Olfactory Signaling Pathway

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Introduction

Reactome is open-source, open access, manually curated and peer-reviewed pathway database. Pathway annotations are authored by expert biologists, in collaboration with Reactome editorial staff and cross-referenced to many bioinformatics databases. A system of evidence tracking ensures that all assertions are backed up by the primary literature. Reactome is used by clinicians, geneticists, genomics researchers, and molecular biologists to interpret the results of high-throughput experimental studies, by bioinformaticians seeking to develop novel algorithms for mining knowledge from genomic studies, and by systems biologists building predictive models of normal and disease variant pathways.

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Literature references


Reactome database release: 79

This document contains 2 pathways and 9 reactions (see Table of Contents)
Mammalian Olfactory Receptor (OR, also called odorant receptor) genes were discovered in rats by Linda Buck and Richard Axel, who predicted that odorants would be detected by a large family of G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) that are selectively expressed in the olfactory epithelium. This prediction was based on previous biochemical evidence that cAMP levels increased in olfactory neurons upon odor stimulation. These predictions proved to be accurate, and Buck and Axel received a Nobel Prize for this and subsequent work (reviewed in Keller & Vosshall 2008).

Subsequent work in mice and other vertebrates has confirmed that OR genes are comprised of a very large family of G Protein-Coupled Receptors (GPCRs) that are selectively-expressed in olfactory epithelium. Although some OR are also expressed selectively in one or a few other tissues, their expression in olfactory-epithelium generally indicates a functional role in mediating olfaction, where they couple binding by odorant ligands with intracellular olfactory signaling. (Note: the other subclasses of GPCR signaling pathways are described under "GPCR Signaling".)

The ligands for ORs are diverse, ranging from chemical compounds to peptides. Intracellular signaling by OR proteins in mice and other mammalian systems is known to be mediated via direct interactions of OR proteins with an olfactory-specific heterotrimeric G Protein, that contains an olfactory-specific G alpha protein: G alpha S OLPF (also named "GNAL").

In model genetic systems such as mice, many candidate OR genes have been shown experimentally to function in olfactory signaling (reviewed in (Keller & Vosshall 2008). For the human OR genes, experimental analysis has been more limited, although some specific OR genes, such as OR7D4 and OR11H7P have been confirmed to mediate olfactory response and signaling in humans for specific chemical odorants (Keller et al. 2007, Abbafy 2007). Mice and other rodents are believed to have about 1000 functional
OR genes, as well as many additional pseudogenes. Based on sequence similarities, there are 960 human OR genes, but approximately half of these are pseudogenes (Keller 2008). In mice, essentially all olfactory signaling requires G-alpha-S (OLF); mouse G-OLF knockouts have been shown to lack olfactory responses (Belluscio 1998). bona fide human OR genes identified by sequence similarity (not pseudogenes with function-blocking mutations) that are expressed in olfactory epithelium are expected to interact with G alpha S OLF containing G Protein trimers.

Of the 960 human OR genes and pseudogenes, there is experimental evidence that indicates over 430 are expressed in human olfactory epithelium, including 80 expressed OR pseudogenes (Zhang 2007).

When expressed in model cell systems mammalian olfactory receptors (ORs) are typically retained in the ER and degraded by the proteasome (McClintock et al. 1997). A study using Caenorhabditis elegans showed that the transport of ORs to the cilia of olfactory neurons required the expression and association of ORs with a transmembrane protein, ODR4 (Dwyer et al. 1998). Co-transfection of rat ORs with ODR4 enhanced the transport and expression of ORs at the cell-surface (Gimelbrant et al. 2001). These studies suggested that olfactory neurons might have a selective molecular machinery that promotes expression of ORs at the cells surface. Two human protein families have been identified as potential accessory proteins involved in the trafficking of ORs to the plasma membrane (Saito et al. 2004). Receptor transporting proteins 1 and 2 (RTP1, RTP2) both strongly induced expression of several ORs at the cell-surface. To a lesser extent, the receptor expression enhancing protein 1 (REEP1) also promoted cell-surface expression. These proteins are specifically expressed in olfactory neurons with no expression in testis, where a subset of ORs are expressed (Parmentier et al. 1992, Spehr et al. 2003). Other members of the RTP and REEP families have a widespread distribution. RTP3 and RTP4 have been shown to promote cell-surface expression of the bitter taste receptors, TAS2Rs (Behrens et al. 2006). REEP1 and REEP5 (also known as DP1) are involved in shaping the ER by linking microtubule fibers to the ER (Park et al. 2010, Voeltz et al. 2006). A recent study looking at the role of REEP in the trafficking of Alpha2A- and Alpha2C-adrenergic receptors showed that REEP1-2 and 6 enhance the cell-surface expression of Alpha2A, but not Alpha2C, by increasing the capacity of ER cargo, thereby allowing more receptors to reach the cell-surface (Bjork et al. 2013). Unlike RTP1, REEP1-2 and 6 are only present in the ER, do not traffic to the plasma membrane and specifically interact with the minimal/non-glycosylated forms of Alpha2C via an interaction with its C-terminus (Saito et al. 2004, Bjork et al. 2013). REEPs may function as general modulators of the ER, rather than specifically interacting with GPCRs. Loss of association of REEP2 with membranes leads to hereditary spastic paraplegia (Esteves et al. 2014).

Olfactory receptors (ORs, also called odorant receptors) are present on the plasma membrane of cilia of olfactory sensory neurons located in the olfactory epithelium of the nasal sinus. Each mature neuron expresses only one OR gene (reviewed in Nagai et al. 2016) and each OR binds one particular volatile chemical or set of volatile chemicals, known as odorants. The binding of an odorant to an OR (Mainland et al. 2015) causes a conformational change in the receptor that activates the G alpha subunit (Golf, GNAL) of an associated heterotrimeric G protein complex to exchange GDP for GTP (inferred from mouse homologs in Jones et al. 1990). GNAL:GTP and the Gbeta:Ggamma subcomplex (GNB1:GNG13) dissociate from the olfactory receptor and GNAL:GTP then binds and activates adenylate cyclase 3 (ADCY3) (inferred from rat homologs in Bakalyar and Reed 1990, reviewed in Boccaccio et al. 2021). Cyclic AMP produced by ADCY3 binds and opens the olfactory cyclic nucleotide-gated channel (CNG channel) composed of CNGA2, CNGA4, and CNGB isoform 1b (inferred from rat homologs in Liman and Buck 1994). The CNG channel translocates sodium and calcium cations from the extracellular region into the cytosol. The resulting cytosolic calcium ions bind ANO2 and increase the transport of chloride ions by ANO2 from the cytosol to the extracellular region (inferred from mouse homologs in Pifferi et al. 2009, Stephan et al. 2009). The translocations of ions across the plasma membrane causes depolarization of the neuron yielding a receptor potential and action potential that is transmitted to the olfactory bulb of the brain.
Literature references


Editions

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Expression and translocation of olfactory receptors

**Location:** Olfactory Signaling Pathway

**Stable identifier:** R-HSA-9752946

Olfactory receptors (ORs) are 7-pass transmembrane G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) located on dendritic cilia of olfactory sensory neurons (OSNs) of the olfactory epithelium (reviewed in Persuy et al. 2015). ORs are also located on cells of some other tissues (reviewed in Oh 2015). ORs bind ligands, called odorants, and activate downstream signaling through a heterotrimeric G-protein leading to opening of olfactory cyclic nucleotide-gated channels (CNG channels) and depolarization of the OSN. The human genome contains about 857 OR genes of which about 394 appear to be capable of encoding a functional OR. The remaining putative OR genes appear to be pseudogenes functionally inactivated by mutations.

Each OR binds a particular odorant or family of odorants. In order to provide odor discrimination, each OSN expresses only one OR gene and connects to specific olfactory bulb glomeruli according to the specific OR expressed (reviewed in Monahan and Lomvardas 2015, McClintock et al. 2020, Sakano et al. 2020). The choice of which OR gene to express is made by an epigenetic mechanism (reviewed in Bashkirova and Lomvardas 2019). Initially during OSN development, OR genes are heterochromatic. A few OR genes become weakly expressed and one then becomes dominant while all other OR genes remain silenced by heterochromatin. During activation of an OR gene, LHX2, LDB1, and EBF1 bind several (~60) intergenic enhancers located between OR genes on 18 chromosomes. The LHX2:LDB1:EBF1:enhancer complexes assemble into an interchromosomal super-enhancer that associates with the expressed OR gene and drives transcription.

Accumulation of OR protein in the endoplasmic reticulum membrane activates the unfolded protein response (UPR) that activates translation of ADCY3, which downregulates the histone methyltransferase KDM1A (LSD1) thereby preventing activation of any other OR genes (Lyons et al. 2013, Dalton et al. 2013).

Most OR proteins are inefficiently translocated from the endoplasmic reticulum membrane to the
plasma membrane when they are expressed in heterologous cells. OSNs contain specific proteins that act as chaperones to increase subcellular translocation of at least some ORs (reviewed in Mainland and Matsunami 2012). The short isoform of RTP1 (RTP1S) and RTP2 bind the OR in the endoplasmic reticulum, are translocated with the OR to the plasma membrane, and remain at the plasma membrane. REEP1 more weakly increases translocation of ORs by an uncharacterized mechanism.

**Literature references**


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odorant binds Odorant Receptor:GNAL:GDP:GNB1:GNGT1

Location: Olfactory Signaling Pathway

Stable identifier: R-HSA-9712210