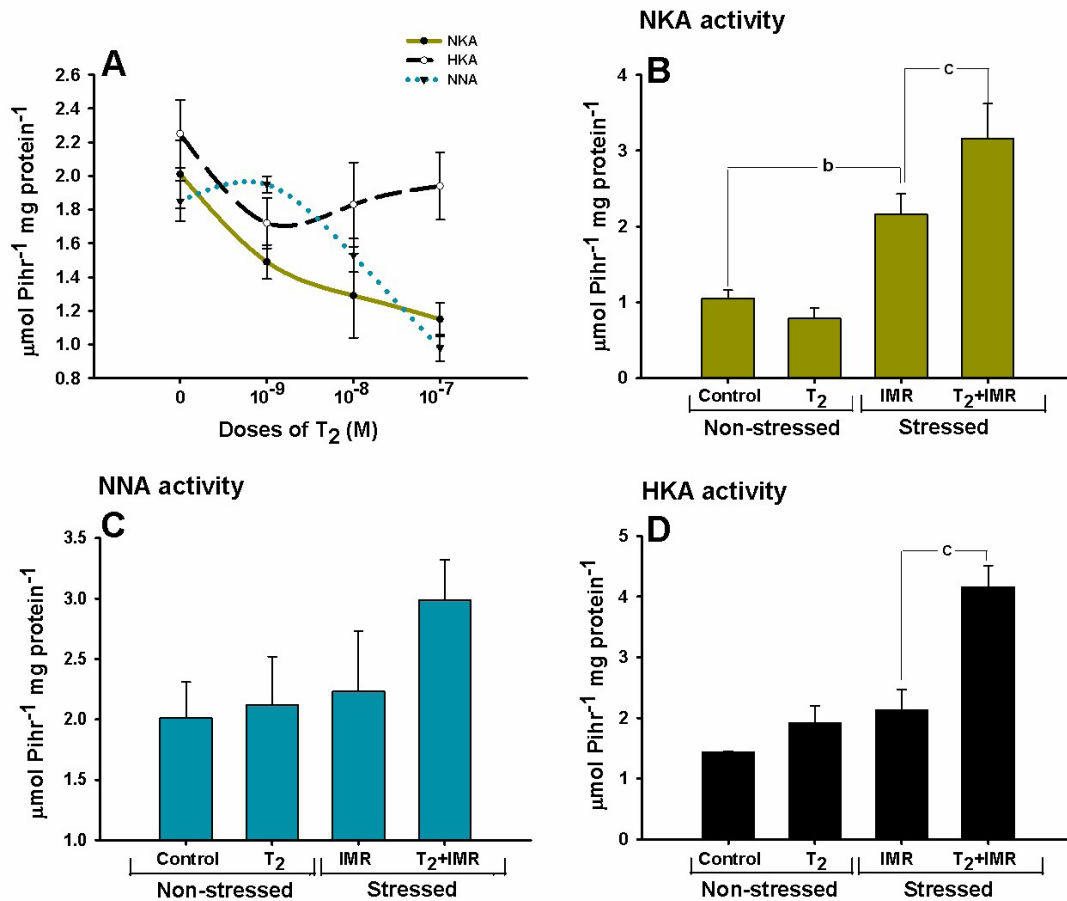


Figure 1. Dose-responsive *in vitro* action of T_2 (10^{-9} , 10^{-8} and 10^{-7} M) treatment for 15 min on the activities of Na^+/K^+ -ATPase (NKA), H^+/K^+ -ATPase (HKA) and $\text{Na}^+/\text{NH}_4^+$ -ATPase (NNA) in the hepatocyte explants of *Anabas testudineus*. (A). The activity pattern of Na^+/K^+ -ATPase, H^+/K^+ -ATPase and $\text{Na}^+/\text{NH}_4^+$ -ATPase are presented in B, C & D, respectively. These activities were obtained from non-stressed and immersion-stressed fish after T_2 treatment (10^{-7} M). Each bar is mean \pm SE for 6 fish. The significance levels of figures 1B-D are represented as “b” when compared between non-stressed control and immersion-stressed fish (IMR) and “c” represents significance between immersed control fish (IMR) and T_2 -treated stressed (T_2 +IMR) fish.

The activity of HKA activity that remained unresponsive to hypoxia but increased significantly ($p < 0.01$) in hepatocytes of stressed fish following T_2 challenge (Figure 1D). In hepatocytes obtained from both non-stressed and stressed fish treatment of 10^{-7} M T_2 did not produce any alteration in PMCA activity (Figure 2C). Mitochondrial Ca^{2+} -ATPase activity showed a significant increase ($p < 0.01$) in hypoxia-stressed hepatocytes, whereas T_2 treatment failed to produce any modification in its activity in both non-stressed and stressed fish (Figure 2D). A significant rise in ($p < 0.01$) in vH^+ -ATPase activity occurred after T_2 exposure in hepatocytes of both non-stressed and hypoxia-stressed fish (Figure 2E). Similarly,

the activity of mitochondrial H^+ -ATPase increased significantly ($p < 0.01$) after T_2 treatment in the hepatocytes of non-stressed and hypoxia-stressed fish (Figure 2F).

4. Discussion

Thyroid Hormones (THs) play vital role in vertebrate physiology as key regulators of growth, development, metamorphosis, metabolism, osmoregulation and reproduction^{34,45-47}. It is known that the principal THs, T_4 and T_3 , as the active hormones are responsible for these activities. However, evidences have showed that T_2 also has important biological actions^{12,32,48} either through

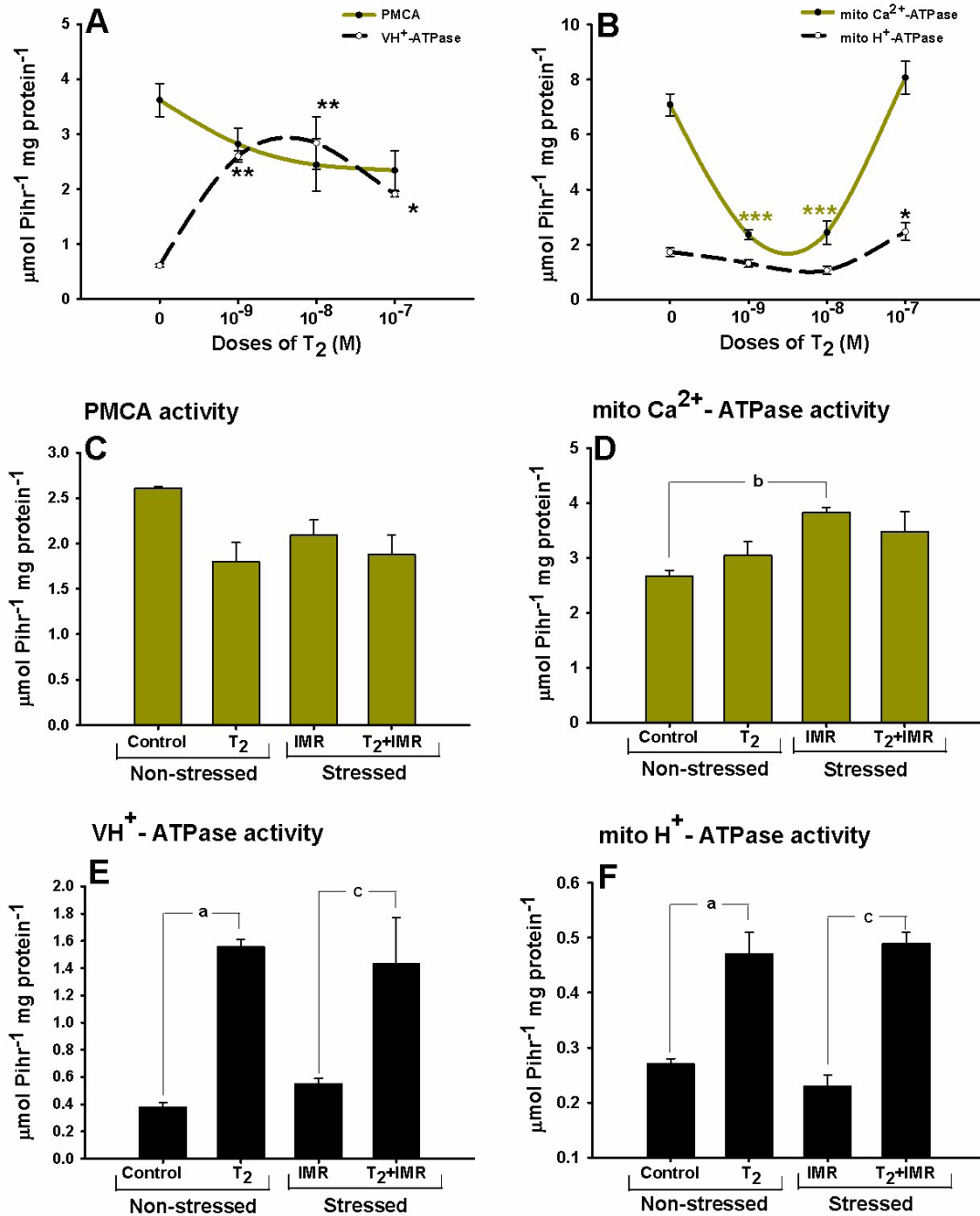


Figure 2. Dose-responsive *invitro* action of T₂ (10⁻⁹, 10⁻⁸ and 10⁻⁷ M) treatment for 15 min on the activities of PMCA, VH⁺-ATPase, mitochondrial Ca²⁺-ATPase and mitochondrial H⁺-ATPase in the hepatocyte explants of *Anabas testudineus*. (A). The activity patterns of PMCA, VH⁺-ATPase, mitochondrial Ca²⁺-ATPase and H⁺-ATPase are presented in B, C, D, E & F, respectively. These activities were obtained from non-stressed and immersion-stressed fish after T₂ treatment (10⁻⁷ M). Each bar is mean ± SE for 6 fish. In figure 2A, the significance levels are represented as “*” (*p*<0.05), “**” (*p*<0.01) and “***” (*p*<0.001) when compared with control fish. significance levels in figures 2B-F are represented as “a” when compared between control and T₂-treated fish, “b” when compared between non-stressed control and immersion-stressed fish (IMR) and “c” represents significance between immersed control fish (IMR) and T₂-treated stressed (T₂+IMR) fish.

non-genomic^{3,12} or genomic actions^{49,50}. These effects of T_2 are not limited to mammals but reported in fishes as well⁵¹. For example, mitochondria and bioenergetics mechanisms have been shown to be the main targets of the TH metabolite T_2 ^{52,53}.

Physiological response to a stressor involves the induction of neuro-endocrine cascade⁵⁴. Fishes have evolved mechanisms to respond to various stress factors and rely on complex network of neuro-endocrine and physiologic responses to maintain their homeostasis⁸. The role of cortisol and adrenaline as major stress hormones during stress response have been well documented in fishes⁵⁵. Similarly, THs have been shown to act as a stress modifiers due to their unique modulatory role in fish physiological processes and their ability to modify stress-induced response^{5,6,8}.

Fishes have evolved transepithelial transport mechanisms to achieve ionic and osmotic homeostasis⁵⁶. Various transporter proteins that are located in the trans-epithelium move specific solutes across the membrane with the aid of transmembrane ATPases which utilize energy from the hydrolysis of ATP⁵⁷. NKA, a key transporter that acts as the driving force for Na^+ -coupled ion transport is abundant in active ion-transporting epithelia of fishes⁵⁸⁻⁶⁰. Similarly, Ca^{2+} , that controls many critical cellular responses, is also essential for the cell functioning. Plasma membrane Ca^{2+} ATPase (PMCA) has a high Ca^{2+} affinity and acts as the fine-tuner of cytosolic Ca^{2+} ⁶¹. Likewise, PMCA maintains a gradient across the plasma membrane by regulating cellular Ca^{2+} extrusion⁶².

NKA and PMCA are the membrane ATPases critical for the normal physiology and functioning of hepatocytes^{63,64}. A unique Na^+ -dependent NH_4^+ -ATPase, contributes to basolateral ammonia transport⁶⁵ and it takes place via NKA⁶⁶. Since NH_4^+ and K^+ have similar hydrated radii, NH_4^+ binds to K^+ binding sites on the NKA^{9,67-69}. HKA, another P-type transporter, is responsible for ATP-dependent translocation of H^+ for K^+ across plasma membranes⁷⁰. Gastric type HKA in the stomach and kidneys of mammals mediates acid secretion⁷¹ and the presence of nongastric type HKA has been reported in the gills of Atlantic stingray, an elasmobranch⁷² and in the osmoregulatory epithelia of our test fish⁹.

Vacuolar H^+ -ATPase or proton pump, an oligomeric protein responsible for electrogenic H^+ secretion, is another important ATPase involved in fish ion regulation⁷³⁻⁷⁵. Primarily, this transporter is responsible for acidification of intracellular compartments and

proton transport across the plasma membrane⁷⁶. Likewise, proton- or H^+ -ATPases in mitochondria are responsible for the transport of protons by utilizing the energy through the hydrolysis of ATP⁷⁷. Mitochondria, as an important Ca^{2+} reservoir, rely on Ca^{2+} ATPase of the mitochondrial membrane to transport Ca^{2+} from cytosol into mitochondrial matrix⁷⁷. Further, mitochondrial Ca^{2+} regulation has a direct link with bioenergetics and cellular signalling⁷⁸.

As a multifunctional organ, liver plays an important role in fish physiology⁷⁹. Liver appears to one of the most important target organs of THs due to its role in energy metabolism⁸⁰. Further, hepatic tissue is also a major target for T_2 action like active THs, particularly due to its action on energy metabolism^{52,53}. The roles played by T_4 and T_3 in physiological processes are well documented. In contrast, the role of T_2 in ion-dependent ATPases that drives cation gradients across membrane remains unknown. We, thus, analyzed the *in vitro* action of T_2 on the ion-transport dynamics that would affect the hepatocyte function. We found that T_2 exposure could affect the activity pattern of various ATPases in this important metabolically active organ. The pattern of dose-dependent *in vitro* action of T_2 on ATPase activity in non-stressed and immersion-stressed hepatocyte explants revealed a direct action of T_2 on hepatocyte cation transport.

It is known that THs affect several fundamental ion-transporter systems in many osmoregulatory tissues as evident in *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies^{7,81,82}. *In vitro* studies on primary culture of rat hepatocytes and rat liver cell lines proved that NKA is a major target of THs and are able to produce both short-term and long-term modulation on this ion-transporter⁸³⁻⁸⁵. 3,5- T_2 exposure increased the hypothyroid liver mitochondrial F_0F_1 -ATP synthase activity and expression, and this activation could be observed in both directions i.e., towards synthesis as well as hydrolysis of ATP⁸⁶. In teleost fish liver, T_2 regulates the transcription of classical TH-regulated genes^{49,51,87}. All these studies indicate that liver is one of the main targets of T_2 and this TH metabolite influences physiology of the liver.

In chick embryo hepatocytes, 3,5- T_2 decreased the activity of NKA through the activation of PKA, PKC and PI3K, which was comparable to that exerted by T_3 ⁸⁴. NKA activity has been shown to be elevated by T_3 , however, 3,5- T_2 decreased its activity in fish liver⁸⁸. In liver, NKA plays a key role in the physiology and structure of hepatocytes, and Na^+ and K^+ gradients produced by NKA was essential

to regulate the transport of bile acid and water⁸⁹. We found increased NKA and HKA activities after T₂ treatment in hepatocytes of immersion-stressed fish which indicated its role in the regulation of H⁺, Na⁺ and K⁺ gradients for the normal functioning of liver. Furthermore, we also found that T₂ facilitates these gradients especially in stress-induced hepatocytes.

Vacuolar H⁺-ATPase activity showed significant increase after T₂ exposure which was also evident in stressed hepatocytes. T₂ has an influence on cellular acidification and proton gradient *via* modulating the activity of H⁺-ATPase was evident from the increased activity of this ATPases in both non-stressed and stressed fish livers followed by T₂ treatment. Mitochondrial Ca²⁺ concentration regulation is more critical in cellular function that ranges from ATP production to cell death⁹⁰. In the present study, T₂ exposure did not influence Ca²⁺-ATPase activity in either cytoplasmic or mitochondrial origin, which point to insensitivity of this divalent cation to T₂ in hepatocytes of both non-stressed and stressed fish. An increase in intracellular calcium level in mitochondria that activates several dehydrogenase enzymes, increase in the respiratory rate, H⁺ extrusion, and ATP production; however, prolonged increase leads to cell death by apoptosis⁹⁰. T₂ has been shown to increase mitochondrial activity and respiration through an increase in mitochondrial Ca²⁺ uptake⁹¹. In pituitary GH3 cells, T₂ rapidly affects intracellular Ca²⁺ via plasma membrane and mitochondrial pathways⁹².

A role for proton-dependent ATPase, particularly in maintaining mitochondrial H⁺ concentration, which could affect the mitochondrial respiratory function and ATP production, could be seen in hepatocytes of both non-stressed and stressed conditions. Increased activity of this transporter in hypoxia stress may indicate the increased need of energy metabolism particularly during stress. Mitochondrial proton gradient was rapidly affected by T₂ through modulating the activity of H⁺ ATPase. We found a rise in this ATPase activity in non-stressed and stressed fish. Previous studies showed that mitochondria and bioenergetics mechanisms become the central target of T₂. This was supported by our *in vitro* study, and further points to a rapid action of T₂ on both cellular and mitochondrial proton gradients they would directly affect mitochondrial respiratory function.

Overall, the present data indicate that T₂ can directly induce high proton and potassium gradients in the hepatocytes of both non-stressed and immersion-stressed

fish. Furthermore, this regulatory action of T₂ suggests a role for T₂ in mitochondrial ion transport activity particularly during immersion-stress, probably for meeting out the energetics associated with a physiological response of this metabolite of TH in a way similar to the active THs.

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