

# Mossy Fiber Long-Term Potentiation Deficits in BACE1 Knock-Outs Can Be Rescued by Activation of $\alpha 7$ Nicotinic Acetylcholine Receptors

Hui Wang,<sup>1,2</sup> Lihua Song,<sup>1</sup> Angela Lee,<sup>1</sup> Fiona Laird,<sup>3,4</sup> Philip C. Wong,<sup>3,4</sup> and Hey-Kyoung Lee<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Biology, College of Chemical and Life Sciences, and <sup>2</sup>Neuroscience and Cognitive Science Program, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742, and Departments of <sup>3</sup>Pathology and <sup>4</sup>Neuroscience, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland 21205

$\beta$ -Site amyloid precursor protein-cleaving enzyme 1 (BACE1)—the neuronal  $\beta$ -secretase responsible for producing  $\beta$ -amyloid ( $A\beta$ ) peptides—emerged as one of the key therapeutic targets of Alzheimer's disease (AD). Although complete ablation of the BACE1 gene prevents  $A\beta$  formation, we reported that BACE1 knock-out mice display severe presynaptic deficits at mossy fiber (MF)-to-CA3 synapses in the hippocampus, a major locus of BACE1 expression. We also found that the deficits are likely due to abnormal presynaptic  $Ca^{2+}$  regulation. Cholinergic system has been implicated in AD, in some cases involving  $Ca^{2+}$ -permeable  $\alpha 7$ -nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChRs). Here we report that brief application of nicotine, via  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs, can restore MF long-term potentiation in BACE1 knock-outs. Our data suggest that activating  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs can recover the presynaptic deficits in BACE1 knock-outs.

## Introduction

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most prevalent form of senile dementia with limited treatment options (Vassar et al., 2009). A current hypothesis of AD states that overexpression of amyloid- $\beta$  ( $A\beta$ ) peptide initiates a cascade of events leading to its pathology (Walsh and Selkoe, 2007).  $\beta$ -Site amyloid precursor protein-cleaving enzyme 1 (BACE1), the neuronal  $\beta$ -secretase, is the first enzyme involved in the sequential cleavage of amyloid precursor proteins (APPs) to produce  $A\beta$  (Vassar et al., 2009). High levels of BACE1 are correlated with an increase in  $A\beta$  in sporadic AD (Hébert et al., 2008; O'Connor et al., 2008). Knocking out BACE1 abolishes  $A\beta$  peptide production (Cai et al., 2001), prevents amyloid plaque deposition, and rescues memory deficits in APP transgenic lines (Luo et al., 2003; Ohno et al., 2004). These observations encourage the development of BACE1 inhibition strategies for AD treatment. However, studies revealed that BACE1 knock-outs (KOs) display behavior deficits (Harrison et al., 2003; Laird et al., 2005; Savonenko et al., 2008) and specific synaptic dysfunctions in the CA1 of hippocampus (Laird et al., 2005). Moreover, at the MF-to-CA3 synapses, where high levels of BACE1 are expressed (Laird et al., 2005), BACE1 KOs display severe presynaptic dysfunctions (Wang et al., 2008). The deficits include a reduction in presynaptic release and an absence of mossy fiber long-term potentiation (mFLTP), which are due to

abnormal presynaptic  $Ca^{2+}$  signaling (Wang et al., 2008). These studies caution against the use of BACE1 inhibitors as a practical treatment for AD.

Cholinergic system modulates neurotransmitter release from glutamatergic and GABAergic terminals via the action of nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChRs) (Gray et al., 1996; Radcliffe et al., 1999; Giocomo and Hasselmo, 2005; Jiang and Role, 2008; Bancila et al., 2009). Among them,  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR is a  $Ca^{2+}$ -permeable homopentameric ion channel highly expressed in the hippocampus and cerebral cortex (Séguéla et al., 1993). Several studies have linked  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR with neurodegenerative disorders, including AD (Perry et al., 2000). We present data that activating  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs, by nicotine (Nic) or a specific agonist, PNU282987, can restore presynaptic function and mFLTP in BACE1 KOs via recruiting calcium-induced calcium release (CICR).

## Materials and Methods

**Animals.** All mice used (BACE1  $+/+$  and  $-/-$ ) were derived from heterozygous breeders ( $+/-$ ) as described previously (Laird et al., 2005). The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees of both University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University approved all procedures involving animals.

**Electrophysiological recordings.** Hippocampal slices (400  $\mu$ m thick) were prepared from adult (3–6 months old) male BACE1 KOs and wild types (WTs) as previously described (Wang et al., 2008). Briefly, hippocampi were sliced in ice-cold dissection buffer (in mM: 212.7 sucrose, 2.6 KCl, 1.23  $NaH_2PO_4$ , 26  $NaHCO_3$ , 10 dextrose, 3  $MgCl_2$ , and 1  $CaCl_2$ ; 5%  $CO_2/95\% O_2$ ). Recordings were done in a submersion-type chamber perfused with artificial CSF (ACSF, in mM: 124 NaCl, 5 KCl, 1.25  $NaH_2PO_4$ , 26  $NaHCO_3$ , 10 dextrose, 1.5  $MgCl_2$ , and 2.5  $CaCl_2$ ; 5%  $CO_2/95\% O_2$ , 29.5–30.5°C, 2 ml/min). Synaptic responses were evoked through glass bipolar stimulating electrodes placed in the dentate granule cell layer to activate MFs with pulse duration of 0.2 ms (at 0.067 Hz), and recorded extracellularly in the stratum lucidum of CA3. Paired-pulse

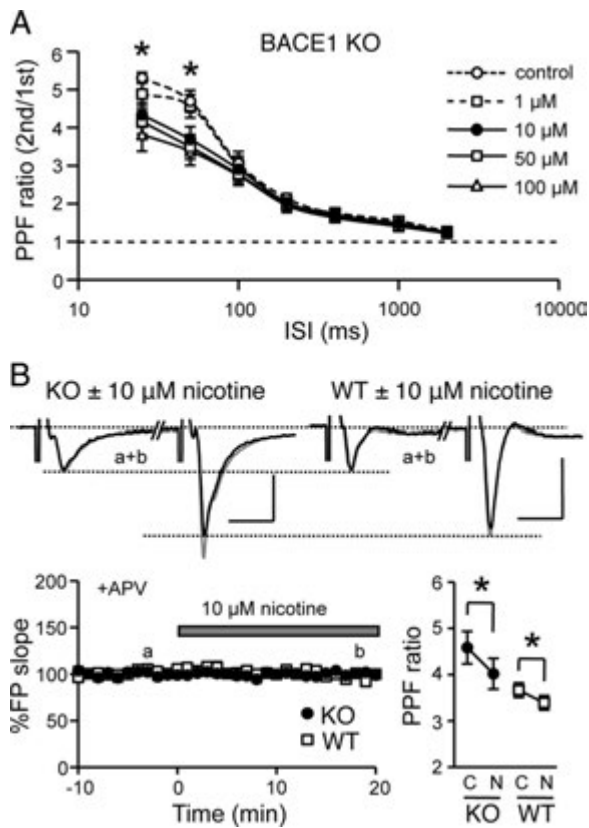
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Correspondence should be addressed to Hey-Kyoung Lee, Department of Biology, University of Maryland, 1210 Bio-Psych Building, College Park, MD 20742. E-mail: hlee21@umd.edu.

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**Figure 1.** Nicotine recovers deficits in PPF at MF synapses in BACE1 KO. *A*, Nicotine reduced PPF ratio in a dose-dependent manner, which was significant at 25 and 50 ms ISIs. \*ANOVA,  $p < 0.05$ ; Fisher's PLSD,  $p < 0.05$  between control and 10, 50, 100  $\mu\text{M}$  nicotine groups. *B*, Nicotine (10  $\mu\text{M}$ ) significantly decreased PPF ratio in both genotypes, but did not influence basal synaptic transmission. Top, Representative FP traces of paired-pulse stimulation (50 ms ISI) before (thin traces) and after (thick traces) nicotine. Calibration: KO, 1 mV; WT, 0.5 mV, 10 ms. Bottom left, No change in basal synaptic strength with nicotine (KO, black circles; WT, open squares). Bottom right, Comparison of PPF ratio (50 ms ISI) before (C) and after (N) nicotine application. \*Paired  $t$  test,  $p < 0.001$ .

facilitation (PPF) was measured at 25, 50, 100, 200, 400, 1000, and 2000 ms interstimulus intervals (ISIs). To induce mflTP, three trains of 100 Hz (1 s) stimuli were given at 20 s intervals. We used  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR agonists (–)-nicotine (Sigma-Aldrich) and PNU282987 (Tocris Bioscience), and an antagonist  $\alpha$ -bungarotoxin (Tocris Bioscience). To block intracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  release, ruthenium red (Tocris Bioscience) or ryanodine (Tocris Bioscience) was applied. All experiments were done in the presence of 100  $\mu\text{M}$  D,L-2-amino-5-phosphonovaleric acid (D,L-APV) (Sigma-Aldrich) to isolate the presynaptic NMDAR-independent mflTP (Nicoll and Schmitz, 2005). At the end of each experiment, 1  $\mu\text{M}$  (2S,2'R,3'R)-2-(2',3'-dicarboxycyclopropyl)glycine (DCG-IV) (Tocris Bioscience) was added, and responses blocked by  $\geq 80\%$  were taken to be MF inputs. Field potential slopes were measured, and data are expressed as mean  $\pm$  SEM.

## Results

### Nicotine restores presynaptic function at MF synapses in BACE1 KO

We first examined the effect of nicotine on the presynaptic function of MFs in BACE1 KO by measuring PPF. The results showed that nicotine decreased PPF ratio in a dose-dependent manner at 25 and 50 ms ISIs in KO ( $n = 7$  slices/3 mice; ANOVA:  $p < 0.05$ ) (Fig. 1*A*), and 10  $\mu\text{M}$  was the lowest concentration that significantly decreased PPF ratio in both genotypes (KO: control =  $4.81 \pm 0.16$ , nicotine =  $4.05 \pm 0.22$ ,  $n = 15$  slices/10 mice, paired  $t$  test:  $p < 0.001$ ; WT: control =  $3.77 \pm$

$0.43$ , nicotine =  $3.50 \pm 0.40$ ,  $n = 10$  slices/9 mice, paired  $t$  test:  $p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 1*B*). We previously showed that BACE1 KO display a significant increase in PPF ratio at MF synapses indicating a reduction in presynaptic release (Wang et al., 2008). Nicotine at 10  $\mu\text{M}$  concentration decreased the PPF ratio of KO to a similar level of WT ( $t$  test:  $p = 0.57$ ) without affecting synaptic transmission in either genotype (KO:  $100 \pm 1\%$  of baseline at 20 min after nicotine,  $n = 15$  slices/10 mice; paired  $t$  test:  $p = 0.97$ ; WT:  $99 \pm 1\%$ ,  $n = 10$  slices/9 mice; paired  $t$  test:  $p = 0.54$ ) (Fig. 1*B*). These results suggest that 10  $\mu\text{M}$  nicotine reverses PPF deficits in BACE1 KO without affecting synaptic strength. Therefore, 10  $\mu\text{M}$  nicotine was used in subsequent experiments.

### Nicotine rescues mflTP in BACE1 KO without affecting mflTP in WT

Consistent with our previous results, KO lacked mflTP under control conditions, but 10  $\mu\text{M}$  nicotine applied during the whole duration of the experiment restored mflTP [control:  $95 \pm 4\%$  at 1 h after high-frequency stimulation (HFS),  $n = 6$  slices/4 mice; nicotine:  $133 \pm 7\%$ ,  $n = 8$  slices/7 mice;  $t$  test:  $p < 0.001$ ] (Fig. 2*A*). Nicotine-induced rescue of mflTP was accompanied by a significant decrease in PPF ratio (50 ms ISI; baseline:  $4.36 \pm 0.26$ , 1 h after HFS:  $3.01 \pm 0.27$ , paired  $t$  test:  $p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 2*A*, inset), suggesting presynaptic expression. Interestingly, 10  $\mu\text{M}$  nicotine did not alter the magnitude of mflTP in WT (control:  $148 \pm 3\%$  at 1 h after HFS,  $n = 5$  slices/3 mice; nicotine:  $144 \pm 6\%$ ,  $n = 7$  slices/6 mice;  $t$  test:  $p = 0.52$ ) (Fig. 2*B*).

To investigate whether nicotine affects the induction mechanisms of mflTP, we transiently applied nicotine for 10 min before and during the HFS. KO displayed significant mflTP, which was similar in magnitude with that evoked in WT (KO =  $147 \pm 2\%$  at 1 h after HFS,  $n = 8$  slices/5 mice, paired  $t$  test:  $p < 0.001$ ; WT:  $157 \pm 8\%$ ,  $n = 8$  slices/5 mice, paired  $t$  test:  $p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 2*C,D*). Furthermore, mflTP was accompanied by a significant decrease in PPF ratio (50 ms ISI) in both genotypes (WT: baseline =  $3.66 \pm 0.16$ , 1 h after HFS =  $2.55 \pm 0.21$ , paired  $t$  test:  $p < 0.001$ ; KO: baseline =  $4.59 \pm 0.35$ , 1 h after HFS =  $2.95 \pm 0.33$ , paired  $t$  test:  $p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 2*C,D*, insets), consistent with an increase in presynaptic release. These results demonstrate that nicotine specifically rescues the induction mechanisms of mflTP in BACE1 KO.

### Nicotine-induced rescue of mflTP in BACE1 KO is mediated by $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs

We showed that presynaptic dysfunction of MF synapses in BACE1 KO is at the level of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  regulation (Wang et al., 2008). To determine whether nicotine acts via the  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ -permeable  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs, we used a specific agonist, PNU282987 (Bodnar et al., 2005). A brief application of PNU282987 (500 nM, 10 min) before and during HFS recovered mflTP in KO (1 h after HFS:  $167 \pm 19\%$ ,  $n = 8$  slices/5 mice; paired  $t$  test:  $p < 0.05$ ) (Fig. 3*A*) for up to 2 h (supplemental Fig. 1, available at [www.jneurosci.org](http://www.jneurosci.org) as supplemental material). Furthermore, PPF ratio decreased significantly after PNU282987 application and further by LTP induction (baseline:  $6.29 \pm 0.77$ , +PNU282987:  $5.81 \pm 0.76$ , 1 h after HFS:  $4.80 \pm 0.69$ ) (Fig. 3*A*, inset). PNU282987 alone did not produce changes in synaptic strength (1 h after PNU282987:  $105 \pm 4\%$ ,  $n = 4$  slices/2 mice; paired  $t$  test:  $p = 0.30$ ) (Fig. 3*A*).

To further test whether nicotine-induced rescue of mflTP was mediated by  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs, we applied 100 nM  $\alpha$ -bungarotoxin ( $\alpha\text{BTX}$ ), a selective antagonist.  $\alpha\text{BTX}$  abolished the effect of nicotine on mflTP (1 h after HFS:  $105 \pm 4\%$ ,  $n = 10$  slices/6

mice; paired *t* test:  $p > 0.05$ ) (Fig. 3B) and PPF ratio ( $\alpha$ BTX:  $5.22 \pm 0.65$ ,  $\alpha$ BTX+nicotine:  $5.17 \pm 0.65$ , 1 h after HFS:  $5.19 \pm 0.73$ ) (Fig. 3B, inset) in KOs. Application of  $\alpha$ BTX and nicotine in the absence of HFS did not alter synaptic transmission (1 h after  $\alpha$ BTX+Nic:  $100 \pm 1\%$ ,  $n = 4$  slices/2 mice; paired *t* test:  $p = 0.86$ ) (Fig. 3B). These results suggest that nicotine-induced rescue of presynaptic deficits in BACE1 KOs is mediated by  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs.

Finally, we tested whether  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs are required for mLTTP in WTs. A brief application of  $\alpha$ BTX (10 min) before and during HFS failed to block mLTTP in WTs (1 h after HFS:  $148 \pm 6\%$ ,  $n = 9$  slices/7 mice; paired *t* test:  $p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 3C). This indicates that activation of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs is not necessary for mLTTP induction in WTs, hence the rescue of mLTTP in KOs by  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR activation is probably via recruitment of an alternative pathway not normally used in WTs.

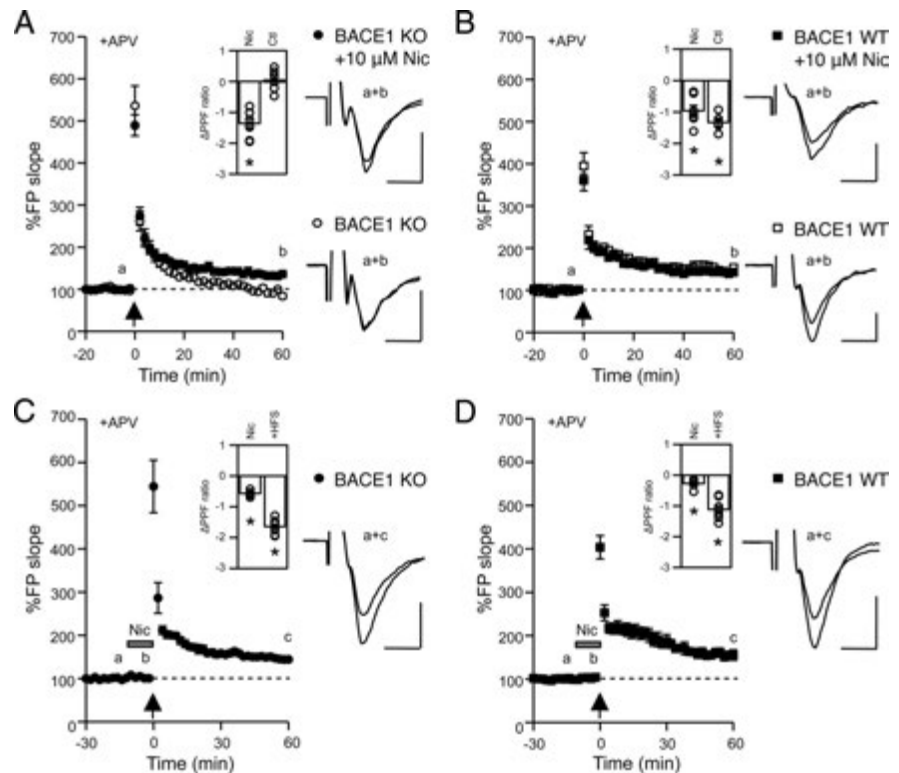
#### CICR is involved in nicotine-induced rescue of mLTTP in BACE1 KOs

Activation of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs enhances CICR from ryanodine-sensitive  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  stores (Sharma and Vijayaraghavan, 2003; Sharma et al., 2008). To investigate whether CICR is also involved in nicotine-induced rescue of mLTTP in KOs, we used 20  $\mu\text{M}$  ruthenium red (RR) or 100  $\mu\text{M}$  ryanodine (Ryan), which are blockers of ryanodine-sensitive stores. Both drugs completely abolished nicotine-induced recovery of PPF ratio [RR:  $5.00 \pm 0.69$ , RR+Nic:  $4.97 \pm 0.70$ , 1 h after HFS:  $4.62 \pm 0.74$  (Fig. 4A, inset); Ryan:  $5.01 \pm 0.20$ , Ryan+Nic:  $5.03 \pm 0.23$ , 1 h after HFS:  $4.93 \pm 0.25$ ] and mLTTP (1 h after RR+Nic:  $91 \pm 5\%$ ,  $n = 9$  slices/5 mice; paired *t* test:  $p = 0.18$ ; 1 h after Ryan+Nic:  $100 \pm 2\%$ ,  $n = 6$  slices/3 mice; paired *t* test:  $p = 0.66$ ) (Fig. 4A) in KOs without influencing basal synaptic transmission. mLTTP was present in WTs treated with RR (1 h after HFS:  $124 \pm 5\%$ ,  $n = 9$  slices/5 mice; paired *t* test:  $p < 0.01$ ) (Fig. 4B), but was significantly less than that in control WTs (*t* test:  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that CICRs are only partially involved.

#### Discussion

We found that nicotine restores PPF and LTP at MF-to-CA3 synapses in BACE1 KOs. The nicotine effect was mimicked by  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR-specific agonist PNU282987, and blocked by  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR antagonist  $\alpha$ BTX. We have evidence that nicotine acts via recruiting CICR. These results suggest nicotine and  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR agonists as potential pharmacological means to circumvent the presynaptic deficits caused by BACE1 inhibition.

mLTTP is presynaptically expressed, requiring an increase in presynaptic  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and a subsequent activation of cAMP–PKA signaling pathway (Nicoll and Schmitz, 2005). We previously demonstrated that presynaptic dysfunction seen in BACE1 KOs is at the level of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  regulation, but the downstream PKA signaling is

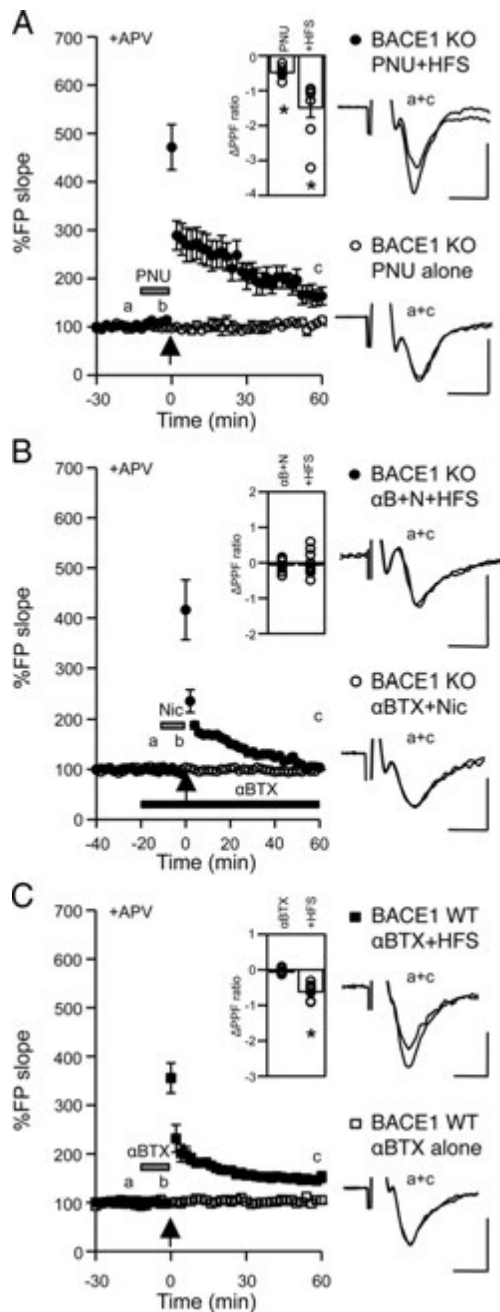


**Figure 2.** Nicotine rescues mLTTP in BACE1 KOs without effects in WTs. **A**, KO slices treated with 10  $\mu\text{M}$  nicotine (black circles) showed significant mLTTP compared to control slices without nicotine (open circles). **B**, The magnitude of mLTTP in WT slices treated with 10  $\mu\text{M}$  nicotine (black squares) was similar to that of control WT slices (open squares). **C**, Transient application of nicotine (10  $\mu\text{M}$ , 10 min; gray bar) before and during HFS rescued mLTTP in KOs (black circles). **D**, The same transient nicotine (10  $\mu\text{M}$ , 10 min; gray bar) application did not influence mLTTP in WT (black squares). Insets: **A**, **B**, Changes in PPF ratio with HFS [ $\Delta\text{PPF ratio} = (\text{PPF ratio at time b}) - (\text{PPF ratio at time a})$ ] for control (Ctl) and Nic; **C**, **D**,  $\Delta\text{PPF ratio}$  with nicotine application [(PPF ratio at time b) - (PPF ratio at time a)] and with HFS [(PPF ratio at time c) - (PPF ratio at time a)]. Bars, Average  $\pm$  SEM. Open circles, Individual data points. \*Paired *t* test,  $p < 0.001$ . Arrow, HFS (100 Hz, 1 s). Right panels, Superimposed FP traces taken at times indicated in the left panels. Calibration: 0.5 mV, 5 ms.

intact (Wang et al., 2008). These results predict that restoring presynaptic  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  signaling should recover mLTTP in BACE1 KOs. Presynaptic  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR elevates the intracellular concentration of free  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  (Vijayaraghavan et al., 1992) and enhances glutamate release at MF terminals (Sharma and Vijayaraghavan, 2003; Sharma et al., 2008; Bancila et al., 2009). The nicotine-induced rescue of PPF and mLTTP without much effect on basal synaptic transmission is likely via the recruitment of CICR, which is known to preferentially amplify use-dependent release (Shimizu et al., 2008). Short-term presynaptic plasticity, including PPF, does not depend on CICR at MF terminals (Carter et al., 2002). Consistent with this, inhibiting CICRs in WTs did not alter PPF ratio, but reduced mLTTP magnitude, which suggests that HFS recruits CICR. In the case of KOs, it is clear that the CICR triggered by  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR activation is needed to rescue mLTTP. Although we cannot rule out the possible involvement of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs on interneurons, the detection of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR immunoreactivity in the MF input region (supplemental Fig. 2, available at [www.jneurosci.org](http://www.jneurosci.org) as supplemental material) provides a substrate for  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR agonists to act on MF terminals. This is further corroborated by a recent electron microscopy study, which localized  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs on MF terminals (Bancila et al., 2009). Interestingly, the  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs were present away from the active zone, suggesting an indirect regulation of presynaptic release.

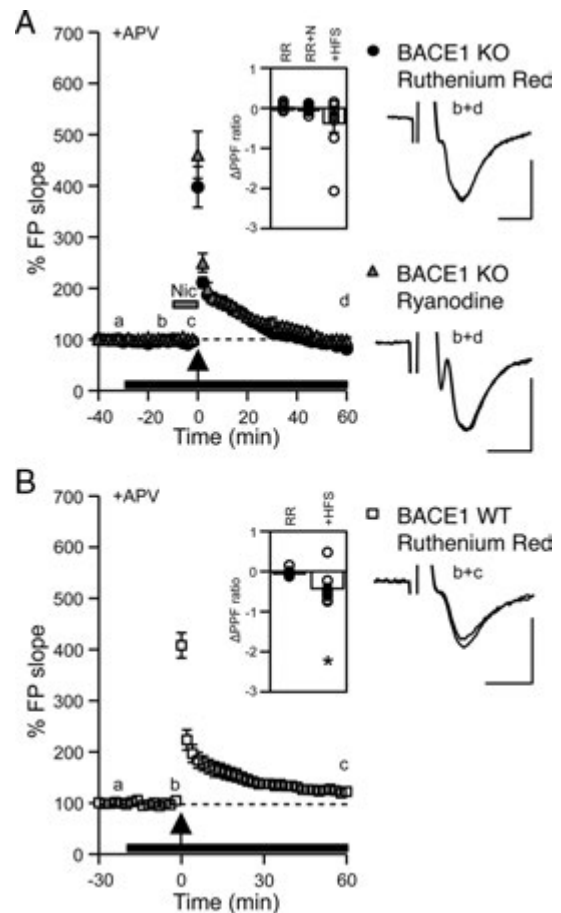
It is known that  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs can rapidly desensitize upon agonist binding in a dose-dependent manner (Peng et al., 1994).





**Figure 3.** Nicotine-induced rescue of mFLTP in BACE1 KO is mediated by  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs. **A**, Transient bath application of PNU282987 (PNU; 500 nM, 10 min; gray bar) rescued mFLTP in KOs (black circles). PNU282987 alone did not alter synaptic transmission (open circles). Inset,  $\Delta$ PPF ratio in KO PNU + HFS experiments.  $\Delta$ PPF ratio with PNU282987 application [(PPF at b) – (PPF at a)];  $\Delta$ PPF ratio with HFS [(PPF at c) – (PPF at a)], \*paired *t* test;  $p < 0.01$ . **B**, Application of  $\alpha$ BTX (100 nM, black bar) blocked nicotine-induced rescue of mFLTP in KOs (black circles). Application of  $\alpha$ BTX and nicotine without HFS did not influence basal synaptic transmission (open circles). Inset,  $\Delta$ PPF ratio in KO  $\alpha$ BTX + Nic + HFS experiments.  $\Delta$ PPF ratio with nicotine application in the presence of  $\alpha$ BTX [(PPF at b) – (PPF at a)];  $\Delta$ PPF ratio with HFS [(PPF at c) – (PPF at a)]. **C**, mFLTP in wild type is not blocked by  $\alpha$ BTX.  $\alpha$ BTX alone (100 nM, 10 min; gray bar) did not affect synaptic transmission (open squares). Black squares,  $\alpha$ BTX + HFS. Inset (for  $\alpha$ BTX + HFS experiments),  $\Delta$ PPF ratio with  $\alpha$ BTX [(PPF at b) – (PPF at a)];  $\Delta$ PPF ratio with HFS [(PPF at c) – (PPF at a)]; \*paired *t* test,  $p < 0.001$ . Right, FP traces. Calibration: 0.5 mV, 5 ms.

Because nicotine-induced rescue of mFLTP was blocked by  $\alpha$ BTX, we suspect residual  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR activity even with the prolonged application of nicotine used in our study. Interestingly, the increase in glutamate release at MF terminals with  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR



**Figure 4.** Nicotine-induced rescue of mFLTP in BACE1 KOs requires CICR. **A**, Application (black bar) of RR (20  $\mu$ M) or Ryan (100  $\mu$ M) abolished nicotine-induced rescue of mFLTP in KOs (RR: black circles, Ryan: gray triangles). Inset,  $\Delta$ PPF ratio of RR application [(PPF at b) – (PPF at a)], + nicotine [(PPF at c) – (PPF at b)], and + HFS [(PPF at d) – (PPF at b)]. **B**, RR (20  $\mu$ M; black bar) reduced mFLTP in WTs (open squares). Inset,  $\Delta$ PPF ratio of RR application [(PPF at b) – (PPF at a)] and + HFS [(PPF at c) – (PPF at b)]. \*Paired *t* test,  $p < 0.01$ . Right, FP traces. Calibration: 0.5 mV, 5 ms.

activation is rather slow and involves presynaptic  $Ca^{2+}$  increase via CICR from internal stores (Sharma and Vijayaraghavan, 2003; Sharma et al., 2008). In synaptosomes isolated from the prefrontal cortex,  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR agonist-induced glutamate release is dependent on CICR and a downstream activation of extracellular signal-regulated kinase (ERK) signaling (Dickinson et al., 2008). These results suggest that presynaptic signaling of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs leading to glutamate release may outlast the initial activation of the receptor.

The regulation of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs has been implicated in the pathology of AD. There are studies reporting high-affinity binding between A $\beta$ 42 and  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs (Wang et al., 2000a,b), which either inhibit (Guan et al., 2001; Liu et al., 2001; Pettit et al., 2001) or activate (Dineley et al., 2001)  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR signaling. It is possible that A $\beta$ 42 may facilitate  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs at low concentration, but may inhibit nAChRs when the burden of A $\beta$  peptides increases (Dineley et al., 2001; Dougherty et al., 2003). The concentration-dependent dual role of A $\beta$ 42 is evident in a study showing that picomolar range of A $\beta$ 42 facilitates, but nanomolar range abolishes, LTP in CA1 and learning via its action on  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs (Puzzo et al., 2008). It is unlikely that endogenous A $\beta$ 42 acts in this manner to influence mFLTP, because blocking  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs with  $\alpha$ -BTX did not affect mFLTP in WTs. This result

indirectly argues that the lack of mFLTP in BACE1 KO may not be a strict consequence of lacking  $\alpha\beta$ . Interestingly, BACE1 has been found to regulate neuregulin-1 (NRG1) cleavage (Hu et al., 2006; Willem et al., 2006), and indeed this process is affected in BACE1 KO (Savonenko et al., 2008). NRG1 is critically involved in maintaining surface expression of presynaptic  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs (Hancock et al., 2008; Zhong et al., 2008). However, in isolated CA3 slices, we did not see a change in the total or cell surface levels of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs and NRG1 in the KO (supplemental Fig. 3, available at [www.jneurosci.org](http://www.jneurosci.org) as supplemental material). Furthermore, our ability to rescue mFLTP in KO with  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR agonists suggests sufficient presence of functional  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs.

Several potential methods are being developed to overcome dysfunctions caused by complete BACE1 inhibition, such as partial BACE1 inhibition (Vassar et al., 2009). While our results might reflect a developmental loss of BACE1, they suggest that combining  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR agonists with BACE1 inhibitors may be another alternative.

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## **Supplementary Methods**

### *Immunohistochemistry and confocal imaging*

Hippocampal slices (300- $\mu\text{m}$ -thick) prepared from transgenic mice expressing yellow fluorescence protein (YFP) in a subset of neurons (YFP-2J line, Jackson Laboratory) were placed in 4% paraformaldehyde overnight (4°C) and transferred to 30% sucrose [in 0.1 M sodium phosphate (SP) buffer] overnight before re-sectioning to 20  $\mu\text{m}$  thickness using a freezing sliding microtome (Leica). The sections were collected in cryoprotectant (20% sucrose, 30% ethylene glycol in pH 7.4 SP buffer) and kept at -20°C. The day before primary antibody incubation, the sections were frozen at -80°C in 30% sucrose (in 0.1 M SP buffer). The following day, sections were defrosted and rinsed in PBS (4 $\times$ 5 min) and permeabilized [2% Triton X-100 (TX-100) in SP buffer, 1 hour]. They were then incubated in -20°C methanol (10 min), rinsed in PBS (4 $\times$ 5 min), and placed in 1% TX-100 blocking solution [10% normal donkey serum (NDS), 4% BSA in PBS] for 1 h at room temperature. Sections were then incubated in 0.2% TX-100 blocking solution with  $\alpha$ 7-nAChR antibody (1:500, rabbit polyclonal antibody, Abcam, Cambridge, MA) and synaptophysin antibody (1:20, mouse monoclonal antibody, Millipore, Billerica, MA) for 7 days at 4°C. After washing (PBS, 4 $\times$ 5 min), sections were incubated for 2 h at room temperature in secondary antibodies [Alexa633 goat anti-rabbit IgG (1:500, Molecular Probes, Eugene, OR) and Alexa555 goat anti-mouse IgG (1:200, Molecular Probes, Eugene, OR)] in 1.5% NDS in PBS. Sections were rinsed in PBS, mounted on glass slides, and air-dried. The slides were coverslipped with Prolong<sup>TM</sup> mounting solution (Molecular Probes, Eugene, OR) and sealed with nail polish. The stained sections were imaged using a Leica SP5X confocal microscope with a 63 $\times$ oil immersion objective lens. The CA3 subfield of the hippocampus was imaged through the z-axis at 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$  steps with x/y/z resolution of 0.24/0.24/0.50  $\mu\text{m}$ /pixel.

### *Steady-state surface biotinylation*

Hippocampal slices (400  $\mu\text{m}$  thick) were prepared as described above, and the CA3 region was isolated. After 30 min recovery at room temperature, the isolated CA3 slices were transferred to 30°C for additional 30 min recovery. The slices were then transferred to ice-cold ACSF for 10 min, and subsequently to ice-cold ACSF containing 2

mg/ml biotin (EZ-Link Sulfo-NHS-Biotin, Pierce) saturated with 5% CO<sub>2</sub>/95% O<sub>2</sub> for 15 min. The slices were then washed in tris-buffered saline (TBS: 50 mM Tris, 0.9% NaCl, pH 7.4) containing 100 mM glycine (5 times, 1 min each) before homogenized in ice-cold 0.2% SDS/1% Triton X-100 IPB (20 mM Na<sub>3</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, 150 mM NaCl, 10 mM EDTA, 10 mM EGTA, 10 mM Na<sub>4</sub>P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub>, 50 mM NaF, and 1 mM Na<sub>3</sub>VO<sub>4</sub>, pH 7.4; with 1 μM okadaic acid and 10 KIU/ml aprotinin) by ~30 gentle strokes using glass-teflon tissue homogenizers (Pyrex). The homogenates were centrifuged for 10 min at 13,200 × g, 4°C. Protein concentration of the supernatant was measured and normalized to 2 mg/ml. Some of the supernatants were saved as inputs by adding gel sampling buffer and boiled for 5 min. 300 μg of each supernatant was mixed with neutravidin slurry [1:1 in 1% Triton X-100 IPB (TX-IPB)] and rotated overnight at 4°C. The neutravidin beads were isolated by brief centrifugation at 1,000 × g. Some of the supernatants were saved by adding gel sample buffer and boiled for 5 min. The neutravidin beads were washed 3 times with 1% TX-IPB, 3 times with 1% TX-IPB containing 500 mM NaCl, followed by 2 washes in 1% TX-IPB. The biotinylated surface proteins were then eluded from the neutravidin beads by boiling in gel sampling buffer for 5 min. The input (I, total homogenate), supernatant (S, intracellular fraction), and biotinylated samples (B, surface fraction) were run on the same gel, and processed for immunoblot analysis using α7-nAChR and actin antibodies. The band intensity in the input lanes and biotin lanes, which fell within the linear range, was quantified to calculate the % of total α7-nAChR on the surface for each sample.

### *Immunoblot analysis*

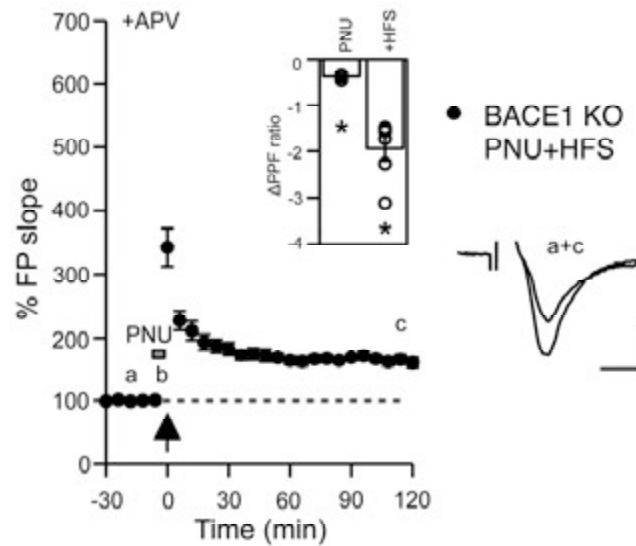
SDS-PAGE gels were transferred to polyvinyl difluoride (PVDF) membranes (Immobilon™, Millipore). The PVDF membrane blots were blocked for ~1 hr in blocking buffer (1% bovine serum albumin and 0.1% Tween-20 in phosphate buffered saline (PBS), pH 7.4), and subsequently incubated for 1-2 hrs in primary antibodies (Ab's) diluted in blocking buffer. After 5 x 5 min washes in blocking buffer, the blots were incubated for 1 hr in 2<sup>nd</sup> Ab linked to Cy3 and Cy5. After washes, blots were scanned using Typhoon Trio (GE Health), and signals were quantified using Image Quant TL software (GE Health). The fluorescence intensity values for each band was then



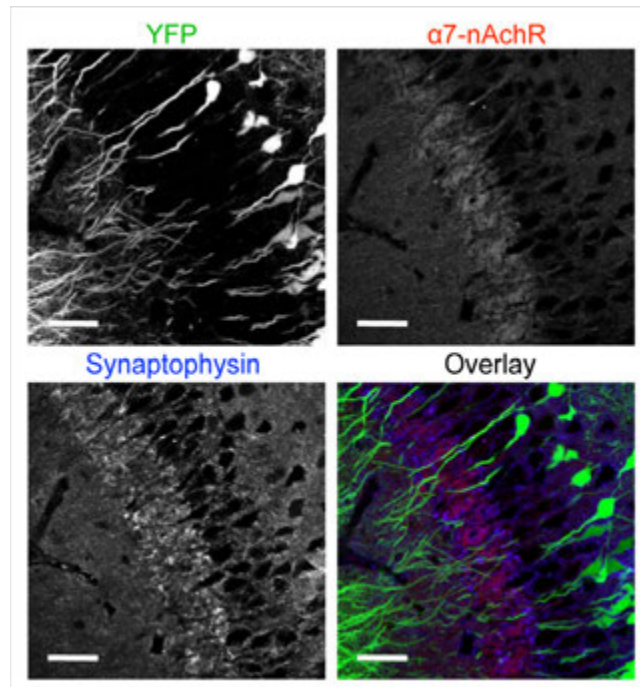
Wang et al.

normalized to the average value of WT samples on the same blot to obtain the % of average WT values, which were compared across different experimental groups using unpaired Student's t-test. The biotinylation blots were also probed simultaneously with  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR and actin antibodies using the ECL plex system. The band intensities of biotinylated samples were normalized to that of the input lanes (total protein) to obtain the level of surface  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR as a % of total value.

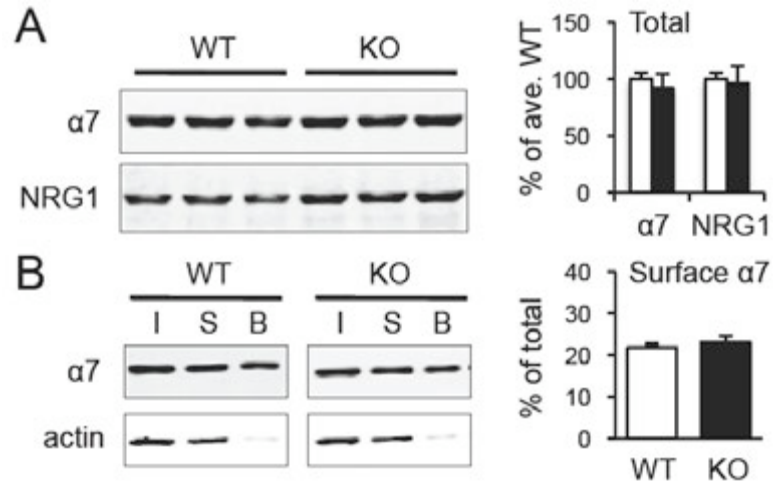
## Supplementary Figures



**Supplementary Figure 1.** Transient bath application of PNU282987 (PNU: 500 nM, 10 min; gray bar) restored mfLTP in BACE1 KOs for up to 2 hours (black circles). 2 hour post-HFS:  $163 \pm 7\%$ ,  $n = 6$  slices/3 mice; paired t-test:  $P < 0.001$ . Inset:  $\Delta$ PPF ratio in BACE1 KO PNU+HFS experiments.  $\Delta$ PPF ratio with PNU282987 application [= (PPF at time point b) – (PPF at time point a)];  $\Delta$ PPF ratio with HFS [= (PPF at time point c) – (PPF at time point a)], \*paired t-test:  $P < 0.001$ . Bars: average  $\pm$  sem. Black circles: individual data points. Arrow: HFS (100 Hz, 1s  $\times$  3). Right: Superimposed FP traces. Scale: 0.5 mV, 5 ms.



**Supplementary Figure 2.** Immunohistochemical labeling of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs in the CA3 region of a YFP-2J mouse. Top left: YFP signal in a subset of CA3 neurons. Top right:  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR immunoreactivity (Alexa633-linked secondary antibody). Note a higher signal in the stratum lucidum. Bottom left: Synaptophysin immunoreactivity (Alexa555-linked secondary antibody). Bottom right: Overlay of YFP (green),  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR (red), and synaptophysin (blue). Note purple signal in stratum lucidum, which indicates overlap of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR and synaptophysin immunoreactivity. Scale: 40  $\mu$ m.



**Supplementary Figure 3.** Normal expression of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs in the CA3 region of BACE1 KOs.

(A) Comparison of  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR and neuregulin-1 (NRG1) levels in the total homogenates of isolated CA3 regions of WT and KOs. Left: Example immunoblots probed with  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR or NRG1 antibody. Right: Quantification of the immunoblots for total  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR (WT = 100 ± 5.7% of average WT value; KO = 92 ± 12.9% of average WT value; n = 10 mice each group; t-test: P > 0.58) and total NRG1 (WT = 100 ± 5.2% of average WT value; KO = 96 ± 14.6% of average WT value; n = 10 mice each group; t-test: P > 0.82).

(B) Comparison of cell surface  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR levels in isolated CA3 slices between WT and KO. Cell surface  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs were isolated using steady-state surface biotinylation. The total protein (input, I), the resulting supernatant (S: intracellular protein fraction), and biotin pull-down (B: cell surface fraction) were loaded onto the same gel, transferred to blots, and simultaneously probed with  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR and actin antibodies using the ECLplex system (GE Health). The intensity of signals in the input and the biotin lanes was used to calculate the fraction of surface  $\alpha 7$ -nAChRs as a % of total  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR. Actin signal was used to assess the success of the biotinylation assay. Only the blots showing less than 5% actin signal in the biotin lanes were used for quantification. Left: An example immunoblot from WT and KO. Right: Quantification of biotinylated  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR signals (Surface  $\alpha 7$ -nAChR: WT = 21 ± 1.0% of total, n = 10 mice; KO = 23 ± 1.7% of total, n = 8 mice; t-test: P = 0.51).