



CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SERC-A DYSFUNCTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR BRAIN FUNCTION IN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Sadia Sohail^{1*}, Farheen Anjum², Dr. Muhammad Ismail Khan³, Fatima Bibi⁴, Rohma Rehman⁵, Munazza Tariq⁶

^{1*}Lecturer, Department of Psychology, National University of Modern Languages, Pakistan,
Email: sadiasohail86@gmail.com

²Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIEMS), Quetta, Pakistan,
Email: farheen.anjum@buitms.edu.pk

³Department of Zoology, Islamia College Peshawar, Pakistan, Email: ismail@icp.edu.pk

⁴MS Scholar, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Islamabad, Pakistan, Email: Fatimayounas6@gmail.com

⁵Clinical Psychologist, Department of Clinical Psychology, Riphah International University, Lahore, Pakistan, Email: rohiir320@gmail.com

⁶Clinical Psychologist, Department of Clinical Psychology, Riphah International University, Lahore, Pakistan, Email: Munazzatariq90@gmail.com

***Corresponding author:** Sadia Sohail

*Lecturer, Department of Psychology, National University of Modern Languages, Pakistan,
Email: sadiasohail86@gmail.com

Abstract:

Objective: This review aims to reevaluate the molecular mechanisms of sarcoendoplasmic reticulum Ca²⁺-dependent ATPase (SERC-A) in Alzheimer's disease and discuss the implications of calcium regulation, particularly in relation to vascular risk and the function of voltage-gated calcium channels.

Methods: We comprehensively analysed existing literature to understand the role of calcium regulation in Alzheimer's disease, focusing on the internal instability of calcium levels and its association with vascular risk. Special attention was given to the molecular mechanisms of SERC-A and the functional aspects of voltage-gated calcium channels.

Results: The prevalence of Alzheimer's disease is influenced by various factors, collectively disrupting normal neuronal functions. Internal instability of calcium levels emerges as a significant factor, with a notable connection to increased vascular risk – a condition prevalent in individuals affected by Alzheimer's disease. This review highlights the molecular intricacies of SERC-A in the disease context and provides insights into the functional significance of voltage-gated calcium channels.

Conclusion: Understanding the regulatory mechanisms of calcium, specifically the role of SERC-A and voltage-gated calcium channels, holds clinical relevance. The irregular function of SERC-A has been implicated in diverse alterations of brain function. Insights from this review may open new

avenues for therapeutic alternatives targeting calcium dysregulation in Alzheimer's disease, providing potential interventions to address the underlying causes of neuronal dysfunction.

Keywords: Alzheimer's Disease; Calcium-Transporting ATPases; Calcium Metabolism Disorders; N-Methyl-D-Aspartate Receptor; Endoplasmic Reticulum.

INTRODUCTION:

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of human dementia, especially in people over the age of 60. Currently, more than 46 million people worldwide suffer from Alzheimer's disease, and it is estimated that by 2050, this number will increase to more than 131 million (Collins, Zhang, & Chatham, 2022).

This disease is due to the progressive loss of neurons in different brain parts. This causes neurological atrophy, mainly of the hippocampus, cortical and limbic structures, and pathological changes that can only be evaluated post-mortem. Many factors intervene in the onset of this disease, especially if they make it difficult for normal neuronal functions, such as vascular accidents, prolonged stressful conditions or lack of external reinforcing stimuli in learning (Walters & Usachev, 2023).

There are also environmental factors that can cause abnormalities in the cytoskeleton (colchicine, lead genotoxicity, etc.) or endocrine elements associated with sexual expression since women have a higher prevalence; in addition to age, since it appears in 50% of cases of people over 80 and 15% of those between 65 and 80 (Peters et al., 2022).

Alzheimer's disease is, therefore, not an entity that a single anomalous event can explain. Still, it results from the conjunction between extrinsic factors, such as those already mentioned, and intrinsic alterations of the β -amyloid protein ($A\beta$). (not in all cases), the accumulation of protein aggregates on the myelin sheaths or the nerve nuclei, the processes associated with the inflammatory cascade, the oxidative neuronal damage due to mitochondrial dysfunction, the protein alterations of the Tau molecule, the formation of tangles neurofibrillary, synaptic failure and neurotransmitter depletion, as well as autosomal dominant inheritance of apolipoprotein E allele 4 (APOE^ε4) and mutations in amyloid precursor proteins (APP) and presenilin-1 and 2; everything was correlated with cases of early familial Alzheimer's disease (Sharma et al., 2023).

In any case, the clinical manifestation of the disease is associated with a complex neurodegenerative progression that produces memory impairment and loss of other cognitive and non-cognitive processes. In general, several neurological disorders, including Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, are linked by incidence to cardiovascular alterations. Still, the molecular elements correlated between the two processes have not been adequately delineated, although Ca²⁺-mediated osmotic alterations after those above are mentioned alterations (Sun et al., 2023).

Therefore, cellular instability of calcium levels is associated with increased vascular risk. Its regulation opens up a wide range of treatments for kidney disease, transplantation, and heart problems. However, little is currently known about calcium regulation before and during Alzheimer's disease and whether it is related to irrigation vascularization (Zampese et al., 2022).

In this work, the molecular mechanisms of Ca²⁺ regulation during Alzheimer's disease are examined to establish whether ATPases, particularly Ca²⁺-dependent sarcoendoplasmic reticulum (SERC-A), could be a possible therapeutic target for treatment (Takenaka et al., 2023b).

Calcium As A Regulator Of Synaptic Potential:

The neuronal function begins with the emission and reception of signals propagating across the cell membrane due to changes in plasma permeability. As a result, an electrical potential develops and propagates throughout the entire presynaptic neuron until the release of chemical signals in the gap or synapse, which allows the transition of the signal to the dendritic terminals of the postsynaptic neuron, where the receivers of these signals are (Yamasaki et al., 2023).

During this process, the arrival of an action potential at the presynaptic terminal induces depolarization of the membrane in that area, which causes the opening of voltage-gated Ca²⁺ channels, the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptors (NMDARs) and Alpha 7, nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChR); generating the concentration of Ca²⁺ cytosolic concentration of resting neurons, which varies from 50 to 300 nM, increases up to the order of μM in the active zone for a few microseconds (Berna-Erro et al., 2023; Yadav, Narayanasamy, & Aradhyam, 2023).

This sudden increase is necessary to synchronize neurotransmitter release in the presynaptic cleft. Therefore, to recover the resting potential, it is necessary to reduce the cytosolic Ca²⁺ level again, requiring the action of Ca²⁺ pumps such as the plasma membrane Na⁺/Ca²⁺ pump (NCX) and the plasma membrane Ca²⁺ ATPase (PMCA). It is also possible to sequester the excess ion in the lumen of the endoplasmic reticulum using pumps that use ATP to capture Ca²⁺ in these intracellular stores until the pre-release potential is reached (Figure 1) (Zhang et al., 2022).

Although Ca²⁺ pumps have a low concentration in nerve cells, they play a fundamental role in their metabolism and physiology, controlling processes that depend on the amplitude, frequency and subcellular localization of Ca²⁺ signals, such as neuronal plasticity, nervous impulse, neuronal aging or apoptosis. Many neurological diseases, including Alzheimer's disease, lead to alterations in Ca²⁺ homeostasis or deficiencies in the functioning of the pumps (Takenaka et al., 2023a).

CA²⁺-TRANSPORTING ATPASES AND THEIR ROLE IN DEGENERATIVE NEUROPATHIES:

Capacitive Ca²⁺ influx is essential for Ca²⁺ homeostasis. Maintains adequate and functional concentrations in the lattice endoplasmic. Therefore, this organelle is the primary cellular calcium reservoir, which enables sustained signaling through ion mobilization. Capacitive Ca²⁺ entry is based on a feedback mechanism activated by the decrease in Ca²⁺ within the endoplasmic reticulum, which triggers its entry across the plasma membrane (Pereira et al., 2022).

Stromal interaction molecules and the expression product of the Orai1 gene, a structural protein of the calcium-selective ion channel activated by calcium release 1, are the leading players in the capacitive influx of Ca²⁺. A stromal interacting molecule detects the contents of Ca²⁺ within the endoplasmic reticulum and, when it decreases, activates transcription of Orai1, which results in a calcium channel operated by intracellular stores in the plasma membrane. The final destination of the incoming Ca²⁺ is not the cytosol but the endoplasmic reticulum, which is filled with it very efficiently. The lattice Ca²⁺ ATPase the sarcoendoplasmic (SERC-A) is the third element of the capacitive Ca²⁺ input, which is tightly coupled. The proximity between the intracellular stores and SERC-A promotes the rapid pumping of Ca²⁺ from the Ca²⁺-rich microdomains generated in the cytoplasmic mouth of the intracellular stores towards the endoplasmic reticulum (Figure 1) (Ousingsawat et al., 2023).

Ca²⁺-transporting ATPases have high affinity and are responsible for active ion transport at the expense of ATP hydrolysis in several cell membranes. Three families have been identified: sarcoendoplasmic reticulum Ca²⁺-ATPase (SERC-A), plasma membrane Ca²⁺-ATPase (PMCA), and secretory pathway Ca²⁺-ATPase (SPCA), as well as other family members specialized in of H⁺/K⁺, Na⁺/K⁺ ions (Rajeev et al., 2022).

SERC-A is an amphiphilic protein integrated into the membranes of the sarcoendoplasmic reticulum, which transports two Ca²⁺ ions from the cytoplasm to the lumen of these compartments, using the hydrolysis energy of ATP in the presence of Mg²⁺. This protein has been identified and first purified in the sarcoplasmic reticulum of skeletal muscle, where the SERC-A1 isoform is found. This constitutes 90% of total membrane proteins and plays a significant role in muscle contraction or relaxation, although numerous other isoforms have been described in different tissues over time (Aluja, Delgado-Tomás, Ruiz-Meana, Barrabés, & Inserte, 2022; Rieder, 2023).

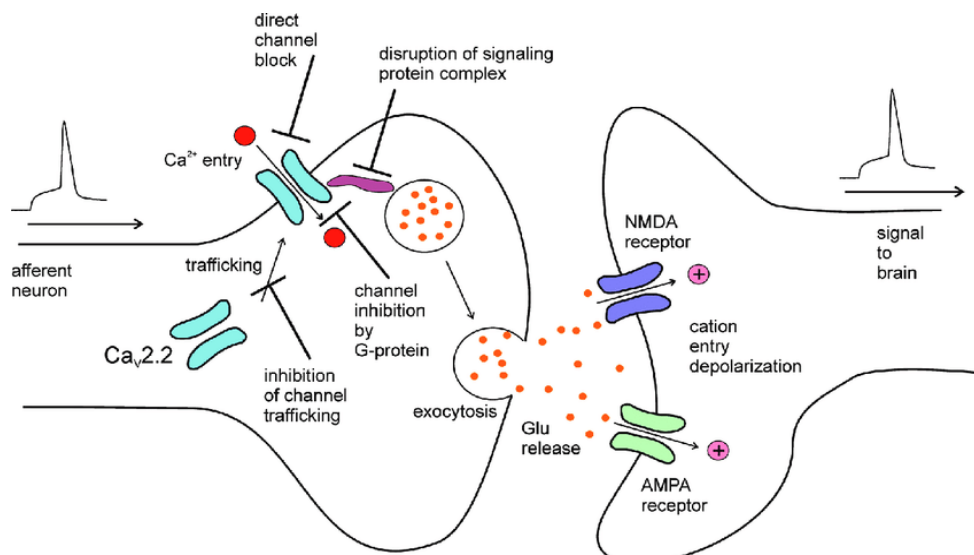


Figure 1. Calcium as a regulator of synaptic potential

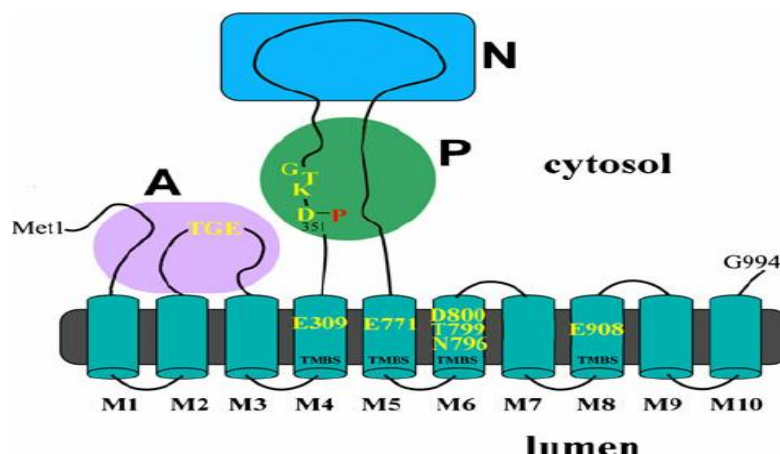
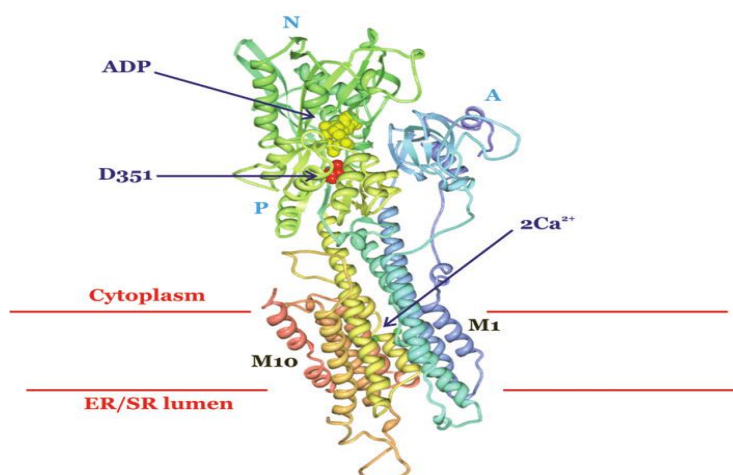


Figure 2. The Ca^{2+} -ATPase of the sarcoendoplasmic reticulum. A) Schematic representation of the structure of SERC-A, showing the numbered transmembrane segments, the catalytic domain, and the N and C termini for the different isoforms.



B) Three-dimensional model of the SERC-A1.

The protein comprises approximately 1,000 amino acids with a molecular weight of 110 kDa. It has the N-terminal and C-terminal ends towards the cytoplasm (SERC-A1, 2a and 3); occasionally, the C-terminus is oriented towards the lumen (SERC-A2b), has 10 (SERC-A1, 2a and 3) to 11 (SERC-A 2b) transmembrane domains. These transmembrane domains, which also constitute the calcium

channel, have a globular head consisting of two cytoplasmic domains, one of which is the catalytic domain, where there is an aspartic acid residue that is phosphorylated during activation and the ATP binding site (figure 2) (Ferrer, 2022).

Isoforms 1, 2, and 3 are produced by three highly conserved genes located on different chromosomes that, in addition, generate further diversity through alternative processing of messenger RNAs from three domains located at the COOH terminus (Yamasaki et al.).

Up to 10 SERC-A isoforms have been identified at the protein level with high tissue and developmental stage specificity. The SERC-A1 isoform is specific to adults, while the B form is specific to newborns; both differ in their C-terminal region. They are specific to fast-twitch skeletal muscle, contributing to the Ca²⁺ flux involved in muscle contraction or relaxation; SERC-A1a makes up 90% of the total proteins in skeletal muscle. These variants are encoded by the ATP2A1 gene located in the chromosomal region 16p12 (MacLeod, 2023).

Autosomal recessive mutations in the ATP2A1 gene have been associated with Brody disease in humans, a rare inherited myopathy characterized by a detrimental increase in skeletal muscle relaxation during exercise, resulting in stiffness and cramps. Surprisingly, ataxia associated with Alzheimer's disease has similar symptomatology (Michalak, 2023; Nakamura et al., 2023).

SERC-A2b is the main isoform of nervous tissue, although it is also present in smooth muscle and non-muscle tissues such as skin. Autosomal dominant mutations are associated with Darier disease in humans, a skin disease characterized by loss of adhesion between epidermal cells and abnormal keratinization. Neuropsychiatric problems such as epilepsy, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression have also been described in some families affected by this disease (Li et al., 2024).

It is striking that mRNAs generated by alternative intron recombination for the SERC-A2a isoform are much less stable than their counterparts in muscle tissue, so the calcium transport system is assumed to be much more sensitive in nervous tissue. On the other hand, decreased expression of this channel induces neuropathic pain. Inhibition of the channel causes neuronal hyperexcitation, nerve injury, endoplasmic reticulum stress, activation of satellite glial cells, and mechanical allodynia (pain due to ordinarily non-painful stimuli). Therefore, SERC-A2b activators have the potential to treat neuropathic pain (Irnaten & O'Brien, 2023; Šeflová, Cruz-Cortés, Guerrero-Serna, Robia, & Espinoza-Fonseca, 2023).

The most important thing about this proposal is that overexpression of SERC-A-2b after chronic constriction injury produces long-term relief of mechanical and thermal allodynia, accompanied by morphological and functional restoration of nervous tissue by relieving endoplasmic reticulum stress; therefore, its use in Alzheimer's disease would allow, at least partially, functional neurological recovery (Ednie, Paul-Onyia, & Bennett, 2023; Mitronova et al., 2023).

Therapeutic strategy for Alzheimer's disease based on SERC-A regulation:

Decreased Ca²⁺ concentration in the endoplasmic reticulum has been established as a significant cause of stress-induced apoptosis in the endoplasmic reticulum. Although several data demonstrate that A β influences Ca²⁺ homeostasis, emerging data suggest that Ca²⁺ stores in the endoplasmic reticulum are significantly involved in A β production and tau phosphorylation during AD. Unfortunately, there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease (Sun et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2023).

The only approved treatments are neurotransmitter modulators, consisting of cholinesterase inhibitors and the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor antagonist, memantine. While these treatments target the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and can provide relief and comfort to patients, they do not stop the progression of the disease itself. The one feature that has consistently been linked to the progression of dementia is the loss of neurons in the brains of Alzheimer's disease patients (MacNeil, 2023).

The brains of people suffering from Alzheimer's disease show three times fewer neurons in the hippocampus than the brains of those who do not have this alteration before the age of fifty (Hussey, Limpitikul, & Dick, 2023).

Therefore, there is a clear need for treatments that can target this mechanism of Alzheimer's disease progression. The ability of the SERC-A allosteric activator, CDN1163, to alleviate parkinsonian

akinesia in rats has recently been reported, and convincing efficacy has been reported in the transgenic mouse model for the amyloid precursor protein and for presenilin-1 (APP /PS1), with Alzheimer's disease. Both proteins are involved in the secretion of the gamma complex and the production of A β in response to endoplasmic reticulum stress, which also induces an inflammatory reaction related to the pathogenesis of various diseases. SERC-A gene therapy has recently alleviated endoplasmic reticulum stress in several animal models (Alvarez, Jafri, & Ullah, 2023; Takenaka et al., 2023b).

The stress above induces the folding modification of numerous proteins, resulting in immediate reactions in cellular phosphorylation patterns and subsequent changes in the expression of hundreds of target genes. The purpose of these adaptive effects is to restore cellular homeostasis, or at least try to. However, if the stress caused is prolonged, the modification of the folding of several proteins can trigger the apoptotic cell death program within the cell, which, in the case of neurons, even precedes the accumulation of A β and is directly related to the proinflammatory signalling. In any case, the affected pathway begins with SERC-A and ends with two neuronal death pathways (Hamilton et al., 2023).

Increased SERC-A activity maintains calcium in the endoplasmic reticulum and, therefore, its function despite stressors. Furthermore, SERC-A activation can sequester more cytosolic Ca $^{2+}$ and prevent mitochondrial signaling-induced apoptosis. All these factors suggest that pharmacological activation of SERC-A will significantly impact the treatment of Alzheimer's disease (Hansen, 2023). This has already been tested in CSM14.1 cell lines obtained from striatal progenitor neurons of rats previously treated with thapsigargin, a known inducer of endoplasmic reticulum stress that unloads luminal deposits in the endoplasmic reticulum via specific inhibition of SERC.-TO. Pretreatment with the quinoline-amide compound CDN1163, a drug that induces SERC-A activity, demonstrated the ability to rescue cells from the apoptotic process by restarting ATPase function (Seitz et al., 2023).

This result was also obtained in HEK, HeLa and BMGK cells exposed to thapsigargin and hydrogen peroxide as inducers of endoplasmic reticulum stress when using CDN1163. Similarly, providing the drug to SERC-A mutant rats, which initially accelerated Ca $^{2+}$ loss due to excitotoxicity induced by glutamate (a neurotransmitter that stimulates NMDA channels), it was possible to attenuate endoplasmic reticulum stress due to exhaustion of the ion(Nikiforova et al., 2023)

Therefore, the therapeutic strategy is clear: activation of SERC-A with CDN1163 or similar will replenish Ca $^{2+}$ stores, alleviating endoplasmic reticulum stress and effectively rescuing neurons damaged from apoptosis(Enrich, Lu, Tebar, Rentero, & Grewal, 2023), (Osman, Spiegel, Patel, & Hemmings, 2023).

CONCLUSION:

Stress caused by a deregulation of Ca $^{2+}$ levels in the endoplasmic reticulum of neurons causes their apoptosis, which is why it is a determining factor associated with Alzheimer's disease. Therefore, stimulation of the Ca $^{2+}$ -dependent ATPase of the sarcoendoplasmic reticulum (SERC-A) could represent a possible therapeutic target in this disease, reducing Ca $^{2+}$ levels in the cytosol of hippocampal neurons.

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