

Direct Involvement of G Protein $\alpha_{q/11}$ Subunit in Regulation of Muscarinic Receptor-Mediated sAPP α Release

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(Received July 27, 2005)

The $G_{q/11}$ protein-coupled receptors, such as muscarinic (M1 & M3) receptors, have been shown to regulate the release of a soluble amyloid precursor protein (sAPP α) produced from α -secretase processing. However, there is no direct evidence for the precise characteristics of G proteins, and the signaling mechanism for the regulation of $G_{q/11}$ protein-coupled receptor-mediated sAPP α release is not clearly understood. This study examined whether the muscarinic receptor-mediated release of sAPP α is directly regulated by $G_{\alpha_{q/11}}$ proteins. The HEK293 cells were transiently cotransfected with muscarinic M3 receptors and a dominant-negative minigene construct of the G protein α subunit. The sAPP α release in the media was measured using an antibody specific for sAPP. The sAPP α release enhancement induced by muscarinic receptor stimulation was decreased by a $G_{q/11}$ minigene construct, whereas it was not blocked by a control minigene construct (the $G\alpha$ carboxy peptide in random order, $G\alpha_qR$) or $G\alpha_q$ constructs. This indicated a direct role of the $G_{\alpha_{q/11}}$ protein in the regulation of muscarinic M3 receptor-mediated sAPP α release. We also investigated whether the transactivation of the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) by a muscarinic agonist could regulate the sAPP α release in SH-SY5Y cells. Pretreatment of a specific EGFR kinase inhibitor, tyroprostoin AG1478 (250 nM), blocked the EGF-stimulated sAPP α release, but did not block the oxoM-stimulated sAPP α release. This demonstrated that the transactivation of the EGFR by muscarinic receptor activation was not involved in the muscarinic receptor-mediated sAPP α release.

Key words: sAPP α Release, Muscarinic receptor, G protein, Epidermal growth factor receptor, SH-SY5Y cells

INTRODUCTION

G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs), which link extracellular stimuli including light, odorants, hormones, and neurotransmitters to effector molecules, represent a major mechanism for signal transduction in mammalian cells. It is currently estimated that as much as 1% of the mammalian genome codes for GPCR (Morris *et al.*, 1999). However, the exact mechanisms involved in the signal transduction events that follow activation of many GPCR are not fully understood. It has been known that the release of soluble amyloid precursor protein (sAPP α) formed by α -secretase is regulated by the activation of the phospholipase C

(PLC)-linked $G_{\alpha_{q/11}}$ -coupled receptors. These receptors include muscarinic M1 and M3 receptor subtypes (Nitsch *et al.*, 1992; Hung *et al.*, 1993; Buxbaum *et al.*, 1994; Slack *et al.*, 1995), metabotropic glutamate receptors (Lee *et al.*, 1995; Lee and Wurtman, 1997; Nitsch *et al.*, 1997; Jolly-Tornetta *et al.*, 1998), and serotonergic receptors (Nitsch *et al.*, 1996), but not by activation of adenylyl cyclase-linked GPCRs including muscarinic M2 and M4 receptors (Nitsch *et al.*, 1992). However, whether the G-protein α subunit ($G\alpha$) directly regulates the sAPP α release has not been examined.

Previous studies have implicated the carboxyl terminus of G protein α subunits in mediating receptor-G protein interaction and selectivity (Sprang, 1997; Bourne, 1997). Carboxyl termini from G protein α subunits are important sites of receptor binding. Additionally, peptides corresponding to the carboxyl terminus can be used as competitive inhibitors of receptor-G protein interactions (Hamm *et al.*,

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1988; Martin *et al.*, 1996; Resenick *et al.*, 1994). This interaction is quite specific as Gilchrist *et al.* (1999) ascertained that a difference in one amino acid can abolish the ability of the $G\alpha_{11/2}$ peptide to bind the A1 adenosine receptor-G protein interface. In the present study, we used different $G\alpha$ carboxy-terminal peptides to investigate whether the activation of the $G\alpha$ subunit protein is directly involved in the regulation of sAPP α release mediated by muscarinic receptors.

It was recognized that GPCRs, including members of the muscarinic acetylcholine receptor family, are functionally linked to the mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) cascade *via* several distinct pathways. Typically, activation of MAPK by GPCRs involves tyrosine phosphorylation of one or more proteins acting as scaffolds, forming complexes with Grb2-mSos. This promotes the activation of the Ras-MAPK cascade (Della Rocca *et al.*, 1999). One such scaffolding protein is the epidermal growth factor (EGF) receptor. EGF-independent activation of this receptor by GPCRs, a phenomenon referred to as 'transactivation' (Luttrell *et al.*, 1997; Daub *et al.*, 1996, 1997; Cunnick *et al.*, 1998; Eguchi *et al.*, 1998; Keely *et al.*, 1998; Li *et al.*, 1998), results in the formation of a complex composed of the phosphorylated EGF receptor and adapter proteins Shc and Grb2 (Daub *et al.*, 1996; Eguchi *et al.*, 1998; Keely *et al.*, 1998). The adapter proteins mediate the recruitment of mSos to the complex. This recapitulates the sequence of events set into motion by the direct activation of growth factors by their ligands. It was shown that the muscarinic agonist transactivated the EGF receptor in T₈₄ cells by a mechanism involving elevation in intracellular calcium, activation of the soluble tyrosine kinase Pyk-2, recruitment of p60^{src} kinase, and subsequent phosphorylation and activation of the EGF receptor (Keely *et al.*, 2000). In this study, we examined whether the transactivation of EGF receptors by the muscarinic agonist could regulate the sAPP α release in SH-SY5Y cells.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Mammalian cell culture

SH-SY5Y human neuroblastoma cells (ATCC CRL-2266) and HEK-293 cells (ATCC CRL-1573) were cultured in DMEM containing 10% fetal bovine serum, 100 units/mL penicillin, and 100 μ g/mL streptomycin. All cells were maintained at 37°C in humidified conditions under 5% CO₂. For the experiments, SH-SY5Y cells were plated in 6 well plates and HEK293 cells were plated in 12 well dishes (4×10^5 cells/well) coated with poly-L-lysine (0.01 mg/mL).

Measurement of sAPP α release

The measurement of sAPP α release was performed as

described by Nitsch *et al.* (1992) with modifications. Cells were cultured to confluency in multiwell dishes (6-well format). Prior to the addition of the drug, cells were washed with serum-free media and pre-treated with various agents in serum-free media for 30 min following a treatment of oxoM in serum-free media for 1 h. The conditioned medium from each well was centrifuged to remove debris, then desalted, dried, and reconstituted in a SDS loading buffer. Total cell protein per dish was measured with the bicinchoninic acid assay (Pierce). Reconstituted culture media protein extracts with similar amounts of total protein were separated by SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis on 10% gels, and transferred to polyvinylidene fluoride membranes. These were immunoblotted using the anti-preA4 APP monoclonal antibody (clone 22C11, 1:125, Roche Molecular Biochemicals) and bands were visualized using a chemiluminescence method (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech). Data collection and processing were performed with the luminescent image analyzer LAS-1000 and IMAGE GAUSE software (Fuji Film, Japan).

Construction of $G\alpha$ carboxyl-terminal minigenes

The $G\alpha$ minigenes ($G\alpha_{11}$ and $G\alpha_s$) were provided by Dr. Heidi Hamm (Northwestern University, U.S.A.). Other minigenes were constructed as described by Gilchrist *et al.* (1999). The cDNA encoding for the last 11 amino acids of human $G\alpha_i$ and $G\alpha_q$ subunits or the $G\alpha_q$ carboxy terminus in random order ($G\alpha_qR$) were synthesized with newly engineered 5'- and 3'-ends (Fig. 2A). The 5'-end contained a *Hind*III site followed by the ribosome binding consensus sequence (5'-GCCGCCACC-3'), a methionine (ATG) for translation initiation, and a glycine (GGA) to protect the ribosome binding site during translation. Also protected by the glycine was the nascent peptide against proteolytic degradation, while the A *Bam*HI site was synthesized at the 3'-end immediately following the translation stop codon (TGA). The complimentary DNA were annealed in a buffer containing 50 mM Tris-HCl, 10 mM MgCl₂, 100 mM NaCl, 1 mM dithiothreitol (New England Biolabs) at 85°C for 15 min, and then slowly cooled to room temperature. The annealed cDNA were ligated at room temperature for 90 min into pcDNA 3.1(+) plasmid vector (Invitrogen), previously cut with *Hind*III and *Bam*HI. To verify that an insert was present, the plasmid DNA was digested with *Nco*I at 37°C for 1 h and run on a 1.5% agarose gel. The vector alone produced 3 bands (3.3, 1.4, and 0.7 kilobases), whereas the vector with insert resulted in 4 bands (3.3, 1.0, 0.7, and 0.4 kilobases).

Reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR)

To determine minigene RNA expression, transiently transfected HEK 293 cells were twice washed with

phosphate-buffered saline and total RNA was processed according to the manufacturer's protocol (Clontech). cDNA was made from total RNA using a RT-PCR (Promega) according to the manufacturer's protocol. To verify the presence of an insert in cells transfected with G α minigene constructs, their cDNA was used as a template for PCR with forward and reverse primers corresponding to the G α insert and vector, respectively (forward: 5'-GCTTGCCGCCACCATGGGA; reverse: 5'-CCGCCGCGCTTAATGCGCC).

Transient transfection of HEK293 cells

The day before transfection, the HEK 293 cells were trypsinized, counted, and plated in 12-well plates at 4×10^5 cells per well, so that they were 90-95% confluent at the moment of transfection. For each well of cells to be transfected, DNAs were diluted into 100 μ L of serum- and antibiotics-free DMEM. Additionally, 4 μ L of LIPOFECTAMINE 2000 (LF2000TM) reagent (GIBCO) were diluted into 100 μ L of serum- and antibiotics-free DMEM. The diluted DNA along with the diluted LF 2000 were combined within 5 min and incubated at room temperature for 20 min to allow DNA-LF2000 Reagent complexes to form. Then they were directly added to each well and mixed gently by rocking the plate back and forth. The cells were incubated at 37°C in a CO₂ incubator for 48 h.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Muscarinic receptor-mediated increase in sAPP α release in SH-SY5Y cells

It was previously shown that the activations of muscarinic receptors (M1 and M3 subtypes) increased sAPP α release (Nitsch *et al.*, 1992; Slack *et al.*, 1993). Similarly, we observed that the activation of muscarinic receptors in SH-SY5Y cells by exposure to a muscarinic agonist, oxoM (1 mM), led to a significant increase in sAPP α release into the culture medium in a time-dependent manner. This oxoM-induced sAPP α release was blocked by pre-treatment with a muscarinic antagonist, atropine (Fig. 1).

Construction of G α cDNA minigenes and determination of minigene RNA expression

Carboxyl termini from G protein α subunits are known to be important sites of direct interaction with GPCRs. The peptides corresponding to the carboxyl terminus can be used as competitive inhibitors of receptor-G protein interactions (Hamm *et al.*, 1988; Martin *et al.*, 1996; Resenick *et al.*, 1994). The inhibitory effects of the minigene constructs were confirmed by Gilchrist *et al.* (1999), by showing that G α_i minigene constructs, encoding the last 11 amino acids of the carboxyl terminus of G $\alpha_{i1/2}$, resulted

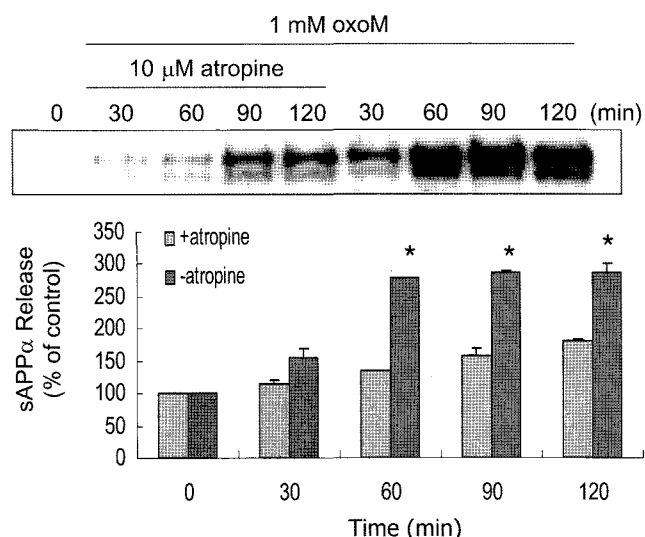


Fig. 1. Muscarinic receptor-mediated increase of sAPP α release in SH-SY5Y cells. Cells were pretreated with vehicle and atropine (10 μ M), and then stimulated with 1 mM oxoM. The secreted sAPP α was measured as described in "Materials and Methods". Data are the means \pm S.E.M. of three experiments. Significance values indicate differences compared with oxoM-treated cells in the absence of atropine. * $p < 0.05$.

in an 85% inhibition of the M2 muscarinic receptor-activated inwardly rectifying the K⁺ channel. In the present study, we used the different G α carboxy-terminal peptides to investigate whether the activation of G α subunit protein is directly involved in the regulation of sAPP α release mediated by muscarinic receptors.

Table I shows the alignment of the last 11 amino acid residues from human G α subunits. The cDNA encoding the last 11 amino acids of human G α subunits (G α_i , G α_q) or the G α_q carboxy terminus in random order (G α_q R) were

Table I. Alignment of the last 11 amino acid residues from human G α subunits

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gi1/2 | I | K | N | N | L | K | D | C | G | L | F |
| Gi3 | I | K | N | N | L | K | E | C | G | L | Y |
| Gq/11 | L | Q | L | N | L | K | E | Y | N | L | V |
| Gs | Q | R | M | H | L | R | Q | Y | E | L | L |
| Gt | I | K | E | N | L | K | D | C | G | L | F |
| Go1 | I | A | N | N | L | R | G | C | G | L | Y |
| Go2 | I | A | K | N | L | R | G | C | G | L | Y |
| Golf | Q | R | M | H | L | K | Q | Y | E | L | L |
| G12 | L | Q | E | N | L | K | D | I | M | L | Q |
| G13 | L | H | D | N | L | K | Q | L | M | L | Q |
| G14 | L | Q | L | N | L | R | E | F | N | L | V |
| G15/16 | L | A | R | Y | L | D | E | I | N | L | L |
| Gz | I | Q | N | N | L | K | Y | I | G | L | C |

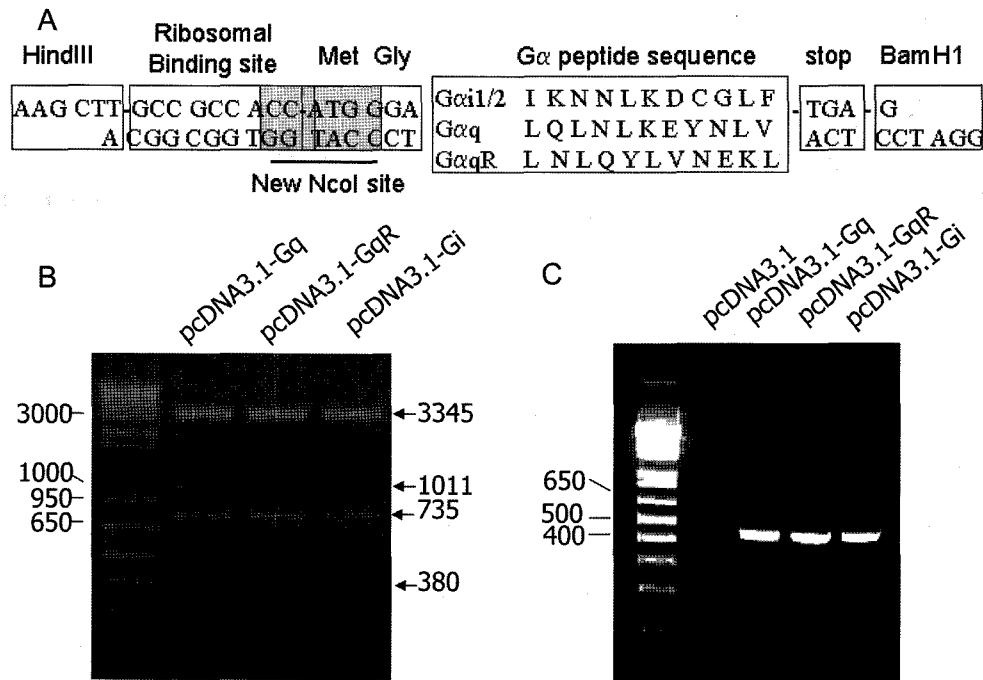


Fig. 2. Construction of $G\alpha$ cDNA minigenes and RNA expressions of G protein minigenes. (A) All $G\alpha$ carboxyl-terminal peptide minigenes contain a HindIII restriction enzyme site at the 5'-end followed by a ribosomal binding site sequence, a methionine for translation initiation, a glycine for stabilization of the peptide, the peptide sequence, a stop codon, and a BamHI restriction enzyme site at the 3'-end. (B) Plasmid DNA was purified, digested with *Nco* I, and separated on a 1.5% agarose gel to determine whether insert was present. Lane 1 is a 1-kilobase pair DNA ladder; lane 2 is pcDNA3.1- $G\alpha_q$; lane 3 is pcDNA3.1- $G\alpha_{qR}$; and lane 4 is pcDNA3.1- $G\alpha_i$. (C) HEK293 cells were transiently transfected with pcDNA3.1 zeo(+), pcDNA- $G\alpha_q$, pcDNA- $G\alpha_{qR}$, or pcDNA- $G\alpha_i$, and mRNA was isolated and then RT-PCR analysis was performed. PCR products were separated on 1.5% agarose gels.

constructed as shown in Fig. 2A. To determine whether the insert was present, DNA was cut with *Nco* I and separated on a 1.5% agarose gel. As shown in Fig. 2B, when the insert is present, there is a new *Nco* I site resulting in a shift in the band pattern, such that the digest pattern goes from three bands (3.3, 1.4, and 0.7 kilobases) to four bands (3.3, 1.0, 0.7, and 0.4 kilobases). The presence of the minigene constructs in transfected cells was confirmed by RT-PCR using the cDNA as a template with primers specific for the $G\alpha$ carboxyl-terminal peptide insert (Fig. 2C).

Regulation of muscarinic receptor-mediated sAPP α release by $G\alpha$ subunit

There have been several reports indicating the $G\alpha_{q/11}$ protein coupled-receptors including muscarinic receptors (M1, M3), metabotropic glutamate receptors, and bradykinin receptors (Buxbaum *et al.*, 1992, 1994; Hung *et al.*, 1993; Wolf *et al.*, 1995; Lee *et al.*, 1995), regulate sAPP α release. However, whether the $G\alpha$ protein directly regulates the sAPP α release has not been tested. To get direct evidence of the role of $G\alpha$ proteins in regulating muscarinic receptor-mediated sAPP α release, we cotransfected $G\alpha_{q/11}$ coupled muscarinic M3 receptors with a different dominant-

negative $G\alpha$ carboxyl-terminal peptide minigene construct into HEK 293 cells and tested the effect of the peptide on the sAPP α release enhancement induced by muscarinic receptor agonist. Numerous studies have shown that the carboxyl terminus of the $G\alpha$ subunits is critical in both mediating receptor-G protein interaction and in receptor selectivity (Gilchrist *et al.*, 1998; Blahos *et al.*, 1998; Onrust *et al.*, 1997). Gilchrist *et al.* (1999) reported that the transfection of different $G\alpha$ carboxyl-terminal peptides selectively blocked signal transduction through the corresponding G protein. They observed that the $G\alpha_i$ minigene construct completely blocked muscarinic M2 receptor-mediated K^+ channel response, whereas the control minigene construct (empty vector), and $G\alpha_{q/11}$ minigene constructs had no effects on muscarinic M2 receptor-mediated K^+ channel response. The inhibitory effects of the $G\alpha_i$ minigene constructs were specific because the over-expression of peptides corresponding to the carboxyl terminus of $G\alpha_q$ or $G\alpha_s$ had no effect on M2 receptor stimulation of the K^+ channel. By using similar strategies, we observed that oxoM-stimulated sAPP α release was reduced in the $G\alpha_{q/11}$ minigene transfected cells, but was not blocked by control the $G\alpha$ protein construct (the $G\alpha$ carboxy peptide in random order, $G\alpha_{qR}$) or dominant-

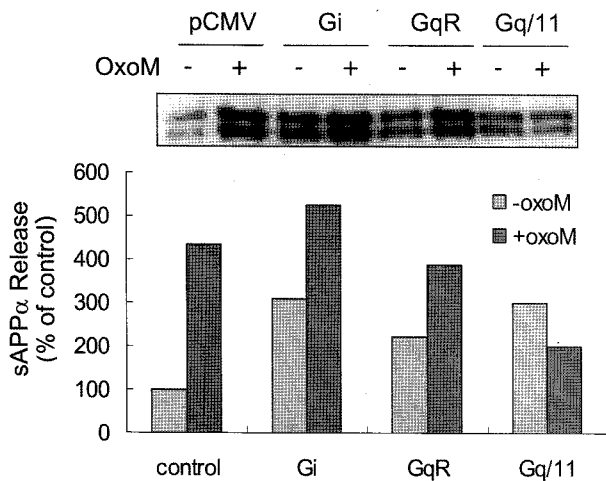


Fig. 3. Effect of dominant-negative G α carboxy-terminal peptide on sAPP α release induced by muscarinic agonist. HEK293 cells were transiently transfected with M3 plus pcDNA3.1 zeo(+), pcDNA3.1-G α_i , pcDNA3.1-G α_{qR} , pcDNA3.1-G α_q , or pcDNA3.1-G α_{11} . Cells were incubated for 1 h in serum-free medium or in medium containing 1 mM oxoM at 48 h posttransfection and the secreted sAPP α was measured as described in "Materials and Methods".

negative G α_i (Fig. 3). The transfection of G α minigene constructs induced a slight increase of the sAPP α release in the absence of oxoM for unknown reasons. This result suggests that G $\alpha_{q/11}$ subunit, especially G α_q and G α_{11} , could directly regulate muscarinic receptor-mediated sAPP α release.

Involvement of EGFR cross-talk in muscarinic receptor-mediated sAPP α release

Previous work has shown that muscarinic M1 activation led to the transactivation of the EGF receptors in M1 transfected HEK293 cells (Tasi *et al.*, 1997). Several previous studies have shown that activation of EGF receptors also enhanced the production of sAPP α in non-neuronal cell lines or in neuronal cell lines (Mills *et al.*, 1999; Slack, 2000; Petanceska *et al.*, 1999; De Strooper *et al.*, 2000). To assess the ability of EGF receptor activation to stimulate sAPP α release, the action of EGF on sAPP α release was examined in SH-SY5Y cells. As reported by other studies, EGF receptor activation led to an increase of sAPP α release in SH-SY5Y cells (Fig. 4) (Canet-Aviles *et al.*, 2002; Slack *et al.*, 1997).

Muscarinic receptors have been reported to be coupled with the activation of ERK 1/2 kinase via PKC-dependent and PKC-independent pathways. The latter involving transactivation of an EGF receptor kinase in HEK cells transfected with the M3 receptor subtype (Slack, 2000). To further examine whether EGFR transactivation was involved in the muscarinic receptor-mediated sAPP α release in SH-SY5Y cells, the cells were pretreated with a

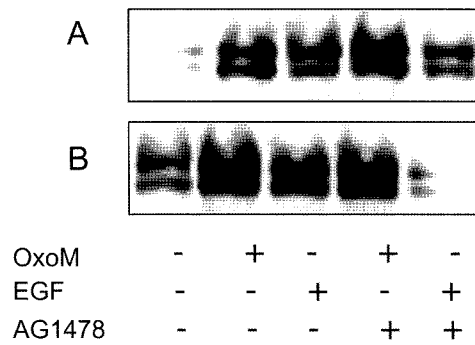


Fig. 4. Effects of AG1478 on oxoM- and EGF-stimulated sAPP α release. Cells were treated with vehicle alone or AG1478 (250 nM) for 30 min and then stimulated with oxoM (1 mM) or EGF (1 mg/mL) for 30 min (A) or 1 h (B) and the secreted sAPP α was measured as described in "Materials and Methods".

specific inhibitor of the EGFR kinase, tyrophostin AG1478, for 30 min and then stimulated with oxoM for 30 min or 1 h. Previous reports indicated that tyrophostin AG1478 acts as a specific inhibitor of EGFR kinase activity and has no significant effect on other tyrosine kinase tested (Levitzi *et al.*, 1995). Pretreatment of tyrophostin AG1478 (250 nM) blocked the EGF-stimulated sAPP α release, but did not block the oxoM-stimulated sAPP α release (Fig. 5). These results demonstrate that transactivation of EGF receptor by muscarinic agonist is not involved in muscarinic receptor-mediated sAPP α release.

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