

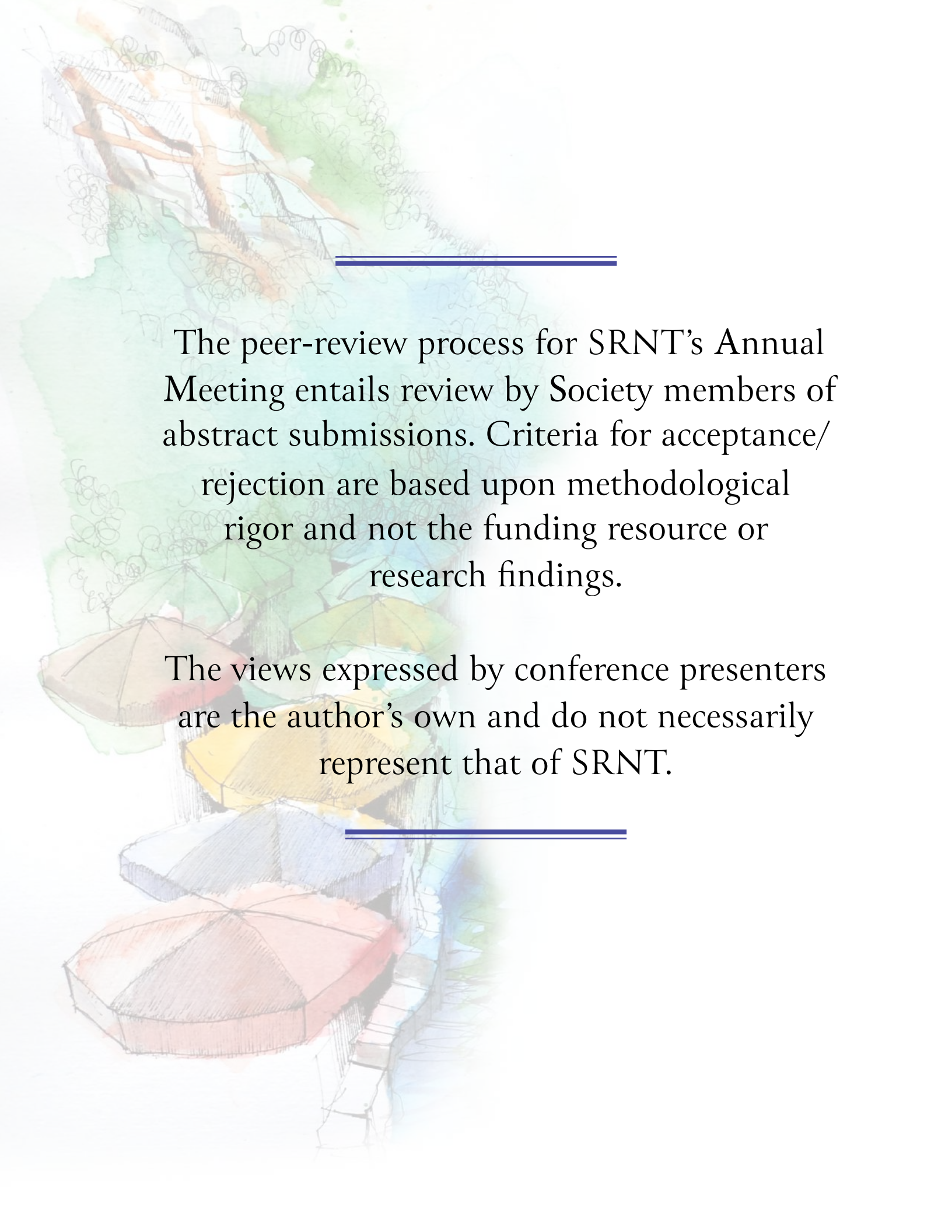
SRNT 2023

29th Annual Meeting

Abstracts

March 1 - 4, 2023

Marriott Rivercenter Hotel
San Antonio Riverwalk, Texas

A watercolor illustration in the background. At the top left, there is a sketch of a tree with brown branches and green foliage. Below the tree, there are several colorful umbrellas in shades of brown, green, yellow, and blue, arranged in a row. The entire illustration is rendered in a soft, painterly style with visible brushstrokes and a light, airy feel.

The peer-review process for SRNT's Annual Meeting entails review by Society members of abstract submissions. Criteria for acceptance/rejection are based upon methodological rigor and not the funding resource or research findings.

The views expressed by conference presenters are the author's own and do not necessarily represent that of SRNT.

CONTENTS

2023 SYMPOSIA	1
PAPER SESSIONS	
Podium Presentation 1	23
Paper Session 1: Under the Influence: Consequences of Tobacco and E-Cigarette Marketing	
Paper Session 2: Tobacco Retailer Location Restrictions: Evaluating Impact	
Paper Session 3: Chronic Disease: Tobacco Treatment Engagement, Development, and Outcome	
Paper Session 4: Training the Trainers: Perspectives and Utilization of Champions to Provide Tobacco Cessation Interventions	
Rapids Session 1: Rapid Response Podium Session 1	
Podium Presentation 2	33
Paper Session 5: Trends in Smoking and E-Cigarette Use	
Paper Session 6: Change Due to Policy: Estimating Real and Potential Effects	
Paper Session 7: Emerging Issues in Nicotine Pouch Research	
Paper Session 8: Why is It So Hard to Stay Abstinent?: Factors Promoting or Counteracting Cessation Efforts	
Paper Session 9: Developmental Effects of Tobacco and Nicotine Exposure	
Podium Presentation 3	44
Paper Session 10: E-Cigarettes for Smoking Cessation	
Paper Session 11: Equity-Focused Approaches to Investigating Commercial Tobacco Product Appeal, Toxicant Exposure, and Sensory Experiences	
Paper Session 12: Exploring the Complex Relationships between COVID-19, Nicotine Use, and Health	
Paper Session 13: Varenicline: New Applications and Effects	
Paper Session 14: Tobacco Control Policies in LMIC	
Paper Session 15: Breathing It In: Impact of Nicotine and Constituents on Lung and Blood Health	
Rapids Session 2: Rapid Response Podium Session 2	
Podium Presentation 4	58
Paper Session 16: Illicit Trade and Smuggling	
Paper Session 17: The Driving Factors: Neurobiological Mechanisms Underlying Drug Use and Novel Therapeutic Approaches	
Paper Session 18: Novel Treatments for Smoking Cessation	
Paper Session 19: Mechanisms for Community Engagement in Commercial Tobacco Use and Dependence Research	
Paper Session 20: From Margin to Center: Sexual and Gender Minority Health in Nicotine and Commercial Tobacco Research	
Podium Presentation 5	69
Paper Session 21: Patterns, Prevalence, and Impact of Flavored E-Cigarettes and Tobacco Products	
Paper Session 22: Tobacco Cessation and Challenges in Psychiatric Populations	
Paper Session 23: Mechanisms of Health Warning Delivery and Alternative Use by Industry	
Paper Session 24: Tax Policy and Pricing: Interaction with Policy and Effect on Cigarette, Heated Tobacco, and E-Cigarette Use	
Paper Session 25: Profiling Toxic Product Emissions and Impact on Health Outcomes	
Paper Session 26: Cigars: From Exposure to Policy	
POSTER SESSION 1: Poster Session 1	83
POSTER SESSION 2: Poster Session 2	115
POSTER SESSION 3: Poster Session 3	147
POSTER SESSION 4: Poster Session 4	178
AUTHOR INDEX	210



PAPER SESSION 17: THE DRIVING FACTORS: NEUROBIOLOGICAL MECHANISMS UNDERLYING DRUG USE AND NOVEL THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES

PPS17-1

AVERSION AND PREFERENCE IN MICE TOWARDS NICOTINE ENANTIOMERS IN SYNTHETIC NICOTINE

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Significance: Manufacturers recently introduced synthetic nicotine in e-cigarettes and smokeless products. While tobacco-derived nicotine consists almost exclusively of S-nicotine, the most widely added form of synthetic nicotine is racemic nicotine, consisting of 50% S-nicotine and 50% R-nicotine. Products containing racemic nicotine may have different sensory properties from equivalent products containing tobacco-derived nicotine, modifying initiation and addiction behaviors. Methods: The two-bottle choice assay was used to characterize aversion and preference in male and female C57BL/6 mice to a range of S- and R-nicotine concentrations and racemic nicotine. Mice were presented with choice solutions overnight on 4 consecutive days, given water ad libitum during the day. Nicotine enantiomers were validated using gas chromatography / mass spectrometry (GCMS) with a chiral column. Results: On all four days of testing, mice consumed as much from the bottle containing R-nicotine (100 µg/ml, 200 µg/ml) as from the bottle containing plain water. In contrast, S-nicotine was strongly avoided at the same concentrations, with plain water preferred. Racemic synthetic nicotine was preferred over S-nicotine when offered at the same concentrations (100 µg/ml). When racemic synthetic nicotine was offered at twice (200 µg/ml) the concentration of S-nicotine (100 µg/ml), mice consumed equal amounts from both bottles. Conclusions: In mice, the aversive effects of racemic nicotine are determined by its S-nicotine content. R-nicotine did not diminish or strengthen the aversion to S-nicotine. Tobacco products containing racemic nicotine are likely less aversive compared to products containing S-nicotine at identical amounts. Such products might be preferred by beginning users. Since synthetic nicotine products are often labeled inconsistently (for S-nicotine only, or for S+ R-nicotine), consumers may be misled and confused about nicotine content. This study can inform regulatory decisions on tobacco products containing synthetic nicotine, their palatability and product use initiation and addiction.

FUNDING: Federal

PPS17-2

SELF-ADMINISTRATION OF NICOTINE OR COTININE ALTERED PROTEIN LEVELS OF MOLECULAR MARKERS OF THE DOPAMINE SYSTEM AND GLIAL CELLS WITHIN KEY REGIONS OF THE MESOCORTICOLIMBIC PATHWAY

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Background: Nicotine is the primary addictive tobacco component. Cotinine is the major metabolite of nicotine that also shows reinforcing effects in rats. Studies have shown that nicotine alters extracellular dopamine (DA) levels and DA receptor expression within the mesocorticolimbic pathway. Evidence indicates that cotinine can also alter mesolimbic DA levels. However, effects of cotinine on DA receptor levels remain unknown. In addition, glial cells, including microglial cells and astrocytes, are important components of and play important roles in the central nervous system. However, the involvement of glial cells in nicotine and cotinine's effect has been largely unknown. The current study aimed to investigate effects of nicotine and cotinine self-administration on molecular markers of the DA system and glial cells within the mesocorticolimbic pathway. Methods: Adult male Wistar rats were trained to self-administer saline, nicotine, or cotinine under a mixed fixed-ratio (FR) and progressive-ratio (PR) schedule for a total of 5 weeks. Following the last PR session, brains tissue was harvested from key mesocorticolimbic regions including ventral tegmental area (VTA), nucleus accumbens shell (NACsh), nucleus accumbens core (NACcr), prelimbic (PL) and infralimbic (IL) cortices. Total protein was isolated and was subject to Western blotting for determination of astrocytes and microglial cells makers, i.e., glial fibrillary acidic protein (GFAP) and

ionized calcium-binding adaptor marker 1 (IBA1), respectively, as well as DA markers including tyrosine hydroxylase (TH), D₁ and D₂ receptors (D1R & D2R). Results: Rats readily developed self-administration of nicotine and cotinine. Nicotine and cotinine induced similar infusions during FR schedules, but nicotine induced greater breakpoint than cotinine during the PR schedule. Cotinine self-administration increased GFAP expression in the VTA, and nicotine self-administration increased GFAP expression in the NACcr. Cotinine self-administration also reduced D2R expression in the NACcr. On the other hand, neither nicotine nor cotinine altered IBA1, TH, or D1R expression. Conclusions: These results indicate that nicotine or cotinine self-administration is associated with altered GFAP and/or D2R protein expression within selective mesocorticolimbic regions, suggesting that these molecular alterations may be involved in reinforcing effects of nicotine and cotinine.

FUNDING: Federal

PPS17-3

TARGETING THE D3R-NACHR HETEROMERIC COMPLEX FOR NICOTINE CESSATION

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Tobacco dependence remains one of the largest preventable causes of disease and death worldwide. Unfortunately, currently available therapeutics are only modestly effective in assisting individuals to achieve long-term abstinence. Thus, there is a critical need to identify novel targets for therapeutic intervention. It has been recently shown that nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChRs) and dopamine D3 receptors (D3Rs) form heteromeric complexes on dopaminergic neurons, and a novel compound, HyNDA-1, can enhance the interaction between the nAChR-D3R complex. Thus, in these studies, we sought to examine whether HyNDA-1 modulation of the nAChR-D3R complex could serve as a novel target for therapeutic intervention to promote nicotine cessation. In the first study, mice were examined for the effects of HyNDA-1 on nicotine intake with the intravenous nicotine self-administration protocol. Subjects were tested across a range of HyNDA-1 doses (0-30 mg/kg) in a within-subject Latin-square manner. Based on these findings, we next examined whether HyNDA-1 would alter general operant responding for food reward in a separate cohort. Finally, a third cohort of mice were examined in the conditioned place preference protocol (CPP) to determine if HyNDA-1 infers rewarding or aversive properties at the effective dose for nicotine self-administration. We found that pre-administration of HyNDA-1 attenuated nicotine self-administration in a dose-dependent manner. Interestingly, the effective dose of HyNDA-1 was ineffective in altering food self-administration and did not induce a chamber preference in the CPP test. These data reveal that modulation of the D3R-nAChR complex by HyNDA-1 decreases nicotine self-administration. Importantly, these effects were specific for nicotine, as HyNDA-1 treatment did not alter food self-administration. Moreover, the HyNDA-1 compound does not appear to infer any rewarding or aversive properties by itself, as no differences were found with CPP. Taken together, these findings reveal that modulation of the D3R-nAChR complex has the potential to be an effective novel target for smoking cessation. Supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIH DA039658 to CDF) and Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program (TRDRP T30FT0967 to VL).

FUNDING: Federal; State; Nonprofit grant funding entity

PPS17-4

NICOTINE SELF-ADMINISTRATION IS INVERSELY RELATED TO MEDIAL HABENULAR NEURONAL EXCITABILITY

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Background: Over 23 million people in the United States are dependent on nicotine. However, of the over 70% that wish to quit, only around 7% are successful. One key reason for poor cessation from nicotine is the strong withdrawal and craving that occur after nicotine abstinence. These symptoms have been increasingly attributed to activity in the habenular-interpeduncular nucleus circuit. Our goal is to understand how activity in the medial habenula is altered by changes in nicotine self-administration. Methods: Using C57/B6 adult male and female mice, we employed an e-Vape® self-administration (EVSA) assay using either 6 mg/mL nicotine, 6 mg/mL nicotine + 15 mg/mL menthol, or 60 mg/mL nicotine (with or without menthol). Mice were assigned to fixed ratio 1 (FR1), fixed ratio 3 (FR3), and progressive ratio (PR) responding to measure reinforcement-related and motivation-related behaviors. Following EVSA, brains were extracted for electrophysiology. Neurons in the medial portion of the MHB were identified via a6 nAChR tagged fluorescence and excitability was measured via ex vivo whole-cell patch-clamp electrophysiology. Neuronal excitability was measured through rheobase