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Version 1

Immunohistochemistry protocol for visualization of the corticospinal, corticobulbar, corticorubral, and rubrospinal tracts. V.1

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We are still developing and optimizing this protocol

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Abstract

This protocol describes the immunohistochemical (IHC) detection of corticospinal, corticobulbar, corticorubral, and rubrospinal tract markers in neural tissue. The procedure employs a three-marker approach to characterize motor system organization: PKC (protein kinase C) staining at 1:1500 dilution for identifying specific neuronal populations, VGLUT2 (vesicular glutamate transporter 2) at 1:200 dilution for labeling glutamatergic terminals, and OTX1 (orthodenticle homeobox 1) at 1:400 dilution for developmental marker expression.

Tissue sections are processed through a standard avidin-biotin complex (ABC) method beginning with one-hour blocking in 5% normal serum, followed by overnight primary antibody incubation at 4°C in PBS with 5% blocking serum. After PBS washes, sections are incubated with biotin-conjugated secondary antibodies for 30-45 minutes, then treated with ABC reagent for 30 minutes. Visualization is achieved using diaminobenzidine (DAB) chromogenic detection under hood conditions. This systematic approach enables precise visualization of motor pathway components in these descending motor systems, facilitating anatomical and functional studies of descending motor control circuits.



Guidelines

Protocols for Solutions:

Peroxidase block (40 mL)

- 20 mL 0.2M phosphate buffer
- 8 mL methanol
- 80 μ L Triton-X100
- 2 mL hydrogen peroxide
- Make up to 40 mL with ddH₂O

Blocking buffer

- 0.1M Phosphate buffer
- 0.3% Triton-X100
- 1% serum from the secondary antibody host species

Phosphate buffer (PBS, 1 L, pH 7.2):

- Prepare 800 mL of distilled water in a suitable container.
- Add 20.214 g of Sodium Phosphate Dibasic Heptahydrate to the solution
- Add 3.394 g of Sodium Phosphate Monobasic Monohydrate to the solution
- Adjust the solution to the final desired pH using HCl or NaOH
- Add distilled water until the volume is 1 L.

Phosphate-Buffered Saline (PBS, 1 L, pH 7.4):

- Prepare 800 mL of distilled water in a suitable container.
- Add 8 g of Sodium chloride to the solution
- Add 200 mg of Potassium Chloride to the solution
- Add 1.44 g of Sodium Phosphate Dibasic to the solution
- Add 245 mg of Potassium Phosphate Monobasic to the solution
- Adjust the solution to the desired pH.
- Add distilled water until the volume is 1 L.

Materials

Materials and reagents (PKC γ), corticospinal tract:

- Primary antibody, Anti-PKC Antibody (A-3): sc-17769
- Secondary antibody, m-IgG2a BP-HRP: sc-542731
- ImmunoCruz® ABC Kit: sc-516216
- Hydrogen peroxide: sc-203336
- 0.1 M Tris-HCl pH 7.6
- TBS or PBS
- Peroxidase block
- Blocking buffer
- 3,3'-Diaminobenzidine (DAB) kit

Materials and reagents (OTX1), corticobulbar tract:

- Primary antibody, OTX1 Antibody (3A5): sc-517000
- Secondary antibody, m-IgG2a BP-HRP: sc-542731
- ImmunoCruz® ABC Kit: sc-516216
- Hydrogen peroxide: sc-203336
- 0.1 M Tris-HCl pH 7.6
- TBS or PBS
- Peroxidase block
- Blocking buffer
- 3,3'-Diaminobenzidine (DAB) kit

Materials and reagents (VGLUT2), corticorubral and rubrospinal tract:

- Anti-VGLUT2 antibody, 8G9.2: ab79157
- Goat Anti-Mouse IgG H&L, HRP: ab205719
- ImmunoCruz® ABC Kit: sc-516216
- Hydrogen peroxide: sc-203336
- 0.1 M Tris-HCl pH 7.6
- 0.025% Triton X-100
- TBS or PBS
- Peroxidase block
- Blocking buffer
- 3,3'-Diaminobenzidine (DAB) kit

Safety warnings

- ! 3,3'-Diaminobenzidine (DAB) is a known cancer-causing agent. Please ensure proper handling methods when handling, including using a fume hood for all reactions with this compound.



Notes on dilutions

1 **Measurements and dilutions for PKC γ :**



- Dilutions: 1:1500 dilution in PBS and 5% normal blocking serum
- Primary: 0.0075 μ L of stock solution in 2.5 mL
- Secondary: 0.0625 μ L of stock solution in 2.5 mL
- Blocking serum: 0.125 mL of blocking reagent for 2.5 mL of solution

Measurements and dilutions for OTX1:

- Dilutions: 1:400 dilution in PBS with 5% normal blocking serum
- Primary: 0.015 μ L of stock solution in 2.5 mL
- Secondary: 0.0625 μ L of stock solution in 2.5 mL
- Blocking serum: 0.125 mL of blocking reagent for 2.5 mL of solution

Measurements and dilutions for VGLUT2:

- Dilutions: 1:200 dilution in PBS and 5% normal blocking serum
- Primary: 0.125 μ L of stock solution in 2.5 mL
- Secondary: 0.25 μ L of stock solution in 2.5 mL
- Blocking serum: 0.125 mL of blocking reagent for 2.5 mL of solution

Measurements and proportions (DAB):

- 0.3% H₂O₂
- 5 mL DI water
- 2 drops #1 solution from DAB kit
- 2 drops #3 solution from DAB kit
- 4 drops #2 solution from DAB kit

Methods (Day 1)

- 2 Perform antigen retrieval before commencing with immunostaining if necessary.



- 3 If using an HRP conjugate for detection, incubate the slides in 0.3% H₂O₂ in PBS for 15 min.

- 4 Wash with three changes of PBS for 5–7 minutes each.



- 5 Block in 10% normal serum with 1% BSA in PBS for 2 h at room temperature.



- 6 Drain slides for a few seconds (do not rinse) and wipe around the sections with tissue paper.
- 7 Apply the primary antibody diluted in PBS with 1% BSA.
- 8 Incubate overnight at 4°C with agitation, if possible.
- 9 Wash with three changes of PBS for 5–7 minutes each.
- 10 Incubate for 30–45 minutes with biotin-conjugated secondary antibody.
- 11 Wash with three changes of PBS for 5–7 minutes each.
- 12 Prepare the Avidin-Biotin Complex (ABC reagent) using the A and B reagents from the ABC Kit (sc-516216) 30 minutes prior to using. Mix 50 µl of each A and B reagent in a proportionate amount of PBS and let the mix stand at room temperature for 30 minutes.
- 13 Incubate for 30 minutes with the ABC reagent.
- 14 Wash with three changes of PBS for 5–7 minutes each.
- 15 Incubate in hydrogen peroxide (0.3%) and DAB solution under a fume hood with a filtration system.
- 16 Wash with three changes of PBS for 5–7 minutes each
- 17 Store until mounting in PBS solution at 4°C.



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