

**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA MARIA  
CENTRO DE CIÊNCIAS NATURAIS E EXATAS  
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM CIÊNCIAS BIOLÓGICAS:  
BIOQUÍMICA TOXICOLÓGICA**

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**ESTRESSE PRÉ E PÓS NATAL AFETAM ASPECTOS  
MORFOLÓGICOS, BIOQUÍMICOS E MOLECULARES DO EIXO  
CORTICO-HIPOTALÂMICO NA PROLE ADULTA**

**Santa Maria, RS**

**2019**



**Luciana Taschetto Vey**

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BIOQUÍMICOS E MOLECULARES DO EIXO CORTICO-HIPOTALÂMICO NA  
PROLE ADULTA**

Tese apresentada ao Curso de Doutorado do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciências Biológicas: Bioquímica Toxicológica, Área de Concentração em Neuropsicofarmacologia, da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM, RS), como requisito parcial para obtenção do grau de **Doutora em Bioquímica Toxicológica**

Orientadora: Prof<sup>ª</sup> Dr<sup>ª</sup> Marilise Escobar Burger

Santa Maria, RS

2019

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ESTRESSE PRÉ E PÓS NATAL AFETAM ASPECTOS MORFOLÓGICOS,  
BIOQUÍMICOS E MOLECULARES DO EIXO CORTICO-HIPOTALÂMICO  
NA PROLE ADULTA / Luciana Vey.- 2019.  
127 p.; 30 cm

Orientadora: Marilise Escobar Burger  
Tese (doutorado) - Universidade Federal de Santa  
Maria, Centro de Ciências Naturais e Exatas, Programa de  
Pós-Graduação em Ciências Biológicas: Bioquímica  
Toxicológica, RS, 2019

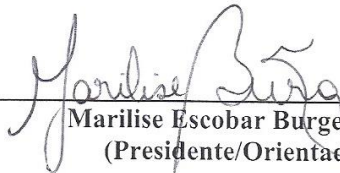
1. Estresse 2. Eixo HPA 3. Morfina 4. Estresse  
Oxidativo I. Escobar Burger, Marilise II. Título.

Luciana Taschetto Vey

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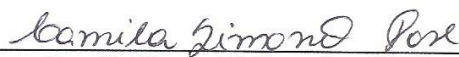
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Aprovada em 18 de outubro de 2019:



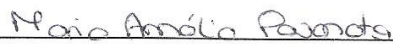
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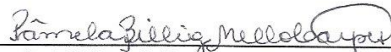
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Santa Maria, RS  
2019

## AGRADECIMENTOS

Primeiramente a Deus, que permitiu que tudo isso acontecesse ao longo de minha vida, e não somente neste tempo de doutorado, mas que em todos os momentos é o maior mestre que uma pessoa pode conhecer.

Agradeço aos meus pais, Enio e Leonida, meus maiores exemplos. Obrigada Mãe, por cada incentivo e orientação, pelas orações em meu favor, pela preocupação para que estivesse sempre andando pelo caminho correto. Obrigada Pai, por ser o meu maior ídolo e mesmo já estando em outro plano, sei que estará sempre torcendo pela minha vitória. Amo Vocês demais!!!

Obrigada às minhas irmãs Juliana e Rosana, que nos momentos de minha ausência dedicados a pós-graduação, sempre fizeram entender que o futuro é feito a partir da constante dedicação no presente, e que não pouparam esforços em me apoiar quando mais necessitei. Á vocês minha eterna admiração. Amo vocês!

Ao meu eterno namorado Samuel, pelos constantes momentos de incentivos e por acreditar em mim. Amo você meu amor!

Á minha orientadora Marilise Escobar Bürger, pela oportunidade fornecida, pelas suas correções, incentivos e por estar junto me dando força quando mais precisei. Obrigada por me servir de exemplo e ter certeza de que estou no caminho certo.

Também dedico aos meus colegas do grupo Farmatox, pessoas com quem eu convivi todos os dias, pelas palavras de conforto quando mais precisei, pelo companheirismo, momentos de descontração e por fazerem parte da minha vida. Vocês são muito importantes!!!



*“A mente que se abre a uma nova ideia,  
jamais voltará ao seu tamanho original.”*

*Albert Einstein*





## RESUMO

### **ESTRESSE PRÉ E PÓS NATAL AFETAM ASPECTOS MORFOLÓGICOS, BIOQUÍMICOS E MOLECULARES DO EIXO CORTICO-HIPOTALÂMICO NA PROLE ADULTA**

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Segundo a Organização Mundial da Saúde (2010), o estresse é reconhecido por sua cronicidade e identificado como o mal do século XXI, cujas repercussões estão diretamente ligadas à qualidade de vida do indivíduo, da família e da sociedade. Modelos animal de estresse pré-natal e isolamento neonatal reproduzem muitas características do estresse crônico ou experiências adversas sofridas no início da vida. Assim, o presente estudo objetivou investigar se o estresse durante os períodos fetal e neonatal poderia modificar parâmetros bioquímicos, morfológicos e moleculares na prole adulta. No primeiro experimento (EXP1), ratas Wistar prenhes foram submetidas ao estresse pré-natal durante duas semanas, enquanto no segundo (EXP 2), as ratas prenhes não foram manuseadas até o nascimento dos filhotes, os quais foram expostos a um protocolo de isolamento neonatal. As análises bioquímicas, morfológicas e moleculares foram realizadas no dia pós-natal 50 de ambos os experimentos. No EXP1, os animais expostos ao estresse materno apresentaram aumento de estresse oxidativo, modificações histológicas persistentes, bem como alterações de neurotrofinas relacionadas à plasticidade celular. Inversamente, animais expostos ao manuseio neonatal (EXP2), apresentaram melhor desempenho de memória, a qual foi acompanhada do aumento da neurogênese observada pelo aumento das neurotrofinas envolvidas na neuroplasticidade, como também na análise histológica. Considerando o forte envolvimento do estresse emocional com níveis aumentados de corticosterona, decidimos investigar também alguns marcadores moleculares relacionados ao estímulo do eixo hipotálamo-pituitária- adrenal através da dosagem dos receptores de glicocorticoides, cuja imunoreatividade foi reduzida no grupo de animais do EXP1 e aumentada nos animais do EXP2. Como a exposição ao estresse tem sido relacionada ao desenvolvimento de drogadição, em ambos os protocolos experimentais um grupo de animais foi exposto à morfina com consequente avaliação da densidade dos receptores mu opioides. Como resultado, animais do EXP1 apresentaram imunoreatividade aumentada deste receptor após exposição à morfina, enquanto os animais provenientes do EXP2 mostraram tal imunoreatividade aumentada, a qual foi também observada nos animais não expostos à morfina, indicando uma modificação per se do manuseio pós-natal. Os resultados aqui apresentados indicam que experiências estressantes durante o período pré-natal podem desenvolver alterações deletérias persistentes ao longo da vida. Por outro lado, as modificações neuroadaptativas consequentes ao isolamento neonatal mostraram capacidade para superar o estresse, caracterizando um aumento de resiliência persistente durante o desenvolvimento rumo à vida adulta.

Palavras-chave: BDNF. Eixo HPA. Estresse oxidativo. Morfina.



**ABSTRACT****PRE AND POSTNATAL STRESS AFFECT MORPHOLOGICAL, BIOCHEMICAL AND MOLECULAR ASPECTS OF CORTICO-HYPOTHALAMIC AXIS IN ADULT OFFSPRING**

AUTHOR: Luciana Taschetto Vey  
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According to the World Health Organization (2010), stress is recognized and identified as the evil of the century due to its chronicity and repercussions that are directly connected to life quality, family and society. Pre-natal animal models of stress and neonatal isolation reproduce many characteristics of chronic stress or adverse experiences lived in the beginning of life. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate if stress during the fetal and neonatal period could modify biochemical, morphologic and molecular parameters in adult offspring. In the first experiment (EXP1), pregnant Wistar rats were subjected to prenatal stress for two weeks while the pregnant rats in the second experiment (EXP 2) were not handled until their pups' birth, which were exposed to a neonatal isolation protocol. Biochemical, morphological and molecular analyzes were performed on postnatal day 50 of both experiments. In EXP1, animals exposed to maternal stress showed increased oxidative stress, persistent histological changes, as well as neurotrophin changes related to cell plasticity. Inversely, animals exposed to neonatal management (EXP2) showed better memory performance, which was accompanied by increased neurogenesis observed by increased neurotrophins involved in neuroplasticity, as well as in histological analysis. Considering the strong emotional stress involvement with increased corticosterone levels, we also decided to investigate some molecular markers related to HPA axis stimulation through glucocorticoid receptor dosage whose immunoreactivity was reduced in the EXP1 group at the same time that increased in the EXP2. As stress exposure has been related to drug addiction, in both experimental protocols a group of animals was exposed to morphine with consequent evaluation of mu opioid receptor density. As a result, EXP1 animals showed increased of mu opioid receptor immunoreactivity after morphine exposure while animals from EXP2 showed increased immunoreactivity, which was also observed in animals not exposed to morphine, indicating a change per se due to postnatal handling. The results presented indicate that stressful experiences during the prenatal period may develop persistent deleterious changes throughout life. On the other hand, neuroadaptive changes resulting from neonatal isolation showed an ability to overcome stress showing an increase in persistence resilience during their development until adulthood.

Keywords: BDNF. HPA axis. Oxidative Stress. Morphine.



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## LISTA DE ABREVIATURAS E SIGLAS

ACTH- hormônio adrenocorticotropina

BDNF- fator neurotrófico derivado do encéfalo

CAT- catalase

CRH- hormônio liberador de corticotrofina

DPN- dia pós natal

EPN- estresse pré-natal

ER- espécies reativas

EROs- espécies reativas de oxigênio

ERNs- espécies reativas de nitrogênio

GCs- glicocorticoides

GCL- camada de células granulares

GD- giro denteado

GR- receptores de glicocorticoides

HPA- hipotálamo-hipófise-adrenal

IN- isolamento neonatal

MOR- receptor  $\mu$  opioides

NE- neuroepitélio

OMS- Organização Mundial da Saúde

SNA- sistema nervoso autônomo

TrkB- receptor de tropomiosina quinase B, do inglês *tropomyosin receptor kinase B*

UNODC- Escritório das Nações Unidas sobre Drogas e Crime



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## **APRESENTAÇÃO**

Esta tese está estruturada nas seguintes seções: Introdução, Objetivos, Manuscrito 1, Manuscrito 2, Discussão, Conclusões e Referências.

Os itens Materiais e Métodos, Resultados, Discussão dos resultados e Referências encontram-se inseridos nos manuscritos, contido na seção **MANUSCRITO CIENTÍFICO**, representando a íntegra do estudo.

As **REFERÊNCIAS** referem-se somente às citações que aparecem na **INTRODUÇÃO** desta tese.



## 1 INTRODUÇÃO

O estresse é entendido como um processo complexo multidimensional no qual atuam agentes físicos e/ou psicológicos, sendo definido como um estado de homeostase ameaçado ou em desequilíbrio (PECHTEL e PIZZAGALLI, 2011). De acordo com os dados da Organização Mundial da Saúde (OMS), o estresse tem atingindo cerca de 90% da população mundial, sendo o Brasil o líder no ranking de ansiedade e depressão na América Latina, comprometendo 70% da população brasileira (ISMA, 2017; WHO, 2009). Segundo a OMS tais transtornos custam à economia global um trilhão de dólares em perda de produtividade a cada ano (WHO, 2017). Com base nesses dados, o estresse é o principal agente responsável pela indução da depressão e suas repercussões estão diretamente ligadas à qualidade de vida do indivíduo, da família e da sociedade.

Quando ocorre durante a gravidez, o estresse tem sido associado a uma diversidade de alterações comportamentais na vida pós-natal (TUCHSCHERER et al., 2002), o que pode levar a alterações na resposta ao eixo hipotálamo-pituitária-adrenal (HPA) e conseqüentemente ao aumento dos níveis séricos de glicocorticoides, permitindo a ocorrência de efeitos adversos deletérios principalmente no sistema nervoso central (LAJUD e TORNER, 2015). O aumento sustentado dos glicocorticoides é responsável por induzir alterações persistentes nos níveis de neurotrofinas como o fator neurotrófico derivado do encéfalo (BDNF), que promove e mantém o crescimento e a sobrevivência no sistema nervoso central (COWANSAGE; LEDOUX; MONFILS, 2010). As expressões dessas neurotrofinas estão intimamente associadas ao processo de aprendizagem por meio da neurogênese (SCHOENFELD e GOULD, 2013) principalmente nas regiões do córtex pré-frontal e o hipocampo (AGUILERA, 2011; KIKUSUI e MORI, 2009).

O estresse quando aplicado em diferentes períodos da vida, fetal ou neonatal, tem mostrado discrepâncias e pode levar ao desenvolvimento de vários distúrbios neurológicos entre eles a adição por drogas (ENAYATI et al, 2012; MATRISCIANO et al, 2013; VEY et al., 2015). Segundo os dados de 2018 do Escritório das Nações Unidas sobre Drogas e Crime (UNODC), o uso não medicamentoso dos opioides tem gerado uma grande ameaça á saúde publica, uma vez que corresponde a 76% das mortes envolvendo transtornos relacionados a drogas no mundo (UNODC, 2018). Dentre os medicamentos opioides descritos, a morfina, oxicodona e meperidina, juntamente com a ilícita heroína, configuram as drogas mais consumidas de forma abusiva (POULETTY, 2002; YARGEAU et al., 2014), sendo os



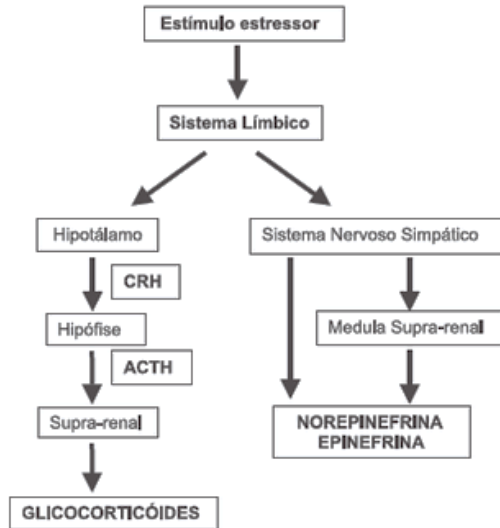
americanos os maiores usuários de opioides, tornando esse tipo de adição uma epidemia mundial (MANCHIKANTI et al., 2012).

Estudo anterior do nosso grupo mostraram as consequências comportamentais do estresse aplicado durante os períodos fetal e neonatal, frente a parâmetros de ansiedade e dependência por morfina (VEY et al., 2015). Baseados nesse estudo, nós decidimos investigar mais profundamente os mecanismos pelos quais os diferentes períodos de estresse poderiam modificar a resposta frente a parâmetros morfológicos, bioquímicos e moleculares após exposição à morfina.

## 2 REVISÃO BIBLIOGRÁFICA

### 2.1 ESTRESSE

Segundo a Organização Mundial da Saúde (2010), o estresse é reconhecido pela sua cronicidade e identificado como o mal do século XXI. Suas repercussões estão diretamente ligadas à qualidade de vida do indivíduo, da família e da sociedade. Assim, o estresse é entendido como um processo complexo multidimensional no qual atuam agentes físicos e/ou psicológicos, sendo definido como um estado de homeostase ameaçado ou em desequilíbrio. Tal agressão psíquica é controlada por respostas viscerais e comportamentais que visam restaurar a homeostase perdida (CARRASCO; VAN DE KAR, 2003). As respostas ao estresse incluem a ativação do sistema nervoso autônomo (SNA) e do eixo hipotálamo-pituitária-adrenal (HPA), as quais acarretam na secreção aumentada de catecolaminas e a liberação de glicocorticoides (GCs), respectivamente (Figura 1) (HARBUZ; LIGHTMAN, 1992; HERMAN; CULLINAN, 1997). A resposta rápida é transmitida pelo SNA, através da liberação de catecolaminas como norepinefrina e epinefrina liberadas pela medula suprarrenal como demonstrado na Figura 1.



**Figure 1.** Ativação do sistema nervoso autônomo e neuroendócrino. Fonte: BUCKINGHAM (2000)

A resposta tardia ativa o núcleo paraventricular do hipotálamo (PVN, do inglês *paraventricular nucleus*) a liberar o hormônio liberador de corticotrofina (CRH) para a vasculatura da glândula pituitária anterior. O CRH estimula a liberação do hormônio

adrenocorticotropina (ACTH), que desencadeia a liberação de GCs a partir do córtex adrenal. Os GCs exercem uma retroalimentação negativa que regula a atividade do eixo HPA (Figura 2), via seus próprios receptores (receptores de glicocorticóides-GR) na hipófise anterior, hipotálamo (DE KLOET et al., 2005), hipocampo e córtex pré-frontal (DE VASCONCELLOS et al., 2006; TAGLIARI et al., 2010; FILIPOVIĆ et al., 2011). Neste contexto, é de extrema importância o estudo das regiões do hipocampo e córtex pré-frontal para avaliar o profundo envolvimento dessas regiões em resposta ao estresse (SAPOLSKY, 2003; MCEWEN, 2008).

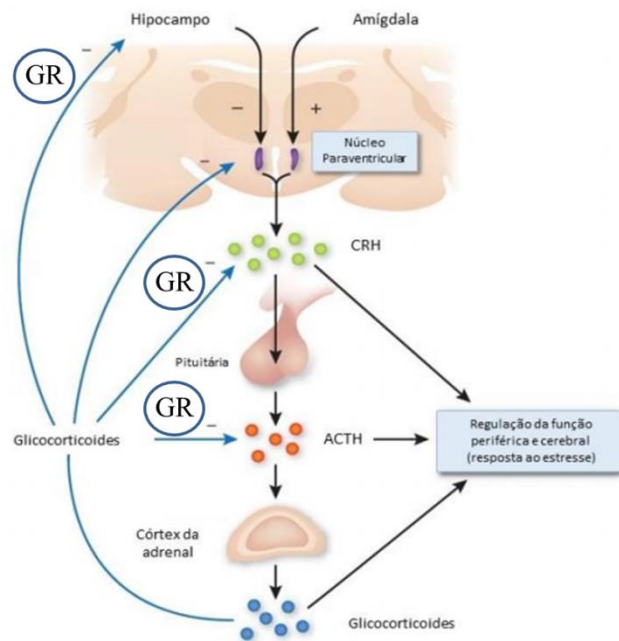


Figura 2. Mecanismo de retroalimentação negativa do eixo HPA via receptores de glicocorticóides. Fonte: Adaptado de Nature Neuroscience.

Como mencionado anteriormente, durante um evento estressante várias substâncias químicas como adrenalina e glicocorticóides são lançadas na corrente sanguínea, o que gera uma cadeia de reações no organismo. Quando experimentadas durante a gestação, essas situações de estresse podem ocasionar a chamada “hipótese da programação fetal”, descrita pela primeira vez por David Barker em 1989. Essa hipótese detalha a importância do ambiente intrauterino no desenvolvimento dos tecidos e órgãos fetais, onde um desvio do equilíbrio do ambiente intrauterino pode ter efeitos persistentes na função da estrutura dos órgãos (BARKER et al., 1989; HALES et al., 1992).

Após a publicação da hipótese de Barker, foi instigada uma curiosidade sobre os efeitos deletérios do estresse durante a gestação, principalmente durante o primeiro e segundo trimestre, a fim de avaliar as consequências persistentes ao longo da vida. Desse modo, interações entre diferentes períodos de estresse e anormalidades comportamentais e psicológicas produzidas na prole animal têm sido amplamente documentadas.

Apesar de o nosso organismo ser capaz de retornar aos níveis basais de GCs, quando o estresse se torna crônico, ocorre um aumento sérico sustentado de GCs, o que pode desencadear alterações biológicas importantes no organismo, incluindo o desenvolvimento de disfunções psicológicas (McEWEN, 2010), que podem ser avaliadas a partir de modelos animais que reproduzem muitas das características do estresse crônico ou experiências adversas no início da vida.

## 2.2 MODELOS ANIMAIS DE ESTRESSE

Os modelos animais que reproduzem muitas das características do estresse crônico ou experiências no início da vida incluem a exposição ao estresse pré-natal (EPN) (LEMAIRE et al., 2000), procedimentos de privação materna (DE KLOET et al., 2005), modelos de separação materna crônica ou periódica (SANCHEZ et al, 2001;. HUOT et al, 2002; PLOTSKY et al, 2005), estimulação tátil (ANTONIAZZI et al. 2017) e isolamento neonatal (MCCORMICK et al., 1998). Nesta tese decidimos estudar o modelo de estresse pré-natal e isolamento neonatal, uma vez que alterações durante esses períodos estão diretamente ligadas à muitas das consequências observadas em seres humanos submetidos a experiências precoces adversas, tais como maus-tratos ou abuso infantil e até mesmo baixo nível sócio econômico (SANCHEZ et al, 2001; HUOT et al., 2002; PLOTSKY et al., 2005).

Durante a gestação, o estresse medeia mudanças na capacidade de resposta do eixo HPA fetal que já está funcional. O aumento sérico de GCs pode desencadear alterações biológicas importantes no organismo, incluindo o desenvolvimento de distúrbios neuropsiquiátricos como esquizofrenia, autismo, ansiedade e depressão na vida adulta (BROWN; HELENA; DERKITS, 2010; ENAYATI et al, 2012; KINNEY et al., 2008; MATRISCIANO et al, 2013; PATTERSON, 2011). Estudos com humanos têm demonstrado que eventos estressores no período pré-natal ou em períodos próximos ao parto aumentam a vulnerabilidade a psicopatias dos filhos na vida adulta (KOFMAN, 2002). Crianças e adolescentes, filhos de mulheres que vivenciaram eventos estressantes durante a gravidez, são

mais propensos a apresentar problemas emocionais, hiperatividade, baixo rendimento escolar e déficits de atenção (GLOVER et al., 2004; BEVERSDORF et al., 2005; GUTTELING et al., 2006; TALGE et al., 2007). O baixo peso ao nascimento também tem sido associado a elevados níveis placentários do hormônio liberador da corticotrofina (que desencadeia a liberação de cortisol) e altos níveis de cortisol no sangue do cordão umbilical, sugerindo um papel dos glicocorticoides endógenos em produzir um retardo no crescimento fetal (GOLAND et al, 1993; WADHWA et al.,2004).

Em animais, também observamos alterações persistentes, uma vez que ratos expostos ao estresse no período perinatal, apresentaram na idade adulta um aumento dos níveis sanguíneos periféricos de corticosterona (BRUNTON E RUSSELL, 2010), juntamente com uma redução significativa de expressão do BDNF, uma neurotrofina chave para o desenvolvimento neurológico e de plasticidade neuronal (FUMAGALLI et al., 2004). Tais mudanças podem levar a modificações estruturais no cérebro e redução na capacidade de se adaptar ou responder a desafios (GRAY et al., 2013), assim como também levar a um prejuízo no processo de neurogênese (DUMAN e VAYDIA , 1998; . ZHANG et al , 2011). Vários estudos tem mostrado que eventos estressantes durante o período gestacional regulam negativamente a neurogênese no hipocampo (LEMAIRE et al., 2000), levando a uma redução da proliferação celular na camada granular, ocasionada pelos altos níveis de corticosterona (MEERLO et al., 2002), e também uma redução do peso ao nascer (DRAGO et al., 1999; SCHNEIDER et al., 1999; LESAGE et al.,2004). Estudos recentes têm mostrado que alterações na nutrição e exposição de GCs durante a gravidez pode levar a modificações na glândula endócrina, metabólica, cardiovascular, e alterações comportamentais em uma forma dependente do sexo através de múltiplas gerações (MORGAN e BALE, 2011; BERTRAM et al., 2008; DRAKE et al., 2005; OWEN e MATTHEWS, 2007).

Se por um lado o estresse durante a gestação tem mostrado inúmeros prejuízos ao longo da vida, intervenções no período pós-natal tem surpreendido pelos efeitos benéficos na vida adulta. O manuseio neonatal é um modelo animal amplamente estudado para avaliar as respostas do animal frente a adversidades no início da vida, e tem mostrado diferentes resultados dependentes do tempo e período da vida em que os animais são submetidos. Vários estudos recentes têm investigado os efeitos benéficos do manuseio, onde os animais apresentam uma maior resiliência na vida adulta bem como uma menor adição por drogas (ALVAREZ et al., 2018; LACAGNINA et al., 2017). Segundo Rio-Alamos e colaboradores (2017), o manuseio durante um curto período de tempo por dia é capaz de diminuir a

ansiedade bem como o estresse ao longo da vida, fazendo com que o organismo crie mecanismos adaptativos a fim de desenvolver mais a prole que foi submetida ao manuseio. No entanto, existem controvérsias sobre os resultados encontrados envolvendo intervenções no período pós-natal.

Filhotes de roedores passam as suas primeiras semanas de vida no ninho materno, assim, interações dos filhotes com a mãe e com o restante da prole são essenciais para o desenvolvimento ideal do cérebro e das habilidades sociais (HUOT et al, 2002; SANCHEZ et al, 2001). A separação da ninhada por períodos prolongados (>2h) é percebida como uma ameaça pela prole e ativa o eixo HPA do neonato, elevando os níveis de corticosterona basais induzidos por estresse na idade adulta (LAJUD et al., 2015). Por outro lado, o IN é um modelo amplamente aceito de manuseio, onde o filhote é isolado da mãe e dos demais filhotes por um período do dia, a fim de investigar as mudanças comportamentais ao longo prazo produzidos por eventos estressores ocorridos precocemente na vida (YOKOYAMA et al., 2006). Nesse contexto, neonatos submetidos a breves períodos de IN apresentam um prejuízo na aprendizagem e na memória (KOSTEN; LEE; KIM, 2007; MARCO et al, 2013), e aumento da vulnerabilidade do adolescente ou adulto ao abuso de drogas (KEHOE et al., 1996; KOSTEN et al., 2006). Porém, outros estudos contestam estes resultados, mostrando que o IN melhora a memória e aumenta a resiliência frente a obstáculos na vida adulta (MAKENA; BUGARITH; RUSSELL, 2012; KEHOE et al, 1995).

O estágio da vida, a espécie e o paradigma comportamental utilizado para avaliar a resposta ao IN podem explicar as discrepâncias encontradas entre os estudos. No entanto, a literatura é escassa a respeito da influência benéfica do IN sobre a resposta ao estresse (KEHOE et al., 1995; MAKENA; BUGARITH; RUSSELL, 2012).

### 2.3 DESENVOLVIMENTO NEURAL

O sistema nervoso em desenvolvimento é altamente vulnerável às influências ambientais, particularmente durante os estágios iniciais da vida (PRYCE e FELDON, 2003; ZHANG e CAI, 2008). Neste período, determinados estímulos podem influenciar o desenvolvimento dos sistemas fisiológico, emocional, cognitivo, neuroendócrino e comportamental (HOFER, 1994; LEHMANN e FELDON, 2000; LEVINE et al., 1967), aumentando a suscetibilidade à depressão (HEIM e NEMEROFF, 2001), transtorno pós-

traumático (YEHUDA et al., 2001), esquizofrenia (HOWES et al., 2004), bem como abuso de drogas aditivas (GORDON, 2002).

O estresse ativa o sistema neuroendócrino a liberar GCs através do eixo HPA e a sua ligação com os receptores de glicocorticoides são responsáveis por exercer a retroalimentação negativa que regula a liberação dessa substância em várias regiões cerebrais, principalmente no hipocampo e córtex pré-frontal (DE VASCONCELLOS et al., 2006; TAGLIARI et al., 2010; FILIPOVIĆ et al., 2011). Neste contexto, é de extrema importância entender a neurogênese nesses tecidos a fim de avaliar a influência do estresse nos diferentes períodos da vida nos sistema cortico-hipotalâmico.

No momento do nascimento o encéfalo já se apresenta bem desenvolvido com camadas corticais, conectividade neuronal e mielinização. A maior parte das funções cognitivas estão relacionadas as camadas corticais. Os neurônios que formam o córtex são originários da zona ventricular, que é uma camada adjacente aos ventrículos do cérebro em desenvolvimento, possuindo células que se diferenciarão em todos os tipos celulares corticais (Figura 3) (CAI et al., 1997; TAKAHASHI et al., 1999). As primeiras células dessa zona que sofrem mitose movem-se em um sentido pré-determinado chamado de glia radial que se alonga da zona ventricular para a camada do córtex em desenvolvimento. Essa célula que primeiramente se forma dá origem aos astrócitos do cérebro adulto e permite interconexões celulares com todos os outros neurônios que irão se formar posteriormente. Os neurônios que ascendem através do caminho radial param inicialmente em uma porção denominada placa cortical (local em que começa a substancia cinzenta do córtex). Em seguida os próximos neurônios que surgem ultrapassam os primeiros e se estabelecem em porções mais externas (superficiais) do córtex, sendo que dessa forma os últimos neurônios a serem formados localizam-se na camada I do córtex cerebral (HERRUP e YANG, 2007). O curso temporal dessa gênese de neurônios varia entre as áreas cerebrais, mas o padrão de crescimento é constante. Qualquer efeito que altere a neurogênese e a migração neuronal resulta em um córtex desorganizado e defeituoso.

Nas primeiras 5 a 6 semanas de gestação as células da zona ventricular se dividem de forma simétrica com crescimento exponencial. Em seguida, ocorre crescimento assimétrico e uma de duas células se torna uma célula migratória. Ao final, grande parte das células que pertenciam à população basal da zona ventricular já migraram e resta uma camada de células que se tornam as células endimárias como demonstrado na figura 3.

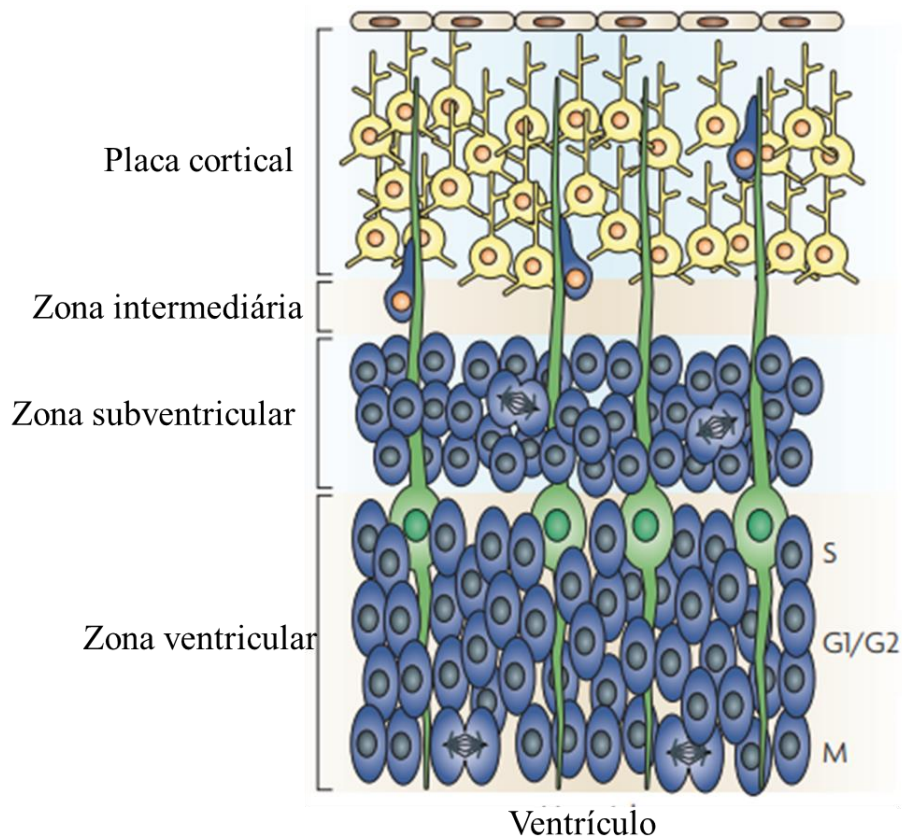


Figura 3: Diagrama esquemático do desenvolvimento do córtex cerebral. Uma seção transversal através da parede do tubo neural é mostrado. As zonas morfológicas são apresentadas à esquerda. As divisões das células neuroepiteliais são mostradas em azul, os neurônios corticais são mostrados em verdes e neurônios maduros em amarelo na camada cortical. Vários recursos do ciclo celular que são importantes para o desenvolvimento do córtex cerebral é mostrado à direita. O ciclo das fases de divisão celular é apresentado na zona ventricular (G1, S, G2 e M). O córtex maduro é gerado a partir da migração sucessiva de células da zona ventricular, resultando em um padrão de dentro para fora de camadas com os primeiros neurônios (primogênitos) que residem nas camadas mais profundas e as últimas células geradas (nascidas tardias) que residem mais superficialmente. Adaptado de Herrup e Yang, 2007.

O giro dentado hipocampal é uma região altamente sensível ao estresse (KAVUSHANSKY et al., 2006, VOUIMBA et al., 2007) e desempenha um papel importante no desempenho cognitivo durante o estresse (HERNANDEZ-RABAZA et al., 2008, NAKASHIBA et al., 2008). O desenvolvimento do giro dentado (*DG- do inglês dentado gyrus*) hipocampal de roedores pode ser subdividido em duas fases principais. Primeiro, as células granulares da camada externa (Figura 4, azul) é originária do neuroepitélio (NE) pré-natal, localizado próximo à fímbria, migra progressivamente da matriz dentada secundária para a zona subapical (*SPZ- do inglês subpial zone*; Figura 4, azul). A primeira migração



dentada (*dgml- do inglês first dentate migration*) é a fonte das primeiras células granulares geradas que constituirão o invólucro exterior da camada granular (ALTMAN e BAYER, 1990; LI et al., 2009). Durante a segunda fase, período pós-natal (Figura 4, vermelho), as células precursoras constroem uma nova zona de proliferação distribuída dentro do hilo, e o esqueleto glial radial embrionário inicial da zona ventricular (VZ- do inglês *ventricular zone*) é substituída por um esqueleto glial secundário que atravessa o hilo (Figura 4, verde). As células da camada radial suportam neurônios em migração e servem de células precursoras para tanto neurogênese e gliogênese (BRUNNE et al., 2013). Essa matriz denteada terciária aumenta sua taxa de proliferação entre DPN3 e DPN10 e é responsável pelo grande aumento da população celular durante o período neonatal (BAYER, 1980). As células granulosas (Figura 4, vermelho) colonizam a camada externa ou núcleo interno da camada de células granulares (GCL- do inglês *granule cell layer*) de maneira simétrica (MARTIN et al., 2002), e a neurogênese segue uma característica gradiente de maturação dorso - ventral (SCHLESSINGER et al., 1975).

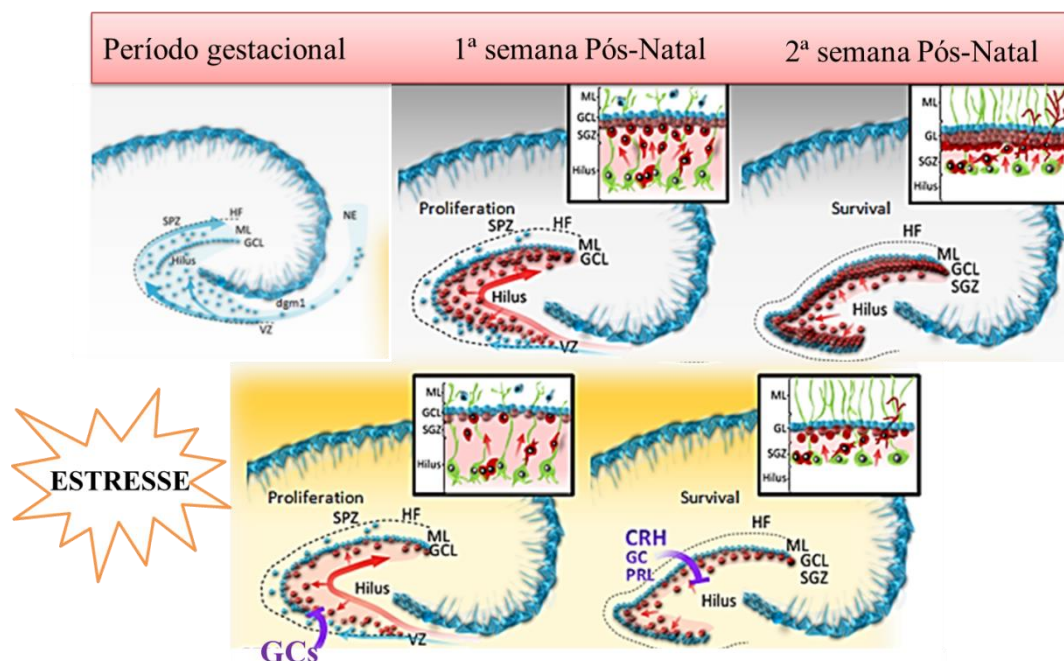


Figura 4: Diagrama esquemático do desenvolvimento do giro denteado desde período fetal até duas semanas pós-natais. Durante o desenvolvimento pré-natal (dias gestacionais 17-22), as células granulares da camada externa (azul) se originam do neuroepitélio e migram para a zona subapical (SPZ) e atravessam o hilo. Ao longo da primeira semana pós-natal, as células precursoras constroem uma nova zona de proliferação distribuída dentro do hilo (vermelho claro) e células granulares do núcleo interno da GCL migram, seguindo a disposição do Andaime glial radial secundário (verde). Durante a segunda semana de vida, o nicho neurogênico está confinado à zona

subgranular (SGZ). O estresse diminui a proliferação e sobrevivência de novos neurônios, gerados na matriz dentária terciária hilar. Adaptado de Lajud e Torner 2015.

Durante a terceira e quarta semanas de vida, o dentado terciário e a matriz desaparecem, e a partir daí, o nicho neurogênico se torna amplamente confinado à zona subgranular (SGZ; ALTMAN e BAYER, 1990b). Esta SGZ é a principal fonte de células granulares produzidas durante o início da vida e na idade adulta. Para que a neurogênese ao longo da vida ocorra, o GD deve manter o nicho de células precursoras adequado na SGZ, que é provável que seja dependente dos mecanismos de desenvolvimento durante a formação do GD. Exposição ao estresse durante diferentes períodos da vida podem ter um impacto significativo na maturação do GD, uma vez que perturba a organização da matriz dentária terciária, alterando permanentemente a estrutura e função do hipocampo imediatamente após a exposição ao estresse (LAJUD e TORNER, 2015).

A neurogênese é suscetível a alterações após eventos estressantes, principalmente durante o seu desenvolvimento (períodos fetal e neonatal), sendo assim, diferentes períodos de exposição ao estresse podem ter respostas prejudiciais ou neuroadaptativas e ter repercussão em vários sistemas, incluindo parâmetros comportamentais (incluindo a memória), bioquímicos e moleculares.

## 2.4 MEMÓRIA E BDNF

Identificado como o mal do século XXI, o estresse tem se tornando rotina na vida das pessoas. A correria do dia a dia e a sobrecarga de trabalho muitas vezes mascaram o primeiro sinal que o corpo tenta mostrar do seu nível de esgotamento: a perda da memória (MARCO et al., 2013).

A memória pode ser dividida em três estágios: sensorial, de curto e de longo prazo. A memória sensorial é responsável pelo processamento das informações, a qual se transforma em memória de curto prazo e em poucos casos acaba sendo transferida para a memória de longo prazo (BADDELEY, 2007). A memória de curto prazo tem duração de cerca de poucos minutos, enquanto a de longo prazo pode ter duração de dias a semanas. Para que ocorra a consolidação deste último tipo de memória, é necessária a síntese proteica e alterações estruturais nos neurônios (KANDEL, 2001; MAYFORD; SIEGELBAUM; KANDEL, 2012).

Entre as regiões envolvidas na memória, o hipocampo e o córtex pré-frontal são as principais áreas que desempenham um importante papel na cognição, sendo essas características dependentes de sua plasticidade. Seus maiores desenvolvimentos ocorrem durante os períodos pré e pós-natal (WILLIAMSON; BILBO, 2013; FERRARIO; REAGAN, 2018). Em modelos animais envolvendo a memória e a aprendizagem, vários fatores foram identificados para o desenvolvimento da consolidação destes processos, dentre eles está a transcrição do BDNF (BAMBAH-MUKKU et al., 2014).

O BDNF é membro da família das neurotrofinas (SHEIKHZADEH et al., 2015) e juntamente com seu receptor TrkB (receptor de tropomiosina quinase B, do inglês *tropomyosin receptor kinase B*) são altamente expressos em áreas cerebrais como hipocampo, hipotálamo, córtex, amígdala e cerebelo (TAPIA-ARANCIBIA et al., 2008). O BDNF é inicialmente sintetizado como uma forma precursora, o pro-BDNF, que sofre clivagem proteolítica para se tornar uma molécula madura (BORODINOVA e SALOZHIN, 2016).

A forma imatura, pro-BDNF, quando se liga ao receptor p75, tem sido responsável por acarretar inúmeros efeitos negativos, entre eles apoptose celular (KANDEL, 2001; REICHARDT, 2006) e atrofia dendrítica (BERRY et al., 2015). Por outro lado, o BDNF possui pouca afinidade a esse receptor e em sua forma madura se liga preferencialmente ao TrkB. A ativação desse receptor é relacionada aos processos de crescimento e sobrevivência neuronal (LU; PANG; WOO, 2005). Esse balanço entre as ligações BDNF-TrkB e pró-BDNF-p75 são importantes para as alterações das estruturas sinápticas, sendo fundamental para a plasticidade sináptica (NEUMANN et al., 2015). Assim, O BDNF é o grande responsável pela promoção da sobrevivência de diferentes neurônios do SNC incluindo hipocampais e corticais e a sua diminuição, especificamente no hipocampo, está relacionada com prejuízos na memória espacial e de reconhecimento em camundongos (HELDT et al., 2007), mostrando que existe um equilíbrio sensível entre o pro-BDNF e o BDNF para condições fisiológicas e patológicas (FOLTRAN e DIAZ, 2016). A relação proBDNF/BDNF determina a atividade neuronal concomitante (BORODINOVA E SALOZHIN, 2016).

Estudos tem demonstrado que o estresse é um fator importante para a diminuição da neurogênese, alterando a transmissão sináptica hipocampal e favorecendo a busca por drogas de abuso (EISCH et al, 2000; BLACK et al., 2004; YANG et al., 2004).

## 2.4 ADIÇÃO

A adição é um quadro caracterizado pelo conjunto de sintomas que indicam o uso compulsivo de uma ou mais substâncias aditivas, ou seja, é um comportamento que foge do controle do indivíduo, o qual manifesta sintomas de disforia, ansiedade e irritabilidade quando é impedido de utilizar tais substâncias (KOOB, Le MOAL, 2008). A adição apresenta um impacto considerável na sociedade, resultando em um dos maiores problemas de saúde pública, uma vez que assola diferentes etnias e classes sociais em todo o mundo (CAMI; FARRE, 2003).

Nos últimos anos, estima-se que cerca de 5% da população mundial, equivalente a um quarto de bilhão de pessoas, usou pelo menos uma vez algum tipo de droga no ano de 2015. O abuso de certos medicamentos prescritos, incluindo opioides, pode alterar a atividade cerebral e levar ao vício. Existem alguns fatores preditivos de dependência grave de opioides descritos na literatura, como a exposição a eventos traumáticos durante a infância ou a vida adulta, a mudança de residência, ou até mesmo o rompimento de relacionamentos e conflitos com os pais (UNODC, 2015).

Nos últimos anos tem se investigado o crescente aumento de mortalidade ocasionado por overdose induzidas por opioides, sejam prescritos ou de uso ilícito (PUJA et al., 2018). De acordo com o Centro de Controle e Prevenção de Doenças, do inglês *Center for Disease Control and Prevention*, a taxa de óbitos devido à overdose causada por opioides, entre eles fentanil e tramadol, somente entre os anos de 2015 e 2016, dobrou nos Estados Unidos (HEDEGAARD et al., 2017). Os americanos são os maiores usuários mundiais de opioides e o uso dessas substâncias se tornou uma epidemia (MANCHIKANTI et al., 2012). Dentre os medicamentos opioides descritos, a morfina, oxicodona e meperidina, juntamente com a ilícita heroína, configuram um dos grupos de drogas mais consumidas abusivamente e assim, levando a adição (POULETTY, 2002; YARGEAU et al., 2014). Durante o período entre 1999 e 2010, houve também um drástico aumento de internações devido ao abuso de medicamentos opioides, assim como também um significativo aumento nas vendas desses medicamentos. Enquanto as vendas de medicamentos opioides no mercado americano aumentaram quatro vezes mais, o número de internações para tratamento de abuso de substâncias ficou seis vezes maior no período (PAULOZZI et al., 2011).

O Brasil é o maior consumidor de analgésicos opioides da América do Sul (BALTIERI et al., 2004; UNODC, 2009). Conforme o segundo levantamento realizado em 2005, pelo Centro Brasileiro de Informações sobre Drogas, envolvendo 108 cidades do país, 1,3% da população fez uso de analgésicos opioides na vida em todas as faixas etárias,

havendo predomínio de uso em mulheres em relação aos homens. Do ponto de vista clínico, a prescrição de opioides é problemática, pois a administração contínua pode levar a tolerância e dependência (ZHU et al., 1999).

## 2.5 OPIOIDES

Opioides são um grupo de substâncias que podem ter origem natural (alcaloides derivadas do ópio, um exsudado extraído da papoula-*Papaver somniferum*), semissintética (produzidas a partir dos alcaloides naturais) ou sintética, as quais são quimicamente distintas, mas com atividade semelhante entre si. Todos os opioides atuam em receptores fisiológicos que recebem o mesmo nome genérico “opioides”, porém apresentam uma distinta classificação por letras gregas ( $\mu$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\kappa$ ,  $\sigma$ ), os quais apresentam ampla distribuição em tecidos neuronais centrais e da periferia. Os opiáceos estão entre as mais antigas drogas conhecidas do mundo arqueológico, onde evidências sugerem que as sementes de papoula eram usadas desde os primórdios da humanidade (ROSENFELD; LOOSE, 2007).

Dentre os opioides, podemos classificá-los como naturais, o que inclui a morfina (Figura 5) e a codeína, os semi-sintéticos, resultantes de pequenas modificações químicas estruturais da morfina ou codeína, tais como, oxycodona, morfina, entre outros; e por fim os opioides sintéticos, tais como a meperidina, a metadona e seus derivados (DUARTE et al., 2005).

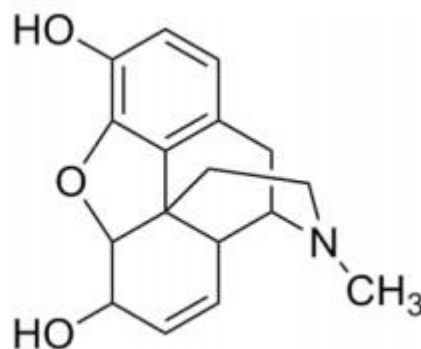
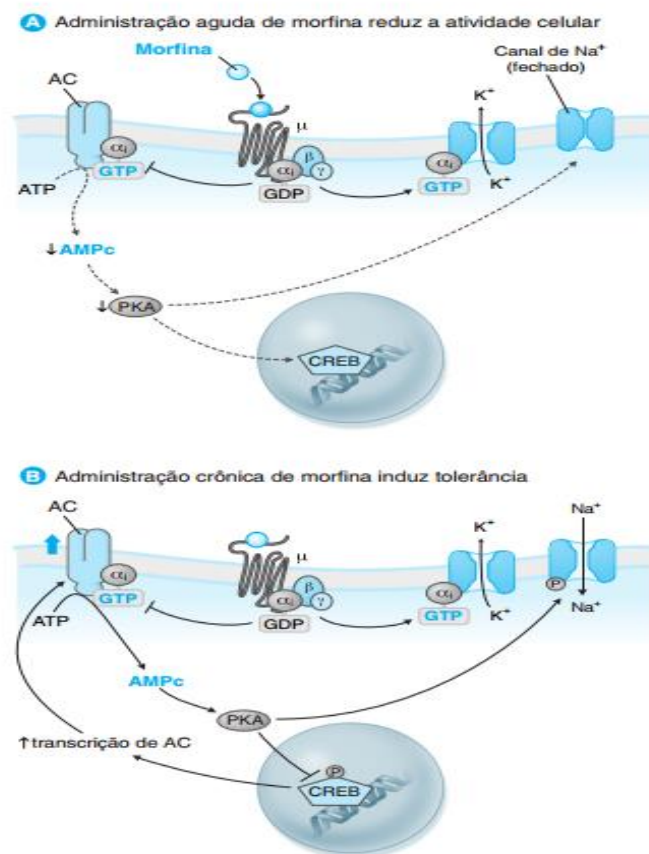


Figura 5: Estrutura morfina. Adaptado de Trescot et al., 2008.

Os efeitos moleculares resultantes da ativação opioide são mediados por receptores metabotrópicos, os quais são acoplados à proteína Gi (inibitória). Em outras palavras, a

ativação destes receptores inibe a atividade da adenilato-ciclase, que por consequência reduz a formação do 2º mensageiro AMPc, resultando no bloqueio da entrada de cálcio e aumento da saída de potássio, ocorrendo assim uma hiperpolarização da membrana (Figura 6A). A administração crônica da droga permite a ativação posterior de um ou mais fatores de transcrição intranucleares, ativando a codificação do gene da adenilato-ciclase, provocando uma verdadeira modificação neuroadaptativa, reduzindo a resposta celular frente à mesma dose inicial da droga opioide (SWIFT; LEWIS, 2009) (Figura 6B).



**Figura 6.** Indução de tolerância à morfina. **Fonte:** Retirado de DAVID e GOLAN, 2009.

Entre os mecanismos que explicam a não-responsividade dos receptores opioides após administração de drogas como os opioides, podemos citar alguns tipos de dessensibilização dos receptores opioides, que incluem a *down-regulation*, internalização e desacoplamento de receptores opioides das proteínas G adjacentes. Estes mecanismos deverão ser dependentes do tráfego intracelular dos receptores opioides, regulado por proteína quinases (KOENING e EDWANDSON, 1997).

A *downregulation* é a alteração no número e na afinidade dos receptores, nos sugerindo um mecanismo atrativo para explicar a perda de capacidade de resposta tão

característica da tolerância. A *downregulation* dos receptores opióides é caracterizada por uma perda generalizada de receptores, tanto dos da superfície celular como dos intracelulares. Por outro lado, a internalização ocorre na ausência de decréscimo na densidade de receptores (DE KEITH et al., 1995). A rápida internalização de receptores deverá desempenhar um papel importante na recuperação funcional pela promoção da dissociação receptor/ligante. Concomitantemente, a endocitose de receptores dessensibilizados é requerida para a desfosforilação, e subsequente ressensibilização para recuperar a sensibilidade ao ligando. Tal como os ligandos peptídicos endógenos, a etorfina e a diidroetorfina estimulam a internalização dos receptores  $\mu$ , enquanto que a morfina ativa os receptores sem causar a sua internalização (ARDEN et al., 1995). Por isso, quando a diidroetorfina é utilizada como analgésico, provoca menos tolerância e dependência do que a morfina (QIN et al., 1994). Assim, tal como já foi referido, no tratamento crônico com a morfina, a ativação de receptores opióides sem internalização provoca distúrbios importantes na homeostasia neuronal, contribuindo para a fisiopatologia da tolerância e dependência (FERGUSON, 2001).

A *down-regulation* e a internalização dos receptores não pode explicar totalmente o fenómeno da tolerância aos opióides. Como alternativa averiguou-se o papel da alteração do acoplamento das proteínas G aos receptores. O mecanismo pelo qual existe desacoplamento de receptores, através da GRK, inicia-se a partir de uma alteração conformacional no receptor, após ligação ao agonista. Isto conduz à ativação da proteína G, sendo que as subunidades  $\beta/\gamma$  livres da proteína G facilitam a translocação da GRK para a membrana plasmática. Verifica-se então a fosforilação dos resíduos serina/treonina, na terceira ansa intracelular e no terminal carboxila. Novamente, a proteína celular arrestina, que possui elevada afinidade para o receptor fosforilado, move-se a partir do citoplasma, ligando-se àquele, dando lugar ao Complexo receptor fosforilado-arrestina. Este mecanismo provoca o desacoplamento da proteína G, tornando o receptor incapaz de transduzir sinal. A fosforilação do receptor isolado não reduz significativamente a sua capacidade de ativar proteínas G (FERGUSON, 2001). Estes conceitos são importantes para o entendimento de como uma pré-exposição à opioides pode alterar a resposta a essas substâncias ao longo da vida.

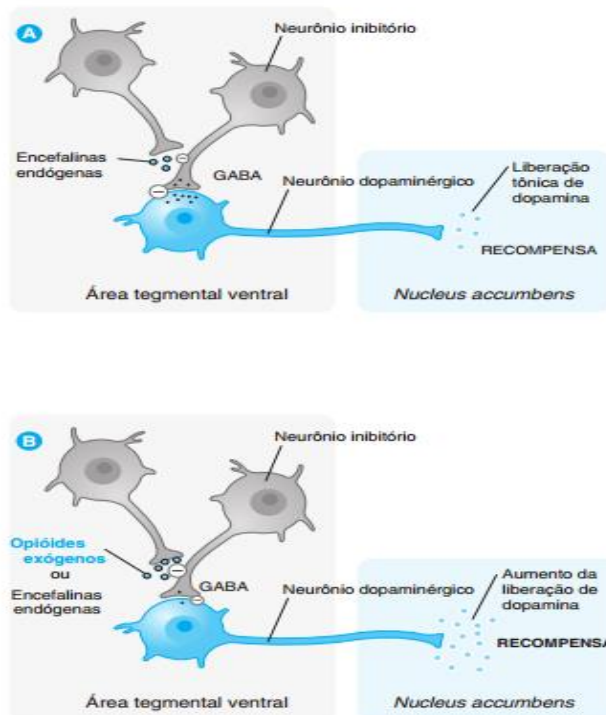
Tem sido relatado que a exposição crônica a opioides pode diminuir significativamente a neurogênese e alterar a transmissão sináptica no hipocampo (EISCH et al, 2000), que é uma região importante envolvida na restauração e distribuição da informação associada à adição no cérebro (NESTLER, 2001), participando de resposta relacionada a recompensa (WHITE,

1996; REZAYOF et al., 2003) e o comportamento de procura à droga (VOREL et al, 2001; BLACK et al., 2004; YANG et al., 2004).

O perigo potencial da maioria dos opioides é que o seu uso prolongado resulta em dependência física e psicológica (KALTENBACH, 1996). A morfina apresenta uso clínico no alívio de dores viscerais ou terminais, sendo eficaz para dor moderada a grave, e cuja eficácia vai se perdendo com o rápido desenvolvimento de tolerância. Além disso, a morfina é capaz de desencadear quadros de dependência física e psíquica, fazendo com que sua privação desencadeie um processo aversivo de grave síndrome de abstinência (O'BRIEN, 1997).

Mesmo após o desaparecimento dos sintomas físicos de dependência, ex-usuários crônicos de opioides sofrem grandes taxas de recaídas ao uso dessas drogas. Isso se explica devido existência de uma interação entre o sistema opioide e de recompensa encefálico como demonstrado na Figura 7 (NESTLER, 1996). Um local de ação situa-se na área tegumental ventral, onde interneurônios GABAérgicos causam a inibição tônica dos neurônios dopaminérgicos responsáveis pela ativação da via de recompensa encefálica no *nucleus accumbens* (Figura 7A) (JOHNSON; NORTH, 1992). Esses interneurônios GABAérgicos podem ser inibidos por encefalinas endógenas, que se ligam a receptores  $\mu$ -opioides nas terminações GABAérgicas (Figura 7B) (KOOB, 1992; WISE, 1990). Os opioides exógenos, como a morfina, também se ligam aos receptores  $\mu$ -opioides e os ativam, um opioide exógeno administrado poderia ativar a via de recompensa encefálica mediante desinibição dos neurônios dopaminérgicos na área tegumental ventral e conseqüentemente o aumento liberação de dopamina (CHESSELET et al., 1983; DEVINE et al., 1993).





**Figura 7-** Papel dos opióides na via de recompensa encefálica. Fonte: DAVID e GOLAN (2009).

Os receptores opioides estão presentes em várias áreas do cérebro, e vários mecanismos podem ser afetados pela exposição aos opioides (YANAI et al., 2003). Os ratos são usados extensivamente para estudar os efeitos do desenvolvimento de dependência por opioides, porque muitas das suas respostas às drogas se assemelham as dos seres humanos (BASHORE et al., 1981). Estudo anterior do nosso grupo de pesquisa mostrou que animais expostos ao estresse durante a gestação se tornaram dependentes de morfina quando submetidos ao modelo de preferência condicionada de lugar (PCL) na adolescência e que essa preferência foi prevenida por manuseios neonatais em outro grupo experimental (VEY et al., 2015). Outro estudo também mostrou que ratos criados em isolamento social demonstraram uma disfunção em mecanismos de recompensa em comum entre opiáceos, cocaína e outras drogas, podendo refletir em alterações de neurotransmissores como dopamina, serotonina e noradrenalina (WONGWITDECHA e MARSDEN, 1996). Sendo assim, é necessário uma investigação a nível molecular a fim de descobrir mecanismos que expliquem as diferentes respostas do estresse (pré e pós-natal) frente a receptores  $\mu$  opioides.

## 2.6 ESTRESSE OXIDATIVO

Após a exposição a eventos estressantes, ocorre um aumento dos níveis de glicocorticóides circulantes, cuja persistência permanece ao longo do tempo, permitindo a ocorrência de efeitos deletérios prejudiciais ao sistema nervoso, especialmente. Estes efeitos são refletidos sobre a geração de espécies reativas (MCINTOSH e SAPOLSKY, 1996), embora as mesmas participem de processos fisiológicos normais, quando em excesso, são causadoras de danos oxidativos em cascata, afetando assim biomoléculas e estruturas celulares. Tal processo é desencadeado quando as defesas antioxidantes do organismo são insuficientes, instalando-se um estado de estresse oxidativo progressivo (GUTTERIDGE e HALLIWELL, 2000) que se mantém até que o sistema de defesa antioxidante seja restaurado, ou o processo gerador de ER seja interrompido.

Os radicais livres são moléculas altamente reativas contendo um ou mais elétrons não emparelhados. Eles doam ou ganham elétrons de outras moléculas na tentativa de emparelhar seus elétrons e gerar uma espécie mais estável (GITTO et al., 2002; POUROVA et al., 2010). Os radicais livres são normalmente produzidos em organismos vivos e estão divididos em duas grandes categorias: espécies reativas de oxigênio (EROs) e espécies reativas de nitrogênio (ERN). Quando produzidas em concentrações fisiológicas, EROs se comportam como importantes mediadores de quase todas as funções celulares. Embora EROs participem de processos fisiológicos normais, quando em excesso, podem causar danos oxidativos em biomoléculas e estruturas celulares. Se, em adição ao aumento da produção de EROs, existe também uma diminuição das defesas antioxidantes, um estado de estresse oxidativo se instala (GUTTERIDGE e HALLIWELL, 2000; AGARWAL et al. 2005; RIZZO et al. 2008, 2012). Reações de radicais livres podem causar alteração de macromoléculas, tais como ácidos graxos poli-insaturados e proteínas. A peroxidação de lipídios de membrana pode levar a uma alteração nas propriedades funcionais da bicamada lipídica das membranas celulares, com consequentes mudanças na sua permeabilidade. Quanto às proteínas, a sua oxidação pode desencadear alterações na estrutura dos poros da membrana (SALVI et al., 2001) ou pode danificar o DNA induzindo fragmentação, que por sua vez, resultam em mutações e oncogênese (SAUGSTAD 2003; RAJDL et al., 2005). Sob circunstâncias fisiológicas, os radicais livres são mantido sob controle por um sistema antioxidante adequado cuja ativação depende da quantidade da lesão oxidativa (HALLIWELL 2011).

O sistema antioxidante é classificado como endógeno e exógeno, enzimático (superóxido dismutase, SOD; catalase, CAT; glutathione peroxidase, GPx) e não enzimática [(antioxidantes e melatonina de tiol), vitaminas (vitamina A, E, C)] e componentes não

vitamínicos (carotenoides e polifenóis) que funcionam de forma sinérgica para neutralizar os radicais livres (Figura 8). Existe um equilíbrio crítico entre a geração de radicais livres e as defesas antioxidantes. Os antioxidantes podem agir inibindo a geração de radicais livres, evitando a oxidação de substratos (RIZZO et al., 2012) ou podem comportar-se como catadores, neutralizando os radicais livres, transformando-os em produtos estáveis quimicamente (STRATTON e LIEBLER 1997; RIZZO et al. 2012). Tanto na medicina humana quanto na veterinária, o estresse oxidativo pode ser um cofator no desenvolvimento de muitas disfunções neonatais, levando a graves problemas sistêmicos e prejudicar a sua vitalidade (GITTO et al., 2009; GUZELBEKTES et al., 2012; MUTINATI et al., 2013).

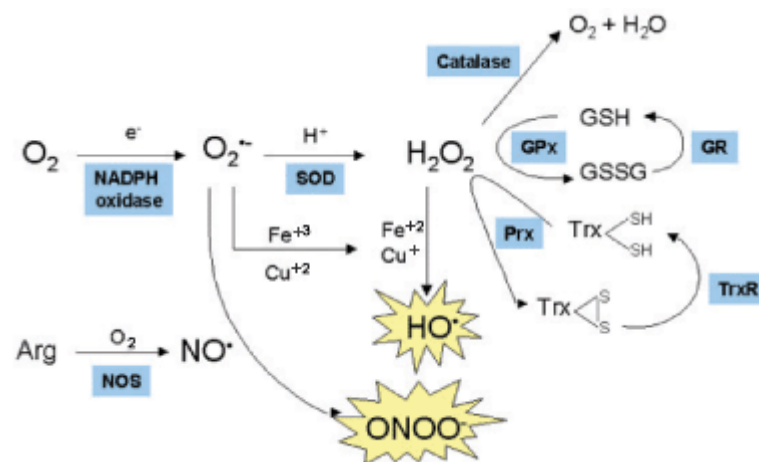


Figura 8: Esquema das reações e respectivas enzimas (azul) envolvidas na formação de espécies reativas de oxigênio e nitrogênio. NOS: NO sintase; SOD: superóxido dismutase; GPx: glutatona peroxidase; Prx: peroxirredoxnas; GR: glutatona redutase; TrxR: tiorredoxina redutase; Trx: tiorredoxina; GSH: glutatona reduzida; GSSG: glutatona oxidada.

Os recém-nascidos são mais propensos a desenvolver estresse oxidativo do que crianças ou adultos. Esta situação parece ser relacionada à exposição de elevadas concentrações de oxigênio nesse período. Muitos estudos mostraram que os recém-nascidos são mais suscetíveis a desenvolver infecções ou inflamação e possuem uma redução das defesas antioxidantes em comparação com os adultos (SAUGSTAD 2003, 2005). A transição da vida fetal para neonatal ao nascimento induz alterações fisiológicas agudas e complexas. Durante o nascimento, o feto é transferido de um ambiente hipóxico intrauterino com 20-25 mmHg tensão de oxigênio ( $PO_2$ ) para um ambiente extrauterino com condições normais de oxigênio de aproximadamente 100 mmHg  $PO_2$  (GITTO et al. 2009). O aumento da tensão do

oxigênio induz uma produção elevada de EROs, detectáveis no sangue do cordão no nascimento ou, quanto aos animais, no sangue retirado da veia jugular, em neonatos animais (SHOJI e KOLETZKO 2007; RIZZO et al. 2012; MUTINATI et al., 2013).

Na presença de um agente estressor, ocorre liberação de aminoácidos excitatórios (glutamato e aspartato) em algumas áreas cerebrais (MOGHADDAM, 1993), o que leva à excitabilidade contínua dos neurônios, aumento de cálcio intracelular, ativação de proteases, lipases e peroxidases, que podem gerar radicais livres e inclusive levar à morte neuronal (GARCÍA-BUENO et al., 2008). Se este aumento persiste durante um longo período de tempo (por exemplo, fatores de estresse crônico), os efeitos deletérios começam a aparecer, os quais são particularmente prejudiciais para o sistema nervoso central. Estes efeitos deletérios foram relatados por aumentar a geração de EROs (MCINTOSH e SAPOLSKY, 1996). O cérebro é especialmente vulnerável aos radicais livres, assim, muitos estudos têm demonstrado seus efeitos sobre o hipocampo e córtex pré-frontal (DE VASCONCELLOS et al., 2006; TAGLIARI et al., 2010; FILIPOVIĆ et al., 2011).

Dadas essas premissas, um profundo conhecimento sobre os fatores que afetam o estado de estresse oxidativo durante os períodos fetais e neonatais servem como ferramentas a fim de evitar efeitos duradouros na vida adulta.



### 3. OBJETIVOS

Investigar a influência do estresse aplicado durante os períodos fetal e pós-natal sobre parâmetros morfológicos, bioquímicos e moleculares, como também as consequências decorrentes da exposição à morfina na prole adulta.

#### 3.1 OBJETIVOS ESPECÍFICOS

- Investigar a influência de protocolos de estresse provocados durante o período fetal sobre os níveis plasmáticos de corticosterona, acessando também parâmetros de estresse oxidativo, moleculares e de morte celular;
  
- Avaliar a influência de protocolos de estresse provocados durante o período pós-natal sobre parâmetros comportamentais, bioquímicos, moleculares e de integridade celular;
  
- Investigar a influência de protocolos de estresse provocados durante os períodos fetal e pós-natal sobre a imunoreatividade de receptores  $\mu$  opioides (MOR) após a exposição de animais adultos à morfina;



#### 4. RESULTADOS

Manuscrito 1:

### **Gestational stress causes oxidative damages, modifies tissue integrity and affects BDNF, GR and Mu-opioid receptors in brain areas of adolescent offspring**

L.T. Vey<sup>a</sup>; H.Z. Rosa<sup>c</sup>; R.C.S. Barcelos<sup>b</sup>; V.T. Dias<sup>b</sup>; V.G. Metz<sup>b</sup>; Y. N. Samara<sup>c</sup>; M. I. U. M. Rocha<sup>bc</sup>; M.M.M.F. Duarte<sup>bd</sup>; M. E. Burger<sup>abc\*</sup>.

Status: **Submetido**



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**Abstract**

Gestational stress (gest-S) is related to hyperreactivity of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, changes in synaptic plasticity and neuronal loss. We assessed the influence of gest-S on biochemical, molecular and histological parameters in the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus as well as the influence of gest-S on mu-opioid receptors (MOR) of adolescent offspring exposed to morphine. Dams were exposed to chronic mild stress (CMS) during pregnancy. On postnatal day (PND) 50, one group (protocol I) was euthanized for analyses. Another group was exposed to morphine (protocol II) to assess gest-S influences on MOR immunoreactivity. Gest-S group had: i) increased corticosterone plasma level and decreased glucocorticoid receptor (GR) immunoreactivity in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus; ii) increased lipid peroxidation (LP) and protein carbonyl (PC) levels in the same brain areas, besides increased catalase (CAT) activity in prefrontal cortex; iii) increased and decreased brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus respectively, in addition to increased pro-BDNF immunoreactivity in both brain structures. Negative correlations reinforced the involvement of plasma corticosterone and GR immunoreactivity, whereas oxidative damages presented positive and negative correlations with BDNF in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, respectively. The findings from the second experimental set were: i) increased MOR immunoreactivity per se in hippocampus; ii) morphine increased MOR levels in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus. Histological evaluations reinforced gest-S-induced impairments, as observed by neuronal loss, especially in hippocampus. Our outcomes indicate that the prenatal period is critical for stress exposure causing biochemical and morphological changes that remain throughout life.

*Keywords: BDNF; corticosterone; glucocorticoid receptor; HPA axis; morphine.*

## 1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), stress affects about 90% of the world population. Brazil leads the ranking of anxiety and depression in Latin America, as 70% of its population suffers from this disease [1-2]. Stress during pregnancy has been associated with a diversity of behavioral alterations and pathologies in postnatal life [3], which can lead to changes in the response to HPA axis and consequently increased serum glucocorticoid levels, allowing the occurrence of deleterious adverse effects mainly on the central nervous system [4].

Sustained increase in corticosterone levels, along with the decrease of receptors such as glucocorticoids (GR) and mineralocorticoid receptors (MR) [5] may directly reflect on the generation of reactive species (RS). Such pro-oxidant species are part of normal physiological processes but may cause oxidative damages when generated in excess, triggering a cascade of effects that could affect biomolecules and cellular structures [6]. This process is triggered when antioxidant defenses are inefficient, creating a state of progressive oxidative stress [7].

This sustained increase in glucocorticoids is also capable of inducing persistent changes in neurotrophins levels. BDNF is one of the most important neurotrophic factors, which promotes and maintains the growth and survival in the central nervous system [8], and its level has been associated with learning-related neurogenesis [9]. However, when its synthesis is impaired, this neurotrophin is capable of inhibiting cell proliferation in different brain areas such as prefrontal cortex and hippocampus [10-11].

In addition to causing deep changes in the endocrine system, stress during the gestational period is also associated with an increase in anxiety and consequently drug abuse [12]. It is estimated that around 5% of the world population, equivalent to quarter of a billion people, at least once used drugs in 2015. The abuse of certain prescribed medications, including opioids, can alter brain activity and lead to addiction. There are some predictive factors of severe dependence on opioids described in the literature, such as exposure to traumatic events during childhood or adulthood, change of residence, breaking up relationships and conflicts with parents. In addition, there appears to be a greater trend for drug abuse by adolescents, women and older adults [13].

A previous study from our laboratory evidenced that animals exposed to different types of stress during the perinatal and postnatal period showed different responses to the rewarding effects of addictive drugs as morphine [12]. Our findings indicated increased

anxiety in animals exposed to stress during the prenatal period together with increased morphine preference, as observed in CPP paradigm. Here we examine biomolecular and morphological alterations under gest-S-induced anxiety and morphine preference. More specifically, we looked for changes in oxidative stress, BDNF signaling, and tissue integrity in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus (areas involved in both stress and addiction). As stress has also been related to changes in the release of endogenous opioids [14], we decided to also investigate whether MOR levels respond to morphine exposure, since we observed changes in morphine preference in our previous study [12].

Considering this, our current objective was to evaluate the influence of gestational stress on oxidative, molecular and histological parameters in both prefrontal cortex and hippocampus of adolescent rats, and the levels of MOR receptors after morphine exposure as well.

## **2. Material and Methods**

### *2.1 Animals*

Pregnant Wistar rats from the local breeding facility (Federal University of Santa Maria) were individually housed with free access to food and water and under a 12 h light/dark cycle at 22-23 °C temperature. Research was approved by the Animal Ethics Committee of the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (027132-UFSM) affiliated to the National Council for the Control of Animal Experimentation (CONCEA), following international norms of animal care and maintenance.

### *2.2 Gestational stress (gest-S) procedure*

Pregnant rats were daily submitted to the chronic mild stress (CMS) protocol during the days 7 to 20 of gestation. A modified version of Willner et al., [15] was used as stress model. The protocol is based on the exposure to two or three different stressors per day under an unpredictable schedule of: group housing, cage tilting (45°), cage switching, damp sawdust, lights on overnight, isolation and foreign object in cage for 14 consecutive days. The stressors were applied two or three times a day: morning and afternoon for 1 or 2 h and overnight. This protocol did not involve any food or water deprivation [15].

### *2.3 Protocol I- Influence of gestational stress on oxidative, molecular and histological markers in rats*

Because we previously reported that both angiogenesis and increased morphine preference result from gest-S, we decided to investigate possible molecular, histological, and biochemical underpinnings of these behavioral alterations. Thus, protocol I was performed to quantify the main hormone involved in the response to stressful events: corticosterone. Samples were collected soon after birth (PND9, a period with high levels of corticosterone [12]), and then again during adolescence to investigate if the levels of this hormone would be maintained throughout life. Corticosterone levels are known to be regulated by glucocorticoid receptor (GR) binding, which is responsible for initiating negative feedback and suppressing the release of this hormone. Thus, we investigated the GR immunoreactivity to elucidate the reason why corticosterone levels do not return to baseline levels after stressful events.

Many are the consequences of sustained levels of circulating corticosterone, including the generation of reactive species and alterations on the synthesis of neurotrophins, primarily damaging cerebral lipids and proteins. Thus, we quantified the effects of stress during gestation through biochemical analysis on lipid markers (lipid peroxidation) and proteins (carbonylated protein) and molecular markers, such as neurotrophins involved in neurobiology (pro-BDNF and BDNF). Finally, our histological observations showed interesting changes evoked by the gestational stress, which were essentially evidenced by tissue atrophy, cell loss and vacuolization in both prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, indicating a close relation between biochemical and molecular impairments and tissue damages [16].

### *2.3.1 Experimental procedures*

Dams were either exposed ( $n = 5$ ) or not ( $n = 5$ ) to CMS. On PND 1, two male pups of each mother were assigned to gest-S ( $n=10$ ) or no stress (NS) ( $n=10$ ) groups. On PND 9, four male pups from each group were euthanized for blood sampling for corticosterone analysis ( $n=4$ ). On PND 50, the remaining animals were anesthetized and euthanized by exsanguination (blood was collected by cardiac puncture in heparinized tubes) aiming at plasma corticosterone analysis, and their brains were dissected for biochemical, molecular and histological analyses, as shown in Figure 1.

### *2.4 Protocol II- Influence of gestational stress on MOR immunoreactivity after morphine exposure*

Given our previous report on stress-induced morphine preference [12], protocol II aimed at verifying the influence of stress during pregnancy on molecular parameters, such as MOR, after the exposure to morphine injections.

#### *2.4.1 Experimental procedures*

For Protocol II, six dams were exposed or not to CMS as previously described. On PND 1, male pups were identified and two pups from each mother were assigned to the following experimental groups: gest-S (n=12) and no stress (NH) (n=12). From PND 46-49, half of the animals from each group were redistributed and assigned to receive saline (n=6) or morphine (n=6) (4mg/kg; intraperitoneally, once a day, for four days). Morphine exposure was fulfilled to assess the influence of gestational stress on MOR immunoreactivity. On PND 50, rats were anesthetized and euthanized for molecular analyses, as shown in Figure 1.

#### *2.4.2 Drug*

The concentration of 4mg/Kg de Morphine sulfate (10mg/mL- Dimorf<sup>®</sup>) used in this protocol was standardized by Vey et al. [12] in previous studies of our laboratory.

#### *2.5 Biochemical assessments*

On PND 50, animals were anesthetized (sodium pentobarbital, 50 mg/kg body weight i.p.) and euthanized by cardiac exsanguinations (blood was collected by cardiac puncture in heparinized tubes). Plasma was collected on PND 9 and PND 50 for determination of corticosterone levels. After decapitation, brains were immediately removed and both prefrontal cortex and hippocampus were dissected and homogenized in Tris-HCl (10mM, pH7,4) 10 volumes (w/v) for quantification of protein carbonyl (PC) and lipid peroxidation (LP) levels, which estimate oxidative damage to proteins and lipid, respectively, as well (CAT) activity, which indicates antioxidant defense.

##### *2.5.1 Plasma corticosterone measurement (CORT)*

Corticosterone analyses were performed on PND 9 following the protocol of previous studies of our group [12] to show the effects of stress during the gestational period soon after birth and on PND 50 to elucidate the persistent deleterious effects throughout life. Plasma samples were collected between 9:00 and 10:00 am [17] and examined for corticosterone

levels through enzyme immunoassay (ELISA) using a commercial kit following the manufacturer's instructions (Immuno Biological Laboratories).

### *2.5.2 Lipid peroxidation (LP) estimation*

Oxidative damage to lipids in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus was estimated by the method described by Ohkawa et al. [18]. Briefly, TBARS assay that estimates LP was determined through the pink chromogen produced by the reaction of thiobarbituric acid (TBA) with malondialdehyde (MDA) at 100°C, spectrophotometrically measured at 532 nm. The results were expressed as nmol MDA/g tissue.

### *2.5.3 Protein carbonyl (PC) quantification*

Oxidative damage to proteins in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus was determined by the method of Yan et al. [19]. Soluble protein was mixed with 2,4-dinitrophenylhydrazine (DNPH; 10mM in 2MHCl) or HCl (2 M) and incubated at room temperature for 1 h. Denaturing buffer (150 mM sodium phosphate buffer, pH 6.8, with 3% sodium dodecyl sulfate), ethanol (99.8%) and hexane (99.5%) were added, mixed by shaking and centrifuging. The protein isolated from the interface was washed twice with ethyl acetate/ethanol 1:1 (v/v) and suspended in denaturing buffer. Each DNPH sample was read at 370 nm in a spectrophotometer against the corresponding HCl sample (blank). Results were expressed as nmol carbonyl/g tissue.

### *2.5.4 Catalase (CAT) activity*

To determine an antioxidant defense, CAT activity was quantified by the method of Aebi [20], which involves monitoring the H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> disappearance in the presence of cell homogenate (pH 7 at 25 °C) at 240 nm for 120 s. Data were expressed in μmol H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>/min/g tissue.

## *2.6 Immunoblotting*

Samples of prefrontal cortex and hippocampus were homogenized with lysis buffer containing 137 mM NaCl, 20 mM Tris–HCl pH 8.0, 1 % NP40, 10 % glycerol, 1 mM phenyl methyl sulfonyl fluoride (PMSF), 10 μg mL<sup>-1</sup> aprotinin, 0.1 mM benzethonium chloride, and 0.5 mM sodium vanadate to determine total protein concentration according to the MicroBCA procedure (Pierce, IL, USA), using bovine serum albumin (BSA) as standard. Briefly, 25 μg

of each protein samples were loaded and separated by electrophoresis on a 10 and 12.5 % polyacrylamide gel (according to protein molecular weight), and electrotransferred to a PVDF membrane (Millipore, MA, USA). Non-specific binding sites were blocked in Tris-buffered saline (TBS), pH 7.6, containing 5 % non-fat dry milk. Membranes were rinsed in buffer (0.05 % Tween-20 in TBS) and then incubated with primary antibodies. For protocol I, the primary antibodies used were anti-actin (1:3000; Santa Cruz Biotechnology Cat# sc-1616, RRID:AB\_630836), anti-proBDNF (1:500), anti-BDNF (1:500; Santa Cruz Biotechnology Cat# sc-546, RRID:AB\_630940) and anti-GR (1:500; Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Cat# sc-1004, RRID:AB\_2155786), followed by the secondary antibody anti-rabbit (1:40.000; Santa Cruz Biotechnology Cat# sc-2054) or anti-goat (1:40.000; Santa Cruz Biotechnology Cat# sc-1616, RRID:AB\_630836) IgG horseradish peroxidase conjugate. For Protol II anti-actin (1:3000; Santa Cruz Biotechnology Cat# sc-1616, RRID: AB\_630836) and anti-MOR (1:500; Santa Cruz Biotechnology Cat# sc-7488, RRID: AB\_2156522) were used followed by the appropriate secondary antibody incubation. After being rinsed with buffer, immune complexes were visualized by chemiluminescence using the ECL kit (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech Inc., NJ, USA) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Film signals were digitally scanned, and then quantified using ImageJ software. Actin was used as an internal control for Western blot so that data were standardized according to its value.

### *2.7 Histological analysis*

The samples were fixed in 10% buffered formalin, embedded in paraffin and sectioned, deparaffinized and stained with hematoxylin and eosin (HE). Images were captured with a 50x magnification, through a camera coupled to the light microscope. As a qualitative indicator of neuronal loss and atrophy, the linear thickness of hippocampal granular layer (GL) of the DG ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) and presence of vacuoles was evaluated of the NS and gest-S experimental groups. Images were obtained through an image analysis system (Axiovision, Carl Zeiss MicroImagnig, Jena, Germany) in a 50x magnification, captured with a digital camera coupled to the light microscope (AxioStarPluSS, Carl Zeiss) and visualized with the aid of a computer with processor (Pentium 4, with 3.00 GHz, 512Mb of RAM-Operating System Microsoft Windows XP-Monitor LG model FLATRONezT710SH, 64M, 17 inches color), associated with a binocular optical microscope (Olympus, model BX51 / BX52), with video camera (Olympus, model OLY-200) attached.



## 2.8 Statistical analyses

Levene's test was applied to data from protocol I and II to verify data homogeneity. Biochemical and molecular analyses from protocol I were performed by Student's T test ( $P < 0.05$  significance level). These data were submitted to Pearson's correlations and critical P value was corrected by Bonferroni. MOR levels from protocol II were analyzed by Two-way ANOVA [2 (NS and Gest-S) x 2 (morphine, vehicle)] followed by Tukey's multiple range test at  $P < 0.05$  significance level.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Protocol I

Student's t-test revealed that Gest-S was able to increase corticosterone levels in pups and adolescent offspring when compared to NS group ( $P < 0.001$ ). In addition, gest-S decreased GR levels in both prefrontal cortex and hippocampus in relation to NS group ( $P < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 2).

Gest-S exposure increased LP and PC levels in the prefrontal cortex ( $P < 0.001$ ;  $P < 0.01$ , respectively) and hippocampus ( $P < 0.005$  and  $P < 0.001$ , respectively). Gest-S also exerted influences on CAT, whose activity was increased in the prefrontal cortex ( $P < 0.01$ , respectively), but it was not modified in the hippocampus (Fig. 3). Student's t-test showed that gest-S exposure increased pro-BDNF level in both prefrontal cortex and hippocampus in relation to NS group ( $P < 0.001$  and  $P < 0.001$ , respectively) (Fig. 4A). Furthermore, immunoreactivity assays showed that after gest-S exposure, BDNF was increased in the prefrontal cortex ( $P < 0.001$ ) and decreased in the hippocampus ( $P < 0.001$ ), in comparison to NS group (Fig. 4B).

Interestingly, correlation with GR immunoreactivity in both the prefrontal cortex ( $r^2 = 0.97$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and hippocampus ( $r^2 = 0.89$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) (Fig. 5A-B). Also interestingly, opposite correlations between LP and BDNF levels were observed depending on the brain area: positive in the prefrontal cortex ( $r^2 = 0.75$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), but negative in the hippocampus ( $r^2 = 0.73$ ,  $p < 0.007$ ) (Fig. 5C-D).

Histological analysis involving both prefrontal cortex and hippocampal DG indicated differences between the experimental groups (NS and gest-S). While in the NS group a higher integrity of the hippocampal DG (145.04  $\mu\text{m}$ ) was observed (Fig. 6A), gest-S exposure was related to atrophy and neuronal loss in this brain area, as observed by decreased thickness of

the granular layer (70.79  $\mu\text{m}$ ) and vacuolization (Fig. 6B). In the prefrontal cortex, neurons and vacuoles were observed following gest-S exposure (Fig. 6D).

### 3.2 Protocol II

Two-way ANOVA of MOR levels in the prefrontal cortex revealed significant effect of stress and a significant drug x stress interaction [ $F(1,20) = 99.96, P < 0.001$  and  $87.54, P < 0.001$ , respectively]. The post-hoc test showed that morphine decreased and increased prefrontal MOR immunoreactivity in NS and gest-S subjects respectively (Fig. 7).

Two-way ANOVA of MOR levels in the hippocampus revealed a significant main effect of stress and drug [ $F(1,20) = 61.78, P < 0.001$  and  $42.63, P < 0.001$  respectively]. Differently from the prefrontal cortex, hippocampal levels of MOR were increased by gest-S per se, while morphine administration increased MOR immunoreactivity in both NS and gest-S groups in comparison to saline (Fig. 7).

## 4. Discussion

In the current study, we evaluated biochemical, molecular and histological alterations in the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus of young rats that had been exposed to gestational stress (gest-S). We also investigated the effects of morphine on MOR immunoreactivity in these same animals previously exposed to gest-S as well.

Our study showed that stress exposure during the gestational period was related to increased plasma corticosterone level, which was sustained throughout life (evaluated on DPN9 and DPN50). These findings confirm the GR immunoreactivity reduction in both structures (prefrontal cortex and hippocampus). In fact, GR activation inhibits the release of glucocorticoids from the HPA axis, thus exerting negative feedback mechanism. While glucocorticoids initiate adaptive processes that generate energy for coping with stress, prolonged or inappropriate glucocorticoid secretion becomes deleterious, which may lead to psychiatric disorders, including depression [21]. In this sense, healthy blood levels of glucocorticoids are critical for homeostasis and adaptive responses to stress [22]. Our histological findings are in agreement with these data, since animals exposed to gest-S presented lower thickness of the granular layer and presence of vacuoles as indicators of neuronal loss in both prefrontal cortex and hippocampus. This way, these outcomes are evidencing a strong relation between the sustained increase of corticosterone and the histological damages found in this study.

Intense metabolic fluctuations occur in both mother and fetus during pregnancy, facilitating oxidative stress development in comparison to non-pregnant state, even under normal conditions. These oxidative events have been linked to an elevated level of mitochondrial activity, especially involving the placenta, which is an important source of reactive species to the fetus [23]. Additional evidences suggested that both oxidative stress and mitochondrial dysfunction may be involved in stress-induced neurological damages and cognitive impairments during the gestational period [24]. This line of thought is in accordance with our current findings, which show a connection between gestational stress and increased oxidative damages in both prefrontal cortex and hippocampus.

This was observed through PC and LP levels, in addition to increased CAT in the prefrontal cortex. In fact, increased CAT together with the higher level of BDNF in the prefrontal cortex of gest-S exposed groups indicate the development of protective mechanisms in this brain area. Such development was evidenced by histological assessments and positive correlation between LP and BDNF in the prefrontal cortex. Conversely, our results showed an increased oxidative damage in the hippocampus, where CAT activity was not modified, resulting in lower levels of BDNF and negative correlation between LP and BDNF in this brain area.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the gestational stress represents a valid model of stress with long-term neurobiological and behavioral consequences to the offspring, since an increased level of glucocorticoids in the blood was correlated to low levels of BDNF in the hippocampus. Indeed, BDNF is a neurotrophin found in the brain in different developmental stages that can follow one of two distinct pathways exerting opposite influences on the cells [25]. While Pro-BDNF has a high affinity for the p75 receptor and is responsible for inducing dendritic atrophy and cellular apoptosis, its mature form, BDNF, activates the TrkB receptor, yielding positive cellular events, as cell proliferation, regulation of neuronal plasticity, survival and neural differentiation [26]. Prenatal stress exposure had been related to increased pro-BDNF and decreased BDNF expression in hippocampus and prefrontal cortex of adolescent rats [27], corroborating our current findings. Thus, there seems to be a direct relation between gestational stress and increased oxidative damage, with downstream neurobiological effects on multiple brain areas. This is reinforced by the correlations we found among corticosterone plasma levels, as well as interesting positive and negative correlations, which were found among corticosterone plasma levels and biochemical/

molecular markers in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, together with oxidative damage markers and molecular changes in the same brain tissues.

In several species including humans, the hippocampus is well known to be involved in both learning and addiction [28-29], and hippocampal plasticity mechanisms supporting the formation of contextual and declarative memories may be sensitive to addictive drugs [30]. In this sense, the hippocampal endogenous opioid system has been implicated in the addiction to opioids such as morphine, heroin and other similar drugs [31]. As it was already described, endogenous opioids are released in different brain areas following stress exposure, thus activating MOR [32].

Previous studies from our laboratory have shown the effects of stress during pregnancy on parameters of anxiety and dependence on drugs such as morphine [12]. Considering this, we decided to investigate the molecular mechanisms involved in morphine addiction after exposure to stressful events during the perinatal period. The second experimental protocol was performed to assess the possible influence of the gestational stress on MOR levels following drug administration. Our findings visibly showed that gest-S increased MOR immunoreactivity after opioid administration in both prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, confirming hypotheses from previous studies, where increased morphine addiction to perinatal stress events would occur due to the elevated MOR levels. Stress exposure differently affects MOR availability, and an increase in MOR density could affect synaptic transmission involved in the regulation of potassium channels and voltage-sensitive calcium channels [33]. This way, the activation of MOR in the hippocampus would inhibit the GABAergic transmission leading to neuronal excitation [34]. Our findings confirm other studies, which state that chronic stress modifies enkephalin levels as well as MOR binding [35].

Therefore, our findings lead to some hypotheses that can explain the changes observed in the gest-S exposed animals, and they are: (i) gest-S exposure was related to high corticosterone plasma levels together with decreased GR immunoreactivity in the prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus, impairing the HPA axis negative feedback; (ii) corticosterone could indirectly regulate cell proliferation by increased glutamate release, thus attenuating BDNF synthesis, which is responsible for cell proliferation and maintenance, consequently regulating neuronal plasticity; (iii) gest-S exposure is able to increase oxidative damage; (iv) gest-S exposure increased MOR immunoreactivity after morphine administration, modifying

the endogenous opioid system and affecting both density and activity of endogenous agonists activity.

In summary, our results indicate that gestational stress can induce persistent alterations in the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus of the offspring, leading to damages such as neuronal loss, oxidative damage, and modulation of molecular markers relevant to drug addiction. These findings reinforce the gestational period as a window of increased susceptibility to stress, and maladaptive consequences into adolescence and adulthood.

### **Acknowledgements**

This work was possible due to the financial support provided by Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES/PROEX- Finance Code 001); Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq) and Pró-reitoria de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa (PRPGP- PROAP/UFSM).

### **Statement of Interest**

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## Figure Captions

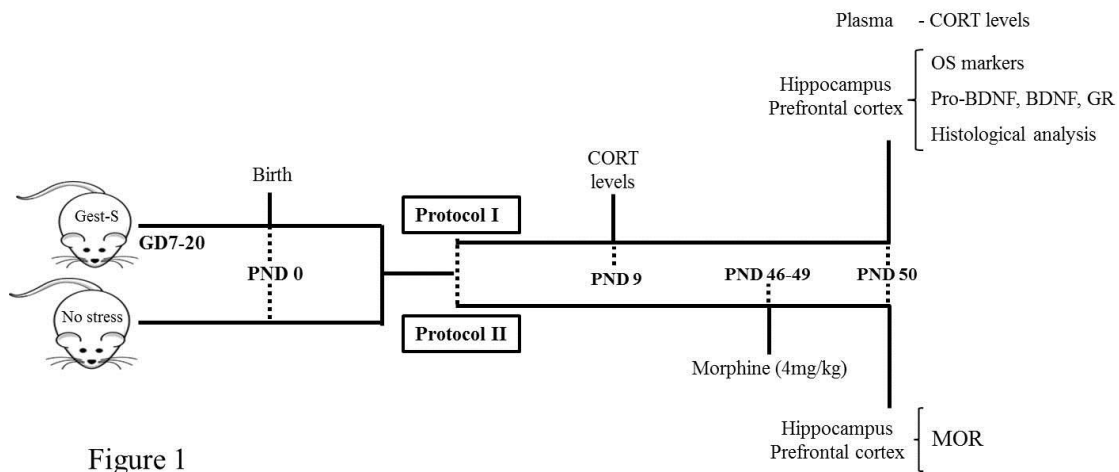
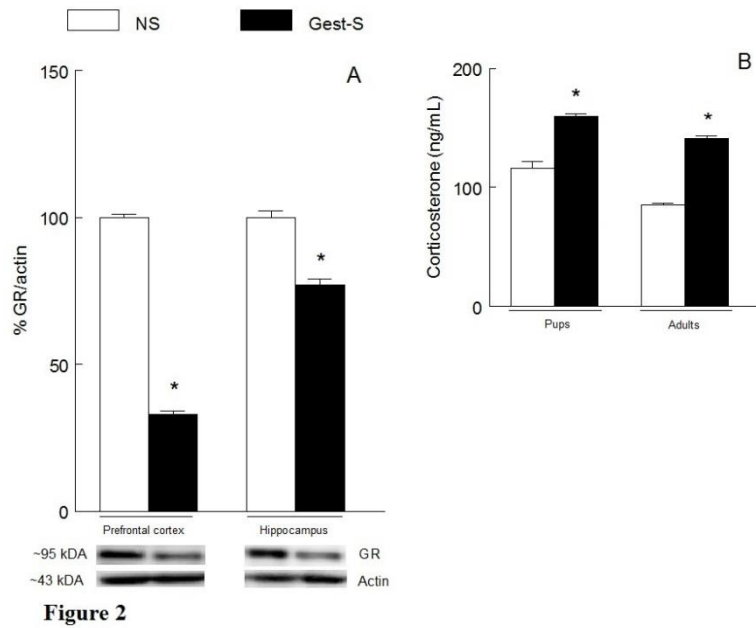


Figure 1

Figure 1: Experimental design. Protocol I- Influence of gestational stress (gest-S) on biochemical, molecular and histological parameters in male rats. Protocol II- Influence of gest-S on  $\mu$  opioid receptors (MOR) levels after morphine exposure in rats.

Abbreviations: GD: gestational day; OS: Oxidative stress; PND: Post-natal day; NS: no stress.



**Figure 2**

Figure 2: Influence of gestational stress (gest-S) on glucocorticoid receptor (GR) levels in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus (A) (n=5) and corticosterone plasma levels in pups and adult rats (B) (n=4 and n=6, respectively). The splicing of blots was made to appropriately order the samples. Data are expressed as mean  $\pm$ S.E.M. Abbreviations: NS: no stress. \*indicates significant difference between the gest-S and NS groups ( $P<0.05$ ).

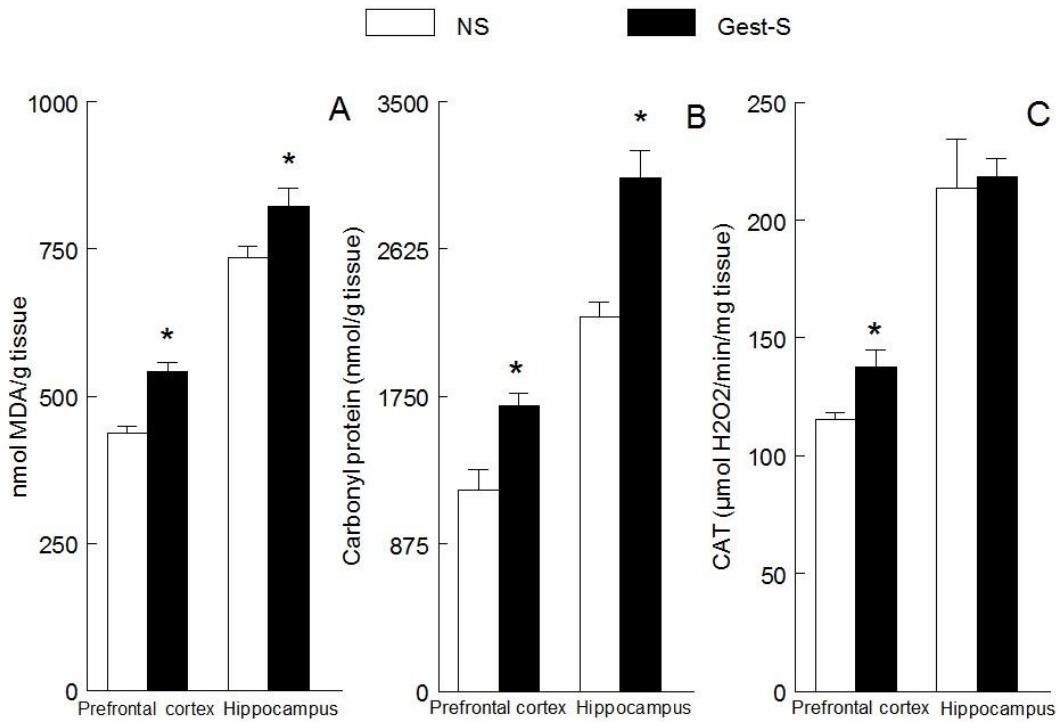
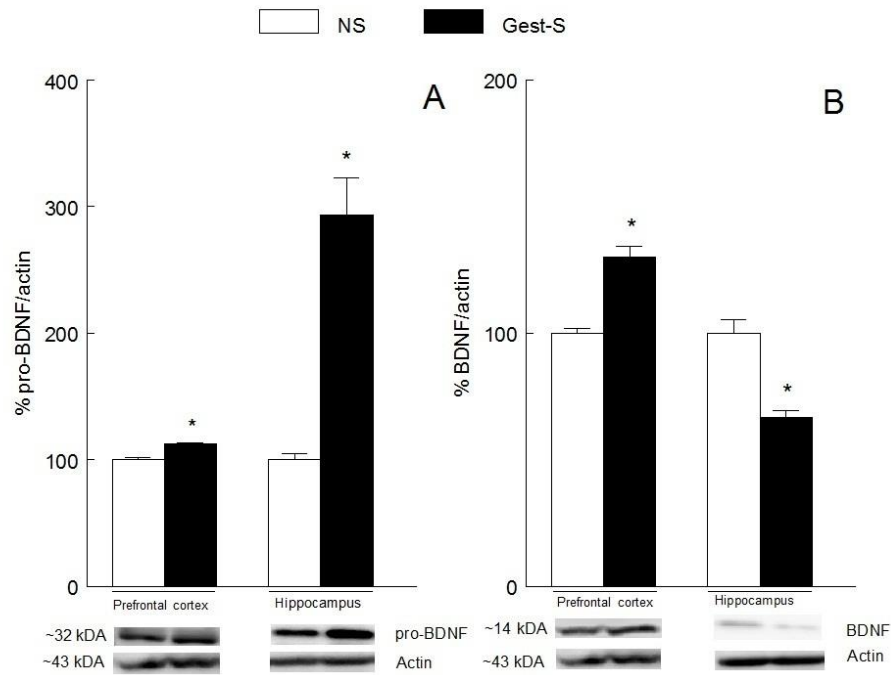


Figure 3

Figure 3: Influence of gestational stress (gest-S) on peroxidation lipid (A), protein carbonyl (B) levels and catalase activity (C) in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus of rats (n=6). Data are expressed as mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. Abbreviations: NS: no stress. \*indicates significant difference between the gest-S and NS groups ( $P < 0.05$ ).



**Figure 4**

Figure 4: Influence of gestational stress (gest-S) on pro-BDNF (A) and BDNF (B) levels in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus of rats ( $n=5$ ). The splicing of blots was made to appropriately order the samples. Data are expressed as mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. Abbreviations: NS: no stress. \*indicates significant difference between the gest-S and NS groups ( $P < 0.05$ ).

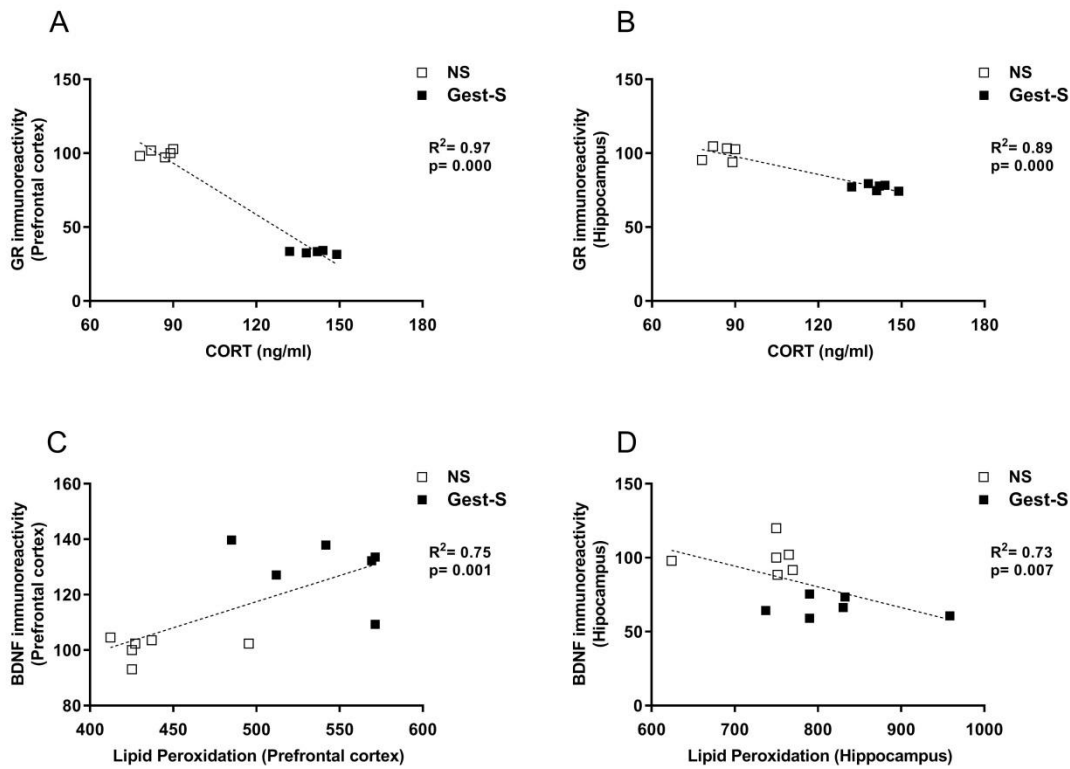


Figure 5: Linear regression analysis among GR and corticosterone levels in prefrontal cortex (A) and hippocampus (B), and linear regression analysis among LP and BDNF levels of de prefrontal cortex (C) and hippocampus (D) of rats after NS or Gest-S. Statistical analysis revealed the following P significance levels for the  $r^2$  value: 0.97 and 0.89, 0.75 and 0.73, respectively.

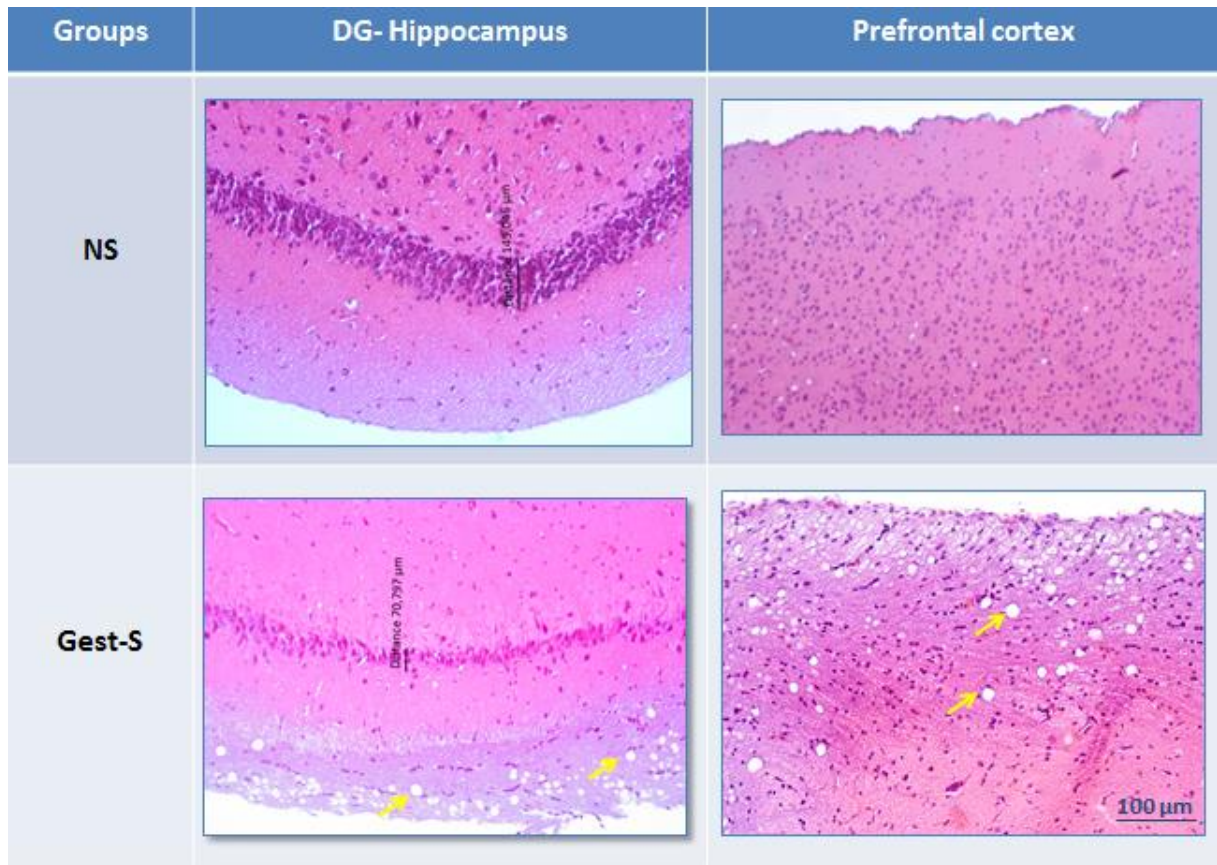
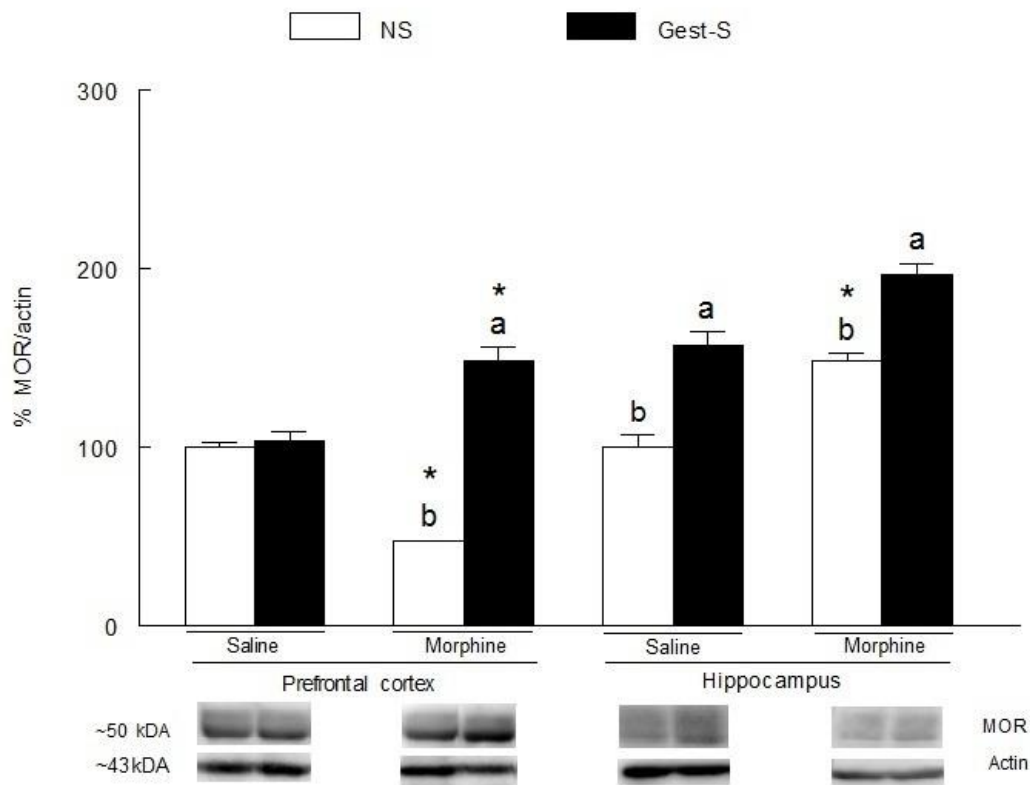


Figure 6. Representative H&E micrographs of rat dentate gyrus (DG) of hippocampus and prefrontal cortex from different groups (NS and gest-S). In the NS group was observed the maintenance of cell layers in the DG region, which is composed of granular cells, forming the granular layer with a distance of 105.045  $\mu\text{m}$  (A). In the gest-S group observed in decreased distance of granular layer (70.797  $\mu\text{m}$ ) and presence of vacuoles (yellow arrows) in the DG region of hippocampus (B). In the prefrontal cortex is presented the maintenance of cell integrity (C) and presence of vacuolation (yellow arrows) in this region after exposure to gest-S (D). Abbreviations: NS: no stress. Gest-S: gestational stress (H&E; bar: 50 $\mu\text{m}$ ).



**Figure 7**

Figure 7: Influence of gestational stress (gest-S) on  $\mu$  opioid receptor (MOR) levels after exposure to morphine in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus of rats ( $n=6$ ). The splicing of blots was performed to appropriately order the samples. Data are expressed as mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. Different lowercase <sup>a-b</sup> indicates significant difference between the gest-S and NS groups ( $P<0.05$ ). \* indicates significant difference between the morphine and saline ( $P<0.05$ ). Abbreviations: NS: no stress.



Manuscrito 2:

**NEONATAL HANDLING INCREASES NEUROGENESIS, BDNF AND GR IN THE  
HIPPOCAMPUS FAVORING MEMORY ACQUISITION IN RATS**

Luciana Taschetto Vey<sup>a</sup>; Higor Zuquetto Rosa<sup>c</sup>; Raquel Cristine Silva Barcelos<sup>b</sup>; Verônica Tironi Dias<sup>b</sup>; Maria Izabel Ugalde Marques da Rocha<sup>bc</sup>; Marilise Escobar Burger<sup>abc\*</sup>.

Status: **Submetido**

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**Abstract**

Early life is a critical period for the development of the central nervous system (CNS) when the brain undergoes functional organization, neuronal proliferation and migration. The aim of this study was to evaluate influences and possible interactions of the neonatal handling (NH) on morphologic, biochemical and molecular markers in the hippocampus, as well as on immunoreactivity of Mu opioid receptors (MOR) in young rats that were exposed to morphine. On the postnatal day (PND) 1, male pups were assigned to two experimental groups: unhandled (UH) or neonatal handling (NH), when this procedure was applied from PND2 to PND9. On PND 50, animals were submitted to memory behavioral test, anesthesia and euthanasia for blood collection and hippocampus removal. Animals exposed to NH presented: i) promotion of angiogenesis and neurogenesis; ii) increased levels of proBDNF and brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF); iii) increased memory performance; iv) decreased lipid peroxidation in both plasma and hippocampus; v) increased antioxidant defenses; vi) increased glucocorticoids receptor (GR) levels. Interestingly, our data showed a positive correlation between BDNF and working memory after NH procedure ( $r^2=0.73$ ;  $P=0.006$ ). Animals that received NH showed an increased *per se* MOR immunoreactivity, but this change was not observed in the morphine exposed animals. Thus, the NH beneficial influence during early stage of life can be reflected during the development of the puppies, thus ameliorating the memory performance, so preventing oxidative events and improving molecular targets in the hippocampus, making this procedure highly recommended in the postnatal period.

**Keywords:** *HPA axis; morphine; Mu opioid receptors; Y-maze.*

**Abbreviations**

BDNF- brain-derived neurotrophic factor

CAT- catalase

CNS- central nervous system

DG- dentate gyrus

GL- granular layer

GR- glucocorticoids receptor

GSH- reduced glutathione

HPA- hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal

LP- lipid peroxidation

MOR- Mu opioid receptors

NH- neonatal handling

PND- Postnatal day

RBC- red blood cells

SGZ- subgranular zone

UH- unhandled

VEGF- vascular endothelial growth factor

## 1. Introduction

For mammals, leaving the safety of the uterine environment and facing the unfamiliar environmental stimuli and risks is a situation that requires a caregiver. During the neonatal period, the mother is an interface between the newly born mammal and the environment, and can strongly influence infant development (Korosi and Baram, 2009). Thus, early life is a critical phase for the development of the central nervous system (CNS), when the brain undergoes functional organization, neural proliferation and migration, in addition to a differentiation, gliogenesis and myelination (Rice and Barone, 2000).

Neonatal handling (NH) is an experimental procedure that involves repeated and brief maternal separation during the first days of life and has been associated to persistent behavioral and neurochemical alterations in the pups over their life course. Such changes can manifest through reduced fear when exposed to novel environments (Padoin et al., 2001), as well as on corticosterone secretion in response to a variety of stressors (Liu et al., 2000; Stanić et al., 2017; Vey et al., 2015). NH is also able to modify the phosphorylation of cyclic AMP-response element binding protein (CREB), which is responsible for the transcription of factors (including brain derived neurotrophic factor [BDNF] that, in turn, lead to biochemical and morphological alterations in the memory formation (Moriceau and Sullivan, 2005). The hippocampus is an important brain region involved in learning and working memory, being highly vulnerable to the actions of circulating glucocorticoids (Herbeck et al., 2017). In this sense, glucocorticoids can modulate adult learning and memory, with facilitated or impaired memory performance, which depend on the timing and the duration of glucocorticoid exposure (Rooszendaal et al., 1996; Kim et al., 2006).

Interventions during the neonatal period may exert long term influences on neurochemical parameters related to oxidative stress, which is defined as an imbalance among the formation of reactive species (RS) and antioxidant defense mechanisms (McCord, 2000). Damages from oxidative stress include modification to cellular protein, lipids, and DNA (Fu et al., 2014). Importantly, lipid peroxides and their metabolic products such as malondialdehyde (MDA) can affect the homeostasis of the neuronal cells and CNS. This way, there are close relationships among the RS generation, decreased antioxidant defenses damages to cells membrane and inflammatory/ degenerative processes to the CNS (Saugstad 2003, 2005).

Interestingly, handling was able to inhibit the response to opioids after morphine administration. Our hypothesis in the previous work was based on the fact that there is an increase in the release of endogenous opioids in the first weeks of life (Ray, Henke, 1990) and with this, an increase in the expression of Mu opioid receptor (MOR) (Auguy-Valette et al., 1978, Petrillo et al., 1987). To continue our previous studies, we decided to carry out a second protocol to analyze the immunoreactivity of receptors after morphine administration, since non-medicated use of prescription drugs is becoming a major threat to public health and law enforcement in the world with opioids being the most damaging, accounting for 76% of deaths involving drug-related disorders (UNODC 2018).

While opioids abuse has become a trend in younger populations (Fiellin, 2008, SAMHSA, 2011), increased incidence of structural abnormalities has been discerned in the brain of drug users who began to use during adolescence compared to those who started during adulthood (Huang et al., 2012). Therefore, our current aim was to evaluate the influences of the neonatal handling on learning and memory parameters together with morphological, biochemical and molecular markers in the hippocampus, accessing its influence on the Mu opioid receptor (MOR) immunoreactivity following the exposure of the animals to morphine as well.

## **2. Material and Methods**

### *2.1 Animals*

Female pregnant Wistar rats from the breeding facility of Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), RS, Brazil, were individually kept in Plexiglas® cages with free access to food and water in a room with controlled temperature (22-23°C) and on a 12 h-light/dark cycle with lights on at 7:00 a.m. This study was approved by the Animal Ethical Committee of Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (9429030215-UFSM), affiliated to the Council for the Control of Animal Experiments (CONCEA), following international norms of animal care and maintenance.

### *2.2 Protocol I - Influence of neonatal handling on morphologic, biochemical and molecular parameters in rats*

Based on our previous studies about the benefits of the neonatal handling on postnatal days (PND) 1-9 for 1h/day on the offspring behavioral parameters, here we investigated, in a

deeper way, the possible mechanisms that may be involved in the protective events resulting from the neonatal handling. In our current study, pups were exposed to the NH procedure to evaluate oxidative stress markers (through carbonylation of proteins and lipid peroxidation), molecular markers (neurotrophins involved in cell survival) accessing possible influences on the cellular integrity through histological analysis.

Six pregnant female rats were used for the protocol I. The pups' date of birth was monitored and considered as postnatal day 0 (PND0). On PND 1, sexes were distinguished by longer anogenital distance and larger genital papilla in male vs. female pups (Liu et al., 2008). So, one male pup from each litter was randomly assigned to one of the two experimental groups: unhandled (UH) and neonatal handling (NH) group, yielding six animals for each group (n=6) and two experimental groups. Neonatal handling was applied from PND2 to PND9. On PND22, litters were weaned and left undisturbed up to 50 days of age. On PND 50 (adolescence period), animals were submitted to work memory task. After behavioral test, the animals were anesthetized and euthanized for morphologic and molecular analyses in hippocampus, and biochemical analyses of Red Blood Cells and Hippocampus as shown in Figure 1.

### *2.3 Protocol II - Influence of neonatal handling on MOR immunoreactivity after morphine exposure in rats*

In our previous study, animals submitted to neonatal handling showed no preference to morphine in the CPP paradigm (Vey et al., 2015). It was surprising that the prolonged maternal separation of this experimental group (PND2-9) could exert beneficial effects on the offspring. Such event may be explained by fact that in the first weeks of life there is a greater expression of Mu opioid receptors consequently increasing endorphins release. Based on these preliminary results, our first hypothesis is that changes in the opioid Mu receptor expression would be responsible for this non-preference for morphine. Thus, we decided to carry out a second experimental protocol to propose a possible action mechanism for the beneficial influence of the neonatal manipulation on Mu receptor, following morphine exposure. Six pregnant female rats were used. Two male pups from each litter were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental groups: unhandled (UH) and neonatal handling (NH), yielding twelve animals in each group (n=12) and two experimental groups. From PND 46-49, half of UH (n=12) and NH (n=12) experimental group were assigned to receive vehicle (n=6) or morphine (n=6) (4mg/kg; intraperitoneally (i.p.), once a day, for four consecutive

days), yielding four experimental groups (UH-VEHICLE; UH-MORPHINE, NH-VEHICLE; NH-MORPHINE; n=6). The morphine exposure was fulfilled to evaluate the influence of neonatal handling on MOR. On PND 50, the animals were anesthetized and euthanized for MOR analyses, as shown in Figure 1.

### 2.3 Drug

Morphine sulfate (Dimorf®, 10 mg/mL, Itapira, São Paulo (SP)) was diluted in 0.9% saline to a previously standardized final concentration of 4 mg/kg (Vey et al., 2015).

### 2.4 Neonatal handling procedure

Newborn litters found before 5p.m. were considered to be born on that day (PND 0). One pup from each litter was randomly assigned to one of two experimental group: unhandled (UH) and neonatal handling (NH). The NH consisted of 1h of neonatal isolation (time away from the mother and litter) and was applied from PND 2 to PND 9 (McCormick et al., 1998). For NH, each pup was individually placed in a clean cup in a temperature and humidity controlled chamber maintained at 30°C. Pups from the UH group were not exposed to any handling procedure during postnatal period, being only handled for weekly cage cleaning (Borrello et al., 1998; Burn et al., 2006). The procedures were carried out between 9 a.m. and 1p.m.

### 2.5 Y-maze

The Y-maze behavioral paradigm was carried out as described by Chu et al. (2012). The apparatus was made of wood and consisted of three arms 32 cm (long) 310 cm (wide) with 26 cm walls. Briefly, on PND 50 each rat was placed in the Y-maze center and allowed to freely explore the maze during a 5-min session for assessment of spontaneous alternating behavior. The sequence and total number of arms entered were video recorded. One arm entry was considered valid if all four paws entered the arm. An alternation was defined as three consecutive entries in three different arms (i.e., 1,2,3 or 2,3,1, etc.). The percentage alternation score was calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total alternation number}}{\text{Total number of entries} - 2} \times 100$$



Furthermore, the total number of arm entries was used as a measure of general activity in the animals. The maze was wiped clean with 20% ethanol after each test to minimize odor cues.

### *2.6 Histological analysis*

The hippocampus is one of the most sensitive brain areas to environmental or experiential influences, and it is closely related to cognition, emotions and drug-related memories as well (Abrous et al 2005). Regarding this, we decided to analyze this brain area, in particular the dentate gyrus (DG), that is an important site for the production of new neurons during adulthood (Abrous et al 2005). For histological analyses, hippocampal samples were fixed in 10% buffered formalin. The paraffin embedded brain specimens were sectioned (6 $\mu$ m), deparaffinized and stained with hematoxylin and eosin (HE) for light microscopic evaluation. In the qualitative analysis, the microscopic images were analyzed for blood vessels presence. As a qualitative indicator of neurogenesis, the linear thickness of hippocampal granular layer (GL) of the dentate gyrus ( $\mu$ m) in adolescent rats and a blind examiner evaluated the UH and NH experimental groups. Images were obtained through an image analysis system (Axiovision, Carl Zeiss MicroImagnig, Jena, Germany) in a 50x magnification, captured with a digital camera coupled to the light microscope (AxioStarPluSS, Carl Zeiss) and visualized with the aid of a computer with processor (Pentium 4, with 3.00 GHz, 512Mb of RAM-Operating System Microsoft Windows XP-Monitor LG model FLATRONezT710SH, 64M, 17 inches color), associated with a binocular optical microscope (Olympus, model BX51 / BX52), with video camera (Olympus, model OLY-200) attached.

### *2.7 Immunoblotting*

Hippocampal tissue was homogenized with a lysis buffer containing 137mM NaCl, 20mM Tris-HCl pH 8.0, 1% NP40, 10% glycerol, 1mM phenyl methyl sulfonyl fluoride (PMSF), 10 $\mu$ g.mL<sup>-1</sup>aprotinin, 0.1mM benzethonium chloride, and 0.5mM sodium vanadate. Homogenates were then centrifuged, supernatants were collected and total protein concentration was determined according to the MicroBCA procedure (Pierce, IL, USA), using bovine serum albumin (BSA) as standard. Briefly, protein samples were separated by electrophoresis on a 10 and 12.5% polyacrylamide gel (according to protein molecular weight), and electrotransferred to a PVDF membrane (Millipore, MA, USA). Non-specific

binding sites were blocked in Tris-buffered saline (TBS), pH 7.6, containing 5% non-fat dry milk. Membranes were rinsed in buffer (0.05% Tween20 in TBS) and then incubated with primary antibodies: for animals of the protocol I, anti-actin (1:2000), anti-proBDNF (1:500), anti-BDNF (1:500), anti-GR (1:500) (Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Santa Cruz, CA, USA) was used. For animals of protocol II, anti-actin (1:2000) and anti-MOR (1:500) (Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Santa Cruz, CA, USA) was used. After, it was carried out the secondary antibody anti-rabbit or anti-goat IgG horseradish peroxidase conjugate (1:40,000; Santa Cruz Biotechnology) incubation. After being rinsed with buffer, the immune complexes were visualized by chemiluminescence using the ECL kit (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech Inc., NJ, USA) according to the manufacturer's instructions. The film signals were digitally scanned, and then quantified using ImageJ software. Actin was used as an internal control for Western blot such that data were standardized according to actin values.

## *2.8 Neurochemical assessments*

On PND 50, the animals of protocol I were anesthetized (thiopental, 80 mg/kg body weight; ip) and euthanized by cardiac exsanguination. The red blood cells (RBC) were collected for determination of lipid peroxidation (LP) and reduced glutathione (GSH) levels. Brains were immediately removed and the hippocampus was dissected and homogenized in 10 volumes (w/v) of 10mM Tris-HCl buffer (pH 7.4) for LP levels determination, which estimate oxidative damages to lipids and, catalase (CAT) activity, an antioxidant enzyme.

### *2.8.1 Lipid Peroxidation levels estimation*

The LP levels of hippocampus and RBC were determined by measuring the accumulation of thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARS) as described by Ohkawa et al. (1979), and expressed as nmol MDA/g tissue and nmol MDA/mL RBC.

### *2.8.2 Catalase (CAT) activity in hippocampus*

CAT activity was spectrophotometrically quantified by the method of Aebi (1984), which involves monitoring the disappearance of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> in the presence of cell homogenate (pH 7 at 25 °C) at 240 nm for 120 s. The enzymatic activity was expressed in  $\mu\text{mol H}_2\text{O}_2/\text{min/g}$  tissue.

### *2.8.3 Reduced glutathione (GSH) levels in RBC*

The GSH levels were determined after the reaction with DTNB [5,5'-bis dithio-(2-nitrobenzoic acid)], according to Ellman (1959) with alterations (Jacques-Silva et al., 2001). The RBC pellets obtained after centrifugation of whole blood were hemolyzed with 10% triton solution and the protein fraction was precipitated with 20% trichloroacetic acid followed by centrifugation. A standard curve using GSH was built to estimate the content of GSH, expressed as nmol GSH/mL RBC.

### 2.9 Statistical analyses

Behavioral, biochemical and molecular analysis of the protocol I were analyzed by Student's T test. Levene's test was applied to verify the data homogeneity. For protocol II, MOR receptor evaluations were analyzed by Two-way ANOVA [2 (UH and NH) x 2 (morphine, vehicle)] followed by Tukey's multiple range test, when appropriate (Software package Statistica 8.0 for Windows was used). All data are expressed as means  $\pm$ S.E.M. Values of  $P < 0.05$  were considered statistically significant for all comparisons made.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Protocol I

Student's T test revealed that NH procedure increased percentage of alternations in Y-maze compared to the UH group ( $P < 0.05$ ) (Fig. 2A). The NH procedure did not change total arm entries compared to UH group (Fig. 2B).

The histological findings of the dentate gyrus hippocampal were different in both experimental groups (UH and NH). The UH was related to the presence of little blood vessels (Fig. 3A), while a high vascularization was observed in the NH group (Fig. 3B). Neurons were identified in the DG of the hippocampus in the different experimental groups. Changes of neuronal density in each group were observed. The UH group displayed intact structure of the hippocampus and normal distribution of the neuronal cells (Fig. 3C). The NH group showed an intense migration of neurons in the subgranular zone (SGZ) and greater thickness of the granular layer (GL) (Fig. 3D).

NH procedure decreased LP levels in hippocampus and RBC compared to the UH group ( $P < 0.01$  and  $P < 0.05$ , respectively). In hippocampus, the NH procedure did not change CAT compared to UH group. Moreover, NH procedure increased GSH levels in RBC compared to UH group ( $P < 0.05$ ) (Table 1).

Student's T test revealed that NH procedure increased GR, pro-BDNF and BDNF immunoreactivity in hippocampus when compared to the UH group ( $P<0.01$ ;  $P<0.000$ , and  $P<0.000$ , respectively) (Fig. 4). The proBDNF/mBDNF ratio was 1.15 (data not shown). Additional statistical analyses revealed a significant positive correlation between Y-maze and BDNF immunoreactivity in the hippocampus ( $r^2=0,73$ ,  $P=0,006$ ; Fig. 5).

### 3.2 Protocol II

Two-way ANOVA of MOR levels in the hippocampus revealed a significant main effect of handling, drug and handling X drug [(1, 20)  $F=131.79$ ,  $P<0.000$ ;  $F=6.02$ ,  $P<0.05$  and  $F=24.11$ ,  $P<0.000$  respectively]. Post-hoc test revealed that NH procedure increased MOR immunoreactivity *per se* in the hippocampus in relation to UH after saline ( $P<0.000$ ). Morphine exposure increased MOR immunoreactivity in UH group in comparison to vehicle-injected group ( $P<0.000$ ). Interestingly, morphine exposure did not change MOR immunoreactivity in NH procedure when compared to vehicle-injected group (Fig. 6).

## 4. Discussion

Recently, we showed that the NH procedure reduced anxiety-like behavior, thus preventing morphine-conditioned place preference in adolescent rats (Vey et al., 2015), indicating that this early manipulation, as a form of postnatal management is able to exert favorable adaptation mechanisms, which are maintained throughout life. In addition, hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis response may be also beneficially affected by maternal behavior subsequent to NH (Liu et al., 1997), once the return of the pups to nest after maternal separation increases the frequency of pup-directed behaviors by dams (Bodensteiner et al., 2012; Macrí et al., 2004), contributing to improve resilience in the rodent offspring (Singh-Taylor et al., 2015).

Throughout the first postnatal week, the precursor cells build up a new proliferation zone distributed, and granule cells of the granule cell layer inner core migrate, following the arrangement of the secondary radial glial scaffold. Most radial glial cells support migrating neurons and serve as precursor cells for both neurogenesis and gliogenesis (Brunner et al., 2013). The tertiary dentate matrix peaks its proliferation rate between PND3 and PND10 and is responsible for the great increase in granule cell population during the neonatal period (Bayer, 1980). In this study, NH increased proliferation of new neurons evidenced by increase

in granule cell population generated in the hilar tertiary dentate matrix probably through NH-mediated mechanisms, as previously described by Bredy et al. (2003).

An important local for the production of new neurons during adulthood is the mammalian hippocampus, especially the dentate gyrus (Abrous et al 2005), which is sensitive to environmental stimulation at a very early age (Rodrigues et al., 2004). In this manner, morphological changes in the hippocampus may improve their physiological functions, including memory (Ferreira et al., 2015). The cerebral vasculature is profoundly affected by BDNF (Fouda et al., 2017), but characteristics of vascular behavior after maternal care are still scarce in the literature. Recent research showed a positive relationship between BDNF and angiogenesis, once that this neurotrophin plays neuroprotective, neuroplastic, neurogenic and angiogenic effects (Nagahara et al., 2011; Kermani and Hempstead, 2007). The vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF)-mediated angiogenesis is followed by the production of BDNF, which in turn directs neuronal recruitment and survival (Goldman and Nottebohm, 1983). Accordingly, in the current study, histological analysis of hippocampus revealed important effects of maternal care, such as the increasing postnatal neurogenesis and angiogenesis. These findings are related to major BDNF immunoreactivity exhibited in the hippocampus.

The BDNF is initially synthesized as a precursor form, the proBDNF, that undergoes proteolytic cleavage in order to become a mature molecule (Borodina and Salozhin, 2016), showing that there is a sensitive equilibrium between proBDNF and BDNF for physiological and pathological conditions (Foltran and Diaz, 2016). The proBDNF/mBDNF ratio determine the concomitant neuronal activity (Borodina and Salozhin, 2016). Here, we observed this result near to 1, which indicates the concentrations balance of proBDNF and mature neurotrophin to an important constituent of many biological processes in nerve cells (Borodina and Salozhin, 2016). In the present study, the pro-BDNF levels increased in NH group, which appeared to be linked to the major BDNF immunoreactivity, as well as to the neurogenesis observed in this neonatal procedure, thus reflecting on the improved work memory, as observed in the Y maze. In the Y-maze task, the correct sequence of alternations requires working memory and attention; the animals need to remember their choice to enter the arm of the maze, consequently assembling a sequence (Beninger et al., 1986, Sarter et al., 1987). Here, neonatal handling submitted animals showed a greater beneficial influence when compared to healthy unmanaged ones, what is in agreement with our previous studies, when we observed a better working memory after the neonatal interventions, such as tactile

stimulation (Antoniuzzi et al., 2017). Other reports have shown similar interpretations, especially when the issue is the mechanism by which BDNF impacts adult neurogenesis in the hippocampus (Garoflos et al., 2005a, b; Greisen et al., 2005; Ortiz-López et al., 2017). The neuronal homeostasis, including the promotion of differentiation, survival, growth and arborisation of neurons, as well as strengthening the synaptic function (Park and Poo, 2013) in the adult mammalian brain, especially in the hippocampus, which is regulated by BDNF (Nibuya et al. 1995) shows that BDNF can influence the cellular migration (Matsuda et al., 2012), representing an important event during neurogenesis, resulting in the correct positioning of precursor derived new neurons in the dentate gyrus (Kempermann et al., 2004). Furthermore, a positive correlation between BDNF and memory was observed in NH group, reinforcing the fundamental role of this neurotrophin on the learning, as widely reported in the literature (Moriceau and Sullivan, 2005).

The NH also modifies the hormonal response because it prepares the rodents offspring through an adequate programming of their hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis activation against stressful environment (Liu et al., 1997). The corticosterone interaction with its receptor (GR) regulates HPA (Chan and Debono, 2010), while several factors can modify this interaction, such as stress (Zannas and Chrousos, 2017), addiction (Vendruscolo et al., 2012) and depression (Wang et al., 2014). We observed that brief manipulations across neonatal period increased GR immunoreactivity in the NH group, which is in agreement with Garoflos et al. (2005) and Stamatakis et al. (2008). Previous studies of our group had shown that NH decreased corticosterone plasmatic levels in the pups (Vey et al., 2015), which would be related to an increase of GR levels and to negative feedback control of corticosterone release. The NH modulated HPA activation, since lower levels of corticosterone in the pups may help protect brain structures, as the hippocampus during its development (Sapolsky and Meaney, 1986). Furthermore, the low levels of corticosterone as observed in the NH exposed group (Vey et al., 2015) may be related to memory improvement in this experimental group, since glucocorticoids are able to modulate learning and memory.

In addition to behavioral and molecular parameters, NH influences on oxidative parameters were also evaluated. Our findings showed that NH decreased LP levels in both hippocampus and red blood cells (RBC) besides increased levels of GSH in RBC, which may have contributed for removal of the reactive species oxygen (ROS), since GSH is considered the main intracellular antioxidant defense due to its nucleophilic properties (Kose et al., 2016). In line with this, previous studies of our group also confirmed that NH is able to

decrease oxidative parameters through the increase of antioxidant defenses (Antoniuzzi et al., 2014; Boufleur et al., 2012).

Different studies have shown that the hippocampal oxidative damages are related to decreased neurogenesis and increased neuronal death (Mattson, 2000; Huang et al., 2012). Inversely, our current findings indicate that NH contributed to decreased oxidative damages, consequently stimulating the hippocampal neurogenesis and memory improvement.

The NH protocol applied here not only modified the morphology, neurotrophins, HPA axis and oxidative status, but it also exerted significant influences on MOR immunoreactivity. As it was expected, UH group presented increased MOR levels in the hippocampus after morphine exposure. Of particular importance to our findings, NH increased *per se* MOR levels in the hippocampus, which was not modified after morphine, suggesting that there was no activation of the dopaminergic pathway in the NH group after morphine exposure, which is necessary for morphine rewarding effects. We propose that the reduced morphine sensitivity, as observed in the NH exposed animals can be attributed to the release of endogenous opioid peptides, which was related to maternal care (Ray and Henke, 1990). Accordingly, our previous study showed beneficial influence of the NH on morphine preference, indicating decreased morphine addiction (Vey et al., 2015), while NH contributes to increase the MOR expression (Auguy-Valette et al, 1978; Petrillo et al, 1987). Moreover, in this study, NH can be related to a phenomenon known as cross-tolerance between endogenous opioid and the exogenous morphine. Indeed, endogenous opioid are selective and potent agonists for the MOR (Zadina et al., 2016), readily driving these receptor to endocytosis, contributing to the development of physiological tolerance by reducing the number of functional receptors in brain areas (Trapaidze et al., 2000). Another mechanism that may be involved in the absence or reduced responsiveness to MOR, following morphine exposure, as observed in the NH group is the increased release of antiinflammatory cytokines, which can induce epigenetic programming, so preventing drug preference (Vey et al., 2015). Inversely, morphine exposure has been related to upregulation of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines in the nucleus accumbens, which is necessary for opioid addiction (Hutchinson et al., 2008).

In search for new knowledge about neonatal handling, which simulates the maternal care, our handling determined morphological, biochemical, molecular and behavioral persistent changes in the hippocampus of adolescent rats. To the best of our knowledge, here we are showing for the first time that the NH was able to: i) promote angiogenesis and neurogenesis; ii) increase both hippocampal proBDNF and BDNF levels; iii) memory

performance improvement; iv) increase antioxidant defenses, thus preventing both hippocampal and systemic lipid peroxidation; v) promote an increase in the hippocampal GR levels. Interestingly, NH was also capable to promote: vi) increase *per se* in MOR levels, which vii) were not observed following morphine exposure. In this sense, the handling beneficial influence during early stage of life, which mimics the natural behavior of maternal care, can be reflected throughout the adolescence period. Based on these findings, additional studies are needed to better understand the molecular mechanisms involved in the NH influences on neuroinflammatory processes and their relations with the opioid system.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors are grateful to CNPq, CAPES, FAPE for the research fellowship.



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## Figure captions

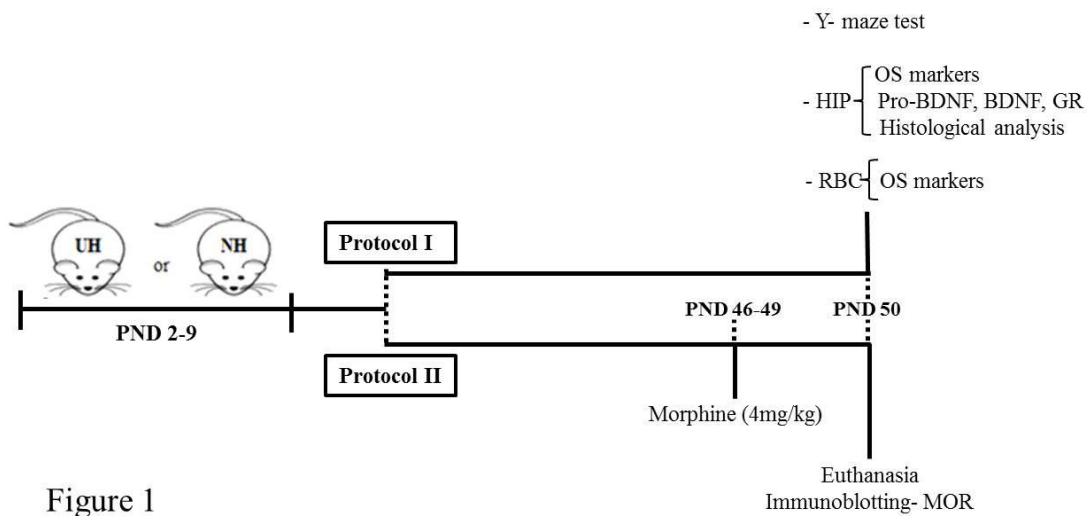


Figure 1

Figure 1. Experimental design. Protocol I- Influence of neonatal handling (NH) on behavioral, biochemical, molecular and histological parameters in male rats. Protocol II- Influence of NH on  $\mu$  opioid receptors (MOR) levels after morphine exposure in rats.

Abbreviations: OS: Oxidative stress; PND: Post-natal day; RBC: red blood cells; UH: unhandled.

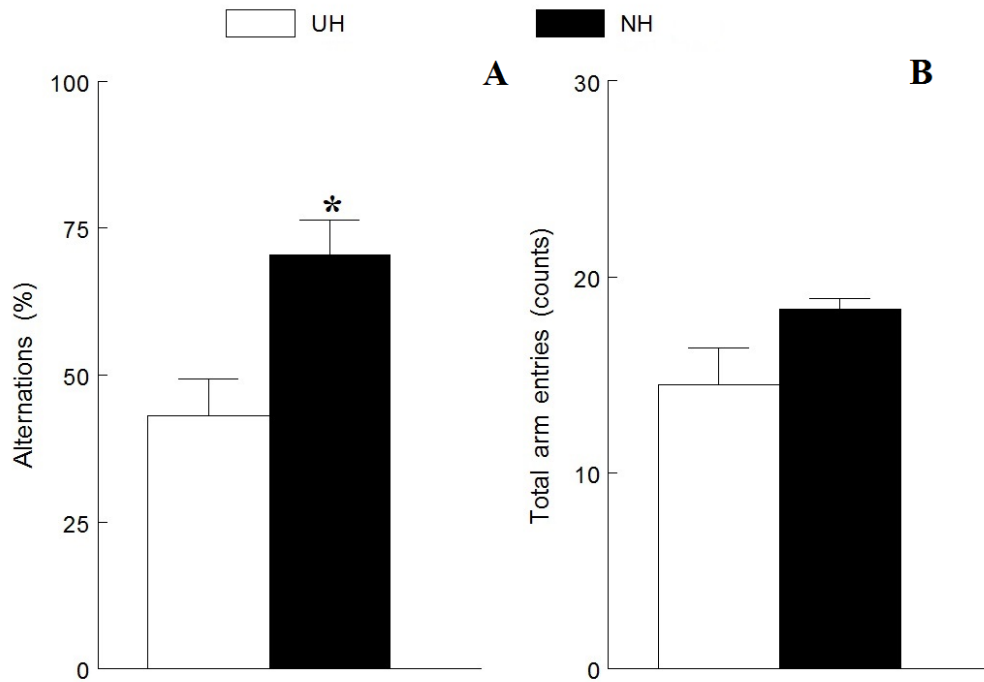


Figure 2

Figure 2. Influence of neonatal handling (NH) on working memory measured in Y-maze task, by alternation rate (A) and total arm entries (B). Data are expressed as mean  $\pm$  S.E.M (n=6). \*indicates significant difference from UH to NH groups ( $P < 0.05$ ). Abbreviations: UH: unhandled; NH: neonatal handling.

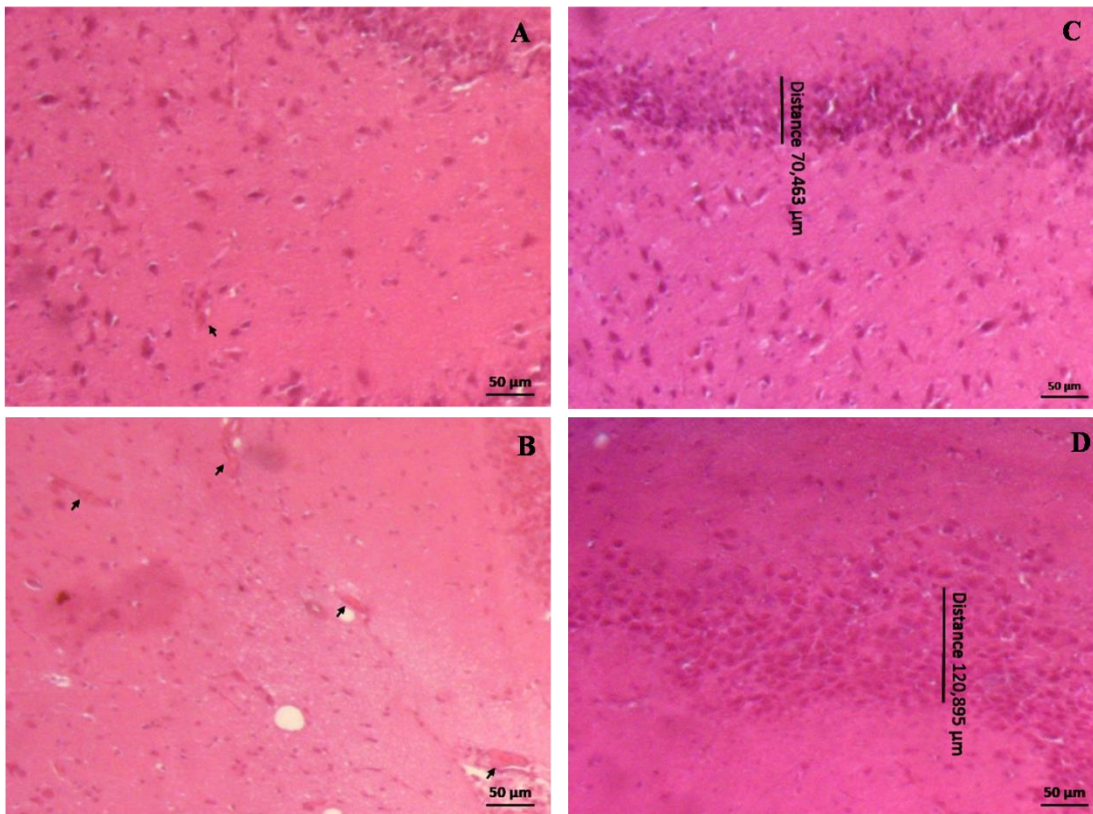


Figure 3. Dentate gyrus of the hippocampus. Blood vessels were profoundly affected by maternal care. Arrowheads indicate sectioned blood vessels. Intact structure of the hippocampus and normal distribution of blood vessels (A) and neuronal cells (C) in the UH group. Increase in the number of blood vessels, indicating higher vascularization (B) and in the GL thickness (D) in the NH group. (H&E; bar: 50μm).

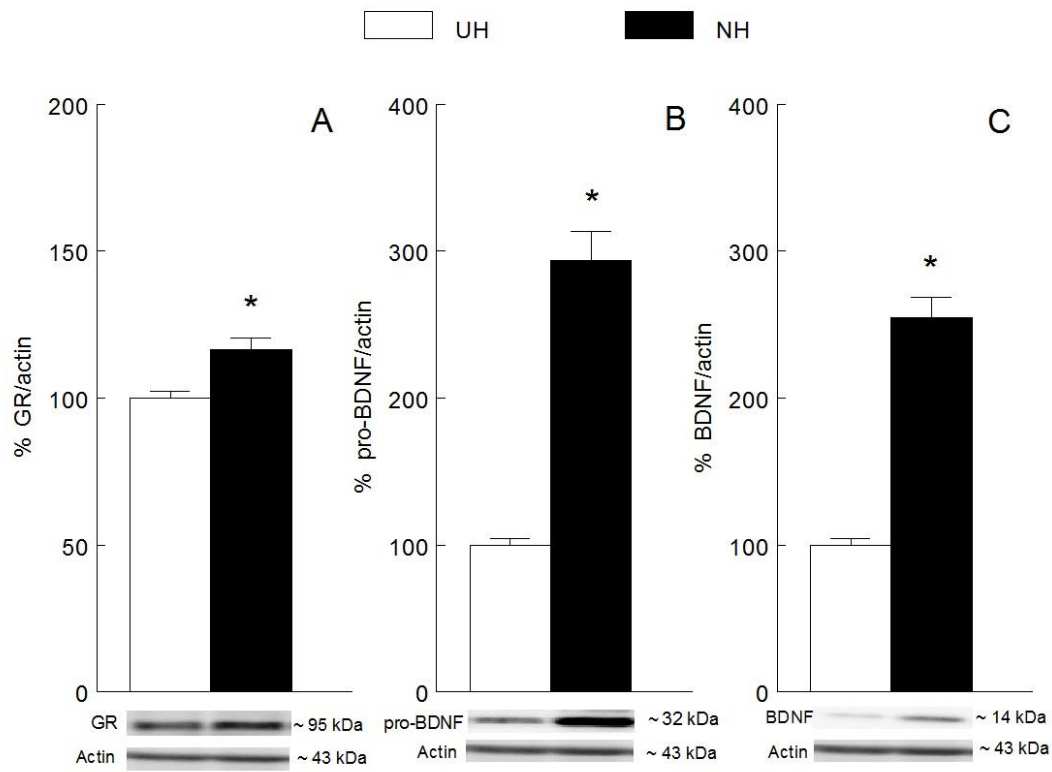


Figure 4

Figure 4. Influence of neonatal handling (NH) on glucocorticoids receptor (A), pro-BDNF (B) and BDNF levels (C) in HIP of rats (n=6). Data are expressed as mean  $\pm$  S.E.M. Abbreviations: UH: unhandled. NH: neonatal handling. \*indicates significant difference between the UH and NH groups ( $P < 0.05$ ).

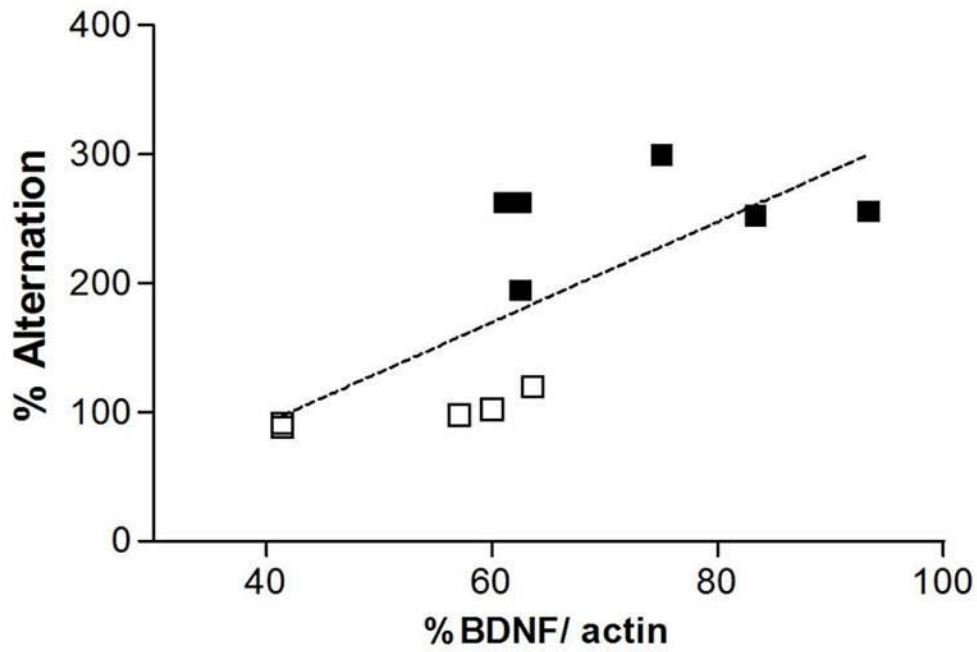
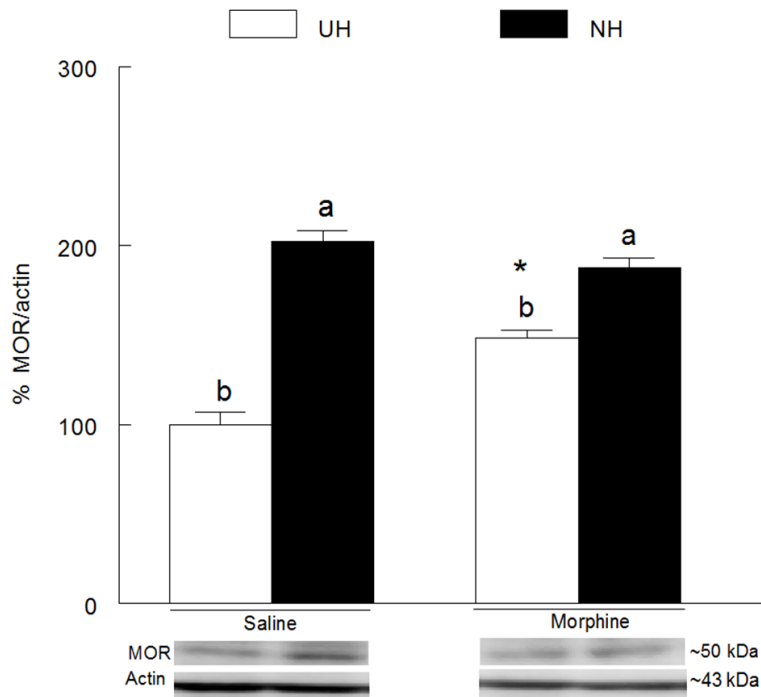


Figure 5. Linear regression analysis between alternation percentage and BDNF levels in hippocampus of rats after NH or UH. Statistical analysis revealed the following P significance levels for the  $r^2$  value: 0.73



**FIGURE 6**

Figure 6. Influence of neonatal handling (NH) on Mu opioid receptor (MOR) levels after exposure to morphine HIP of rats (n=6). The splicing of blots was made to appropriately order the samples. Data are expressed as mean $\pm$  S.E.M. Different lowercase <sup>a-b</sup> indicates significant difference between the UH and NH groups ( $P<0.05$ ). \* indicates significant difference between the morphine and saline ( $P<0.05$ ). Abbreviations: UH: unhandled.

Table 1. Effects of neonatal handlings on oxidative parameters in adolescent rats.

HANDLING	HIPPOCAMPUS		RBC	
	LP	CAT	LP	GSH
UH	735.05± 4.94	213.36± 21.17	34.35± 2.53	2514.03± 125.06
NH	598.73±67.67*	143.37± 22.78	23.45± 2.58*	2944.64± 77.47*

Abbreviations: UH: unhandled; NH: neonatal handling; LP: lipid peroxidation; CAT: catalase; GSH: reduced glutathione; RBC: red blood cells. Data are expressed as mean±S.E.M. (n=6) \*Significant differences from UH ( $P<0.05$ ).





## 5. DISCUSSÃO

Baseado no fato do estresse ser o agente causador de várias doenças e considerado ser o mal do século XXI avaliamos ao longo desta tese diferentes intervenções que possam afetar as respostas ao estresse. Se por um lado nos observamos os efeitos prejudiciais do estresse aplicado durante a gestação, por outro, nós encontramos alternativas comportamentais que levam a adaptações neuronais e conseqüentemente melhora na resiliência ao longo da vida.

Tem aumentado o interesse para compreensão dos efeitos deletérios do estresse durante a gestação, uma vez que alterações hormonais neste período podem causar significativas alterações comportamentais que podem transpor gerações (IQBAL et al., 2012). Um estudo anterior do nosso grupo de pesquisa já havia mostrado alterações nos níveis de corticosterona em ratos submetidos a diferentes protocolos de estresse nos períodos fetal e pós-natal (VEY et al., 2015), porém mais estudos são necessários a fim de investigar o mecanismo da via do eixo HPA pelo qual o estresse é capaz de causar alterações persistentes. A ativação do eixo HPA desencadeia uma cascata de eventos que tem como resultado a liberação do hormônio adrenocorticotropina (ACTH) e por fim, a liberação de glicocorticoides a partir do córtex da glândula adrenal. Após a sua liberação, os GCs ligam-se a seus respectivos receptores glicocorticoides (GR), fazendo com que essa ligação ative a retroalimentação negativa, inibindo sua síntese na hipófise anterior, hipotálamo (DE KLOET et al., 2005), hipocampo e córtex pré-frontal (DE VASCONCELLOS et al., 2006; TAGLIARI et al., 2010; FILIPOVIĆ et al., 2011). Baseado nisso, decidimos realizar a análise da imunoreatividade do GR a fim de entender o mecanismo pelo qual um aumento sustentado dos níveis de corticosterona no grupo exposto ao estresse gestacional foi observado. Tal ensaio apresentou como resultado uma diminuição dos níveis do GR nas regiões do hipocampo e córtex pré-frontal no grupo dos animais que foram expostos o estresse durante a gestação, bem como um aumento sustentado dos níveis de corticosterona, o que concorda com nossa hipótese do artigo anterior (VEY et al., 2015). A diminuição da imunoreatividade do GR induzido pelo estresse gestacional desfavorece a interação corticosterona- GR, não ocorrendo a retroalimentação negativa, responsável pela inibição da síntese de glicocorticoides. Esse seria o mecanismo pelo qual o estresse é capaz de sustentar os níveis de corticosterona ao longo da vida.

Essa elevação dos níveis de glicocorticoides tem inúmeros prejuízos para o nosso organismo. A primeira resposta é a liberação de glutamato, um neurotransmissor excitatório que regula indiretamente a proliferação de células neuronais (STEIN-BEHRENS et al., 1994),

e cuja excitabilidade estimulada é capaz de interromper a mitose e alterar a neogênese (KEMPERMANN et al., 1997), neurotrofinas em sua forma imatura (pro-BDNF) e madura (BDNF) (BORODINOVA e SALOZHIN, 2017) No presente estudo, o estresse gestacional causou alterações na formação da camada granular hipocampal, favorecendo a presença de células irregulares, como também a presença de vacúolos no córtex pré-frontal. Possivelmente, essas alterações morfológicas foram consequentes ao aumento dos níveis de pro-BDNF, a neurotrofina ainda imatura como já mencionado, a qual está intimamente envolvida na apoptose em diferentes áreas cerebrais (COWANSAGE et al., 2010).

Além das alterações na formação neuronal, o aumento dos níveis sustentados de corticosterona é capaz de gerar alterações na capacidade de defesa do organismo, em resposta a adversidades como o estresse (MCEWEN, 2002). Neste estudo, as defesas antioxidantes dos filhotes expostos ao estresse gestacional não foram modificadas, mesmo após danos oxidativos acessados através de análises da peroxidação lipídica e carbonilação de proteínas. Esses dados mostram que existe uma correlação negativa entre os níveis das neurotrofinas envolvidas na neurogênese, tal como o BDNF, e o desenvolvimento de estresse oxidativo. Após todas essas observações deletérias à prole causadas pelo estresse no período gestacional, outra abordagem foi delineada envolvendo a situação da relação entre mãe e filhote após o nascimento. Durante a gestação, a mãe é a interceptora da funcionalidade do eixo HPA do feto, e continua sendo após seu nascimento (KOROSI e BARAM, 2009). No entanto, em um mundo moderno onde a maternidade acontece em conjunto com o desenvolvimento e crescimento da carreira profissional, frequentemente, o retorno ao trabalho ocorre pouco tempo após o parto, gerando uma ruptura de tal vínculo. Para elucidar a influência da mudança dos hábitos e a importância do reconhecimento da mulher no mercado de trabalho, nós utilizamos um modelo animal de isolamento neonatal a fim de avaliar os mecanismos envolvidos na neuroadaptação dos filhotes quando atingem a vida adulta.

O período neonatal é uma fase determinante para a proliferação neuronal, principalmente entre os dias 3 e 10 pós-natal (DPN), desde que neste período ocorre a formação da matriz denteada terciária no hipocampo (ABROUS et al., 2005), região que é sensível à estimulação ambiental no início da vida (RODRIGUES et al., 2004). No presente estudo, o manuseio neonatal apresentou um aumento da camada granular hipocampal, representado através da análise qualitativa no Giro denteado. Dessa forma, alterações morfológicas no hipocampo pode melhorar as funções desta área cerebral, incluindo a performance de memória (FERREIRA et al., 2015). No presente estudo, o manuseio neonatal

aumentou a memória no paradigma de labirinto em Y quando comparados ao grupo não manuseado. Tal melhora se deve ao fato de que ao retornar para o ninho de origem, os animais recebiam cuidados adicionais materno, cujo comportamento pode ser responsável por aumentar o número de neurônios, o que foi observado neste grupo experimental (LENZ e SENNELAUB, 2009).

Dados da literatura confirmam a ocorrência de uma correlação positiva entre uma melhor performance de memória e o aumento dos níveis de BDNF no giro dentado do hipocampo (BRUNNE et al., 2013). A promoção da diferenciação, sobrevivência, crescimento e arborização de neurônios, bem como o fortalecimento da função sináptica no cérebro de mamíferos, especialmente no hipocampo, são regulados via BDNF (NIBUYA et al., 1995; PARK e POO, 2013). Aqui, nós encontramos um aumento dos níveis de BDNF no grupo submetido ao manuseio neonatal. O BDNF é inicialmente sintetizado como uma forma precursora, o proBDNF, que sofre clivagem proteolítica para se tornar uma molécula madura (BORODINOVA e SALOZHIN, 2016), mostrando que existe um equilíbrio sensível entre o proBDNF e o BDNF para condições fisiológicas e patológicas (FOLTRAN E DIAZ, 2016). A relação proBDNF/BDNF determina a atividade neuronal concomitante (BORODINOVA e SALOZHIN, 2016).

Além de parâmetros morfológicos e comportamentais, também investigamos alterações no eixo HPA, uma vez que o protocolo de isolamento neonatal reduziu os níveis de corticosterona em estudo prévio do nosso grupo (VEY et al., 2015). A fim de demonstrar o mecanismo envolvido nos achados anteriores, a imunoreatividade do GR também foi quantificada. Diferentes fatores tais como o estresse (ZANNAS e CHROUSOS, 2017), depressão (WANG et al., 2014) e drogadição (VENDRUSCOLO et al., 2012), são capazes de modificar a interação dos glicocorticoides junto aos seus receptores. Aqui, o manuseio neonatal aumentou os níveis de GR dos animais adultos, o que está de acordo com menores níveis de corticosterona, como observado no estudo anterior do nosso grupo. Esses achados afirmam que a maior disponibilidade do GR aumenta sua interação com os glicocorticoides circulantes e com isso são capazes de realizar a retroalimentação negativa e diminuir a síntese de corticosterona. Estudos mais antigos já mostraram que níveis baixos de corticosterona ajudam a proteger as estruturas do cérebro durante o desenvolvimento do indivíduo, principalmente do hipocampo (SAPOLSKY e MEANEY, 1986). Esses resultados possivelmente são consequentes do aumento das defesas antioxidantes, como observado neste

grupo experimental, o que pode ser interpretado como proteção aos lipídeos e proteínas hipocampais.

Em humanos e animais, o hipocampo é uma área do cérebro fortemente envolvida na hedonia evocada por drogas aditivas, uma vez que existe um alto grau de sobreposição entre a neurobiologia da aprendizagem e memória e a neurobiologia da adição (GOODMAN et al., 2016; XIAO et al., 2016). Como o hipocampo apresenta alto grau de plasticidade e elevada capacidade para suportar memórias contextuais e declarativas, tais propriedades podem facilitar mudanças induzidas por drogas aditivas na função do hipocampo, favorecendo uma profunda modificação comportamental (KUTLU e GOULD, 2016).

Em um estudo anterior do nosso grupo, investigamos os efeitos de diferentes exposições ao estresse frente ao protocolo de preferência condicionada de lugar com morfina. Nesse estudo, o estresse gestacional evocou um aumento da busca pela droga, assim como um aumento de comportamentos de ansiedade nos animais. Entretanto, os animais que receberam manipulações durante o período neonatal, mostraram resultados incrivelmente positivos, observados pela prevenção da drogadição, manifestando por consequência, menores comportamentos de ansiedade (VEY et al., 2015). A fim de investigar o mecanismo de tais respostas comportamentais, avaliamos aqui a imunoreatividade do MOR após administrações de morfina.

Como esperado, o grupo exposto ao estresse gestacional apresentou um aumento dos níveis de MOR na região do hipocampo e córtex pré-frontal, após a exposição à morfina. Por se tratar de duas regiões importantemente envolvidas na restauração e distribuição da informação associada à drogadição (NESTLER, 2001), o sistema cortico-hipocampal participa ativamente das respostas hedônicas relacionadas à recompensa (WHITE, 1996; REZAYOF et al., 2003) e ao comportamento de procura à droga (VOREL et al., 2001; BLACK et al., 2004; YANG et al., 2004).

Enquanto a exposição ao estresse durante os períodos fetal e neonatal podem afetar diferentemente a disponibilidade de MOR, um aumento na densidade desses receptores pode afetar a transmissão sináptica envolvida na regulação de canais de potássio e canais de cálcio sensíveis à voltagem (IKEDA, 1996). Desta forma, a ativação de MOR inibe a transmissão GABAérgica levando à excitação neuronal (DRAKE; CHAVKIN; MILNER, 2007). Nossos achados confirmam outros estudos, que afirmam que o estresse crônico modifica os níveis de encefalinas, bem como a ligação aos MOR (DRAKE et al., 2002), através do mecanismo de ressensibilização, onde os receptores sofrem endocitose após exposição à opioides endógenos,

sendo então reciclados de volta à membrana plasmática com uma maior sensibilização após exposição à morfina. Esse seria um dos mecanismos que podem explicar o aumento da imunoreatividade dos MORs no grupo de animais submetido ao estresse gestacional.

Em Vey et al (2015) o manuseio durante o período neonatal foi capaz de prevenir a preferência pela morfina no protocolo de preferência condicionada de lugar com morfina. Para nossa surpresa, encontramos um aumento *per se* dos níveis de MOR neste grupo experimental. A fim de investigar os mecanismos envolvidos na ativação dos receptores acoplados a proteína G como os MOR, dados da literatura mostraram que o aumento do cuidado materno durante o período neonatal é capaz de estimular a liberação de peptídeos opioides endógenos (RAY e HENKE, 1990), ativando dessensibilização dos receptores, conduzindo à endocitose após exposição repetida, e por fim a sua reciclagem (MARTINI e WHISTLER, 2007). Entretanto, ao observar nossos achados, não percebemos efeitos da exposição à morfina nos MOR do grupo de animais expostos ao manuseio neonatal. A partir dessas observações, é possível propor que a sensibilidade reduzida à morfina observada pela falta de alteração nos níveis de MOR após exposição à morfina, pode ser relacionada a um fenômeno conhecido como tolerância cruzada entre o opioide endógeno e a morfina exógena. De fato, opioides endógenos são agonistas seletivos e potentes para MOR (ZADINA et al., 2016), favorecendo a endocitose dos mesmos, e contribuindo para o desenvolvimento de tolerância fisiológica pela redução do número de receptores funcionais em diferentes áreas cerebrais (TRAPAIDZE et al. , 2000). Outro mecanismo que pode estar envolvido na ausência ou redução da responsividade à ativação MOR após a exposição à morfina, é o aumento da liberação de citocinas antiinflamatórias, o que pode induzir programação epigenética, evitando assim a preferência farmacológica (SCHWARZ; HUTCHINSON; BILBO, 2011; VEY et al., 2015 ). Inversamente, a exposição à morfina tem sido relacionada com a regulação positiva de citocinas e quimiocinas pró-inflamatórias no nucleus accumbens, o que é necessário para a dependência de opióides (HUTCHINSON et al., 2008).



## 6 CONCLUSÕES

A partir do presente estudo pode-se concluir que o estresse sofrido durante o período gestacional desenvolve alterações significativas, as quais podem persistir ao longo da vida adulta, podendo modificar a formação neuronal através do aumento da atividade do eixo HPA e causar danos oxidativos, prejudicando as neurotrofinas, importantes para sobrevivência celular. Em contrapartida, manipulações durante o período neonatal configuram como importantes moduladores da neurogênese, levando a uma melhora da memória através de mecanismos neuroadaptativos.

Os diferentes protocolos e/ou manipulações aqui avaliadas também foram capazes de alterar a resposta farmacológica frente à exposição a drogas opioides como a morfina. Assim, torna-se de extrema importância a busca de compreensão a respeito de mecanismos que envolvam a responsividade dos MORs após uma previa exposição de opioides endógenos.





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