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Investigation Of Posttranscriptional Regulation After Global Brain Ischemia And Reperfusion Injury

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INVESTIGATION OF POSTTRANSLATIONAL REGULATION AFTER GLOBAL BRAIN ISCHEMIA AND REPERFUSION INJURY

by

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Stephen and Janice, and to all the other family and friends who have given me support and encouragement.

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1.1 Introduction

Ischemia and reperfusion (I/R) injury occurs when a transient reduction in blood flow is followed by restoration of blood flow. In humans, brain I/R injury occurs during the common conditions stroke and cardiac arrest. At present, understanding of the cellular pathology of brain I/R injury is insufficient to provide a foundation on which to develop effective clinical therapies.

When circulation is interrupted prior to entering the brain, a global brain I/R injury affects all neurons. Global brain I/R differentiates neurons into selectively vulnerable and selectively resistance groups. After global brain I/R, both selectively vulnerable and selectively resistant neurons recover from initial disturbances in energy imbalance and ion gradients, and both groups retain the ability to transcribe mRNA. Resistant neurons are differentiated from vulnerable neurons by their ability to translate stress response mRNAs into protein early in reperfusion. It is not understood how resistant neurons translate stress response transcripts into protein, a significant deficit in knowledge which is a barrier to developing neuroprotective therapies.

This thesis work investigates mechanisms of posttranscriptional and translational control in pyramidal cell neurons of the ischemia resistant cornu ammonis 3 (CA3) and ischemia vulnerable CA1 subregions of the rat hippocampus. This work builds on the previous discovery in the DeGracia laboratory of the mRNA granule, a stress-induced messenger ribonucleoprotein complex (mRNP) in reperfused neurons. This work is also based on an extensive literature describing translation control and cellular stress responses in reperfused neurons by the DeGracia laboratory and many others in the field. To

investigate the posttranscriptional regulation of stress response transcripts following global brain I/R injury, the following specific aims were carried out:

1.2 Specific Aims

1.2.1 Specific Aim 1: mRNA Granule Dependence on Polysomeassociated mRNA

Upon reperfusion after brain ischemia, cytoplasmic mRNA forms into distinct structures called mRNA granules. mRNA granules form in all injured neurons, but only resolve in neurons which recover from brain I/R injury¹. While intact during ischemia, polysomes disassemble immediately upon reperfusion, breaking into ribosomal subunits which slowly reassemble as protein synthesis gradually returns during reperfusion². Dissociation of neuronal polysomes is expected to liberate free mRNA into the cytoplasm and therefore may be necessary for mRNA granule formation. In this aim, mRNA was locked onto polysomes with cycloheximide (CHX) to determine if polysome-associated mRNA was required for mRNA granule formation. Because mRNA granules are complex structures under microscopy, texture analysis was used to detect and quantify mRNA granule formation. To further study the relationship between polysomes and mRNA granules, polysome dissociation was induced in uninjured control animals using puromycin, and the effects on mRNA granules were studied under the microscope.

1.2.2 Specific Aim 2: Localization and Interactions of HuR in Reperfused Neurons

Ischemia resistant neurons such as the pyramidal cell neurons of the CA3 region of the hippocampus effectively translate stress-response transcripts into protein early in reperfusion after an ischemic insult^{3,4}. Ischemia vulnerable populations such as CA1 pyramidal cell neurons transcribe stress response mRNAs, but they do not translate mRNAs into protein in early reperfusion^{3,4}. The mRNAbinding protein (mRBP) Hu antigen R (HuR, also called embryonic lethal, abnormal vision, Drosophilalike 1) localizes to mRNA granules early in reperfusion only in ischemia resistant neurons, but the implications of this finding are unknown. HuR is known to stabilize the mRNA of stress response proteins such as HSP70 by several mechanisms including facilitated nuclear export^{5,6}, but HuR's effects on *hsp70* mRNA have not been studied in a brain I/R model. To establish a direct interaction between HuR protein and *hsp70* mRNA, RNA immunoprecipitation (RIP) with HuR protein was performed from reperfused neurons. To investigate facilitated nuclear export of *hsp70* mRNA by HuR, relative amounts of HuR protein and *hsp70* mRNA were quantified in nuclear and cytoplasmic fractions from reperfused neurons of CA1 and CA3.

1.2.3 Specific Aim 3: Polysome Characterization and Association with HuR in Reperfused Neurons

Hu proteins can increase translation of their target mRNAs by associating with polysomes⁷. This mechanism may explain why CA3 neurons translate *hsp70* mRNA into protein when CA1 neurons do not. To study the association of HuR and polysomes, polysomes were isolated in linear sucrose gradients (polysome profiles), and HuR was measured in polysome-enriched fractions.

1.2.4 Specific Aim 4: Global Brain Ischemia Translation State Analysis

Previous microarray studies after global brain I/R have had significant limitations. All microarray studies of global brain I/R have use steady-state levels of mRNA which poorly reflect the amount of each transcript being translated on polysomes. Choice of input tissue has also been a limitation. Prior to this study, no expression profiling had compared ischemia resistant CA3 and ischemia vulnerable CA1 neurons after global brain I/R. Here, polysome profiles were used to isolate translating mRNA which was compared to cytoplasmic, non-polysome-bound mRNA. Tissue used in the polysome profiles was microdissected from CA3 and CA1, allowing comparison between resistant and vulnerable neuron populations.

Chapter 2 - Background and Rationale

2.1 Clinical Manifestations of Brain I/R Injury

Ischemia, a restriction of blood flow, causes injury to the brain. Cerebral ischemia can be either global, resulting from reduction of blood flow in vessels entering the brain, or focal, resulting from blockage of blood flow to a specific region within the brain. Clinically, global cerebral ischemia occurs in the context of cardiac arrest. Focal ischemic manifests as ischemic stroke. Blockage of an artery within the brain by an embolus or thrombus in stroke generates a focal ischemic insult with central necrosis and peripheral injury radiating from a point of restricted circulation. Cardiac arrest causes a global ischemia affecting all CNS neurons. Ischemic stroke and cardiac arrest are by far the most common cardiovascular causes of death in the United States. Considered together, cardiovascular disease causes about one-third of all deaths in the United States, more than 2200 deaths per day⁸. Estimated national direct and indirect costs to treat cardiovascular disease total over \$280 billion dollars per year 8 .

2.1.1 Ischemic Stroke

In 2005, the last year for which data were available, stroke was the fourth leading cause of death in the United States and the leading cause of long-term disability⁹. Annual cost for treatment of stroke in the United States was estimated to be over \$18 billion for 2005⁹ and lost productivity estimated to cost an additional \$15 billion⁸. Although significant advancements have been made in prevention of stroke and in long-term therapy for stroke survivors, acute treatment of the actual I/R injury remains primarily

palliative. While other thrombolytics and surgical approaches may become alternatives, the only approved treatment to directly reverse arterial blockage in stroke is tissue plasminogen activator (tPA). The NINDS recombinant tPA stroke study showed a clear benefit from thrombolysis with tPA given within 3 hours of onset of stroke¹⁰. tPA also commonly causes hemorrhagic transformation in patients with longer durations of occlusion⁴. The three hour therapeutic window of tPA, along with other common contraindications, limits its use to just 3% of ischemic stroke patients¹¹. Most patients will also receive supportive therapy such as oxygen and aspirin and treatment for comorbidities. Despite longstanding intensive research, no new therapies to treat the occlusion and resulting brain damage from stroke have entered clinical practice 12 .

2.1.1 Cardiac Arrest and Resuscitation

Advances in the emergency medical system and widespread public education about cardiopulmonary resuscitation currently allow for the return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) in about 5 to 15% of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest victims¹³. Inpatient cardiac arrest victims fair much better with nearly half having $ROSC¹⁴$. Unfortunately, most victims in both the community and inpatient populations do not survive to hospital discharge. In-hospital mortality after cardiac arrest is between 55% and 71%¹⁵ and mortality has not improved since the statistic were first recorded in the $1950s^{16}$. *I/R* injury affects the whole body after ROSC, but death is due primarily to brain damage¹⁷ manifesting as seizures, coma, and brain death. Most patients who survive to discharge will continue to have significant neurological sequelae 18 .

2.1.4 Development of Neuroprotective Therapies has been Disappointing

Given the immense clinical impact of brain damage after stroke and cardiac arrest, protection of central nervous system (CNS) neurons from I/R injury is an area of intensive research. The short time frame from onset of ischemia to neuron damage makes revascularization therapies unlikely to prevent neuronal injury. However, final death of CNS neurons occurs slowly, often days after the initial ischemia, providing a therapeutic window to protect damaged neurons and promote their recovery. Protracted injury, occurring over days after even a brief ischemic insult, culminates in cell death called delayed neuronal death (DND)¹⁹. Therapies aimed at salvaging neuron which die by DND are classified as neuroprotection. Unfortunately, all large-scale clinical trials of neuroprotective therapies have failed (reviewed in O'Collins *et al*., 2006) 20 . Neuroprotectants which have failed in clinical trials have targeted a variety of damage mechanisms and shown efficacy in multiple animal models, and their failure in large clinical trials has been a major concern in the field of stroke research^{21,22}. Acute treatment with hypothermia may prove to be the exception²³, but robust clinical data measuring long term outcomes after hypothermia are still sparse, and the track record of other all other previous therapies signals caution. Overall, clinical research into neuroprotective therapies indicates a lack of basic understanding of damage pathways and cellular stress responses active in neurons after I/R injury.

2.1.5 Experimental Models of Brain I/R Injury

There are numerous biological models of stroke and brain injury from cardiac arrest ranging from cell culture systems to full animal primate models. Cellular models either deprive cultured neurons of essential nutrients such as the oxygen and glucose, or expose cells to a specific insult such as hydrogen peroxide. Although cellular models benefit from simplicity and reproducibility, they cannot recreate the multifaceted injury seen in whole brains²⁴. Whole animal models incorporate the variables of hemodynamics, CNS architecture, support from glial cells, and systemic immune and inflammatory responses. Whole-animal rodent models can replicate the complex pathology of focal and global injuries.

Focal I/R injuries are most often modeled with an occluding filament placed in the middle cerebral artery, the most common site of occlusion in ischemic stroke²⁵. Cardiac arrest is modeled by occluding the carotid arteries, usually accompanied in rats and mice by either occlusion of the vertebral arteries (4VO) or hypovolemic hypotension (2VO/HT). Transient global ischemia by 2VO/HT can reproducibly generate a delayed cell death in selectively vulnerable populations of neurons such as the CA1 region of the hippocampus. The adjacent CA3 region of the hippocampus survives the same insult. Because these two groups of cells, both pyramidal neurons in the same structure and receiving the same injury, have dichotomous outcomes, the transient global ischemia model is ideal for the study of the intrinsic ability of neurons to respond to the I/R injury. In this thesis, the 2VO/HT model of Smith *et al.* 26 was used because of its specific relevance to cardiac arrest, and because it allowed for the comparison of vulnerable CA1 and resistant CA3 regions of the hippocampus. Behavioral, histological, biochemical, and electrophysiological studies of this model are all consistent with pathology seen in human brains after cardiac arrest and resuscitation²⁶. In the DeGracia laboratory, the 2VO/HT model induces selective cell death of CA1 but not CA3 hippocampal neurons at 3 days reperfusion after 10 minutes of ischemia in adult, male Long Evans rats. More information about the specific methods of the 2VO/HT model and measures of resultant brain injury are explained in detail below.

2.2 Mechanisms of Brain I/R Injury

2.2.1 Introduction

I/R is a complex, protracted injury process. Many damage mechanisms have been shown to be active during brain I/R, but a systematic description of their contribution to DND is lacking. The progression of events in brain I/R begins with loss of glucose and oxygen supplied by the blood. After cardiac arrest, partial pressure of oxygen in the ischemic brain reaches zero after only 2 minutes of ischemia²⁴. Without an energy supply, the cell membrane sodium potassium ATPase (NaKATPase) fails,

and concentrations of sodium, potassium, and calcium ions rapidly equilibrate across the membrane. Subsequently, excitatory amino acid neurotransmitters are released from neurons, and mechanisms of lipolysis, proteolysis, and free radical damage are activated. After stroke and in focal ischemia models, inflammatory responses are also important in damage and recovery of injured neurons²⁷. Transient global I/R lacks a necrotic focus, so inflammation is less important²⁸. The ostensible sequence of damaging processes precipitated by loss of blood flow to neurons is called the ischemic cascade (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The ischemic cascade. Loss of blood flow rapidly depletes neurons of ATP. NaKATPase fails and sodium and potassium equilibrate across the plasma membrane. Depolarization opens inwardly directed, voltage gated calcium channels, increasing intracellular calcium. Depolarized neurons also release glutamate to the extracellular space, spreading the depolarization to adjacent neurons. Intracellular calcium activates

lipolytic and proteolytic enzymes which, in turn, generate free radicals. A confluence of upstream mechanisms cause damage to DNA and may activate apoptosis. Adapted from Hossmann,2009 29 .

2.2.2 Loss of Blood Glucose and Excitotoxicity

In the rat model of global brain ischemia, levels of cellular ATP in the cortex fall rapidly until ATP is undetectable after 30 minutes of ischemia^{30,31}. Concurrently lactate produced by anaerobic respiration increases 11-fold³¹. Without blood glucose and resultant ATP, neuronal NaKATPase cannot maintain ion gradients across the cell membrane. Sodium and potassium rapidly equilibrate during ischemia³². Ionic imbalances across the plasma membrane have unique consequences for neurons, causing calcium influx and neurotransmitter release. Voltage gated calcium channels open upon depolarization. Influx of calcium drops extracellular calcium concentration from 1.2 mM to less than 100 μ M after just one minute of global brain ischemia in rats³³. Intracellular calcium activates a variety of catabolic enzymes and the downstream effects are discussed below. Depolarization also releases the excitatory neurotransmitter glutamate into the extracellular space, and extracellular glutamate concentration remains elevated for at least 3 hours after global ischemia³⁴. Glutamate release in \overline{UR} injury opens the 2-amino-3-(5-methyl-3-oxo-1,2- oxazol-4-yl)propanoic acid (AMPA) and N-methyl-D-aspartic acid (NMDA) ionotropic glutamate receptors on neurons, depolarizing them³⁵. Depolarization causes further calcium influx and then glutamate efflux, a feed forward phenomenon known as excitotoxicity. However, blood glucose and cellular ATP are both rapidly restored upon reperfusion even in regions of the brain which will eventually die, suggesting that brief loss of energy metabolites is not a direct cause of neuronal death in brain I/R^{36} .

2.2.3 Increased Intracellular Calcium

Calcium is a powerful signaling molecule within cells and free cytosolic calcium is tightly regulated at 10^{-7} M³⁷. Depolarization in brain I/R causes a massive influx of calcium which triggers

damage by calcium-activated enzymes such as calpains³⁸. Calpains are a family of cysteine proteases activated by micromolar (μ -calpain) or millimolar (m-calpain) concentrations of intracellular calcium³⁹. Calpain activity is increased in neurons after both focal and global ischemia in rat models³⁸. In transient global I/R, calpain activity was greatest in CA1 hippocampal neurons at 1 hour reperfusion. Eukaryotic initiation factors 4G (eIF4G)⁴⁰ and eIF4E⁴¹ are substrates for calpain, and calpain may damage these complexes during global ischemia as discussed below.

Increased intracellular calcium also triggers lipolysis through activation of phospholipase A_2 $(PLA_2)^{42}$. PLA₂ are a family of esterases that release free fatty acid chains from the second carbon of glycerol⁴³. PLA₂ can liberate arachidonic acid from triglycerides, and arachidonic acid is converted by cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) and downstream enzymes into pro-inflammatory prostaglandins and leukotrienes 44 . Inducible COX-2 is increased after focal ischemia in humans and localized to necrotic cells near the ischemic focus⁴⁵. Activation of PLA_2 can also generate damaging free radicals and membrane permeability changes as discussed below.

Other calcium-activated enzymes induced by brain I/R include protein kinase C (PKC) and calcium/calmodulin-dependent kinase II-alpha (CaMKII)⁴⁶. PKC is a family of serine/threonine protein kinases with complex signaling functions in eukaryotes. CaMKII is also a family of serine/threonine protein kinases which have been implicated in long term potentiation and mediate glutamate signaling⁴⁷. Both kinases act at the cell membrane, and PKC and CaMKII translocated to cell membranes in neurons near the ischemic focus in a rat focal model *VR* model⁴⁶. CaMKII inhibitors have been shown to be protective in a cell culture I/R model⁴⁸, but the role of both enzymes remains unclear in brain I/R⁴⁹. Finally, the neuronal nitric oxide synthase (nNOS) is induced by intracellular calcium and generates the highly reactive peroxynitrite free radical⁵⁰. There are many sources of free radicals in brain I/R injury, explained in more detail below.

2.2.4 Free Radicals and Reperfusion

While necessary for survival, restoring blood flow provides a high oxidative potential to brain tissue which is primed by ischemia to produce free radicals. Mitochondria are an important source of free radicals during reperfusion. The mitochondrial inner membrane, which allows the hydrogen ion gradient of the electron transport chain, is permeabilized by mitochondrial calcium accumulation during ischemia⁵¹. When mitochondrial function is restored upon reperfusion, leakage of the inner mitochondrial generates superoxide. Other sources of free radicals during brain I/R include nNOS (mentioned above), arachidonic acid production by $COX-2^{52}$, and xanthine oxidase activity on xanthine to produce superoxide⁵³.

At fours hours reperfusion after 30 minutes of global ischemia in the rat, nitric oxide, superoxide, and peroxynitrite are all elevated in injured neurons⁵⁴. Superoxide production, prominent in all injured neurons in early reperfusion, was observed only in CA1 pyramidal neurons past 24 hours of reperfusion⁵⁵. Free radicals damage lipid membranes⁵⁶ and mitochondria⁵⁷ in reperfused neurons and cross-link DNA^{58} . Free radical scavengers such Cu/Zn superoxide dismutase and xanthine oxidase inhibitor reduce cell death in models of focal and global brain ischemia (reviewed by Lipton, $1999)^{28}$. However radical scavengers, like all neuroprotective therapies so far developed, have failed to improve outcome in human patients²⁰.

All of these damage mechanisms interact in complex pathways. For example, lipid peroxidation by PLA₂ can further inhibit NaKATPase, promoting depolarization⁵⁹. The mitochondrial permeability transition caused by high mitochondrial calcium releases cytochrome c which can trigger apoptosis 60 . These complex interactions make it difficult to quantify the relative contributions of each damage mechanism to overall cell.

2.2.3 Selective Vulnerability and Delayed Neuronal Death

After brain I/R injury, neurons will have one of three outcomes: survival, necrotic cell death, or the protracted DND¹⁹. Necrotic cell death occurs near the site of blockage in focal brain ischemia. The

extent of necrosis in global I/R depends on the duration of ischemia. Because necrotic cells are not salvageable and because the clinical focus of post-cardiac arrest care is preservation of injured neurons, this dissertation focuses rather on neurons which die by DND in a predictable manner days after ischemia.

It has long been known that progressive brain injury follows even brief ischemic insults. Kirino, *et al.* first showed this phenomenon in the gerbil global I/R model, where 48 hours after a five minute ischemic insult, CA1 pyramidal neurons began to show swelling of organelles followed by plasma membrane clefts and nuclear perikarya¹⁹. When observed next at 4 days reperfusion, the CA1 neurons were lysed and dead. DND was subsequently observed in the rat global model, also restricted to CA1 pyramidal cells after a ten minute ischemic insult⁶¹. Isolated hippocampal damage is also consistent with common memory deficits following cardiac arrest¹⁸, and this pattern of cell death was found in humans postmortem after cardiac arrest and resuscitation^{62,63} and on MRI⁶⁴. DND restricted to CA1 pyramidal neurons has been shown repeatedly in the DeGracia laboratory using the 2VO/HT model after 10 minutes ischemia^{1,65,66} (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Delayed neuronal death of CA1 hippocampal pyramidal cell neurons. Rat 50 micron dorsal hippocampal sections from non-ischemic controls (NIC), and animals after 15 minutes I/R and reperfusion for 48 hours (48hR) or 72 (72hR) hours. Staining is for A) toluidine blue and B) fluoro-jade. Toluidine blue, a structural stain, shows that CA1 pyramidal cells have died and lysed at 72hR while CA3 cells remain intact. **Fluoro-jade labels degenerating neurons and strongly reacts only in the CA1 region at 72hR. Scale bar appliesto all panels. Adapted from Jamison, 2008¹ .**

In human patients and animal models, irreversible brain damage begins after only 4 minutes of cardiac arrest⁶⁷. After 30 minutes of cardiac arrest, the resulting CNS damage is usually too extensive to allow long-term survival⁶⁸. Ischemic durations between 4 and 30 minutes cause DND to neurons depending on the neuron's selective vulnerability to I/R injury. CNS neurons as a whole can be thought of as a selectively vulnerable population relative to surrounding glia. Neurons have a high metabolic demand and consume the majority of glucose supplied to the brain to maintain ion gradients for the propagation action potentials⁶⁹.

Considering only neurons, specific brain regions are known to be relatively vulnerable or resistant to I/R injury. As described above, CA1 pyramidal neurons are especially vulnerable to even mild ischemic insults. Consistent with ischemic duration determining magnitude of injury, longer durations of ischemia extended DND into areas of the cortex⁷⁰. With increasing ischemia, DND was found in parts of the hippocampal CA4 region and cortex layers II and V^{71} (reviewed in Lipton, 1999)²⁸.

Because shorter durations of ischemia, 5 minutes in the gerbil and 10 minutes in the rat, cause DND only in CA1, these durations have been used to study intrinsic differences in neurons selectivelyvulnerable or selectively-resistant to I/R. At present, there is no coherent explanation of why DND occurs. Classical morphological markers of DND are late-stage changes such as organelle swelling and DNA damage, not visible until at least 24 hours and usually 48 hours after ischemia⁷². These late changes are not merely a delayed necrosis, as selectively-vulnerable neurons show recovery of acute derangements to energy consumption, electrophysiological activity, ion gradients, and physiological pH during early reperfusion. After a CA1-lethal insult, these acute derangements are indistinguishable between CA1 and CA3 in the time preceding $DND^{73,74}$ (reviewed in Hossmann, 1993⁷⁵ and Dienel, 1980³⁰). Cerebral blood flow measurements indicate the metabolic state of human brains is normalized by two hours after ROSC, making acute necrosis an unlikely cause of brain damage after cardiac arrest⁷⁶. Neither are adjacent CA3 neurons simply dying more slowly. Studies out to one year after I/R injury show CA3 neurons are preserved with normal morphology after a CA1-lethal insult⁷⁷. As outlined above, secondary changes in calcium and free radicals are sometimes noted to be restricted to CA1 or more intense in these neurons⁷⁸,

but clinical trials of calcium channel blockers and free radical scavengers to treat brain I/R have universally failed²⁰. Likewise, while proapoptotic markers are upregulated in reperfusion⁶⁶, antiapoptotic treatments fail to reduce injury from brain UR^{20} , suggesting DND is not apoptotic cell death.

An important development in the field of brain I/R was the recognition, first made by Kleihues, *et al*., that protein synthesis remained impaired in selectively vulnerable neurons but recovered in resistant neurons². During reperfusion after brief transient ischema, protein synthesis returns slowly over the course of hours in resistant neurons. In ischemia vulnerable neurons, protein synthesis never returns to normal pre-ischemic levels. This variable protein synthesis differentiates CA3 from CA1 much earlier than classic morphological markers. Recovery of protein synthesis is both an absolute requirement for long term survival of the cell and also an immediate requirement for expression stress response proteins which allow the neuron to recover^{75,79}. Below, the mechanisms of protein synthesis inhibition and expression of stress response transcripts are reviewed.

2.3 Gene Expression in Reperfused Neurons

2.3.1 Introduction

Expression of protein-coding genes is a complex process regulated by environmental cues. Regulation of gene expression is combinatorial, incorporating multiple levels of control. Typically control of gene expression is divided into transcriptional regulation, posttranscriptional regulation, and regulation of translation. Posttranscriptional regulation of gene expression can be further divided into posttranscriptional modifications, nuclear export, cytoplasmic localization, and mRNA degradation. Posttranscriptional and translational control are particularly important under conditions of acute stress such as brain *IR* where cells do not have the time or resources to control gene expression through transcription factors⁸⁰. In reperfused neurons, gene expression is altered in a well-characterized sequence of events: complete translation arrest, upregulation of stress response gene transcription, selective translation of stress response mRNA, and finally return to normal protein synthesis.

2.3.2 Translation Arrest, eIF2 α Phosphorylation, and the Integrated Stress Response

2.3.2.1 Normal Translation Initiation

Initiation of normal protein translation requires the formation of the ternary complex composed of initiator tRNA (Met-tRNA_i) and eukaryotic initiation factor 2 (eIF2) bound to GTP (Figure 3). eIF2 is a heterotrimer with two catalytic subunits, beta and gamma, and a regulatory subunit, alpha. Formation of the ternary complex is rate-limiting in translation, and therefore a key regulatory point in protein expression^{81,82}. After the ternary complex forms, it joins the $40S$ small ribosomal subunit and other initiation factors to form a 43S preinitiation complex. The 43S preinitation complex is recruited to the 5' untranslated region (UTR) of the mRNA, a process promoted by eIF4F. eIF4F is a heterotrimer of eIF4E, eIF4G, and eIF4A. eIF4E binds the 5' cap structure of the mRNA, eIF4G is a scaffolding protein the links eIF4E to other initiation factors, and eIF4A is a RNA helicase that melts mRNA secondary structure. Together, the subunits of eIF4F facilitate scanning of the 5'UTR for an AUG start codon. Loading of the start codon into the A site of the ribosome causes a conformational change in eIF2 resulting in hydrolysis of eIF2-associated GTP⁸³. The small and large ribosomal subunits then join and elongation of the nascent peptide chain proceeds.

Figure 3: Initiation of protein synthesis. 1) Initiator tRNA (Met-tRNAi) and eukaryotic initiation factor 2 (eIF2) bound to GTP form the ternary complex. Addition of other initiation factors forms a 43S preinitiation complex. 2) The 43S preinitiation complex begins scanning the 5'UTR of the mRNA which is associated with the eIF4F complex. 3) When the preinitiation complex arrives at the start codon, GTP associated with eIF2 is **hydrolyzed and the 60S large ribosomal subunit joins the small ribosomal subunit to begin chain elongation. Guanidyl transferase activity of eIF2B recycles GDP back to GTP on eIF2. Adapted from Pain, 1996 81 .**

2.3.2.2 eIF2αP Causes Transient Translation Arrest in Global Brain I/R

GTP must be restored to eIF2 before a new ternary complex can form and a new round of initiation can begin, a process catalyzed by the eIF2B subunit. Recycling of GTP by eIF2B is blocked by phosphorylation of the regulatory alpha subunit of eIF2 at serine 51^{84} . Alpha-phosphorylated eIF2 binds $eIF2B$ with high affinity, sequestering $eIF2B$ and acting as a competitive inhibitor⁸⁵. Inhibition of translation initiation through eIF2(α P) is a common mechanism to regulate many forms of cell stress, a process collectively referred to as the integrated stress response⁸⁶.

eIF2 activity is rapidly inhibited upon reperfusion after global brain ischemia. After 15 minutes of transient global brain ischemia and 30 minutes of reperfusion in the rat, the ability of eIF2 to form ternary complexes decreased 50% in both CA1 and $C A3^{87}$. Again in the global rat model, decrease in eIF2 activity was shown to correlate to eIF2(α P) and inhibition of the guanidyl transferase activity of eIF2B⁸⁸. Addition of exogenous, intact eIF2 to homogenates from I/R-injured brain partially reversed inhibition of protein synthesis⁸⁹.

In all regions of the brain after transient global I/R, $eIF2(\alpha P)$ gradually remits, returning to control levels by about 4 to 6 hours reperfusion^{90,91}. Immunohistochemical mapping and assay of hippocampal subregion microdissections has established that eIF2α phosphorylation persists for the same duration in both ischemia vulnerable CA1 and ischemia resistant neurons CA3⁹². This initial inhibition of protein synthesis is generally considered protective⁹³, conserving energy and amino acid pools and preventing damage from the failed synthesis of misfolded proteins⁹⁴ or the successful synthesis of proapoptotic proteins⁹³. Identical patterns of eIF2(α P) between CA1 and CA3 suggest that, like energy and ionic disturbances, regulation of eIF2 does not cause DND.

2.3.2.3 eIF2(α P)-induced Translation Arrest Causes Polysome Dissociation

Observations from a variety of whole-animal brain I/R models and post-mortem human tissue show that CNS neuron polysomes remain intact during brain ischemia, a phenomenon Kleihues and Hossmann termed -ischemic freezel⁹⁵, but disassemble upon reperfusion. Using polysome profiles,

Kleihues *et al.* first showed this phenomenon in cats subjected to global ischemia for 30 minutes⁹⁵. They made three important observations that would later hold for all animal models investigated: 1) Polysome profiles of ischemic animals which were not reperfused prior to sacrifice resembled those of controls, while animals reperfused after *I/R* injury lost almost all polysomes. 2) During reperfusion, absence of polysomes correlated to reductions in protein synthesis as measured by *in vivo* radioactive incorporation of amino acids into proteins. 3) Electron microscopy showed well-defined polysome rosettes in CNS neurons of ischemic animals, but not in animals studied during early reperfusion after ischemia.

Kleihues and Hossmann went on to show the same phenomenon in monkeys after 1 hour of global brain ischemia^{2,96}. Based on well-defined peaks in absorbance correlating to rRNA concentration at specific densities, this work also showed that rather than separating into individual ribosomes, the polysomes of reperfused neurons dissociated into individual 40S and 60S ribosomal subunits. The same observations were later noted by Cooper *et al.* in a rat model of cerebral compression⁹⁷. The Cooper study also isolated the ―frozen‖ polysomes from ischemic, non-reperfused rat brain and found that they were functional in an *in vitro* reticulocyte lysate system as measured by incorporation of radioactive phenylalanine. The observation that ischemic polysomes remain functional indicates that nonlethal ischemia does not damage the ribosome. The return of polysomes and protein synthesis depends on the duration of the ischemia. *In vivo* radioactive amino acid studies in the rat 4VO global model showed protein synthesis returned to normal 4 hours after ten minutes of ischemia, but protein synthesis was suppressed for 3 days after 30 minutes of ischemia³⁰.

2.3.2.4 Persistent Translation Arrest in CA1

Although eIF2 α phosphorylation remits in all brain regions after about 4 hours in the global brain I/R model, translation arrest persists in CA1 neurons (reviewed in Hossmann, 1993)⁷⁵. This persistent translation arrest differentiates CA1 and CA3 neurons and is the earliest known marker of ischemia vulnerable cells. The cause of persistent translation arrest in CA1 neurons is unknown.

There is evidence that in addition to phosphorylation of the α subunit of eIF2, other initiation factors are altered by ischemia. As mentioned above, eIF4G, a subunit of the mRNA-binding eIF4F complex, is partially degraded in reperfused neurons³⁸, which may be mediated by μ -calpain activated by increased intracellular calcium⁴⁰. Another eIF4F subunit, eIF4E, was degraded specifically in rat CA1 at 4 hours reperfusion after a 30 minute global ischemia, but eIF4G levels were unchanged⁹¹. Additional changes in eIF4E-binding proteins and small ribosomal protein subunit S6 have been noted but, in general, changes in protein translational machinery have been poorly characterized relative to other injury mechanisms in UR^{82} . Moreover, damage to initiation factors is not insurmountable, even in CA1 neurons. In the rat, the vulnerable CA1 neurons express stress-response proteins such as HSP70 in amounts comparable to CA3, but only after 30 hours of reperfusion, presumably too late to allow for recovery⁶⁵. Conversely, CA3 makes HSP70 protein as early as 8 hours after ischemia. This time delay is believed to be critical to the difference in outcome between the two regions⁷⁹.

The general hypothesis of this thesis is that the exclusive ability of ischemia resistant neurons to effectively translate inducible stress response mRNAs early in reperfusion allows these neurons to recover from I/R injury.

2.3.3 Selective Translation of Stress Response Transcripts

As discussed above, an important focus of brain I/R research has been the development of neuroprotective agents which block damage mechanisms in injured neurons. However neurons, like all stressed cells, exert their own neuroprotection through intrinsic stress responses, some of which require new transcription and translation. Stress responses allow neurons to recover after I/R injury and prevent DND. Understanding neuronal stress responses also offers the potential to manipulate them for therapeutic purposes. In the transient global I/R model, translation of stress response transcripts allow

selectively-vulnerable CA1 neurons to recover as CA3 neurons do, for example, following ischemic preconditioning^{90,98}.

Kleihues, *et al.* first noted in 1975 that specific proteins were preferentially translated in early reperfusion while global protein synthesis was still suppressed 2 . Later Kiessling *et al.* isolated polysomes from reperfused brain and used them for *in vitro* protein synthesis in a reticulocyte lysate system 99 . Proteins synthesized by the isolated polysomes were systematically studied by 2-D electrophoresis. At 3 hours reperfusion after 30 minutes of 4VO ischemia they found an increase in proteins with molecular weights of 70 kDa, 90 kDa, and 110 kDa. These were later identified as heat shock proteins from the HSP70, HSP90, and HSP110 families¹⁰⁰, respectively, previously known by immunohistochemistry to be expressed in gerbil neurons after global brain $I/R^{101,102}$. HSP70 protein expression localized exclusively to CA3 neurons in the gerbil; gerbil CA1 neurons did not make HSP70 protein after global brain I/R. It is important to note that, in this model of I/R, global protein synthesis was still inhibited at 3 hours reperfusion, and heat shock proteins were preferentially translated in spite of global translation arrest.

Heat shock proteins are a highly conserved superfamily of molecular chaperones that assist in protein folding and prevent damaging protein aggregation¹⁰³. HSP70, the cytoplasmic member of the HSP70 family, is induced in all manner of cellular stress including heavy metal poisoning, hypoxia, glucose deprivation, and many others (reviewed in Lindquist, 1986)¹⁰³. There is strong evidence that HSP70 is neuroprotective in brain I/R. Overexpression of *hsp70* using a herpes simplex vector improved neuron survival after both focal¹⁰⁴ and global ischemia in the rat¹⁰⁵. Functionally, induction of HSP70 caused reduced aggregation of ubiquitin, a marker for protein misfolding in a focal ischemia model¹⁰⁶.

Other proteins are expressed during the translation inhibition of early reperfusion. c-Fos and c-Jun are immediate early genes (IEGs), a class of genes which are transiently and rapidly upregulated in response to stress. *c-fos* mRNA was present throughout the gerbil hippocampus just fifteen minutes after a five minute global ischemia¹⁰⁷, and c-Fos protein was expressed as early as one hour after transient ischemia¹⁰⁸. *c*-jun mRNA were found 30 minutes after a 10 minute ischemia in the rat¹⁰⁹. In the hippocampus, expression of c-Fos and c-Jun proteins was confined to the CA3 and dentate gyrus and

remitted by 8 hours reperfusion¹¹⁰. Other proteins expressed while global translation is inhibited in early reperfusion include a caspase-3-like protein 111 , brain-derived neurotrophic factor $(BDNF)^{112}$, and ornithine decarboxylase⁷⁵.

How polysomes in ischemia resistant cells re-assemble and translate specific classes of mRNAs during early reperfusion is not known. After prolonged ischemia, polysomes in both CA1 and CA3 remain intact and able to translate mRNAs in an *in vitro* system 97 . Detailed studies of *hsp70* transcription suggest that transcriptional regulation alone does not allow for increased HSP70 protein expression during early reperfusion. In the DeGracia laboratory, *hsp70* mRNA and HSP70 protein have been measured directly from microdissected, reperfused hippocampal subregions at various time points after 10 minutes of 2VO/HT ⁶⁵ (Figure 4). Both CA1 and CA3 regions show strong expression of *hsp70* mRNA at 8 hours reperfusion. In fact, *hsp70* mRNA expression in CA1 is four to five-fold greater than in CA3. *hsp70* mRNA expression remains elevated in CA1 until at least 30 hours reperfusion, long after CA3 *hsp70* mRNA expression has returned to baseline. Conversely, HSP70 protein is expressed at 8 hours reperfusion in CA3 but not until 30 hours reperfusion in CA1. Using *in situ* hybridization, other researchers have found $hsp70$ mRNA upregulated in the CA1 region in both rat³ and gerbil^{4,107} global ischemia models, but again HSP70 protein was either not synthesized in CA1 or found only late in reperfusion.

Figure 4: Expression of HSP70 protein correlates to recovery from brain I/R. All data are from rats after 10 **minutes 2VO/HT and reperfusion as indicated. A)** *hsp70* **mRNA is expressed at 8hR in both CA1 and CA3, returns to baseline in CA3, but remains elevated to 30hR in CA1. B) Unlike mRNA expression, HSP70 protein is expressed at 8hR only in CA3 as shown by western blotting and densitometry. C) Immunohistochemistry staining for HSP70 protein confirms expression is early in CA3 and late in CA1. A) and B) adapted from Roberts,** *et al.* **2007⁶⁵; C) adapted from Jamison,** *et al.* **2008¹ .**

2.3.3.2 Regulation by 5' UTR elements

Selected stress response transcripts can translated without the formation of a regular 5' cap structure or eIF4E association, called cap-independent translation¹¹³. Internal ribosome entry sites (IRES) is a cap-independent mechanism present in an estimated $3-5%$ of all translated mRNAs¹¹⁴. A consensus 5'UTR regulatory sequence for IRES has not been found and likely depends on complex secondary or tertiary structure¹¹⁵. All eukaryotic instances of IRES regulation have been determined experimentally¹¹⁶. Lack of a consensus sequence makes the role of IRES in brain *VR* injury uncertain. Human $hsp70^{117}$ and

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 $grp78^{118}$ 5'UTRs have been reported to contain an IRES¹¹⁷. However, the IRES sequence is not necessarily conserved and has not been reported in corresponding rodent transcripts. Transcriptional profiling of mRNA from isolated polysomes after focal ischemia showed that IRES-containing transcripts were not enriched in reperfusion 119 .

Another 5'UTR mechanism that may allow translation in early reperfusion is multiple upstream open reading frames $(uORFs)^{120}$. Ribosomes initiate on the first open reading frame encountered in the 5'UTR of a transcript. In unstressed cells, ribosomes will initiate on the uORF and release the transcript before reading the authentic coding region. Under conditions of cell stress, when $eIF2(\alpha P)$ increases, ribosome scanning is prolonged and the likelihood of initiating at the downstream, authentic coding domain increases^{41,94}. The best characterized uORF-containing transcripts in brain I/R are CCAAT/enhancer-binding protein homologous protein (CHOP) and activating transcription factor 4 (ATF), both transcription factors induced by the unfolded protein response (UPR), a stress response pathway in the endoplasmic reticulum. Although the UPR and specifically CHOP are both induced by brain I/R, the resulting amount of CHOP is orders of magnitude less than the amount of HSP70 produced in the heat shock response^{65,79}. The low level of CHOP induction relative to HSP70 suggests the UPR and CHOP have minimal influence in gene induction after global I/R.

2.3.3.3 mRBPs and mRNA Operons in Brain I/R

Rapid changes in posttranscriptional and translational regulation of gene expression are a hallmark of the cellular stress response. RNA is regulated by *cis*-acting sequences, usually in the 5' and 3' UTRs and the *trans*-acting mRNA binding proteins (mRBPs) which bind to these regulatory sequences. mRBPs are associated with mRNAs from transcription through degradation, regulating splicing, nuclear export, localization, translation, and degradation¹²¹.

Ribonucleoproteins (mRNPs), groups of mRNAs and associated mRBPs, such as the stress granule (SG) and processing body (PB) change in response to stress. Stress granules are dynamic cytoplasmic mRNPs which are sites of mRNA –triage, directing mRNAs in stressed cells to storage, degradation, or translation¹²². The number of stress granules increases in cultured cells stressed with arsenate¹²³ or the protein synthesis inhibitor puromycin¹²⁴. Stress granules also increase with eIF2(α P) in brain ischemia⁶⁶, but this increase is transient and does not correlate with cell death.

2.3.3.3.1 mRNA Granules

Previous work by Drs. Jamison and DeGracia has shown that cytoplasmic polyadenylated mRNA undergoes a major rearrangement in reperfused neurons forming mRNA granules^{1,125} (Figure 5). mRNA granules are distinct cytoplasmic structures that form rapidly upon reperfusion after brain ischemia and contain mRNA and poly-A binding protein (PABP). mRNA granules form no later than 1 hour into reperfusion in all injured neurons after global brain ischemia. In focal ischemia, mRNA granules do not form neurons of the necrotic lesion core but are abundant in the damaged tissue surround the core (penumbra) (M. Lewis and D. J. DeGracia, unpublished observation). mRNA granules do colocalize with markers for the large¹²⁶ or small¹ ribosomal subunit and therefore do not sequester ribosomal subunits during reperfusion. mRNA granules also do not colocalize with markers of SGs or PBs^1 .

mRNA granules were present in all neurons known to have repressed protein translation. mRNA granules were present in CA1 neurons from one hour reperfusion out to 48 hours reperfusion, the last time point measured. Conversely, mRNA granules remitted in CA3 neurons before 36 hours reperfusion.

Figure 5: Changes in mRNA granules correlate to survival after brain I/R. A) *In situ* **hybridization to polyadenylated RNA in hippocampal pyramidal cells from non-ischemic control animals (NIC) and after 10 minutes I/R for 16 (16hR) or 36 hours (36hR). Arrowheads indicate mRNA granules. B) FISH/ Immunofluorescent microscopy for polyadenylated RNA (green) and HuR protein (red). mRNA granules form in all injured neurons, but only remit in CA3 neurons. HuR is present in CA3 neurons at 16hR, but only enters CA1 neurons at 36hR. Arrow indicates an interneuron. Adapted from Jamison** *et al* **1** *.*

2.3.3.3.2 HuR

The binding sites in the 5' and 3' untranslated regions (UTRs) of eukaryotic mRNAs allow for the coordinated posttranscriptional regulation of mRNAs through mRBPs. Common UTR binding sites interacting with a mRBP have been called mRNA operons, in reference to prokaryotic operons which allow coordinated expression of genes with a common function behind a single promoter $127,128$. Eukaryotic genomes are not functionally organized like prokaryote genomes, but groups of mRNAs with common UTR binding sites (mRNA operons) can be coordinately regulated by the same mRBPs, generating the same functional effect¹²⁸.

The adenylate uridylate-rich element (ARE) is a cis-regulatory sequence found in the 3'UTR of 5%-8% of all mRNAs¹²⁹. Among the proteins encoded by ARE-containing mRNAs are proto-oncogenes,

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immediate early genes, transcription factors, and cytokines; proteins that typically exert powerful effects in the cell relative to their steady-state concentrations¹³⁰. *hsp70* mRNA also has a 3'UTR ARE sequence¹³¹ and binds HuR in mammalian cells¹³². In unstressed cells, the ARE identifies transcripts for rapid degradation. Cytoplasmic ARE-containing mRNAs are bound by tristetraprolin (TTP), an mRBP which activates decapping and degradation of these mRNAs at the processing body¹³³.

HuR is another mRBP which specifically interacts with the ARE. In mammals, HuR is the only ubiquitous member of the embryonic lethal abnormal vision (ELAV)/Hu protein family, which also includes the neuron-specific members HuB, HuC, and HuD 134 . All Hu proteins have three RNA recognition motifs (RRMs) and a hinge region (called the HNS) between RRMs 2 and 3¹³⁵. RRMs 1 and 2 bind specifically to the ARE sequence while motif 3 recognizes the polyadenylated tail of full length $mRNA¹³⁶$.

Under conditions of cell stress, when it is advantageous to increase the steady state levels of stress response transcripts, HuR can stabilize ARE-containing mRNAs¹³⁷. HuR staining can differentiate ischemia resistant CA3 neurons from ischemia vulnerable CA1 neurons after transient global brain ischemia. HuR was present in mRNA granules in CA3 neurons at one hour reperfusion and remains colocalized until the granules dissipate before 36 hours reperfusion (Figure 5B)¹. In CA1 neurons, HuR was not found in mRNA granules until 36 hours reperfusion¹.

The mechanisms by which HuR influences gene expression are not well characterized and vary between cell types and cellular stresses¹³⁸. Three distinct mechanisms have been shown to independently increase translation of HuR-target transcripts: reduced target degradation¹³⁹, facilitated nuclear export of targets¹⁴⁰, and increased association of target mRNAs with polysomes⁷. The most commonly studied mechanism of regulation by HuR is reduced degradation. In stressed cells, cytoplasmic HuR is associated with ARE-containing mRNAs, blocking their transport by TTP to $PBs¹⁴¹$. By preventing the degradation of ARE-containing mRNAs, HuR increases the steady-state concentration of these mRNAs and, therefore, their translation into protein¹⁴². However, prevention of mRNA degradation is not likely to contribute to regulation of ARE-containing transcripts after brain I/R. As previously described, *hsp70*
mRNA is more abundant in CA1 neurons than CA3 neurons during reperfusion, but is not translated. Even if *hsp70* mRNA is preferentially degraded in reperfusion, this mechanism cannot account for delayed HSP70 protein expression in CA1.

2.3.3.3.3 Facilitated Nuclear Export of ARE-containing mRNAs by HuR

HuR can also increase the translation of its target mRNAs by facilitating their nuclear export. In unstressed cells, HuR is a predominantly nuclear protein, actively shuttled into the nucleus by association with importin $B¹⁴³$. Under conditions of cell stress, a variety of poorly characterized phosphorylation events cause the HNS region of HuR to associate with the shuttling proteins $pp32$ and APRIL¹⁴⁴. $pp32$ and APRIL both contain nuclear export signals (NES) recognized by nuclear export factor chromosomal region maintenance protein 1 (CRM1). CRM1 actively exports HuR bound to pp32 and APRIL out of the nucleus in response to cell stress. While all proteins exit the nucleus in a GTP-dependent fashion by association with shuttling proteins such as CRM1, most mRNAs use a GTP-independent mechanism associating the $TAP/p15$ transport receptor. However, there is a subpopulation of mRNAs which shuttle in a CRM1-dependent fashion¹⁴⁵.

In Hela cells stressed with heat shock, HuR specifically colocalized with pp32 and APRIL, and CRM1 immunoprecipitated in complexes with HuR^{146} . Inhibition of the CRM1 pathway by leptomycin B blocked nuclear export of HuR after heat shock. Leptomycin B also blocked the export of *hsp70* mRNA, leading Gallouzi *et al*. to speculate that HuR may regulate the nuclear export of *hsp70* mRNA. Subcellular localization of HuR also had functional significance in breast cancer cell lines, where decreased HuR specifically in the cytoplasm increased JNK activity and responsiveness to tamoxifen⁶. HuR regulation of target mRNA nuclear export was later shown in Jurkat T cell culture where APRIL and HuR were necessary for CD83 mRNA nuclear export⁵.

2.3.3.3.4 HuR Association with Polysomes

Recently, a third mechanism by which Hu proteins may regulate target mRNAs has been proposed. HuD is a Hu protein family member, highly homologous to HuR, involved in neuronal differentiation¹⁴⁷. Fukao, *et al*. showed that the HuD directly interacted with eIF4A and that this interaction was necessary for enhanced translation of target $mRNAs⁷$. The authors hypothesize that because HuD-enhanced translation required target transcripts to have both a 5' $m⁷G$ cap and 3' poly(A) tail, that HuD may be promoting circularization of mRNAs. As discussed above, the 5' cap structure of translating mRNAs is bound by eIF4E, and the 3' poly(A) tail is bound by PABP. mRNA circularization on a ribosome occurs when both PABP and eIF4E associate with eIF4G in what is called the closed loop model¹⁴⁸. Circularization promotes reinitiation of ribosomes on the translating mRNA¹⁴⁸.

Like HuR, HuD binds to both ARE sequences and $poly(A)$. Association of HuD with eIF4A could promote initiation by bringing the polyadenylated 3' tail of ARE-containing mRNAs adjacent to eIF4E. This provides a novel mechanism of selective initiation of ARE-containing mRNAs and may explain how *hsp70* is selectively translated during reperfusion.

2.3.3.4 Measuring Gene Expression in the Reperfused Neuron

Neurons change their transcriptional program after brain I/R injury and express new transcripts which are necessary for recovery^{109,149}, making reperfused neurons an ideal target for expression profiling studies such as microarray. Reperfused brain tissue has been studied by microarray since the method entered mainstream molecular biology in the early $2000s^{150}$. Since then nearly 40 microarray studies of brain I/R have published¹⁵¹. Most of these studies used the rat focal ischemia model, but global ischemia has also been studied¹⁵².

Despite the large amount of expression profiling work done in brain I/R, present studies have major limitations. Earlier studies were limited by array technology and knowledge of the rat genome. The first global ischemia microarray only contained probes for 750 genes, just 3% of the rat genome. Beyond technical limitations, it is now known that the steady state, whole-cell mRNA levels measured by

microarray do not correlate well to levels of protein expression¹⁵³. This problem has been carefully studied in yeast¹⁵⁴, and recently appreciated in mammals. A recent study in mouse hematopoietic cell lines found that only 40% of protein expression levels could be explained by mRNA abundance¹⁵⁵.

This issue was addressed in the focal brain I/R model in 2004 by MacManus *et al.* who performed microarray analysis on mRNAs extracted from polysome peaks after sucrose density gradient centrifugation, a technique called translation state analysis. Translation state analysis showed only 36% of transcripts upregulated by focal ischemia were bound to polysomes. This finding indicated that previous expression profiling after brain I/R primarily measured transcripts with increased transcription but not increased translation.

Summary

mRNA granules form in all reperfused neurons after I/R injury. Dissociation of mRNA granules correlates with recovery of neurons from I/R injury and differentiates the ischemia vulnerable CA1 neurons from ischemia resistant CA3 neurons. The presence of HuR in mRNA granules correlates to synthesis of HSP70 protein, occurring early reperfusion in CA3 and late in CA1. How HuR may regulate the expression of HSP70 in brain I/R is not known, but several mechanisms of posttranscriptional regulation by HuR have been described in other systems. To investigate the potential mechanisms of HuR regulation of *hsp70* translation in brain I/R, the following hypothesis were proposed:

- 1. mRNA granule formation is dependent on polysome-associated mRNA. (Chapter 3)
- 2. HuR binds *hsp70* mRNA and facilitates its export from the nucleus. (Chapter 4)
- 3. *hsp70* translation in reperfused neurons is regulated by HuR. (Chapter 5)
- 4. Brain I/R injury causes ARE-containing mRNAs to preferentially associate with polysomes. (Chapter 6)

Chapter 3 - mRNA Granule Dependence on Polysomeassociated mRNA

3.1 Introduction

Previous work by Drs. Jamison and DeGracia has identified the mRNA granule as a distinct cytoplasmic structure which forms in all injured neurons during early reperfusion after transient global brain ischemia¹. The mRNA granule does not colocalize with other mRNPs such as the SG, PB, or polysome¹. mRNA granules do not contain markers of the small or large ribosomal subunits, but they do contain densities of cytoplasmic polyadenylated mRNA, PABP, and eIF4G. Roughly 2/3 of cytoplasmic mRNA is associated with polysomes in unstressed cells¹⁵⁶. If translating mRNA on polysomes is required to form mRNA granules, then persistence of mRNA granules could explain the prolonged translation arrest seen in vulnerable neuron populations during reperfusion after brain ischemia. Prior to the present study, the relationship between the polysome and the mRNA granule was not characterized. Here, pharmacological agents that alter polysome function were used to study the relationship between mRNA granules and polysomes.

CHX is a glutarimide antibiotic that prevents the release of tRNA during translation elongation, inhibiting translation in eukaryotes¹⁵⁷. There is limited evidence that CHX is neuroprotective against brain I/R injury. In a rat 30-minute four-vessel occlusion model of global brain ischemia, 1.5 mg/kg CHX reduced hippocampal DND when given 1 hour prior to ischemia by not 1 hour after ischemia¹⁵⁸. Another study also found that 2 mg/kg subcutaneous CHX given just prior to reperfusion reduced DND in CA1 neurons after 10 minutes of four-vessel occlusion¹⁵⁹. However, in a 2-vessel gerbil model, 2 mg/kg CHX given after 10 minutes reperfusion slightly increased $DND¹⁶⁰$. Authors finding the CHX reduces brain I/R

injury speculate that the translation arrest induced by CHX conserves cell resources and prevents aberrant protein synthesis, protecting neurons in the same manner as transient eIF2(α P) phosphorylation¹⁵⁸. Authors finding CHX detrimental in global ischemia models speculate that prolonged protein synthesis inhibition is detrimental and any positive effects likely arise from CHX's ability to lower body temperature¹⁶¹. Although the potential of CHX as a neuroprotectant is certainly interesting, here the drug is used because of its proven ability to functionally alter polysomes.

As CHX prevents the release of tRNA, it locks intact polysomes together with translating mRNAs¹⁵⁷. In cell culture models of cell stress, the formation of PBs^{161} and SGs^{124} is inhibited by freezing mRNA onto polysomes with CHX. Puromycin is a protein synthesis inhibitor acting by a different mechanism- a nucleoside analog that inhibits translation by causing premature termination, thus destabilizing polysomes and causing their dissociation¹⁶². By increasing available mRNAs, puromycin increases the number of processing bodies and stress granules formed after stress in cell culture¹²⁴.

A robust literature describes the use of CHX and puromycin in mammalian brain establishing effective dosage and method of administration. Using radioactive amino acid incorporation, Jonec *et al.* showed that 1.5 mg/kg IP CHX inhibited 74% of forebrain protein synthesis as early as 15 minutes after injection and protein synthesis inhibition was maintained for at least two hours¹⁶³. Intra-cerebral injection of 90 µg of puromycin per cerebral hemisphere in rat rapidly inhibited 90% of hippocampal protein synthesis, an effect that was maintained from a single dose for over four hours¹⁶⁴.

mRNA granules have not yet been characterized biochemically, but have only been studied under the microscope. mRNA granule formation is a complex process with changes in staining intensity and pattern. Simple methods of measuring fluorescence or colocalization were inadequate to quantitatively measure changes in mRNA granule formation. This problem was addressed with texture analysis. Texture analysis is the calculation of a large, diverse set of image features combined with statistical variable reduction techniques to quantify image features. Texture analysis is commonly used to classify images in the physical sciences^{165,166}. In biomedical sciences, texture analysis has been used to classifying brain tumors on MRI¹⁶⁷ and identify cancerous¹⁶⁸ and apoptotic¹⁶⁹ cells under the microscope.

3.1.1 Summary

mRNA granules form in all affected neurons after transient global brain ischemia. mRNA granules abate in the ischemia resistant CA3 region of the hippocampus, but they persist in the ischemia vulnerable CA1. Persistence of mRNA granules correlates to persistent protein synthesis inhibition and selective cell death in CA1. mRNA granules may require translating mRNA from polysomes to form, like other stress-induced mRNPs do. Sequestering mRNA on polysomes with CHX should prevent mRNA granules from forming if they require polysome-associated mRNA. Conversely, liberating polysomeassociated mRNA in unstressed cells may cause the formation of mRNA granules as it causes the formation of other stress-induced mRNPs. Since, at present, mRNA granules can only be detected microscopically, texture analysis was used to quantify microscope images.

3.1.2 Hypotheses

1. Preventing polysome dissociation prior to injury will prevent the formation of mRNA granules.

2. mRNA granules will form when polysome dissociation is induced in unstressed cells.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Materials

Alexa 488-labeled streptavidin (S32354) was from Invitrogen (Carlsbad, CA). Biotinylated goat anti-streptavidin (BA-0500) was from Vector Laboratories (Burlingame, CA). HuR (sc-5261) antiserum was purchased from Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Inc. (Santa Cruz, CA). A 5 -biotinylated 50-mer oligo-dT probe was made by Integrated DNA Technologies, Inc. (Coralville, IA). CHX (c1988) and puromycin dihydrochloride (P7255) were purchased from Sigma (St. Lois, MO). Prehybridization buffer was

mRNAlocator *In Situ* Hybridization Kit from Ambion (Austin, TX). All other chemicals were reagent grade.

3.2.2 Animal Model

All animal experiments throughout the thesis were approved by the Wayne State University Animal Investigation Committee and were conducted following the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (National Research Council, revised 2011)¹⁷⁰. Global forebrain ischemia was induced in adult (275-300 g) male Long Evans rats using the bilateral carotid artery (two-vessel) occlusion and hypovolemic hypotension (2VO/HT) model developed by Smith et $al.^{26}$ and used commonly in the DeGracia laboratory^{65,66,126}. Animals were anesthetized with 5% halothane and anesthesia was maintained at 2% halothane in 100% O_2 using a facemask throughout the duration of the surgery. Throughout the ischemic period and the first hour of reperfusion, body temperature was maintained at 37 \pm 0.5 °C using a homeostatic blanket system and rectal temperature probe. Temperature of the head was also maintained at 37 ± 1 °C and independently monitored with a thermocouple probe placed in the temporalis muscle. Mean arterial pressure was monitored in real time via tail artery access. Blood gas measurements were maintained at pH = 7.4 \pm 0.1, pO₂ = 80 mmHg and pCO₂ = 35 \pm 5 mmHg until immediately prior to the initiation of ischemia.

To initiate ischemia, blood was withdrawn from the femoral artery into a 10-mL syringe until a mean arterial pressure of 50 mmHg was reached. Following the withdrawal of blood, the common carotid arteries were clamped using microaneurysm clips. Additional blood was withdrawn to maintain a mean arterial pressure of 40 mmHg for 10 minutes. Following 10 minutes of ischemia, microaneurysm clips were released and blood was reinfused at a rate of 5 mL per minute. All wounds were sutured and anesthesia and temperature control was maintained for one hour following the surgery. Post-surgical animals displaying frank necrosis, weight $loss > 15\%$ initial body weight/day, or sustained seizure activity were excluded from the study. Overall survival rate for the reperfusion groups was 75%. Tissue

processing and brain dissection is further described below. As outlined above in Chapter 2, it is well established that transient global brain ischemia can cause DND. DND following 2VO/HT has been shown repeatedly in the DeGracia laboratory^{1,65} and independently confirmed in other laboratories^{19,70}. In the DeGracia laboratory, multiple, independent lines of evidence have established selective cell death of CA1 pyramidal cell neurons in the 2VO/HT model including fluoro jade staining and morphology of toluidine blue staining (Figure 2).

3.2.3 CHX and Puromycin Treatments

For the CHX study, animals were subjected to 10 minutes ischemia followed by one hour reperfusion. 1.5 mg/kg CHX in saline was administered via intraperitoneal injection at either 15 minutes prior to onset of ten-minute ischemia (C-pre; $n = 6$) or at 15 minutes into reperfusion after ischemia (Cpost; $n = 5$). One hour reperfused groups were repeated using saline vehicle alone (v-pre; $n = 5$) (v-post; n $= 5$), and groups of sham-operated nonischemic animals (NIC; $n = 4$) and 1 hour reperfused animals (1hR; $n = 7$) without injection served as controls. The CHX dose and delivery method were chosen because they have previously been shown to rapidly and inhibit protein synthesis in the rat brain¹⁶³. This dose may also be neuroprotective in global ischemia models when given prior to ischemia¹⁵⁸.

For the puromycin study, three non-ischemic animals were injected with puromycin (Pur) and two animals were injected only with saline vehicle (Veh). Sections from two animals previously subjected to 10 minutes of ischemia and one hour of reperfusion (1hR) and and two uninjected non-ischemic animals (NICs) were also stained as controls. Puromycin dose and administration were based on the method of Flexner, *et al.*¹⁶⁴ who showed that intra-cerebral injection 90 µg of puromycin at 9 mg/mL in each cerebral hemisphere in the rat rapidly inhibited 90% of protein synthesis in the hippocampus, an effect that was maintained from a single dose for over four hours.

To administer intra-cerebral injections of puromycin, rats were anesthetized IP with 100mg/kg ketamine and 10mg/kg xylazine and placed in a stereotactic apparatus. Skull was exposed and holes were

drilled tangent to the surface of the skull at the angle formed by the caudal parietal suture and origin of temporalis muscle. In each hemisphere, 90 µg puromycin in 10 µL saline was injected at depth of 3 mm, targeting the hippocampus (Bregma coordinates -2.1 mm caudal, 2.0 mm lateral, and 1.4 mm vertical)¹⁷¹. Rats were maintained under anesthesia for two hours after puromycin injection and then sacrificed.

3.2.4 Tissue Fixation and Staining

3.2.4.1 Fixation

One hour after ischemic injury or sham surgery or two hours after puromycin injection, rats were transcardially perfused with 250 mL of ice-cold 0.9% NaCl at a rate of 20.8 mL/min. Following the NaCl solution, 300 ml of 4% paraformaldehyde (PFA) in 0.1 M phosphate buffered saline (PBS) was perfused at a flow rate of 10 mL/min. Once perfusion was complete, brains were excised and post-fixed by immersion in 4% PFA, 0.1M PBS. Duration of the post-fix was 24 hours. Following post-fix, the dorsal hippocampus was sectioned in 50 μm coronal slices using a vibratome. Sections used for staining below were taken near 3.0 mm posterior to Bregma. The tissue was sectioned in 0.1M PBS and resultant sections were stored in cryostat solution at -20 $^{\circ}$ C until used for staining.

3.2.4.2 Immunofluorescent Microscopy / Fluorescent *in situ* Hybridization

Immunofluorescent microscopy and fluorescent *in situ* hybridization (IF/FISH) was performed in a two stage procedure. FISH was a modification of the procedure of Bessert and Skoff¹⁷². The combined procedure was performed exactly as described in Jamison, *et al* 1 *.* All IF procedures were at room temperature with gentle agitation on an orbital shaker. Brain sections were washed four times for 10 minutes in 0.1 M PBS. After the last wash, sections were pre-blocked for 25 minutes in 0.1M PBS containing 0.3% Triton X-100 and 10% serum of donkey (the host species for the secondary antibody).

After three ten-minute washes in PBS, blocked sections were immersed in 1:25 mouse anti-HuR primary antibody PBS 0.3% Triton X-100 and 1% donkey serum at room temperature overnight. The following day, samples were washed three times for 10 minutes in PBS and incubated with donkey anti-mouse secondary antibody in PBS with 0.3% Triton X-100 and 10% donkey serum for 2 hours. HuR staining provided a useful signal for generating nuclear and cytoplasmic image masks as part of the texture analysis described below.

Primary and secondary antibody concentrations were determined in previous studies in the DeGracia laboratory based on dilution series¹. HuR was tested with a series of dilutions on control and experimental animals in order to determine the concentration that limits background and provides the best overall signal. Validation of antisera staining included: (1) loss of signal with omission of primary antisera, (2) graded loss of signal with antisera dilution, and (3) agreement with published descriptions of antisera staining patterns were previously reported¹.

The second stage, FISH, was performed under low light illumination or in the dark. At the end of the IF procedure, slices were mounted on lysine-coated slides. IF-stained sections were fixed in 3.6% formaldehyde in PBS for 10 minutes at room temperature and then drained and blotted. Prehybridization was in a box humidified with 50% formamide/ $4X$ saline-sodium citrate (SSC) at 32 °C for 3 hours in prehybridization buffer. Slides were then incubated overnight in the same apparatus in a solution of 50 ng/mL of a 5'- biotinylated 50-mer oligo-dT probe dissolved in hybridization buffer. The next day, all subsequent processing was performed at room temperature. Slides were washed three times in 2X SSC for 10 minutes and then incubated in the dark at 1:500 Alexa 488-labeled streptavidin in 4X SSC/0.1% Triton X-100 for 60 minutes. Slides were then washed once in 4X SSC for 10 minutes followed by incubation in 2X SSC/0.1% Triton X-100 containing 1:667 of biotinylated goat anti-streptavidin for 60 minutes. Slides were again washed once in 4X SSC for 10 minutes and then incubated in 1:667 Alexa 488-labeled streptavidin in 2X SSC/0.1% Triton X-100 for 60 minutes. Slides were then washed sequentially in 4X SSC for 10 minutes and 2X SSC for 10 minutes, and then coverslipped for viewing. Previous studies established that polyadenylated mRNA (poly(A)) and HuR staining patterns were identical on IF/FISH

double-labeled sections and individually stained sections. Negative controls demonstrating the specificity of poly(A) FISH staining including pre-incubating NIC brain slices in DNAse-free RNAse or 0.1 M NaOH were previously reported¹.

3.2.5 Texture Analysis

3.2.5.1 Image Acquisition

Photomicrographs of the CA3 pyramidal cell layer of the dorsal hippocampus were acquired on an Axioplan 2 Imaging System (Carl Zeiss, Oberkochen, Germany) equipped with an ApoTome as previously described⁶⁶. This study focused exclusively on the hippocampal CA3 region because of the large cytoplasmic area of this population of cells. The DeGracia laboratory has previously shown that mRNA granule formation occurs in all post-ischemic neurons¹.

Similar to a laser scanning confocal microscope, the apotome focuses on a specific plane in the tissue and can acquire optical sections moving up or down from the original plane of focus. The microscope is controlled via a computer that is programmed to acquire optical sections of consecutive focal planes marked by a defined distance (the software sets this distance to meet Nyquist sampling requirements). The set of sequential optical sections are referred to as a z-stack. z-Stacks of ten optical sections were acquired under 63× oil immersion lens (1388 × 1040 w × h; pixel spatial dimensions; x = 0.1 m, $y = 0.1$ m, and $z = 0.35$ m). Eight-bit per channel maximum intensity orthographic projections were constructed in NIH ImageJ 173 from the 16-bit acquired z-stacks and used as input images for the texture analysis. Excitation at 488 nm and 568 nm, and emission at 518 nm and 600 nm were used for Alexa 488 (green, poly(A)) and Alexa 555 (red, HuR) respectively. Orthographic projections were used because they provided a denser staining pattern than single z-slices^{66,125}, and were thus more representative of the distribution and density of the mRNA granules in the cell cytoplasm. Each image contained, on average, 24.1 ± 3.8 cells. The ratio of total cytoplasmic area to total cell area was 73.6% \pm 5.1%, and the ratio of total nuclear area to total cell area was $23.4\% \pm 5.1\%$.

3.2.5.2 Texture Analysis Computations

Texture analysis is a method to quantitatively measure complex changes in images. The data processing elements in the texture analysis pipeline were image masking, feature calculation, feature selection, feature projection, and significance testing.

Image masking divides an image into regions of interest onto which downstream methods are applied. Using distinctive HuR nuclear staining, images were segmented into regions of nucleus, cytoplasm, and background. Semi-automated image segmentation was performed in the EDISON program (Edge Detection and Image Segmentation, $v1.1$)¹⁷⁴.

Following image masking subsequent texture analysis steps were carried out in MaZda v4.6¹⁷⁵. Features calculated by MaZda are quantifiable pieces of information which can be measured and compared between images. Calculated features were derived from histogram analysis, absolute gradient methods, run length matrix, co-occurrence matrix, autoregressive modeling, wavelet analysis, and fractal dimension. A brief description of each parameter follows: Histogram analysis quantifies statistical features of the image histogram such as kurtosis. Absolute gradient features compare each pixel to a fivepixel neighborhood matrix. A run length matrix measures how many pixels in any direction maintain the same intensity. A co-occurrence matrix measures the probability two pixels will have the same intensity at a set distance apart. An autoregressive model assumes a pixel is influenced by a weight sum of neighboring pixel intensities. Discrete wavelet transform is a linear transformation of pixel intensity. Fractal dimension measures how image patterns change with the scale at which they are measured. In total, 155 different image features were calculated in MaZda.

Ten features were selected to be compared between sample groups (Table 1). These ten features were the most discriminant between sample groups by Fisher coefficient, a ratio of between-group to within-group variance. The ten most discriminant features were carried forward to feature projection, the transformation of high dimensional feature space into a new, lower dimensional feature. Feature

projection was accomplished by principal component analysis (PCA), a variable reduction technique performed within MaZda. PCA generates a first principal component or most expressive factor (MEF1) which consolidates as much variance as possible from the ten most discriminant original variables. Oneway ANOVA was used to test the significance of group differences in MEF1 followed by Tukey post-hoc testing of each possible pair with p<0.05 considered significant.

Table 1: Image featuresselected from the texture analysis. From 155 image features measured, ten each were selected for the pre-treatment and post-treatment experiments by Fisher coefficient (F). For each set, these ten **features were then used in PCA, and a first principal component or most expressive factor (MEF1) was calculated for each experimental group.**

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Pre-treatment but not Post-treatment with CHX inhibits mRNA granules

Cytoplasmic staining of polyadenylated mRNA was quantified after one hour of reperfusion. Of the six animals pretreated with CHX, only one displayed obvious mRNA granulation (Figure 6A). Following CHX post-treatment, four of the five animals displayed mRNA granules (Figure 6A). Qualitative differences seen in the microscope images were quantified by texture analysis.

B. CHX pretreatment

Figure 6: Effect of CHX on mRNA granules at 1 hour reperfusion after global ischemia. (A) Merged images of pA (green) and HuR (red) double-labeling of individual samples as indicated. Scale bar applies to all images. (B) On the left, CHX pretreated TA: PCA scatter plots for pA cytoplasmic textures in experimental groups as indicated with Fisher coefficient in upper right. On the right, average (±standard deviation) of MEF1 for groups as indicated in legend. pA ANOVA $p = 0.017$, *Tukey HSD post hoc $p < 0.05$ compared to **v-pre group. (C) CHX post-treatment. On the left, TA: PCA scatter plots for pA cytoplasmic textures in experimental groups as indicated. On the right, average (±standard deviation) of MEF1 for groups as**

indicated in legend. pA ANOVA $p = 0.023$, # Tukey post hoc $p < 0.01$ compared to the NIC group. Modified **from Szymanski,** *et al.* **2011¹⁷⁶ .**

Texture analysis was used to quantify these changes and measure the effect of CHX on the C-pre and C-post groups. After quantifying 155 unique image features in the cytoplasm of each image, Fisher coefficient was used to select the ten features most discriminant for all animal groups (Table 1), and these variables were consolidated by principal component analysis. MEF1 consolidated well over half the variance in the ten most discriminant image features. The C-pre animals were indistinguishable from NICs but significantly different from v-pre on Tukey post hoc testing after one-way ANOVA (Figure 6B). Conversely, C-post and v-post groups were indistinguishable, but these groups were significantly different from NICs.

Consistent with my original hypothesis, I found that CHX administered before ischemic and reperfusion injury, when polysomes are intact, inhibited the formation of mRNA granules. CHX administered after brain I/R injury, when polysomes have dissociated, did not inhibit the formation of mRNA granules.

3.3.2 Puromycin induces mRNA granules in neurons of uninjured animals.

Consistent with previous observations¹, NIC animals showed no mRNA granules (Figure 7A), while 1hR animals had robust mRNA granule formation in CA3 neurons (Figure 7B). mRNA granules have never previously been observed outside the context of global brain I/R. Two of three animals injected with puromycin showed mRNA granule formation near the puromycin injection site (Figures 7B and 7C). mRNA granules were not observed over 1 mm away from the injection site. Vehicle-injected animals showed no mRNA granules throughout the entire section, showing that mechanical trauma from the injection did not generate mRNA granules. Thus mRNA granules could be pharmacologically induced in non-ischemic rat brain.

Figure 7: Puromycin induced mRNA granule formation in uninjured neurons. Representative images of pA staining in CA3 hippocampal neurons. A) Vehicle-injected non-ischemic animal without mRNA granules. B) and C) Images from two separate, nonischemic, puromycin-treated animals showing partial mRNA granulation near injection site. D) Animal without puromycin injection after 10 minutes ischemia and 1hR showing diffuse mRNA granulation.

Chapter 4 – HuR Binds *hsp70* mRNA but does not Regulate its Nuclear Export

4.1 Introduction

After transcription, stress-induced mRNAs such as *hsp70* may exit through the CRM1 pathway. Through binding partners APRIL and pp32, HuR exits the nucleus with CRM1 in stressed cells. HuR has been shown to facilitate nuclear export of some target mRNA, increasing their translation ¹⁴⁶. To study the nuclear export of HuR and *hsp70* mRNA, neurons from microdissected CA1 and CA3 hippocampal regions were separated into nuclear and cytoplasmic fractions by differential centrifugation after gentle mechanical homogenization. RNA immunoprecipitation (RIP) detects transcripts specifically bound to a mRBP. RIP was used to show that HuR associates *hsp70* mRNA in reperfused neurons.

4.1.1 Hypotheses

1. If *hsp70* mRNA is associated with HuR in reperfused neurons, RIP will precipitate *hsp70* mRNA with HuR.

2. Facilitated nuclear export of *hsp70* mRNA by HuR will allow translation of *hsp70* mRNA in ischemia resistant CA3 while lack of nuclear export of *hsp70* mRNA in ischemia vulnerable CA1 will prevent translation of *hsp70* mRNA.

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Animal Model

Animal model was used as described in Chapter 2. RIP used whole cortex tissue, and subcellular localization used microdissection hippocampal subregions as described below. Animal groups were: For RIP- 10 minutes ischemia followed by 8 hours reperfusion (8hR), n=3); for HuR in subcellular fractions-NIC, n=6, and 8hR, n=6. Again for $hsp70$ mRNA in subcellular fractions, groups were- NIC, n=6 and $8hR, n=6.$

4.2.2 RIP

RIP was based on the method Keene, $et \text{ } a l^{177,178}$. All efforts were made to prevent RNase degradation of samples. Consumables were RNase-free and other containers and surfaces were treated with Zap (Ambion). Where possible, procedures were performed under a laminar flow hood and all solutions were prepared with DEPC-treated water.

8hR or NIC animals were sacrificed and brains rapidly removed. Whole forebrain was dissected at 4 °C and homogenized on ice in 1:5 (w/v) of 50 mM HEPES pH 7.5, 150 mM NaCl, 1% (v/v) Triton X-100, 10% (v/v) glycerol, 1 mM MgCl2, 1 mM EGTA, 80 U/mL RNase inhibitor (Ambion, Austin, TX, USA), 0.2% ribonucleoside vanadyl complexes (Sigma, St. Loius, MO, USA), and 1:85 protease inhibitor cocktail (Sigma). Centrifugation of the 2500 *g* post-nuclear supernatant at 25,000 *g* generated a cytoplasmic supernatant, and 600 µg of supernatant protein was precleared with 1 µL of an unrelated antibody (Lamin AlC, Santa Cruz Biotech, Santa Cruz, CA, USA) plus 20 µL Protein A-Sepharose beads (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA). Precleared supernatants were rotated 16 hr, 4°C in 15 µL Protein A-Sepharose prebound with 16 µg HuR antiserum (Santa Cruz) or 10 µg PABP antiserum (Abcam). Beads were washed three times in sterile phosphate buffered saline. RNA was extracted from precipitated protein using TRIzol reagent (Invitrogen). 2 µg total RNA was measured by A260 and reverse transcriptase PCR was performed according to vendor instructions (Roche, Boulder, CO, USA). Primers

for PCR were *gapdh* (5'-ACAAGATGGTGAAGGTCGGTGTGA-3', 5'-

TTGTCATTGAGAGCAATGCCAGCC-3'; 1.0 kb product) and *hsp70* (5'- TCTTGGTTGCCAACACCCAAATCC-3', 5'-AAAGGTCACTGCTAGCTCCGTGTT-3'; 0.5 kb product). Amplification products were run on Tris-acetic acid- EDTA-1% agarose gels and visualized by SYBR gold (Invitrogen). For some IP reactions, RNA was not extracted but rather beads were boiled in Laemmli buffer, run on SDS-PAGE gels, and western blotted for HuR or PABP using methods previously described (Jamison, et al., 2008).

4.2.3 Quantification of HuR Protein and *hsp70* mRNA in Nuclear and Cytoplasmic Fractions

4.2.3.1 Hippocampal Subregion Microdissection

Microdissection of dorsal hippocampus CA1 and CA3 subregions was according to the method of Roberts *et al*⁶⁵. Briefly, animals were anesthetized with 5% halothane and quickly decapitated after the appropriate reperfusion duration. For each animal, whole brain was rapidly removed and snap-frozen in a dry ice-ethanol bath for 15 seconds. A semi-frozen coronal section was cut from 2.30 to 3.80 mm posterior to Bregma in a brain blocker. This section, containing the dorsal hippocampus, was further subdivided on an ice-cooled stage under a dissecting microscope (Figure 9A). A vertical cut was made slightly medial to CA3 and surrounding cortex was removed to isolate CA3. CA1 was separated from the dentate gyrus by a horizontal cut through the hippocampal fissure. Corpus callosum and other superior tissues were separated to isolate CA1. Bilateral sections were rapidly weighed and then stored at -80° C. Bilateral wet weight for each subregion averaged 25 mg per rat. Microdissection of CA1 and CA3 hippocampal subregions allowed for the comparison of ischemia vulnerable and ischemia resistant neurons in a global ischemic model. Additionally, these regions consist primarily of hippocampal pyramidal cell neurons. While interneurons and glia are still present, pyramidal neurons account for the

majority of the mass of these sections, allowing for study of generally homogenous populations of cells^{179} .

4.2.3.2 Subcellular Fractionating

Microdissected tissue samples were homogenized at 1:15 (w/v) in a homogenization buffer of 320 mM sucrose, 1 mM $MgCl₂$, 1 mM $NaH₂PO₄$, pH 6.6. 2.39, 1 mM DTT, 80 units/mL RNase inhibitor (Ambion), 0.5% protease inhibitor cocktail (Sigma). Homogenization used a glass Kontes dounce with 150 µM clearance to preserve the nuclear membrane. Nuclei were pelleted by 850 *g* centrifugation for 10 minutes followed by three washes of the nuclear pellet. Nuclei were then resuspended in 1 mL homogenization buffer and mixed with 5 mL of nuclear purification buffer (2.39 M sucrose, 1 mM $MgCl₂$, 1 mM NaH₂PO₄, 10% (v/v) triton X-100, pH 6.6, 1 mM DTT, 80 units/mL RNase inhibitor, 0.5% protease inhibitor cocktail). Resuspended nuclei were centrifuged $48,000$ g for 1 hour at 4° C in a Beckman SW50.1 rotor. Pellet of intact nuclei was washed 3 times in homogenization buffer and then resuspended at minimal volume in a lysis buffer of 5 mM EDTA, 50 mM tris, pH 7.5, 2% SDS.

4.2.3.3 Western Blotting

Western blotting was performed exactly according to vendor instructions (Amersham). 2 µL aliquots of each sample were taken in triplicate for Lowry assay to determine protein concentration. All antibody conditions were identical to previous western blotting used in the DeGracia laboratory^{1,65}. Prior to loading, all protein samples were boiled for 2 minutes in equal volume of 2x Laemmli buffer. SDS-PAGE gels were 10% total, 0.8% bis acrylamide. Pilot studies determined the total protein from each subcellular fraction necessary to generate good signal in western blotting, and all western blots compared only samples from the same subcellular fractions. After SDS-PAGE, proteins were transferred to nitrocellulose. Gels were silver stained to assess protein loading. Antibody conditions were: mouse antiHuR 5261 (Santa Cruz Biotechnology) 1:200 without blocking for 2 hours at room temperature; mouse anti-lamin B1 16048 (Abcam) 1:5000 overnight 4 at °C without blocking; and rabbit anti-glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) 25778 (Abcam) 1:1000 for one hour at room temperature without blocking. The base buffer for all primary antisera incubations was tris buffered saline with 0.1% tween 20. All peroxidase-linked secondary antibodies were at a concentration of 1:6700 and blocked in 4% serum of the secondary host. Films were scanned at 300 dpi on a Scanmaker 9800XL flatbed scanner (Microtek) and densitometry was performed in BioIamge Intelligent Quantifier v.4.

4.2.3.4 RNA Isolation and Real Time PCR

RNA was extracted from hippocampal subregions by guanidinium-acid-phenol using the TRIzol reagent exactly according to vendor instructions. As described in the method of RIP above, all efforts were made to prevent RNase degradation of samples. Final isolated RNA had an A_{260} : A_{280} ratio >1.7, and RNA integrity was confirmed with denaturing agarose gel electrophoresis. cDNA was generated using the Transcriptor First Strand cDNA Synthesis kit (4896866001) from Roche. cDNA was transcribed using poly-T primers so that only full length transcripts were amplified. This step was taken to ensure that only mature and not nascent transcripts were amplified from the nuclear fraction. The resultant cDNA was input to quantitative PCR reactions using SYBR Green quantitative PCR (qPCR) Master Mix (600548) from Stratagene, on the Mx3000P real time PCR thermocycler. Primers for qPCR were the same as for the RIP method, above measuring differences in *hsp70* and using *gapdh* as a normalizer. After an initial 10 minutes at 95 \degree C, all samples were amplified for 40 cycles of one minute annealing at 55 \degree C, 30 seconds elongation at 72 $^{\circ}$ C, and 30 seconds dissociation at 95 $^{\circ}$ C followed by a dissociation curve. Amplification data were analyzed in MxPro v.3.00 from Stratagene using 2^{AACT} method for relative quantification¹⁸⁰. Threshold fluorescence was determined using a minimum cycle threshold (Ct) spread algorithm in MxPro which minimizes the overall spread of Ct standard deviation for all replicates in a given run. Differences between hippocampal subregions were measured with a two-tailed t-test.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 RIP

RIP of HuR or PABP was performed on cytoplasmic fractions from forebrain homogenates of NIC and 8hR samples (Figure 8). HuR RIPs selectively brought down *hsp70* mRNA but not *gapdh*. PABP RIPs brought down both *hsp70* and *gapdh* mRNA.

Figure 8: Figure: *hsp70* **mRNA co-precipitates specifically with HuR after transient global brain ischemia. Results from PABP (left) and HuR (right) RNA co-immunoprecipitation (RIP) reactions from 8hR forebrain.** Left panels for each RIP show enrichment of precipitated protein by western blot. HC and LC are antibody **heavy and light chains from the immunoprecipitation. Right panels for each RIP are reverse transcriptase PCR products after 35 cycles. Both** *gapdh* **mRNA and** *hsp70* **mRNA co-precipitate with PABP, but only** *hsp70* **mRNA co-precipitates with HuR. 18S is a loading control.**

4.3.2 Nuclear and Cytoplasmic Fractionation

To study whether HuR facilitates the nuclear export of *hsp70* mRNA, nuclear and cytoplasmic fractions of CA1 and CA3 were generated for NIC and 8hR animals. Microdissected regions are shown in Figure 9A. Cortex HSP70 expression was used to validate brain I/R injury for all 8hR samples; NICs did not show appreciable HSP70 expression on western blot.

Subcellular fractionation was validated with GAPDH and Lamin B1, markers for the cytoplasmic and nuclear fractions respectively (Figure 9B). Both markers were present in samples of homogenate prior to fractionation. Nuclear fractions contained only Lamin B1 and cytoplasmic fractions contained only GAPDH. The I/R injury did not affect the fractionation based on these markers.

Figure 9: Nucleocytoplasmic fractioning method and controls. A) Example of CA1 and CA3 microdissection from the dorsal hippocampus showing hippocampal subregions and cuts made in the tissue. B) Western blots of NIC and 8hR cortex staining for nuclear and cytoplasmic fraction markers.

4.3.2 HuR Does Not Exit the Nucleus During Global Brain I/R

HuR was quantified in cytoplasmic and nuclear fractions and unfractionated homogenate from microdissected CA1 and CA3 regions. Consistent with previous microscopy work in the DeGracia lab and published reports of other laboratories^{144,146}, HuR was predominantly nuclear in both NIC and 8hR groups (Figure 10B). Cytoplasmic HuR was 2-3-fold greater in CA1 compared to CA3 ($p<0.05$).

However, the amount cytoplasmic HuR did not change in response to 1/R injury in any region or fraction, indicating that HuR does not exit from the nucleus in response to 1/R injury.

Figure 10: HuR in subcellular fractions. A) Western blot measuring HuR in cytoplasmic fractions from CAl of 6 NIC and 6 8hR animals. NIC unfractionated homogenate and nuclear fmctions were loaded as controls. Similar blots were gene1·ated for unfractionated homogenate and nuclear fractions and for the CA3 region. B) Densitometry for HuR in subcellular fractions. HuR values were normalized to GAPDH for input and

cytoplasmic fractions or silver staining for nuclear fractions. Each column represents 6 samples; error bars are standard deviation, two-tailed t-test p>0.05 between NIC and 8hR for all regions and fractions.

4.3.3 8hR CA1 and CA3 have the same Distribution of Nuclear and Cytoplasmic *hsp70* mRNA

Levels of *hsp70* mRNA were also assessed in each region and fraction by qPCR (Figure 11). *hsp70* in unfractionated homogenate was increased roughly 26-fold in both regions at 8hR with no significant differences between CA1 and CA3. In the cytoplasm, *hsp70* was increased between 200 and 500-fold at 8hR, values consistent with previous cytoplasmic fractions in the 2VO/HT model⁶⁵. Again, there was no significant difference in the amount of *hsp70* mRNA between CA1 and CA3.

Figure 11: Real time quantitative PCR for *hsp70* **in unfractionated homogenate (Unfract. Hom.) and cytoplasmic fractions of CA1 and CA3. Fold change of** *hsp70* **mRNA from NIC to 8hR in unfractionated homogenate (left) and cytoplasmic (right) fractions from CA1 and CA3. Both unfractionated homogenate and cytoplasmic fold change of** *hsp70* **were identical for CA1 and CA3 by two-tailed t-test.**

Calculation of relative differences by $2^{\cdot\Delta\Delta CT}$ assumes that the increase in amplicon per cycle, the PCR efficiency, is the same for each PCR target. Values for efficiency range from 1 (no efficiency) to 2 (perfect efficiency). Efficiency was quantified using the slope of the log-fold dilutions of each primer from input fraction of a 8hR animal (Figure 12). Efficiencies were 1.8 for both primer sets within error.

Figure 12: Example of efficiency experimentsfor *hsp70* **and** *gapdh***. Amplification curves show linear changes in Ct at logarithmic dilutions (left). Dilution of cDNA (logarithmic) versus CT (right) shows efficiencies of 1.81 (SD 0.08) for** *hsp70* **and 1.79 (SD 0.07) for** *gapdh***.**

These studies show that there is no significant difference in the nuclear export of either HuR

protein or *hsp70* mRNA between CA1 and CA3 neurons at 8hR after 10 minutes of global brain ischemia.

Chapter 5 – HuR Interactions with the Polysome **5.1 Introduction**

The work described in Chapter 4 shows that HuR interacts specifically with *hsp70* mRNA in reperfused neurons, but does not export *hsp70* mRNA out of the nucleus. A second mechanism by which HuR could regulate $hsp70$ is by directly enhancing translation through association with eIF4A⁷. Polysome profiles present a method to assess whether HuR increases its association with polysomes during reperfusion. Eight hours reperfusion was again selected as the time point for these studies because rats are known to be actively translating *hsp70* mRNA into protein in CA3 and throughout the cortex at 8hR.

5.1.1 Hypothesis

HuR association with polysomes increases during reperfusion after brain ischemia.

5.2 Methods

5.2.1 Experimental Groups

Animal model was identical to previous chapter. Experimental groups were NIC, n=4 and 8hR, n=4. All tissue was homogenized as whole cortex.

5.2.2 Tissue Processing

Whole cortex from either 8hR animals expressing HSP70 or NICs was homogenized at 1:2 (w/v) in a 7-mL dounce homogenizer in cold lysis buffer (340 mM sucrose, 50 mM tris pH 7.4, 25 mM NaCl, 5 mM MgCl₂, 100 µg/mL CHX, 5.2 µL/mL protease inhibitor cocktail, 1 mM DTT, 80 U/mL RNase inhibitor, 1% (v/v) Triton X-100). Methods to control RNase activity were as described in Chapter 4, section 4.2.2.

After 20 strokes with the dounce homogenizer, homogenates were centrifuged 1000 *g* for ten minutes at 4° C to pellet nuclei and membranes. Supernatants were then centrifuged 10,000 *g* for 30 minutes at 4° C to generate a post-mitochondrial supernatant (PMS).

5.2.3 Polysome Profiles

Polysome profiles were generated based on the methods of MacManus, *et al.*¹¹⁹ and DeGracia, *et* $al¹⁸¹$. Gradient and homogenate preparation and polysome profile centrifugation were performed on ice or at 4 °C. Sucrose gradients were prepared by layering sucrose concentrations of 15%, 20%, 25%, 30%, 35%, 40%, and 45% (w/v) sucrose dissolved in gradient buffer (50 mM tris pH 7.4, 25 mM NaCl, 5 mM MgCl₂, 100 µg/mL CHX, 5.2 µL/mL protease inhibitor cocktail, 1 mM DTT, 80 U/mL RNase inhibitor) and allowing layers to equilibrate overnight.

Spectrophotometry of PMS was taken at 254 nm and 75 A_{254} units were layered on top of each 11.5-mL sucrose gradient. Sucrose gradient was centrifuged at 240,000 *g* (37500 rpm) for three hours in a Beckman SW41Ti swinging bucket rotor at 4° C.

After centrifugation, each gradient was placed in a Beckman fraction recovery stand and tube bottom was pierced. 66% (w/w) sucrose was pumped via peristaltic pump at 1-mL per minute into the bottom of the tube to displace the gradient. Eluent was run through a spectrophotometer photocell measuring A254 and then into a fraction collector. Gradients were fractionated into 15 equal volumes of 800 µL and absorbance at 254 nm was continuously recorded with a strip chart recorder advancing at 0.5 mm per second.

For graded input controls, 25, 50, or 75 A_{254} units of NIC cortex were loaded onto gradients identical to above. For CHX control, tissue was homogenized in the presence of 15 mM EDTA. Gradient buffer also had 15 mM EDTA and did not have Mg^{2+} .

5.2.4 Western Blotting

To study protein concentrations of proteins in each fraction of the polysome profile, whole fractions were concentrated by ultrafiltration with a 3 kDa cutoff device (Amicon) and all protein from each fraction was loaded onto one lane of an SDS-PAGE gel. Western blotting and HuR antibody conditions were as described in Chapter 4. Other antibody conditions were: mouse anti-S6 2317S (Cell Signaling) 1:250 in 5% dry milk incubated overnight at 4 °C, rabbit anti-PABP 21060 (Abcam) 1:500 without blocking incubated overnight at 4 °C, rabbit anit-L7a 2403 (Cell Signaling) 1:1000 in 5% dry milk incubated overnight at 4° C.

For densitometry, raw band densities for each fraction were scaled by average density across the gradient. Scaling allowed comparison of values across gradients. For each fraction, relative density of HuR was compared between NIC and 8hR groups by two tailed t-test with a significance of $p<0.05$.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Polysome Profile Controls

Traces of A_{254} along the density gradient had similar forms between NIC and 8hR groups (Figure 13). 8hR animals showed peaks similar in height and area to NICs. To detect polysome-containing fractions, all fractions were western blotted for polysome-associated markers (Figure 13). Small ribosomal subunit protein S6 and large ribosomal subunit protein L7a both concentrated in fractions 8-11. PABP concentrated at the low-density end of the gradient, consistent with previous studies ^{182,183}.

Figure 13: Polysome profile control data from 8hR (left) and NIC (right) cortex. Polysome profile A ²⁵⁴ traces are similar between conditions. Polysome profiles were divided into 15 fractions for western blotting. S6 and L7a markers of the small and large ribosomal subunit, respectively, concentrate in polysome enriched fractions. PABP concentrated in less dense fractions.

Other controls for polysome profiles included graded increase in polysome peak with sample loaded (Figure 14A), and loss of polysome peak with addition of EDTA (Figure 4B) which chelates Mg^{2+} needed for polysome formation¹⁸⁴.

Figure 14: NIC input and EDTA controls. A) Gradients with 25, 50, and 75 A_{254} units showing polysome peak **increases with input. B) 15 mM EDTA abolishes polysome peak from 75 NIC A²⁵⁴ units.**

To assess HuR association with polysomes, densitometry of 8hR and NIC cortex polysome profiles was performed. Densitometry confirmed that HuR distributed evenly across densities relative to polysome-associated or free proteins (Figure 15B). At each fraction, NIC and 8hR HuR density was compared by two-tailed t-test, and there were no significant differences for any fraction.

This finding suggests that HuR does not preferentially associate with polysomes at 8hR.

Figure 15: HuR association with polysomes. A) Western blots of HuR (darkest band) in fractions from NIC and 8hR cortex polysomes. B) Densitometry for 4 NIC and 4 8hR cortex polysome profiles expressed as percent of average density of each gradient. Error bars are standard deviation. No differences between NIC and 8hR HuR in any fraction cleared p<0.05 t-test.

Chapter 6 - Brain I/R Transcriptomics

6.1 Introduction

In order to recover from I/R injury, neurons need to translate newly-transcribed mRNAs encoding stress response proteins. Although there have been several global¹⁸⁵⁻¹⁸⁷ and many focal^{150,152,188-196} microarray studies of reperfused brain, all previous studies suffer from major limitations in measuring the post-ischemic transcriptional program. Many well-designed brain I/R microarray studies were conducted prior to advancements in array technology and genome mapping, making the number of transcripts measured a small fraction of the whole genome. More recently, it has been appreciated that steady-state levels of mRNA and protein are only weakly correlated^{153,155}, severely limiting the ability of microarrays to measure actively translating transcripts. The loose correlation in mRNA and protein steady states is due, in part, to posttranscriptional RNA regulatory mechanisms. Through specific mRBP interactions, stress response transcript translation can be significantly altered over short time frames in stressed cells 128 . In particular during reperfusion after brain ischemia, stress-response transcripts are able to escape the global suppression of translation¹⁴⁹. The functional effects of mRBPs and translation suppression are not detectable by microarray of whole-cell RNA.

Translation state analysis can identify upregulated transcripts which localize to the polysome¹⁹⁷. MacManus, *et al.* performed the only translation state analysis of brain tissue after I/R injury. This study used a mouse focal ischemia model to compare lesioned and unlesioned hemispheres of the brain. While MacManus made an important finding that only 36% of upregulated transcripts were bound to polysomes, use of a focal model limits the interpretation of this result. I/R damage and induction of stress responses are not constant throughout a focal lesion¹⁹⁸. In fact, genes produced by inflammatory cells in the necrotic core of a focal lesion can be directly antithetical to those expressed in recovering penumbra¹⁹⁹.

Selectively vulnerable CA1 dies by DND while adjacent CA3 neurons survive. This dichotomous outcome is a useful model to study the intrinsic ability of neurons to recover from I/R injury. By studying the CA1 and CA3 regions of the hippocampus in the transient global ischemia model, researchers have shown conclusively that persistent suppression of translation correlates to selective vulnerability. Yet no study has yet compared the CA1 and CA3 regions in global brain ischemia by microarray.

This chapter investigated both the differences between polysome-bound and unbound transcripts and between the CA1 and CA3 regions.

6.1.1 Hypothesis

There are quantifiable differences in the mRNA populations bound to polysomes in CA3 and CA1 neurons after brain I/R.

6.2 Methods

6.2.1 Animal model

The 2VO/HT model was performed exactly as described in Chapter 3. Experimental groups used in this chapter were: NIC ($n = 15$) and 8hR ($n=15$). For the purpose of validating the integrity of RNA extraction from polysome profiles, additional NIC $(n=5)$ and 8hR $(n=5)$ animals were performed.

6.2.2 Microdissection

CA1 and CA3 were microdissected exactly as described in Chapter 4.

6.2.3 Tissue processing

Homogenates for microdissected CA1 and CA3 were prepared as described in Chapter 5, section 5.2.2. For rats used to assess integrity of polysome-extracted RNA, whole forebrain homogenates were prepared. Whole forebrain consisted of bisecting the brain coronally at the level of the superior colliculus and taking all structures anterior, including the diencephalon. Whole forebrain was homogenized at 1:2 (w/v) the same buffer used to homogenize CA1 and CA3. Homogenates of CA1, CA3, and whole forebrain were processed exactly as described in Chapter 5, section 5.2.2 to produce PMS fractions that served as input to polysome profiles.

6.2.4 Pooling of microdissected regions

Polysome profiles required loading 75 A_{254} units of PMS to isolate RNA. Microdissection of as single, bilateral CA1 or CA3, in its entirety, provided 20 A₂₅₄ units of PMS_. Therefore, to achieve the required quantities for polysome profiles, five homogenates per hippocampal region per experimental group were randomly pooled to generate a single pooled sample. Thus, the four main experimental groups: (1) NIC CA1, (2) NIC CA3, (3) 8hR CA1, and (4) 8hR CA3 each consisted of three pooled samples, where each pooled sample contained 5 pooled homogenates from individual animals (Figure 16A).

Because of the pooling requirements, pilot studies to assess RNA extraction quality were performed on whole forebrain homogenates, where each animal provided enough material to run a single polysome profile (Figure 16B).

6.2.5 Polysome profiles

Polysome profiles of pooled hippocampal regions and forebrain samples were run exactly as described in Chapter 5, section 5.2.3. The data shown in Chapter 5, section 5.3.1 established that gradient fractions 8-11 contain the polysome peaks that concentrated 40S and 60S markers. These fractions were
pooled and constituted the polysome-bound fractions (bound, B). The lower density fractions, 1-6, were also pooled, and these constituted the polysome-unbound fractions (unbound, U) (Figure 16).

6.2.6 RNA extraction.

RNA was extracted from B and U fractions using the same protocol as described in Chapter 4. Ethanol washed RNA pellets, resuspended in sterile water, were shipped overnight on dry ice to Genome Explorations (Memphis, Tennessee) who performed microarray hybridization as described below. An aliquot of resuspended RNA pellets was used to measure RNA concentration by A_{260} and estimate RNA purity by A_{260}/A_{280} ratio.

6.2.7 Summary of Experimental Design

There were a total of 24 samples analyzed by microarray. The overall design of the microarray studies is illustrated in Figure 16. Five samples from forebrain were used for pilot studies on RNA extraction from polysome profiles; the treatments of these samples is shown in Figure 16B.

Figure 16: Design of microarray experiments. A) Design of main experiment comparing CA1 and CA3. Each polysome (p) contained tissue from 5 animals, pooled randomly. RNA was isolated from polysome bound (B) and unbound (U) fractions of each polysome profile. B) Design of pilot study for RNA extraction from polysome profiles. Each polysome contained tissue from a single forebrain.

6.2.8 Performance of Microarrays

A. Main Experiment Design

The following procedures A-C were carried out by Genome Explorations.

A. RNA quality control.

Immediately prior to cDNA synthesis, the purity and concentration of RNA samples were determined from OD_{260/280} readings using a dual beam UV spectrophotometer and RNA integrity was

determined by capillary electrophoresis using the RNA 6000 Nano Lab-on-a-Chip kit and the Bioanalyzer

2100 (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA) as per the manufacturer's instructions.

B. cDNA synthesis and labeling.

RNA (5-25 ng each sample) was converted to cDNA, amplified, fragmented, and labeled with biotin using the Ovation Pico WTA, Ovation Exon Module, and Encore Biotin Module kits according to the manufacturer's instructions (NuGEN, San Carlos CA).

C. Oligonucleotide array hybridization and analysis.

Fragmented, biotin-labeled cDNA was hybridized for 17hr at 45 $^{\circ}$ C to GeneChip® Rat Gene 1.0 ST Arrays (Affymetrix, Santa Clara CA). The Rat Gene 1.0 ST array is a perfect-match-only array comprised of 722,254 unique 25-mer oligonucleotide features representing transcripts from roughly 27,000 rat genes with each gene represented on the array by approximately 27 probes spread across the full length of its transcript²⁰⁰. Arrays were washed and stained with phycoerythrin -conjugated streptavidin (Life Technologies, Carlsbad, CA) in a Fluidics Station 450 (Affymetrix) according to the manufacturer's recommended procedures. Fluorescence intensities were determined using a GCS 3000 7G high-resolution confocal laser scanner, and analyzed using programs resident in the Affymetrix GeneChip Operating Software suite, v.3.2. (GCOS; Affymetrix). GCOS quality control outputs included average expression across arrays (ALE) box plots, relative level of expression (RLE) box plots , and positive vs. negative area under curve (AUC) values, and were used to identify potential outlier arrays. Outlier evaluation was also performed by principal component analysis in GeneMaths XT (Applied Maths, Austin TX).

Data Output

Genome Explorations provided the resulting data files generated by the Affymetrix software. These included raw 16-bit pixel intensity image files (.DAT), and probe intensity files (.CEL). All subsequent analyses were performed in the DeGracia laboratory using the data pipeline described next.

Data Analysis

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Background correction by the PM-CGBG method and probe set signal summarization using the PLIER algorithm^{201,202} was performed in Affymetrix Expression Console²⁰³. Quantile normalization²⁰⁴, filtering, hierarchical clustering, and class comparisons to identify probe sets exhibiting significant differential expression were performed using BRB-ArrayTools v.4.2.1 developed by Dr. Richard Simon and the BRB-ArrayTools Development Team. BRB-ArrayTools is a microarray analysis plug-in for Microsoft Excel, freely distributed by the National Cancer Institute at the NIH. The filter criteria used for class comparisons was log intensity variation $> 75th$ percentile. Application of this filter reduced the initial 26,309 genes to a set of 6,578 genes. Hierarchical clustering was by Pearson correlation with distances calculated by complete linkage.

The following class comparisons were performed on the 6,578 gene set:

(1) NIC CA1 bound (N1B) vs. 8hR CA1 bound (R1B), (2) NIC CA3 bound (N3B) vs. 8hR CA3 bound (R3B), (3) NIC CA1 unbound (N1U) vs. 8hR CA1 unbound (R1U), (4) NIC CA3 unbound (N3U) vs. 8hR CA3 unbound (R3U),

using an absolute signal fold change > 2 , and significance threshold $p < 0.01$ on univariate two-tailed ttest.

Results were expressed as: (1) Tables of significant hits, including p values, false discovery rates (FDR), fold-change, probeset ID, Entrez ID and gene name, and (2) Venn diagrams.

Gene Ontology Analysis

Gene annotation, gene ontology information, and biochemical pathway information were obtained from the National Center for Biotechnology Information (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov), NetAffx (ww.affymetrix.com), the Gene Ontology Consortium (http://amigo.geneontology.org), and WebGestalt [\(http://bioinfo.vanderbilt.edu/webgestalt\).](http://bioinfo.vanderbilt.edu/webgestalt)) Enrichment of gene ontology (GO) categories in each comparison was estimated by hypergeometric distribution using GO TermFinder²⁰⁵. A biological process term was considered enriched if the number of genes annotated by the GO term in a list was greater than chance with a significance greater than p<0.01, Bonferroni-corrected.

ARE database search

Differentially expressed transcripts were tested for the presence of ARE sites using the AU-Rich element containing database (ARED) [\(http://brp.kfshrc.edu.sa/ARED/\)](http://brp.kfshrc.edu.sa/ARED/)206)²⁰⁶. ARED is an assembly of all mRNA and 3' expressed sequence tags (ESTs) in the GenBank and EMBL sequences databases, screened for the ARE consensus sequence, WWWU(AUUUA)UUUW, allowing for one mismatch. Gene lists for I/R-upregulated, polysome-bound transcripts were tested in ARED and lists of positive hits recorded.

IRES database search

There is no consensus IRES site for eukaryotic transcripts expressed by cap-independent translation, so these sites are currently determined experimentally. A database of experimentally determined IRES sites (IRESite) is maintained by Charles University in Prague [\(http://iresite.org/](http://iresite.org/) $)^{207}$. Gene lists for I/R-upregulated, polysome-bound transcripts were tested in IRESite and lists of positive hits recorded.

Transcription factor database search

Transcription factor binding site enrichment for was tested in MAtInspector (genomatix)²⁰⁸. MatInspector uses a large library of matrix descriptions for transcription factor binding sites to locate matches in DNA sequences. MatInspector assigns a quality rating to matches by aligning them to a weighted probability matrix for each transcription factor in its database. Each position in the matrix is assigned a score between 0 and 100 for each possible nucleotide. Transcription factor binding is measured as a likelihood of achieving a given score, compared to a random sequence.

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Polysome fractions are enriched in rRNA and translating mRNAs

To assess the integrity of polysome profile RNA, rRNA and transcribing mRNAs were measured across density gradients generated from whole forebrain (Figure 17). Both 8hR and NIC samples showed good RNA integrity for all fractions by rRNA in by denaturing electrophoresis. 18S and 28S rRNA bands concentrated in fractions enriched in polysomes while small nucleotides concentrated at low density. Polysome-enriched fractions of NIC were able to generate *gapdh* product in RT-PCR. 8hR samples are known to be translating large amounts of *hsp70* mRNA. The 8hR polysome-enriched fractions concentrated *hsp70* PCR product, again validating the quality of the isolated RNA.

Figure 17: Figure: Polysome profiles for translation state analysis. Representative polysome profile A²⁵⁴ traces for 8hR (left) and NIC (right) cortex. Whole RNA from each gradient fraction was isolated by TRIzol. **RNA from odd numbered fractions was separated by denaturing agarose electrophoresis. (Agarose gel** images inverted for clear viewing.) Samples of 2 µg RNA from odd numbered fractions were input for reverse **transcriptase PCR amplifying primers for either** *hsp70* **(8hR) or** *gapdh* **(NIC) mRNA. Shown are primer products after 25 cycles on 1.2% agarose.**

6.3.2 Microarray Validation

All arrays were normalized by quantile normalization where the values of each array are transformed so that all arrays have the same distribution of transformed probe intensities. Normalization was confirmed by comparing probe intensity box plots before and after quantile normalization (Figure

18).

Figure 18: Box plots of probe set intensity values for each microarray expressed as log₂ intensity. A) Probe set **intensity values before normalization. B) Probe set intensity values after normalization.**

Sample groups were first assessed by hierarchical clustering of genes (Figure 19). Genes with the top ¼ of log intensity variation were used in the clustering analysis. Clustering arranges genes according their similarity of expression by a Pearson correlation. The more closely two genes are arranged in rows

of the heat map, the more similar their expression. Expression was different between bound and unbound fractions for each treatment group and region. Smaller differences are apparent between NIC and 8hR samples from the same fraction.

Figure 19: Hierarchical clustering of most differentially expressed 2630 genes. Microarrays in columns are grouped by sample sets. Distances were calculated by complete linkage. Scaled gene expression is shown in blue (downregulated) or red (upregulated) as indicated by the scale bar below the heat map.

Gene clustering in Figure 19 is unsupervised; microarrays were arranged to show the differences between polysome bound and unbound groups. Unsupervised clustering of both genes and samples still grouped all arrays into their respective sample groups (not shown).

A PCA plot of the first three principal components was generated for all samples (Figure 20).

Consistent with the hierarchical clustering, microarrays clustered by sample group indicating that no

complete arrays were outliers. There is a sharp divide between polysome-bound (lower left, B) and unbound (upper right, U) transcripts for all groups.

Figure 20: Principal component analysis of all microarrays and genes show the top three principal components as x, y and z axes. Polysome-bound transcripts (B) group to the lower left while unbound transcripts(U) group to the upper right.

6.3.5 Polysome-bound Subpopulations at 8hR

In each hippocampal region transcripts were then compared between the polysome-bound NIC and polysome-bound 8hR groups. Overall, the CA3 region had both more upregulated transcripts at 8hR and higher fold-changes over NIC when compared with CA1 (Figure 21A).

Figure 21: Expression of polysome-bound transcripts. A) Volcano plots of expression changes (Log2 fold changes) on the x-axis and significance of two-tailed t-test (y-axis) comparing polysome-bound 8hR to NIC samples in CA3 (left) and CA1 (right). Hits above the significance threshold, p<0.01 are in blue. B) Distribution of I/R-induced, polysome-bound transcripts between CA1 and CA3 at p<0.01, >2-fold change. Values in Venn diagrams are for exclusive CA3 hits (left), exclusive CA1 hits (right) and overlapping hits **(middle).**

1005 transcripts in CA3 region and 247 transcripts in the CA1 region cleared thresholds. Overall, both regions had more upregulated than downregulated transcripts with 75% (185) of differentially expressed CA1 transcripts upregulated and 59% (592) of CA3 transcripts upregulated. Only 95 of the I/Rupregulated, polysome-bound transcripts (R/N-bound) were identical between CA3 and CA1 groups (17% of the CA3 group or 52% of the CA1 group) (Figure 21B).

6.3.6 Unbound Subpopulations at 8hR

Transcripts were then compared between unbound NIC and unbound 8hR groups. As with bound transcripts, the CA3 region had more upregulated transcripts at 8hR, but fold-changes were comparable between CA1 and CA3 (Figure 22A).

Figure 22: Expression of unbound transcripts. A) Volcano plots of expression changes (Log² fold changes) on the x-axis and significance of two-tailed t-test (y-axis) comparing unbound 8hR to NIC samples in CA3 (left) and CA1 (right). Hits above the significance threshold, p<0.01 are in blue. B) Distribution of I/R-induced, unbound transcripts between CA1 and CA3 at p<0.01, >2-fold change. Values in Venn diagrams are for exclusive CA3 hits (left), exclusive CA1 hits (right) and overlapping hits (middle).

1,429 transcripts in CA3 region and 926 transcripts in the CA1 region cleared thresholds. Less differentially regulated transcripts were upregulated relative to the bound groups. 51% (185) of differentially expressed CA1 transcripts upregulated and 58% (830) of CA3 transcripts upregulated. 272 of the I/R-upregulated, unbound transcripts (R/N-unbound) were identical between CA3 and CA1 groups

(32% of the CA3 group or 57% of the CA1 group) (Figure 22B). The percent of CA3 R/N-unbound transcripts shared by CA1 R/N-unbound (32%) is more than double the percent of CA3 R/N-bound transcripts shared by CA1 R/N-bound (17%).

6.3.7 GO for Biological Processes in R/N-bound Groups

Overall, both R/N-bound CA1 and CA3 were enriched in GO groups related to signaling, development, and stress response.

Figure 23: Biological process GO for R/N-bound groups. GO categories were considered upregulated if likelihood if the enrichment of transcriptsin the GO category was p<0.01 by chance.

6.3.8 ARE Enrichment in R/N-bound and R/N-unbound Groups

By the relatively stringent standards of ARED, 1.92% of the rat transcriptome contains an ARE sequence. Both R/N-bound CA1 and CA3 were enriched in AREs. In R/N-bound CA1, 16 transcripts contained AREs (3 predicted) and in R/N-bound CA3, 39 transcripts contained AREs (9 predicted). These values correlate to a 5.3- fold enrichment in R/N-bound CA1 AREs and at 4.3- fold enrichment in R/Nbound CA3 AREs. 10 ARE-containing mRNAs were in both CA1 and CA3.

Figure 24: Upregulated R/N-bound (A) and R/N-unbound (B) transcripts were searched in the ARED database to determine number of upregulated transcripts in each list. Values in Venn diagrams are for exclusive CA3 hits (left), exclusive CA1 hits (right) and overlapping hits (middle).

R/N-unbound groups were also enriched in AREs. R/N-unbound CA3 had 44 ARE-containing transcripts (9 predicted, 5-fold increase) and R/N-unbound CA1 had 19 ARE-containing transcripts (4 predicted, 5 fold increase). Both R/N-bound CA1 and CA3 were enriched in AREs. In R/N-bound CA1, 26 transcripts contained AREs (4 predicted) and in R/N-bound CA3, 49 transcripts contained AREs (11 predicted).

6.3.9 Transcription Factor Binding Site Enrichment in R/N-bound

Transcripts

Transcription factor binding site enrichment for the R/N-bound transcripts found in both CA3 and CA1 (overlap of Figure 24A) were tested in MAtInspector²⁰⁸. The ten most-enriched transcription factors are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Top ten enriched transcription factorsin MAtInspector.

<i>Franscription Factor</i>	Number of Transcripts Found	Score (p <

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6.3.10 IRES Enrichment in R/N-bound Transcripts

IRESite was screened for the R/N-bound transcripts found in both CA3 and CA1 (overlap of Figure 24A). There was specific evidence from rat for one IRES-containing transcript in the R/N-bound CA1 population, ODC1 encoding the ornithine decarboxylase 1 protein.

Chapter 7 - Discussion

7.1 Summary of Results and Their Implications

In this dissertation, I investigated causal and functional aspects of brain I/R-induced mRNA granule, with emphasis on the role of HuR, whose presence in mRNA granules correlates with translation of *hsp70* mRNA. Specifically, I investigated formation of mRNA granules in brain reperfusion (Chapter 3), the levels of HuR and *hsp70* mRNA in subcellular fractions of control and reperfused samples (Chapter 4), and the distribution of HuR on polysome profiles isolated from control and reperfused samples (Chapter 5), and performed the first microarray studies of (1) the differential transcription between reperfused CA1 and CA3, and (2) translational state analysis of reperfused CA1 and CA3. The main findings are summarized:

Chapter 3

- 1. Cycloheximide prevented the formation of mRNA granules when given before, but not after global brain ischemia.
- 2. Puromycin induced mRNA granules in neurons of uninjured animals.

Chapter 4

- 1. *hsp70* mRNA immunoprecipitated with HuR in cortical homogenates after 8 hours reperfusion.
- 2. HuR levels in subcellular fractions did not change at 8hR compared to NIC in CA1 and CA3.
- 3. Increase in *hsp70* mRNA was not different between CA1 and CA3 at 8hR in unfractionated homogenate or cytoplasmic fractions.

Chapter 5

1. HuR distribution on polysome profiles did not change between NIC and 8hR groups.

Chapter 6

- 1. Differential gene expression was detected between CA1 and CA3 at 8hR as compared to the respective NIC groups.
- 2. A different and larger population of mRNAs was isolated on polysomes from 8hR CA3 compared to 8hR CA1; there was only fractional overlap in the polysome-bound transcripts between the two regions.
- 3. Both CA1 and CA3 R/N-bound groups were enriched for similar biological processes by broad categories of gene ontology and express both proliferative and pro-death transcripts.
- 4. ARE-containing transcripts were enriched in all 8hR compared to NIC groups.
- 5. Heat shock factor (HSF) binding sites were enriched in the polysome-bound, I/R upregulated transcripts common to CA1 and CA3.
- 6. There was no evidence of a concentration of mRNA regulation by IRES in the polysome-bound transcripts that increased at 8hR in CA1 and CA3.

Each of these main findings will be discussed in turn. Interspersed through these discussions will be statements of the limitations of each study and suggestions for future directions. The Discussion will conclude with comments about the significance of these findings for the field of brain I/R studies.

7.2 Dependence of mRNA Granules on Polysome State

Pretreatment with CHX blocked the formation of mRNA granules in CA3 neurons after transient global ischemia. The same CHX treatment after ischemia had no effect. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that polysome-associated mRNA is required to form mRNA granules. Other dynamic mRNPs such as SGs and PBs also increase in response to cell stress¹²⁴. In the 2VO/HT model, SGs were already increased at 10 minutes reperfusion⁷⁹. SGs are known to route mRNAs between other mRNPs, directing mRNAs to translation, storage, or degradation. The rapid increase in SGs in reperfused brain

together with my finding that polysome mRNA is necessary for mRNA granule formation gives rise to the following model:

polysome dissociation \rightarrow increase SGs to route mRNAs \rightarrow increase mRNA granules

The present investigation of mRNA granules is limited to the 1hR time point. Therefore, we do not know how suppressing mRNA granule formation may affect cell survival. It is tempting to argue that these findings may explain the neuroprotective effect of CHX, but previous reports in CHX in brain I/R argue against this hypothesis. Some researchers found no effect of CHX of comparable dose and administration in global UR^{209} . Also, some researchers have reported neuroprotection from CHX given after ischemia¹⁵⁹, directly contradicting a mechanism of preventing mRNA granule formation. Despite conflicting reports in the brain I/R field, it is well established that CHX does prevent cell death in cultured cells under stress²¹⁰, and this is usually attributed to the drug's ability to exert something like an integrated stress response, suppressing protein synthesis during stress¹⁵⁹. Reperfused neurons already exert a strong integrated stress response during early reperfusion⁸⁷, so it is doubtful that additional protein synthesis inhibition would have much of an effect. Mattson and Furukawa have noted that less than 3% of CHX studies on cellular stress actually measure protein synthesis, and the dose of CHX in many positive studies is known to be too low to block more than a small fraction of protein synthesis 211 . They present the interesting alternative hypothesis that CHX may selectively increase the steady state level or translation of some mRNAs. This has already been shown to be true for several $IEGs^{211}$, but the mechanisms are not clear. Given the evidence against CHX neuroprotection through protein synthesis inhibition, the drug's ability to influence behavior of mRNA granules is even more important. More investigation of how CHX could regulate steady state levels of mRNA and translation in the transient global ischemia model are warranted.

Future studies should investigate the effect of a single CHX bolus over a reperfusion time course, to determine whether mRNA granules will eventually form. If CHX can prevent mRNA granules

throughout reperfusion, then outcome studies measuring cell death would indicate the role of the mRNA granule in damage or recovery from I/R. Also, detailed studies of early reperfusion in non-CHX-treated animals should reveal when mRNA granules form relative to SGs.

The novel use of texture analysis allowed me to quantify the changes in cytoplasmic mRNA seen under the microscope. Previously, cellular changes in brain I/R have often been reported descriptively. While still useful, descriptive changes can only be compared nominally; either findings are present, or they are absent. Descriptive findings are typically reported as ―representative‖ images. These images may only be a small fraction of the actual cells visible under the microscope, and they cannot express diverse changes in a population. Texture analysis allows quantification of even complex changes among images.

7.3 HuR Does Not Facilitate *hsp70* **mRNA Nuclear Export**

While it is accepted that HuR can regulate ARE-containing mRNAs in stressed cells, the mechanisms by which HuR exerts posttranscriptional regulation are not well-studied¹³⁸. HuR's best characterized regulatory mechanism is blocking mRNA degradation at the $PB²¹²$. I have not excluded this possibility in reperfused neurons, but there is strong evidence that this mechanism, even if active, is not important in the differential regulation of stress response transcripts between CA1 and CA3. First, reperfused neurons are known to be transcriptionally active and expressing IEG transcripts in response to I/R, even after just minutes of reperfusion¹⁰⁸. Second, radioactive nucleic acid probes¹⁴⁹ and qPCR⁶⁵ have established that *hsp70* mRNA is more abundant in CA1 than CA3 throughout early reperfusion.

The implausibility of differential regulation by blocking mRNA degradation led me to consider alternative mechanisms. In all systems tested, nuclear export of HuR is necessary for the protein to exert posttranscriptional control¹⁴⁶. Additionally, there is more limited evidence that HuR nuclear export itself can regulate gene expression by exporting associated mRNAs¹⁴⁰. However, I found that the levels of both nuclear and cytoplasmic HuR were unchanged at 8hR after 10 minutes of 2VO/HT in both CA1 and CA3.

Because unfractionated homogenate was also measured for each region and time point, we may also assert that new HuR is not synthesized at 8hR in response to I/R injury. Together with the main finding that HuR is not exported from the nucleus, this implies that HuR which enters the mRNA granules is present in in the cytoplasm prior to ischemia. Because all known regulatory mechanisms of HuR require nuclear export, HuR may be regulating reperfused neurons by an unknown mechanism.

Increases in *hsp70* mRNA after brain I/R are the same between CA1 and CA3 in cytoplasm and unfractionated homogenate. This is direct evidence that regulation of nuclear export, by HuR or any other means, does not affect the differential translation of *hsp70* after I/R.

I found that HuR binds specifically to *hsp70* mRNA in reperfused neurons at 8hR. HuR did not recognize *gapdh* mRNA, suggesting that its interaction with *hsp70* is not based in the poly(A) tail. Conversely, PABP recognized both *hsp70* and *gapdh* mRNAs at 8hR. This was expected, as PABP associates with all polyadenylated mRNAs as they are being translated. My discovery that HuR specifically binds *hsp70* mRNA in reperfused neurons at 8hR both reinforces previous microscopy work from the DeGracia laboratory and provides justification for future studies of regulation by mRNPs.

An important limitation of this study and of all RIP designs is the possibility of false positives from nonspecific binding or *in vitro* interactions. Despite measures to prevent nonspecific binding, preblocking protein A beads and pre-clearing samples, some nonspecific interaction of RNA with protein A sepharose is unavoidable. While PCR is sensitive enough to detect trace amounts of transcripts precipitated by nonspecific interactions, the difference between specifically interacting and nonspecifically bound transcripts should be obvious. Indeed, when limiting PCR to 25 cycles, we found that only *hsp70* mRNA was detectable from HuR immunoprecipitation.

In vitro interactions are more difficult to control. While the majority of cellular mass in cortex tissue comes from neurons, glia and other cell types are also present in the homogenate¹⁷⁹. It is possible that HuR from other cells in the cortex binds neuronal *hsp70* mRNA once the cells are lysed in homogenate. Mili and Steitz showed an *in vitro* HuR-mRNA interaction in HEK293 cells²¹³. They transfected some cells with *c-fos* and transfected different cells with FLAG-tagged HuR. RIP on a mixture

of both cell populations showed FLAG-tagged HuR did pull down c-fos. Presently, the only way to control for *in vitro* interactions in RIP is to add a cross-linker to samples prior to homogenization, but this method introduces the possibility of forming nonspecific interactions within the cell, depending on the strength of the cross-linking¹⁷⁸.

7.4 HuR Distribution on Polysomes

Hu proteins can increase translation of target mRNAs by associating with polysomes through eIF4A⁷. After ruling out the possibility that HuR prevents degradation of *hsp70* mRNA and showing that HuR does not export *hsp70* mRNA out of the nucleus, we decided to investigate the model proposed by Fukao, *et al.* that Hu protein binding to eIF4A could increase translation in the closed loop model. HuR binds 3'UTR ARE and poly(A) sequences. Association of HuR with eIF4A would bring the 3' end of the mRNA adjacent to cap-binding complex of which eIF4A is a subunit.

The distribution of HuR across the polysome profile did not change in response to I/R injury. However, lack of differential association in response to I/R does not necessarily imply that HuR is not regulating translation. Distribution of HuR across the gradient is unlike either polysome-associated proteins or non-polysome-associated PABP. While broadly distributed across densities like PABP, HuR is most concentrated in high-density fractions like ribosomal proteins (Figure15A). With this distribution, HuR is likely constantly associated with the polysomes to some extent. This distribution also suggests that HuR is part of mRNPs of intermediate density between polysomes and free proteins and nucleic acids.

Observations of $S\text{Gs}^{214}$ and PBs²¹⁵ indicate that mRNP interactions are complex, and HuR is not likely to be an exception given its diverse role in posttranscriptional regulation. No drugs exist which can specifically suppress HuR in the whole animal. Elucidating HuR's global role in posttranscriptional

regulation will likely require a knockout or knockdown study after which the expression of known HuR targets and their corresponding protein products can be measured.

7.5 Microarray Studies

Comparison to Previous Expression Profiling

While translation state analysis was a novel approach to study global brain I/R, our design was limited by lack of comparisons to total RNA. We have no way to normalize fold changes between the bound and unbound groups (and therefore do not compare them directly). Because we are unable to sum bound and unbound transcripts, we cannot directly compare our quantitative results to those of previous brain I/R microarray studies of total RNA. However, this does not preclude qualitative and order-ofmagnitude comparisons with highly-expressed transcripts.

A literature and database search and review article¹⁵¹ indicated that no microarrays have been performed on brain tissue at 8hR after global ischemia. The most similar study, Büttner, *et al.*, is from a rat transient global ischemia model at $6hR^{186}$. Still, the Büttner study uses cortex from the entire left hemisphere of post-ischemic brain while our study was of only polysome-bound samples from hippocampus. Differentially regulated transcripts with fold change $\geq 75^{\text{th}}$ percentile over all arrays were used to compare upregulated transcripts at 8hR to reported 6hR values. The top ten most differentially expressed transcripts are compared to 6hR transcripts in Table 3.

Table 3: Most differentially expressed transcripts, 8hR polysome-bound (left) and 6hR whole cell RNA (right). Transcripts common to both lists are underlined.

	8hR polysome-bound		Büttner,09 Cortex at 6hR		
Fold	Symbol	Name	Fold	Symbol	Name
change			change		
54	Hspb1	heat shock protein 1	250	Hspalb	heat shock 70kD protein 1B (mapped)
50	Atf3	activating transcription	16	Hspb1	heat shock protein 1
		factor 3			
46	Hspa1b	heat shock 70kD protein 1B	13	Fos	FBJ murine osteosarcoma viral oncogene
					homolog

Four genes, Hspb1, Atf3, Hspa1b, and Hmox1 are among the top ten most upregulated in both groups, suggesting that these groups of arrays are from similar expression profiles. The proteins encoded by Hspb1, Atf3, Hspa1b, and Hmox1, are HSP27, activating transcription factor-3, HSP70, and heme oxygenase 1, respectively. HSP27, HSP70, and heme oxygenase 1 are all heat shock family member proteins, and ATF3 is a cAMP-responsive transcription factor. All four proteins are known to be expressed in early reperfusion²¹⁶⁻²¹⁹. Consistent with the idea that polysome-enriched fractions contain translating mRNA, there is direct evidence for the upregulation of each of the other proteins encoded by the other six genes in the 8hR list- sulfiredoxin 1 homolog²²⁰, transthyretin²²¹, metallothionein $1a^{222}$, $p21^{223}$, and COX-2²²⁴, and inhibin beta-A²²⁰. It is also noteworthy that $hsp70$ and Cdkn1a mRNA are both known targets of $\text{HuR}^{146,225}$.

Translation State Analysis of 8hR CA1 and CA3

The primary motivation for this study was to see if the mRNAs on the polysomes were concentrated in HuR regulatory sites in their 3'-UTR. That is, this study was the most direct way, without using pharmacological or genetic interventions, to test the role of HuR in mediating selective translation. We could have performed microarray of HuR-precipitated transcripts , but polysome profiles avoid the false positive issues of RIPs discussed above. Whereas it is clearly thermodynamically favorable for mRNAmRBP bindings to occur *in vitro* after cell disruption²¹³, it is thermodynamically highly unfavorable that polysomes will spontaneously form in a tissue homogenate that lacks exogenous energy charge. Thus, we had a high degree of confidence of avoiding false positive results and regarding the mRNAs on the isolated polysomes are exactly those that existed *in vivo* before tissue disruption.

We observed an increase in ARE-containing mRNAs, suggesting that HuR and other ARE-binding mRBPs contribute somehow to getting the mRNAs onto the polysomes when global translation itself is suppressed. Limitations of the ARE result are discussed below.

Our design had a number of other advantages over previous global brain I/R expression profiling. This was the first study to compare CA1 and CA3 regions after global brain I/R, and therefore, the first global I/R study of translation state analysis¹⁵¹. Previous global brain I/R microarrays necessarily assumed that steady-state levels of total RNA correlated to protein expression. Exclusive comparison of polysomeassociated transcripts removes this assumption. The error associated with total RNA microarrays is apparent in our results for unbound transcript comparisons; these changes would be averaged with bound transcript changes in a microarray from total RNA.

Important and unexpected results were 1) R/N-bound CA3 had a more diverse population of mRNAs than R/N-bound CA1 and 2) there was relatively little overlap in the R/N-bound CA1 and CA3 populations. Lack of overlap is due, in part, to differences in steady-state RNA levels between CA1 and CA3 as indicated by comparison of the R/N-unbound populations. However, R/N-unbound did share more transcripts than R/N-bound (32% of R/N-unbound CA3 transcripts versus 17% of R/N-bound transcripts).

A more diverse induction of transcription at the outset of reperfusion may allow CA3 to recovery from I/R injury, while the more limited transcriptional program of CA1 is insufficient to repair the neuron. Alternatively, considering recovery from I/R as dynamic process, CA3 may have a faster rate of recovery than CA1. The larger diversity of transcripts in CA3 may, therefore, reflect recovery of normal translation.

Our microarray results were necessarily limited by the mixed cell population of microdissections. The microdissection procedure minimizes but does not eliminate contamination of other cell types. Interneurons are present in the hippocampus at about a 1:20 ratio with principle neurons¹⁷⁹, as well as glial cells at 1:10. Pyramidal cells account for roughly 90% of cell mass in the pyramidal cell layer. Our design clearly does not distinguish these non-pyramidal cells. There is evidence that some significant

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expression differences in the microarray data were the result of non-pyramidal cells. For example, HSP27, one of the biggest fold difference hits, has been previously shown to be exclusively transcribed and translated in astrocytes²¹⁸. That the level of hsp27 mRNA is greater in CA3 than CA1 suggests a functional role for astrocytes in outcome and recovery, and is consistent with work from Rona Giffard who has extensively studied astrocytes after brain $IR^{226,227}$. Alternative approaches which would prevent mixed cell populations include laser capture microdissection and high throughput *in situ* hybridization, either of which are technically and financial unfeasible.

One obvious future direction will be to repeat this experimental design, but sampling over the entire time course of reperfusion: 1) in CA3 until it fully recovers the control pattern of polysome-bound mRNAs, and 2) in CA1 until the cells die at 72 hr reperfusion. Such a design will reveal the exact time course of all transcript changes, their fates in terms of translation, and shed a completely new light on how stress responses function in post-ischemic neurons, and open up understanding of the diversity of regulatory mechanisms that bear on how individual mRNAs gain access to ribosomes in the reperfusion period.

Database Searches for ARE and IRES-containing mRNAs

Ideally, we would like to screen the 5' and 3'UTRs of all upregulated sequences for enrichment of regulatory sites. Unfortunately, global comparison of RNA regulatory sequences has not matured to the extent of other sequence comparisons such as transcription factor binding sites. RNA regulatory sequences typically depend in secondary if not tertiary structure, making prediction from primary sequences difficult. Some regulatory sequences such as IRES are determined entirely experimentally. Therefore, our database search results pertaining to AREs and IREs concentration in the mRNA populations must be taken only as a first approximation of what is, undoubtedly, a more complex picture.

Given the limits of current mRNA regulatory site databases, empirical measures are absolutely necessary. This could be accomplished by (1) studying individual mRNAs that are high on our hit lists and show, by accepted techniques in the mRNA regulatory field, that they contain functional regulatory

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sites. (2) Comparing transcripts upregulated by translational state analysis to transcripts upregulated in RIP for an mRBP of interest such as HuR. Parallel translation state analysis and RIP was used, for example, to identify transcripts regulated synergistically when associated with both the polysome and the fragile X mental retardation mRBP 228 .

7.6 Significance of the Work in this Thesis

The discovery of mRNA granules was a significant advancement in the field of brain I/R studies. It offered a new model of translation arrest, and pointed to a causal role for the mRNA granule in postischemic outcome. However, prior to this thesis, our understanding of mRNA granules after brain I/R was entirely descriptive, based only on histological and correlative observations. This is the very first study to assess the molecular significance of mRNA granules.

In particular, the studies here have advanced the understanding of how HuR may regulate expression of HSP70. The results here suggest that 2 of the 3 known Hu protein regulatory mechanisms, prevention of transcript degradation and facilitated nuclear export, are unlikely to play a significant role in post-ischemic outcome.

The work here has not ruled out a role of HuR selective translation of stress induced mRNAs. While a change in the binding of HuR to polysomes was not observed during reperfusion, translational state analysis showed a concentration of ARE-containing mRNAs on polysomes in both CA1 and CA3 (the interpretation of which is subject to the constraints listed above).

Perhaps the most important finding, one not anticipated when the studies were conducted, was the greater diversity of transcripts in CA3. This has wide-ranging implications for understanding the response of specific neurons to I/R injury, how stress responses are executed via transcription and translational coupling, and how regulation of stress responses relates to outcome. Much new work is expected to spawn from this observation.

These findings significantly advance the understanding of HuR function, mRNA granules, and the execution of stress responses in post-ischemic neurons beyond the present general understanding in the field.

7.7 Summary and Conclusion

Previous expression profiling studies of the reperfused brain have been almost exclusively focused on hypothesis discovery rather than testing concrete hypotheses. The work described here represents the application of expression profiling technology to answer well-focused questions pertaining to mRNA regulation. To do so, we applied methods commonly used in basic science studies of ribosome and mRNA regulation, where assessing entire populations of mRNAs simultaneously is important for understanding the biology of the system. It is hoped that the present work stands as an example for others in the field as a way to apply –omics technology to address specific, and biologically meaningful questions.

In conclusion, it is hoped that the studies described here will contribute to the development of successful therapies to effectively treat stroke and cardiac arrest brain damage.

APPENDIX A: TRANSCRIPTS DIFFERENTIALLY EXPRESSED IN POLYSOME-BOUND CA3 8HR AND NIC **GROUPS**

APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTS DIFFERENTIALLY EXPRESSED IN POLYSOME-BOUND CA1 8HR AND NIC **GROUPS**

APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPTS DIFFERENTIALLY EXPRESSED IN UNBOUND CA3 8HR AND NIC GROUPS

APPENDIX D: TRANCRIPTS DIFFERENTIALLY EXPRESSED IN UNBOUND CA1 8HR AND NIC GROUPS

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0.00783 0.0639 3.85 10894919 NA NA

0.007838 0.0639 0.25 10796436 NA NA

0.007868 0.0641 2.71 10935798 NA NA

0.007902 0.0641 0.36 10878617 NA NA

0.007906 0.0641 0.31 10752586 NA NA

0.007911 0.0641 0.29 10863615 exocyst complex component 6B 500233

0.009526 0.0687 0.41 10861563 NA NA

0.00954 0.0687 0.29 10785867 NA NA

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and Genetics12. Risk Factor: Smoking/Tobacco Use13. Risk Factor: High Blood Cholesterol and Other Lipids14. Risk Factor: Physical Inactivity15. Risk Factor: Overweight and Obesity16. Risk Factor: Diabetes Mellitus17. End-Stage Renal Disease and Chronic Kidney Disease18. Metabolic Syndrome19. Nutrition20. Quality of Care21. Medical Procedures22. Economic Cost of Cardiovascular Disease23. At-a-Glance Summary Tables24. Glossary A Report From the American Heart Association. *Circulation* **123**, e18–e209 (2011).

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ABSTRACT

INVESTIGATION OF POSTTRANSLATIONAL REGULATION AFTER GLOBAL BRAIN ISCHEMIA AND REPERFUSION INJURY

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Major: Physiology

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

The final cause of death in most patients revived after cardiac arrest is ischemia and reperfusion (I/R) injury in the brain. Survival after brain I/R injury depends on the expression of new stress response proteins such as heat shock protein 70 (HSP70). Little is known about why recovering neurons are able to express new stress response proteins while neurons that will die can transcribe RNA but do not translated protein in early reperfusion. Previous studies suggested that the mRNA-binding protein HuR may regulate hsp70 mRNA in reperfused neurons through a novel cytoplasmic structure, the mRNA granule. To determine the roles of HuR and the mRNA granule in reperfused neurons and to characterize global translation regulation, we 1) prevented mRNA granule formation in reperfused neurons or induced mRNA granules in uninjured neurons by pharmacological manipulation polysomes, 2. studied potential HuR posttranscriptional regulation mechanisms of facilitated nuclear export and polysome association, and 3. performed translation state analysis of reperfused neurons from hippocampal subregions CA1 and CA3.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Education

M.D.-Ph.D. Wayne State University School of Medicine, 2005-2014

Physiology

B.S., Northern Michigan University, 2000-2004, Biochemistry

Experience

- Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral Fellow, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, February, 2009 – Present.
- Research Assistant, *Karmanos Cancer Institute, Laboratory of Dr. Jun Kan-Mitchell*. 2005.
- Research Assistant, *Northern Michigan University, Laboratory of Dr. Suzanne Williams*. 2000 $-2004.$

Awards

- Ruth L. Kirschstein Research Service Award for MD- PhD Fellows (F30), 2009 Present
- Wayne State University School of Medicine Board of Governors Scholarship, 2004 Present.
- First Place Oral Presentation Wayne State School of Medicine Graduate Student Research Day, 2010.
- Charles C. Spooner Competitive Research Grant Northern Michigan University, 2004.

Publications

- 1. DeGracia DJ, Jamison JT, **Szymanski JJ**, Lewis MK. Translation arrest and ribonomics in post- ischemic brain: layers and layers of players. J. Neurochem 2008 Sep;106(6):2288–2301.
- 2. Jamison JT, **Szymanski JJ**, Degracia DJ. Organelles do not colocalize with mRNA granules in post-ischemic neurons. Neuroscience 2011 Dec;199:394–400.
- 3. **Szymanski JJ**, Jamison JT, DeGracia DJ. Texture analysis of poly-adenylated mRNA staining following global brain ischemia and reperfusion. Computer Methods and Programs in Biomedicine 2012 Jan;105(1):81–94.
- 4. **Szymanski JJ**, Rossi N. Renal epithelial choices in ischemia: The unfolded protein response in acute kidney injury. Trends in Comparative Biochem & Physiol. 2012 In Press.

Abstracts

- 1. Jamison JT, Lewis MK, **Szymanski JJ**, Kimball SR, DeGracia DJ. Redistribution Of mRNA After Global Brain I/R. Translational Control, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, New York, 2008; 108.
- 2. Jamison JT. Lewis MK, **Szymanski JJ**, DeGracia, DJ. Redistribution of mRNA after global brain ischemia and reperfusion. J Cereb Blood Flow Metab (2009) 29, S407–S414.
- 3. Jamison JT, **Szymanski JJ**, DeGracia DJ. Histological Evidence that mRNA Granules are Cytoplasmic Structures. J Cereb Blood Flow Metab (2011).
- 4. **Szymanski JJ**, Jamison JT, DeGracia DJ. Texture analysis of poly-adenylated mRNA following global ischemia and reperfusion. J Cereb Blood Flow Metab (2011)