Cd$^{2+}$ Regulation of the Hyperpolarization-activated Current $I_{AB}$ in Crayfish Muscle

ALFONSO ARAQUE, DANIEL CATTAERT,* and WASHINGTON BUÑO

From the Instituto Cajal, CSIC, E-28002 Madrid, Spain; and *Laboratoire de Neurobiologie et Mouvements, CNRS, F-13402 Marseille, France

ABSTRACT The effects of Cd$^{2+}$ on the hyperpolarization-activated K$^+$-mediated current called $I_{AB}$ (Araque, A., and W. Buño. 1994. Journal of Neuroscience. 14:399–408.) were studied under two-electrode voltage-clamp in opener muscle fibers of the crayfish Procambarus clarkii. $I_{AB}$ was reversibly reduced by extracellular Cd$^{2+}$ in a concentration-dependent manner, obeying the Hill equation with $IC_{50} = 0.452 \pm 0.045$ mM and a Hill coefficient of 1 (determined from the maximal chord conductance of $I_{AB}$). Cd$^{2+}$ decreased the $I_{AB}$ conductance ($G_{AB}$) and shifted its voltage dependence towards hyperpolarized potentials in a similar degree, without affecting the slope of the voltage dependence. The $I_{AB}$ activation time constant increased, whereas the $I_{AB}$ deactivation time constant was not modified by Cd$^{2+}$. The $I_{AB}$ equilibrium potential ($E_{AB}$) was unmodified by Cd$^{2+}$, indicating that the selective permeability of $I_{AB}$ channels was not altered. $I_{AB}$ was unaffected by intracellular Cd$^{2+}$. The Cd$^{2+}$-regulation of $I_{AB}$ did not depend on [K$^+$]o, and the effects of [K$^+$]o on $I_{AB}$ were unchanged by Cd$^{2+}$, indicating that Cd$^{2+}$ did not compete with K$^+$. Therefore, Cd$^{2+}$ probably bound to a different site to that involved in the K$^+$ permeability pathway. We conclude that Cd$^{2+}$ affected the gating of $I_{AB}$ channels, interfering with their opening but not with their closing mechanism. The results can be explained by a kinetic model in which the binding of Cd$^{2+}$ to the $I_{AB}$ channels would stabilize the gating apparatus at its resting position, increasing the energy barrier for the transition from the closed to the open channel states.

INTRODUCTION

The investigation of the block and regulation of membrane currents by different substances has provided useful insights into the structure and function of voltage-gated ionic channels (see e.g., Armstrong, 1975; Hille, 1992). For example, the analysis of channel block has supplied fundamental knowledge on the mechanisms of ion permeation and specificity, gating, activation, deactivation, and inactivation, and on the structure of numerous types of voltage-gated channels (e.g., Woodhull, 1973; Armstrong, 1975; Gay and Stanfield, 1977; Standen and Stanfield, 1978; Catterall,
Recently, a hyperpolarization-activated current termed $I_{AB}$, which underlies anomalous rectification in crayfish muscle, has been described (Araque and Buño, 1994). This time- and voltage-dependent current is selectively carried by $K^+$ and its activation curve is a function of the extracellular $K^+$ concentration ($[K^+]_o$). In addition, $I_{AB}$ does not show instantaneous voltage-dependent activation, as occurs with the inward rectifier of vertebrate muscle and oocytes (Hagiwara and Takahashi, 1974; Sakmann and Trube, 1984; Matsuda et al., 1987). Moreover, whereas $I_{AB}$ is unaffected by extracellular $Ba^{2+}$, $Cs^+$, or $Rb^+$, it is blocked by low extracellular concentrations of $Cd^{2+}$ or $Zn^{2+}$ (Araque and Buño, 1994).

The present study was aimed at characterizing the effects of $Cd^{2+}$ on $I_{AB}$ in an attempt to comprehend the mechanisms of its block and to supply information on the operation of the $I_{AB}$ channels. The mechanisms of channel block have been described in terms of three general categories: (a) ionic pore occlusion; (b) modification of gating; and (c) shift in the voltage dependence (see Hille, 1992). In some cases, channel block has been exclusively associated to ionic pore occlusion, whereas modification of gating has been identified as regulation or modulation of channels. Because $Cd^{2+}$ effects on $I_{AB}$ could be explained by gating modification, we used the term regulation to refer to these effects.

We have found that the $Cd^{2+}$ regulation of $I_{AB}$ was dose dependent, and we provide evidence suggesting that $Cd^{2+}$ modified the gating properties of $I_{AB}$ channels, acting by binding to a site different to that involved in the $K^+$ permeability pathway. We propose a simple kinetic model that explains how the $Cd^{2+}$ effects on the gating account for the shift in the voltage dependence of $I_{AB}$ and the $I_{AB}$ reduction. In that scheme, $Cd^{2+}$ would stabilize the closed state of $I_{AB}$ channels by increasing the energy barrier for the transition from the closed to the open channel states, whereas the energy barrier for the reverse transition from the open to the closed channel states was unmodified.

**METHODS**

**Preparation**

Opener muscles from the propodite of the first walking leg of crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*) were isolated and transferred to a superfusion chamber (2 ml). Small crayfish (< 5 cm) with short muscle fibers (< 400 µm) were used for better space clamp characteristics.

**Microelectrodes and Recordings**

Fibers were impaled with two micropipettes filled with 1 M-KCl (1–5 MΩ). An Axoclamp-2A amplifier (Axon Instruments, Inc., Foster City, CA) was employed for two electrode voltage clamp recordings. Probe gains in the voltage clamp configuration were 1 and 10× for voltage and current electrodes, respectively. Voltage command pulses and injected currents were continuously monitored on a storage oscilloscope and stored on FM tape (0–1,250 Hz bandwidth; Hewlett-Packard, Model 3964a). The time required to reach the command pulse potential was ≤ 0.5 ms and there were no membrane potential ($V_m$) variations throughout the...
pulse. Capacitive currents ended within ~5 ms. Recordings which did not meet these criteria were rejected. Pulse generation, data acquisition and analysis were done with a PC/AT personal computer (IBM) and pCLAMP software (Axon Instruments, Inc.) with a Lab Master TM-40 interface board (Scientific Solutions, Inc., Solon, OH).

Solutions

The control solution, modified from Van Harrevel (1936), was as follows (in millimolar): NaCl, 110; KCl, 5.4; MgCl₂, 16.1; Tetraethylammonium chloride, 100; Tris buffer 10; pH was adjusted to 7.2 with HCl. In this solution, depolarization-activated currents were eliminated or greatly reduced (Araque and Buño, 1994). In Cd²⁺ solutions, CdCl₂ was added in equimolar exchange with MgCl₂. In experiments with increased [K⁺]o, KCl was added without osmolarity compensation (in 10.8 mM K⁺ or in equimolar exchange with NaCl. Experiments were performed at room temperature (21–23°C). All chemicals were purchased from Sigma Chemical Co. (St. Louis, MO).

Protocols and Parameter Measurements

Two different voltage command protocols were used. Both consisted in a pulse to an initial voltage (V) from a holding potential (H), followed by a pulse to a final voltage (F). In Protocol 1 (e.g., Fig. 3 A), V was variable in amplitude and F was constant at ~110 mV (distant from the reversal potential of Iₐₒ). In Protocol 2 (e.g., Fig. 3 B), V was fixed at ~130 mV (which clearly activated Iₐₒ) and F was variable. The current-voltage (I-V) relationship of the steady state total current evoked by Protocol 1 was measured at the end of V. The instantaneous currents at the beginning of V and F evoked by Protocols 1 and 2, respectively, were measured 7 ms after the pulse transients (when the capacitative currents had ended and the activation and deactivation of Iₐₒ were negligible). The instantaneous current at the beginning of V corresponded to the leak current (Iₘₙₙ) and that at the beginning of F corresponded to Iₘₙₙ (previously activated by V) (Araque and Buño, 1994). The instantaneous I-V relationships of Iₘₙₙ and Iₘₙₙ + Iₐₒ, reflected the behavior of the Iₘₙₙ and the open Iₐₒ channels, respectively (see Araque and Buño, 1994). The slopes of the calculated linear regressions of both instantaneous I-V relationships corresponded to the chord conductance of Iₘₙₙ (Gₘₙₙ) and to Gₘₙₙ plus the chord conductance of Iₐₒ (Gₐₒ), respectively. The reversal potential of Iₐₒ (Eₐₒ) was calculated either from the tail currents evoked by Protocol 2 (see Fig. 4, B and C) or from the intercept point of the computed linear regressions of the instantaneous I-V relationship of Iₘₙₙ and Iₘₙₙ + Iₐₒ (see Araque and Buño, 1994). Gₐₒ was calculated from the instantaneous current at the beginning of pulse F in Protocol 1 (see e.g., Fig. 3 A), following the equation:

\[ Gₐₒ = (I - Iₘₙₙ)/(F - Eₐₒ) \]  \hspace{1cm} (1)

where I is the instantaneous current at pulse F, which had a minimum (Iₘₙₙ) when Gₐₒ = 0 (see Araque and Buño, 1994). The activation curve of Iₐₒ, i.e., the voltage dependence of Gₐₒ, was characterized by the expression:

\[ Gₐₒ = Gₐₒ,max/[1 + \exp \left(V - V₀\right)/S]\]  \hspace{1cm} (2)

deduced from the Boltzmann equation where Gₐₒ,max is the maximum Gₐₒ, V₀ is the voltage at which Gₐₒ is half-activated, and S is a slope parameter.

Because leak and capacitive currents were linear (and Iₐₒ did not show instantaneous rectification; see Araque and Buño, 1994), they could be adequately subtracted using the pCLAMP software according to the following procedure: the sum of the currents evoked by n identical pulses n-fold smaller than the test pulse was subtracted from the current elicited by
the corresponding test pulse. To prevent significantly activation of voltage-gated currents, \( n \) was usually 15.

To minimize the steady state current at the holding potential, \( H \) was set near the resting potential (e.g., -60 mV in control solution and -40 mV in 10.8 mM K\(^+\)) (see Araque and Bufio, 1994). All data were expressed as mean ± SD.

**RESULTS**

**Cd\(^{2+}\) Reduction of Both \( I_{AB} \) and \( I_L \)**

Fig. 1A shows total currents evoked by Protocol 1 in control solution, in the presence of 5.0 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) and after recovery by washout. In control solution, voltage command pulses from a holding potential (\( H \)) of -60 mV to \( V_m \) between -50 and -170 mV evoked an instantaneous linear leak current \( I_L \). With pulses < -80 mV, \( I_L \) was followed by the time- and voltage-dependent inward current \( I_{AB} \). The \( I-V \) relationships of the steady state total current measured at the end of \( V \) clearly shows the inward rectification due to \( I_{AB} \) (Fig. 1B, circles). The steady state total current was greatly reduced and its \( I-V \) relationship became almost linear in 5.0 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solution (Fig. 1B, triangles), indicating that \( I_{AB} \) was practically abolished. Further-
more, the instantaneous $I-V$ relationship of $I_L$ (Fig. 1 C), calculated at the beginning of pulse $V$ in Protocol 1 (Fig. 1 A), remained linear and the chord conductance $G_L$ (i.e., the first-order regression slope) diminished from 3.7 $\mu$S in control to 0.6 $\mu$S (i.e., a 83.8% drop) in 5.0 mM Cd$^{2+}$ solution (circles and triangles, respectively). From eight different preparations, $G_L$ varied from $4.2 \pm 0.7$ $\mu$S in control to $1.5 \pm 1.0$ $\mu$S in 5.0 mM Cd$^{2+}$ solution (i.e., a 64.3% reduction). The reversal potential of $I_L$ ($E_L$), estimated by linear interpolation of the first-order regression of the instantaneous $I-V$

![Figure 2](https://jgp.rupress.org/)

**Figure 2.** Effects of Cd$^{2+}$ on $I_{total}$, $I_{AB}$, and $I_L$. (A) $I_{total}$, $I_{AB}$, and $I_L$ in control, 0.5 and 1.0 mM Cd$^{2+}$ solutions. $I_{AB}$ was isolated by computer subtraction of linear capacitive and leak currents from total currents. $I_L$ was obtained by computer subtraction of $I_{AB}$ from $I_{total}$. (B and C) Activation of $I_{AB}$ elicited by a pulse to $-130$ mV from a $-60$-mV holding potential, and deactivation of $I_{AB}$ evoked by a pulse to $-60$ mV after a prepulse to $-130$ mV, respectively, in control (continuous line) and 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ (dotted line). $I_{AB}$ was scaled between minimum and maximum values. B and C are from the same fiber.

relationship of $I_L$ with the voltage axis (Fig. 1 C), was not significantly altered by Cd$^{2+}$, indicating that the ion did not modify the selective permeability of the channels underlying $I_L$. Therefore, Cd$^{2+}$ also blocked $I_L$.

Because $I_L$ was linear (Fig. 1 C; see Araque and Buño, 1994), $I_{AB}$ could be isolated by computer subtraction of linear current components (capacitive and leak) from the total current ($I_{total}$), and $I_L$ could be separated by subtraction of $I_{AB}$ from $I_{total}$. Fig. 2 A shows $I_{total}$, $I_{AB}$, and $I_L$ evoked by hyperpolarizing pulses in control, 0.5 and 1.0
Both \( I_{\text{AB}} \) and \( I_L \) were reduced by Cd\(^{2+}\) in a dose-dependent manner (see below), but the reduction of \( I_{\text{AB}} \) was much larger. Furthermore, while the \( I_{\text{AB}} \) activation kinetic gradually slowed down as a function of the extracellular Cd\(^{2+}\) concentration ([Cd\(^{2+}\)]\(_o\)) (Fig. 2 B; see also Fig. 8 C), the \( I_{\text{AB}} \) deactivation kinetic was essentially unchanged by Cd\(^{2+}\) (Fig. 2 C).

Fig. 3, A and B, shows total currents evoked by Protocol 1 and 2, respectively, in control and 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solutions. Fig. 3 C shows the \( I-V \) relationships of the steady state total current in control and 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solutions (circles and triangles, respectively). The steady state total current at \( V_m \) above -60 mV was reduced in 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\), as expected by the Cd\(^{2+}\) blockade of \( I_L \). Furthermore, the nonlinear, inwardly rectifying, \( I-V \) relationship was maintained in 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solution, and the reduction of the steady state total current was more prominent at hyperpolarized potentials owing to the addition of the Cd\(^{2+}\) inhibition of \( I_{\text{AB}} \). Consequently, the Cd\(^{2+}\) reduction of \( I_{\text{AB}} \) was dose dependent, decreasing as [Cd\(^{2+}\)]\(_o\) decreased (see Fig. 2 and below).
Instantaneous I-V relationships. The instantaneous I-V relationships of both \( I_L \) and \( I_L + I_{AB} \) are shown in Fig. 3 D, (solid and open symbols, respectively). On the one hand, the instantaneous I-V relationships of \( I_L + I_{AB} \) in control and 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solutions (open circles and triangles, respectively) were linear (\( r > 0.99 \), in both cases), and their slopes (i.e., \( G_L + G_{AB} \)) varied from 10.9 to 7.4 \( \mu \)S, respectively, (i.e., a 32.1% drop). Furthermore, the linear behavior of the open \( I_{AB} \) channels in Cd\(^{2+}\) solution indicates that Cd\(^{2+}\) did not interfere with the motion of ions through the open \( I_{AB} \) channels. Alternatively, Cd\(^{2+}\) could unbind slowly from the channel, however, the effects of Cd\(^{2+}\) on the kinetic behavior of \( I_{AB} \) (see below and Discussion) suggest that the Cd\(^{2+}\) binding reaction was faster than the transitions between the open and closed states of \( I_{AB} \) channels. On the other hand, \( G_L \) in control (solid circles) and 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solutions (solid triangles) declined from 5.7 to 4.5 \( \mu \)S, respectively (i.e., a 21.1% drop). On average (\( n = 6 \)), \( G_L \) diminished from 4.3 \( \pm \) 0.8 \( \mu \)S in control to 2.8 \( \pm \) 1.0 \( \mu \)S (i.e., a 34.9% drop) in 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solution. Consequently, the Cd\(^{2+}\) blockade of \( I_L \) was also dose dependent because the \( G_L \) drop measured in 5.0 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) (see Fig. 1) was much larger than that in 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\).

Reversal potential of \( I_{AB} \). Fig. 4, A and B, shows total and tail currents evoked by protocol 1 and 2, respectively, in control and 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solutions. \( E_{AB} \) estimated by linear interpolation in the I-V relationship of the \( I_{AB} \) tail current amplitudes (i.e., the difference between currents at the beginning and end of F in protocol 2) was not substantially different in control (-67.6 mV) and 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) (-64.1 mV) solutions (Fig. 4 C, circles and triangles, respectively). The mean \( E_{AB} \) in control and 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solutions (\( n = 8 \)) were -63.8 \( \pm \) 5.1 and -61.5 \( \pm \) 7.1 mV, respectively, and they were not significantly different (t test; \( P > 0.1 \)), indicating that the selective permeability of the \( I_{AB} \) channels was unaffected by Cd\(^{2+}\).

Chord conductance of \( I_{AB} \). Fig. 4 D shows the voltage-dependence of \( G_{AB} \) (i.e., the \( I_{AB} \) activation curve), calculated at the beginning of pulse F in protocol 1 (see Fig. 3 A), in control and 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solutions. \( G_{AB,max} \) was reduced from 8.6 \( \mu \)S in control to 5.5 \( \mu \)S in 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solution. Furthermore, the \( I_{AB} \) activation curve was shifted by Cd\(^{2+}\) to more hyperpolarized potentials, changing \( V_0 \) from -101.6 mV in control to -120.0 mV in 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solution. However, the slope parameter \( S \) was only slightly changed (11.2 and 12.8, in control and 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solutions, respectively). On average (\( n = 7 \)), in 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) solution \( G_{AB,max} \) was reduced 0.52 \( \pm \) 0.27 times, \( V_0 \) was displaced -14.7 \( \pm \) 6.7 mV and \( S \) was changed 0.7 \( \pm \) 1.6 U from the control solution (see Fig. 7).

Therefore, Cd\(^{2+}\) reduced \( G_{AB} \) and shifted the \( I_{AB} \) activation curve to hyperpolarized potentials, suggesting that it acted as a modifier of gating (see below). Furthermore, Cd\(^{2+}\) did not modify the slope parameter \( S \) (which defines the shape of the Boltzmann relation), i.e., if scaled and shifted, the activation curves in the presence and absence of Cd\(^{2+}\) could be superimposed (not shown), indicating that the same relative amount of channels were opened by a given \( V_m \) increment.

Kinetic behavior of \( I_{AB} \). The kinetic behavior of \( I_{AB} \) was also affected by Cd\(^{2+}\) (see Fig. 2). Although the characterization of the \( I_{AB} \) time course by more than a single exponential function cannot be discarded, the time course of both \( I_{AB} \) activation and deactivation (Fig. 4, A and B, dotted lines) could be reasonably fitted (\( r > 0.95 \)) by single-exponential functions (continuous lines) and both kinetics could be described by
a single time constant ($\tau_{ab}$), which for convenience corresponded to the activation time constant at $V_m < -80$ mV and to the deactivation time constant at the remaining $V_m$ (see Araque and Bufio, 1994). Furthermore, the voltage dependence of $\tau_{ab}$ (i.e., the $\tau_{ab} - V_m$ relationship) was a bell-shaped function with a peak at $\sim V_0$ (Araque and Bufio, 1994). Fig. 4E displays the $\tau_{ab} - V_m$ relationships in control (circles) and 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ (triangles) solutions, showing the shift to the left on the voltage axis produced by Cd$^{2+}$ (responsible for the similar $I_{ab}$ activation curve shift; see Fig. 4D). Moreover, while the magnitude of the deactivation $\tau_{ab}$ was not modified (note that

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4.** $F_{ab}$, $G_{ab}$, and $\tau_{ab}$ in control and 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$. (A and B) Total currents (dots) evoked by $V$ and $F$ pulses in Protocols 1 and 2, respectively, in control and in 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$. Superimposed continuous lines are single-exponential fits ($r > 0.95$) to each record. (C) $I-V$ relationships of $I_{ab}$ tail current amplitudes in control and 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ (● and ▲, respectively) fitted to first-order regressions ($r > 0.99$) (continuous lines). (D) Voltage dependence of $G_{ab}$ in control (●) and 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ (▲). $G_{ab}$ was calculated from Eq. 1 and fitted to Eq. 2 (continuous lines) (see Materials and Methods). In control: $G_{ab,max} = 8.6 ± 0.1 \mu$S, $V_0 = -101.6 ± 0.4$ mV and $S = 11.2 ± 0.3$; in 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$: $G_{ab,max} = 5.5 ± 0.1 \mu$S, $V_0 = -120.0 ± 0.9$ mV and $S = 12.8 ± 0.6$. (E) $\tau_{ab} - V_m$ relationships in control (●) and 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ (▲).

the apparent decrease corresponded to the $I_{ab}$ activation curve shift), the magnitude of the activation $\tau_{ab}$ was markedly augmented in 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ solution, and this increment was dependent on the [Cd$^{2+}$]$_o$ (see Fig. 8C). In conclusion, the time course of $I_{ab}$ in the presence of Cd$^{2+}$ remained a single exponential function, the deactivation rate of $I_{ab}$ was unchanged and the $I_{ab}$ activation was slowed by Cd$^{2+}$. These results suggest that Cd$^{2+}$ bound and unbound faster than the transitions between closed and open states of $I_{ab}$ channels (see Discussion) and that Cd$^{2+}$ acted on the gating mechanism involved in the opening of $I_{ab}$ channels.
IntraceUular Cd$^{2+}$

In four experiments, the current electrode was substituted after a control recording by a new electrode filled with 1M CdCl$_2$. Cd$^{2+}$ was ionophoretically injected with 80 ms, 50- nA current pulses, delivered at 1/s during 30–60 min. Both $I_L$ and $I_{AB}$ were unmodified by intracellular injection of Cd$^{2+}$ (not shown). The amount of Cd$^{2+}$ ionophoresed was estimated from the equation (Adler, Augustine, Duffy, and Charlton, 1991):

$$n = \frac{I T_b}{F z}$$

where $n$ is the number of moles injected, $I$ is the injected current intensity, $T_b$ is the transference number (i.e., the fraction of current carried by Cd$^{2+}$), $F$ is Faraday’s constant, and $z$ is the ion’s valence. Assuming that Cd$^{2+}$ has the same electric mobility than Mg$^{2+}$, $T_b$ would be 0.41 (Hille, 1992). If all the injected Cd$^{2+}$ stayed inside the cell and considering a standard muscle fiber volume of 3.14 nl (length, 400 μm; diam, 100 μm), the estimated intracellular Cd$^{2+}$ concentration varied between 4.87 and 9.74 mM. The negative result of Cd$^{2+}$ injection indicates that the effects of extracellular Cd$^{2+}$ were not due to leak of Cd$^{2+}$ into the cell through electrode penetrations, which could act from the inside at micromolar levels. Therefore, Cd$^{2+}$ acted by binding to a receptor site in the extracellular side of the membrane.

Cd$^{2+}$ Regulation of $I_{AB}$ in Different $[K^+]_o$

The above results indicate that the selective permeability of the $I_{AB}$ channels was not affected by Cd$^{2+}$, and that Cd$^{2+}$ acted from the extracellular side. It has been proposed that a permeant ion must bind to at least one site in the permeation pathway when migrating through a channel (Hess and Tsien, 1984; Hess, Lansman, and Tsien, 1986). Thus, ionic pore occluders and permeant ions usually compete for common binding sites at the channel (e.g., Standen and Stanfield, 1978; Mlinar and Enyeart, 1993; see also Lester, 1991; Hille, 1992), although the blocker could also occlude the pore at a peripheral site far away of the permeation pathway.

To explore whether Cd$^{2+}$ exerted its effects by binding to a site involved in the K$^+$ permeability pathway, the effects of Cd$^{2+}$ in different $[K^+]_o$ were analyzed. Fig. 5, A and B, shows total currents in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K$^+$ solutions, respectively, in the absence (top) and the presence of 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ (bottom). The Cd$^{2+}$-induced current reduction is evident in both $[K^+]_o$. Fig. 5 C, shows the corresponding I-V relationships of the steady state total current in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K$^+$ (solid and open symbols, respectively), without (circles) and with 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ (triangles). It had previously been shown that the I-V relationship of the steady state total current shifted 58 mV towards positive potentials by a 10-fold increase in $[K^+]_o$ (Araque and Buño, 1994). In accordance with the shift, the I-V relationship of the steady state total current in raised $[K^+]_o$, was similarly displaced ~17 mV to the right both in the absence and the presence of 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$. Moreover, the degree of Cd$^{2+}$ reduction in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K$^+$ was 55 and 56%, respectively (measured at -120 and -140 mV, respectively). Consequently, the Cd$^{2+}$ reduction was similar irrespective of the I-V shift and of $[K^+]_o$. 

Fig. 5. Cd\(^{2+}\) blockade of \(I_{AB}\) was independent of [K\(^+\)]\(_o\). (A and B) Total currents in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K\(^+\), respectively, in the absence (top) and presence (bottom) of 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\). (C) \(I-V\) relationships of the steady state total current in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K\(^+\) (solid and open symbols, respectively), in the absence and presence of 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) (circles and triangles, respectively).

Reversal potential of \(I_{AB}\). Fig. 6 A shows the \(I-V\) relationship of the \(I_{AB}\) tail current amplitudes evoked by protocol 2. \(E_{AB}\) shifted to more depolarized \(V_m\) in high [K\(^+\)]\(_o\), and the corresponding \(E_{AB}\) in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K\(^+\) (solid and open symbols) were not modified by Cd\(^{2+}\) (triangles), again indicating that the selective permeability of the \(I_{AB}\) channels was unaffected by Cd\(^{2+}\).

Chord conductance of \(I_{AB}\). Fig. 6 B shows the voltage dependence of \(G_{AB}\) in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K\(^+\) solutions (solid and open symbols, respectively) and in the absence and

fig.png

Fig. 6. Effects of Cd\(^{2+}\) on \(E_{AB}\), \(G_{AB}\), and \(\tau_{AB}\) in different [K\(^+\)]\(_o\). Effects of 5.4 and 10.8 mM K\(^+\) (solid and open symbols, respectively) without and with 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\) (circles and triangles, respectively). Same fiber of Fig. 5. (A) \(I-V\) relationships of \(I_{AB}\) tail current amplitudes, fitted to first-order regressions (\(r > 0.99\)) (continuous lines). (B) Voltage dependence of \(G_{AB}\) calculated from Eq. 1 and fitted to Eq. 2 (continuous lines) (see Materials and Methods). In control, in 5.4 mM K\(^+\): \(G_{AB,\text{max}} = 14.8 \pm 0.1 \mu\text{S}, V_o = -84.1 \pm 0.4 \text{ mV and } S = 13.9 \pm 0.3); in 10.8 mM K\(^+\): \(G_{AB,\text{max}} = 15.5 \pm 0.1 \mu\text{S}, V_o = -72.9 \pm 0.4 \text{ mV and } S = 15.7 \pm 0.3). In 0.5 mM Cd\(^{2+}\), in 5.4 mM K\(^+\): \(G_{AB,\text{max}} = 8.7 \pm 0.1 \mu\text{S}, V_o = -110.3 \pm 0.8 \text{ mV and } S = 16.0 \pm 0.5); in 10.8 mM K\(^+\): \(G_{AB,\text{max}} = 9.3 \pm 0.2 \mu\text{S}, V_o = -94.8 \pm 0.9 \text{ mV and } S = 12.4 \pm 0.7). (C) \(\tau_{AB}-V_m\) relationships.
the presence of 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ (circles and triangles, respectively). $G_{AB, \text{max}}$ was similarly reduced by Cd$^{2+}$ in both [K$^+$]$_o$, i.e., to 58.8 and 60.0% (see also Fig. 7A and below). Araque and Buño (1994) described that the activation curve of $I_{AB}$ shifted towards positive $V_m$ by $\sim 58$ mV with a 10-fold increase in [K$^+$]$_o$ (Fig. 6B, circles). The voltage dependence of $G_{AB}$ was shifted to more negative potentials in the presence of Cd$^{2+}$, and the shift was similar in both [K$^+$]$_o$ ($-26.2$ and $-21.9$ mV in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K$^+$ solutions), while the slope parameter S was, if any, slightly changed (Fig. 6B). Indeed, on average $V_o$ changed $-14.7 \pm 6.7$ mV ($n = 7$) and $-20.1 \pm 3.9$ mV ($n = 6$) by 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K$^+$ solutions, respectively, and the difference between $S$ with and without 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ was $0.7 \pm 1.6$ and $0.1 \pm 2.0$ in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K$^+$ solutions, respectively. Therefore, the Cd$^{2+}$ regulation was not affected by [K$^+$]$_o$, suggesting that Cd$^{2+}$ did not exert its effect by binding to a site involved in the K$^+$ permeability pathway.

**Figure 7.** Concentration-effect curves of [Cd$^{2+}$]$_o$ on $G_{AB, \text{max}}$, $V_o$ and S (see Materials and Methods, Eq. 2). (A) Ratio ($Y$) between $G_{AB, \text{max}}$ in Cd$^{2+}$ and in control solution, in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K$^+$ (filled and open circles, respectively) fitted to Eq. 3 (continuous and dashed lines, respectively) (see Results). (B) Differences ($\Delta V_o$) between $V_o$ in Cd$^{2+}$ and in control solution, fitted to Eq. 4 (continuous line) (see Results). (C) Differences ($\Delta S$) between the slope parameter $S$ in Cd$^{2+}$ and in control solution. All experimental values are means from at least six different preparations.

**Kinetic behavior of $I_{AB}$.** Fig. 6C shows the $\tau_{AB}-V_m$ relationship in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K$^+$ solutions (solid and open symbols, respectively) in the absence and presence of 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$ (circles and triangles, respectively). The voltage dependence of $\tau_{AB}$ was shifted to more depolarized potentials in raised [K$^+$]$_o$, as expected by the $I_{AB}$ activation curve shift. Furthermore, in 0.5 mM Cd$^{2+}$, the $\tau_{AB}-V_m$ relationship was shifted to the left (Fig. 6C, triangles), also in accordance with the similar $I_{AB}$ activation curve shift (see above, and Fig. 6B). However, the effects of Cd$^{2+}$ on the $\tau_{AB}-V_m$ relationships were similar in both [K$^+$]$_o$, i.e., the shift to the left was the same, the deactivation rate of $I_{AB}$ was unchanged, and the activation $\tau_{AB}$ was similarly augmented by Cd$^{2+}$ in both [K$^+$]$_o$. Indeed, the activation $\tau_{AB}$ increased $\sim 1.5$ and 1.4 times in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K$^+$, respectively, at potentials $\sim 30$ mV more hyperpolarized than the corresponding $V_o$. 
We were not able to perform similar studies using very high [K+]o because Gl increased (>30 µS in 100 mM K+) preventing accurate recordings (see Araque and Buño, 1994). However, a solution containing 100 mM K+ plus 10 mM Cd²⁺ (which reduced Gl below 15 µS) was used. In these conditions, I_AB was absent in all the seven fibers tested (not shown), indicating that a high [K+]o did not remove the effect of Cd²⁺.

Therefore, because the Cd⁻⁻⁻ regulation was unaffected by [K+]o, we conclude that Cd²⁺ did not compete with K⁺ for its binding site to modulate I_AB channels, again supporting that Cd²⁺ did not exert its effect by binding to a site in the K⁺ permeability pathway.

Dose Dependence of Cd²⁺ Regulation of I_AB

Results described so far show that as [Cd²⁺]o increased, G_AB,max was reduced and the I_AB activation curve was shifted towards more negative Vm in a dose-dependent manner. Results obtained from 19 different preparations displaying the effects of [Cd²⁺]o on G_AB and its voltage dependence are shown in Fig. 7. The Cd²⁺ concentration-effect relationships on G_AB,max (i.e., the degree of reduction as a function of [Cd²⁺]o) in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K⁺ are shown in Fig. 7A (filled and open circles, respectively). Mean values of the ratio (Y) between G_AB,max in Cd²⁺ and in control solutions were fitted to the equation:

\[ Y = Y_{max}/[1 + (Cd/IC_{50})^1] \]

deduced from the Hill equation, where \( Y_{max} \) is the maximum Y, Cd is [Cd²⁺]o, IC_{50} is the [Cd²⁺]o at which Y = ½ Y_{max} and the Hill coefficient, i.e., the exponential value is 1. The fit statistics (r > 0.99, in both cases) indicate that the effect of [Cd²⁺]o on G_AB was dose dependent, increasing as [Cd²⁺]o increased and obeying the Hill equation with a Hill coefficient of 1, supporting the assumption of 1:1 ligand-receptor binding. Furthermore, the fit parameters of IC_{50} in 5.4 and 10.8 mM K⁺ were 0.452 ± 0.045 and 0.495 ± 0.080 mM, respectively, which were not significantly different (t test; P > 0.1), again indicating that the Cd²⁺ regulation was unaffected by [K⁺]o and that Cd²⁺ did not exert its action by binding to a site involved in the K⁺ permeability pathway.

The I_AB activation curve shift evoked by Cd²⁺ was estimated by the effect of [Cd²⁺]o on V_o (Fig. 7 B). The mean differences between V_o in Cd²⁺ and in control solutions (ΔV_o) were plotted versus [Cd²⁺]o. Since at [Cd²⁺]o > 5.0 mM, G_AB was drastically reduced and could not be successfully fitted to the Boltzmann equation, a saturation of ΔV_o at high [Cd²⁺]o could not be found. Moreover, when G_AB,max = 0, V_o is mathematically undetermined. However, attempts were made to fit experimental values to the expression:

\[ ΔV_o = ΔV_{o_{min}} - [ΔV_{o_{min}}/[1 + (Cd/IC_{50})^1]] \]

also deduced from the Hill equation, assuming a Hill coefficient of 1 and where ΔV_{o_{min}} is the minimum value of ΔV_o. The procedure provided a reasonable fit (r > 0.95), again supporting the assumption of 1:1 Cd²⁺ binding. Furthermore, the concentration-effect relationship on V_o was similar to that on G_AB,max. Indeed, the
relationship between $\Delta V_0$ and $V$ was linear ($r > 0.95$; not shown), suggesting that the Cd$^{2+}$-evoked $G_{AB}$ reduction and the shift in $G_{AB}$ voltage dependence were due to the same mechanism.

The mean differences between the slope parameter $S$ in Cd$^{2+}$ and in control solutions ($\Delta S$ versus $[\text{Cd}^{2+}]_0$), are shown in Fig. 7 C. No meaningful differences ($t$ test; $P > 0.1$) were found between the mean $\Delta S$ in control and in different $[\text{Cd}^{2+}]_0$ solutions. Indeed, the correlation coefficient between $\Delta S$ and $[\text{Cd}^{2+}]_0$ was not significantly different from zero.

**DISCUSSION**

Our results show that both $I_{AB}$ and $I_L$ were reduced by low extracellular concentrations of Cd$^{2+}$ in a dose-dependent manner.

**Cd$^{2+}$ Regulation of $I_{AB}$**

The Cd$^{2+}$ regulation had the following characteristics: (a) $E_{AB}$ was not modified, indicating that the $I_{AB}$ reduction was not caused by interfering with the channel's selective permeability mechanisms; (b) Cd$^{2+}$ did not compete with K$^+$ for the regulatory site, suggesting that Cd$^{2+}$ did not bind to the site for K$^+$ in the permeation pathway; (c) the regulation did not modify the slope parameter $S$ of the $I_{AB}$ voltage dependence; (d) the voltage dependence of $G_{AB}$ was shifted to more hyperpolarized potentials; (e) the activation $\tau_{AB}$ was increased but the magnitude of the deactivation time constant was unaffected.

Therefore, many aspects of the regulation of $G_{AB}$ by Cd$^{2+}$ were different from that of other known anomalous rectifiers blocked by different ions. For example, Cs$^+$ blocked all other known inward rectifiers in a voltage-dependent manner (e.g., Gay and Stanfield, 1977; Mayer and Westbrook, 1983). Voltage-dependent block by different ions has also been described in many conductances (e.g., Lansman et al., 1986; Swandulla and Armstrong, 1989; Lansman, 1990). On the one hand, it has been suggested that nonpermeant positively charged blocking ions bind to the channel attracted by the increased transmembrane electrical field during hyperpolarization and that depolarization disengages the blocking ion (Woodhull, 1973; Gay and Stanfield, 1977; Standen and Stanfield, 1978). This is not the case for $I_{AB}$ because the open channel behavior was linear in the presence of Cd$^{2+}$ for the voltage range studied, which appears large enough in the depolarizing direction. On the other hand, extreme hyperpolarization could force the blocking cation to permeate through the channel, also alleviating block. This is clearly not the case for Cd$^{2+}$ regulation of $I_{AB}$ which was not relieved by strong hyperpolarizations to $-170$ mV (see below). It has been shown that Ba$^{2+}$ blocked the inward rectifier of frog skeletal muscle by competing with K$^+$ for a site in the K$^+$ permeability pathway (Standen and Stanfield, 1978). However, Cd$^{2+}$ did not compete with K$^+$ for its blocking site. These results suggest a different mode of action of Cd$^{2+}$, which acted by binding to a receptor site outside the K$^+$ permeability pathway. Cd$^{2+}$ could occlude the pore by binding to an external site away from the K$^+$ permeability pathway and, because the instantaneous $I-V$ relationship of $I_{AB}$ remained linear in the presence of Cd$^{2+}$,
binding could occur outside the membrane electric field (perhaps in the outer vestibule of the channel). However, the effects of $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ on both the activation curve and the time course of $I_{\text{AB}}$ strongly favor the interpretation that $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ affected the gating mechanism of $I_{\text{AB}}$ channels (see below) rather than $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ acted by ionic pore occlusion.

Frankenhaeuser and Hodgkin (1957) described that changes in $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_o$ shifted the voltage dependence of $\text{Na}^+$ and $\text{K}^+$ currents in squid axons and proposed that $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ interacted with surface negative charges creating an electric field inside the membrane which adds to the resting potential. Due to that effect, the voltage dependence of most voltage-gated currents was shifted towards positive $V_m$ in raised extracellular divalent cation concentrations (an effect termed, screening). Interestingly, inward rectifiers and hyperpolarization-activated currents did not show screening (Hille, 1992). Moreover, the $\text{Cd}^{2+}$-evoked shift of the $G_{\text{AB}}$ voltage dependence was towards negative potentials, indicating that $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ effects cannot be explained by screening, since in that case a positive shift would occur. Furthermore, the extracellular concentration of divalent cations was maintained constant by equimolar replacement with $\text{Mg}^{2+}$, and the reduction of $G_{\text{AB}}$ was not reproduced by $\text{Mn}^{2+}$ or $\text{Ba}^{2+}$ (see Araque and Buño, 1994).

The channel gating properties are defined by the conductance-$V_m$ relationship and by the opening and closing time course of the channels (i.e., the $\tau$-$V_m$ relationships) (cf, Gilly and Armstrong, 1982; Armstrong and López-Barneo, 1987; Edman and Grampp, 1988; Swandulla and Armstrong, 1989; Ganfornina and López-Barneo, 1992; Hille, 1992). As discussed above, $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ modified the voltage dependence of $G_{\text{AB}}$, shifting the activation curve to hyperpolarized levels without affecting the slope parameter $S$. This result strongly suggests that $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ acted by modifying the gating properties of $I_{\text{AB}}$ channels. Furthermore, the activation $\tau_{\text{AB}}$ was increased by $\text{Cd}^{2+}$, again indicating that gating mechanisms involved in opening $I_{\text{AB}}$ channels were modified by $\text{Cd}^{2+}$. Contrastingly, the deactivation $\tau_{\text{AB}}$, i.e., the closing time course of $I_{\text{AB}}$ channels, was unaffected by $\text{Cd}^{2+}$, indicating that the gating mechanisms engaged in channel deactivation were not modified.

The above interpretations were incorporated into a kinetic scheme which supplies additional information on the mechanism of the $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ regulation. Assuming an ohmic open channel with an intrinsic gating mechanism (see above and Araque and Buño, 1994), the simplest representation with the minimal conformational states to explain the voltage dependence and kinetic of $I_{\text{AB}}$ is a two-state model like that proposed by Chesnoy-Marchais (1983) to explain $\text{Cl}^-$-mediated inward rectification in $\text{Aplysia}$ neurons (see also Araque and Buño, 1994). Thus, the voltage dependence of $G_{\text{AB}}$ and $\tau_{\text{AB}}$ could be explained supposing that $I_{\text{AB}}$ channels may be in a conducting or open state (O) with a voltage-independent conductance (because the instantaneous I-V relationship of $I_{\text{AB}}$ was linear), or in a nonconducting or closed state (C), with voltage-dependent transition rates ($\alpha$ and $\beta$) between both states:

$$C \xrightarrow{\alpha} O \quad \beta$$
Following this model, $G_{AB}$ and $\tau_{AB}$ are given by the equations:

$$G_{AB} = G_{AB,max}[\alpha/(\alpha + \beta)]$$  \hspace{1cm} (5) \\
$$\tau_{AB} = 1/(\alpha + \beta).$$  \hspace{1cm} (6)

To test the accuracy of the model in describing the voltage and time dependence of $I_{AB}$, $\alpha$ and $\beta$ were deduced from the above equations (see Chesnoy-Marchais, 1983). They could be considered as exponential functions of $V_m$, and were accurately fitted ($r > 0.95$) to the expressions:

$$\alpha = \alpha_0 \exp(-aV_m)$$  \hspace{1cm} (7) \\
$$\beta = \beta_0 \exp(bV_m)$$  \hspace{1cm} (8)

were $\alpha_0$, $\beta_0$, $a$, and $b$ were constants. Fig. 8, E and F (circles), shows an example illustrating that the model accurately described the $I_{AB}$ behavior. Mean values obtained from six different experiments for $\alpha_0$, $\beta_0$, $a$ and $b$ were $1.2 \pm 0.6$ s$^{-1}$, $962.6 \pm 749.7$ s$^{-1}$, $25.9 \pm 5.7$ V$^{-1}$ and $50.3 \pm 12.5$ V$^{-1}$, respectively.

Because the time course of $I_{AB}$ in the presence of Cd$^{2+}$ remained a single exponential function, the deactivation $I_{AB}$ was unchanged and the $I_{AB}$ activation was slowed down by Cd$^{2+}$. Cd$^{2+}$ would bind faster than the transitions between closed and open states of the $I_{AB}$ channels. In addition, Cd$^{2+}$ did not act by ionic pore occlusion by binding to the open $I_{AB}$ channel (see above). Therefore, while a C-O-B model could be probably excluded, the effects of Cd$^{2+}$ on $I_{AB}$ were reasonably explained by a B-C-O model. Although a more complex scheme with more conformational states (see, e.g., Ganfornina and López-Barneo, 1992) could be proposed, the simplest kinetic model including the minimal conformational states required to explain the voltage dependence and kinetics of $I_{AB}$ and the effects of Cd$^{2+}$ is shown in Fig. 8 A. In the model, CB and OB are Cd$^{2+}$-bound channel states that cannot conduct, $K$ and $K'$ are affinity constants for Cd$^{2+}$ and $\alpha$, $\beta$, and $\alpha'$ are transition rate constants. Because the magnitude of the deactivation $\tau_{AB}$ was unchanged by Cd$^{2+}$, $\beta$ was assumed as unmodified by Cd$^{2+}$. Cd$^{2+}$ would slow down the $I_{AB}$ channel opening by decreasing the rate constant $\alpha$ by a factor $f$ ($<1$), i.e., $\alpha' = \alpha f$. For microscopic reversibility, Cd$^{2+}$ must bind with lower affinity to the open state, i.e., $K' = K f$ (see Katz and Thesleff, 1957).

The model predicts that the activation and deactivation of $I_{AB}$ can be described by single exponential functions (only if Cd$^{2+}$ binding is much faster than the gating of $I_{AB}$ channels), and that Cd$^{2+}$ decreases $G_{AB,max}$ and shifts the $I_{AB}$ activation curve to hyperpolarized potentials (given the voltage dependence of $\alpha$ and $\beta$ and the voltage independence of $K$ and $K'$), as we found experimentally. The reduction in $G_{AB,max}$ at negative voltages would rule out a pure B-C-O model, since this model also predicts that the effect of Cd$^{2+}$ could be overcome at sufficiently negative voltages. Nevertheless, we cannot confirm this prediction experimentally because strong hyperpolarizations (usually $>-140$ mV) evoked a large, slow, long-lasting inward current which has not been identified (see Araque and Buño, 1994) and which may mask $I_{AB}$. However, the observed dose-dependent reduction of $G_{AB,max}$ by Cd$^{2+}$ implies a significant contribution of the rightmost equilibrium. Therefore, Eq. 5 for $G_{AB}$ in
Cd$^{2+}$ could be rewritten as:

$$G_{AB} = \frac{G_{AB,\text{max}}}{(1 + K'\text{Cd})} \left[\frac{\alpha^{Cd}}{\alpha + \beta}\right]$$

where $Cd$ is $[\text{Cd}^{2+}]_o$ and $\alpha^{Cd}$ is the over-all transition rate constant, which is a function of $\alpha$ and $[\text{Cd}^{2+}]_o$ (see below), and that is equal to $\alpha$ in the absence of $\text{Cd}^{2+}$. According
to Katz and Thesleff (1957), the over-all time constant to reach the equilibrium would be given by the equation:

$$\tau_{AB} = \frac{1}{[\alpha(1 + K'CD)/(1 + KCD)] + \beta}$$

(10)

thus, from Eqs. 5 and 6, and Eqs. 9 and 10, α^cd should be:

$$\alpha^cd = \alpha/(1 + KCD).$$

(11)

From Eqs. 5 and 9, the dose-dependent reduction of G_{AB} would be given by the equation:

$$Y = \frac{1}{[1/(1 + K'CD)][(\alpha + \beta)/[\alpha + \beta(1 + KCD)]]}$$

(12)

Fig. 8B shows that experimental values could be accurately fitted to Eq. 12, where fitting parameters were: K' = 1.5 ± 0.2 mM⁻¹ and K = 11.6 ± 1.7 mM⁻¹.

The dose-dependent reduction of α^cd is shown in Fig. 8C, where mean values of the activation rate constant of I_{AB} (obtained from Eqs. 5–8, from 10 different experiments at V_m between −130 and −150 mV) were plotted vs [Cd^{2+}]_o (Fig. 8C, circles). The model, i.e., the solution of Eq. 11 (where K took the value obtained for the dose-dependent reduction of G_{AB}), accurately described the Cd^{2+}-induced activation rate constant modification (Fig. 8C, continuous line). Indeed, values could also be accurately fitted to Eq. 11 (not shown), where the fitting parameter K was 10.4 ± 1.1 mM⁻¹, which was not significantly different from that obtained for the dose-dependent reduction of G_{AB} (t test; P > 0.1).

The adequate fit of the model to the experimental data was also analyzed by comparing the experimental data with the predicted Cd^{2+} effects on the activation rate constant of I_{AB} at different V_m. Fig. 8D shows the relationship between the activation rate constant at −100 mV and [Cd^{2+}]_o. The solution of Eq. 11 (where K = 11.6 mM⁻¹) (continuous line) was in good agreement with the experimental data (circles; mean values from 10 experiments).

The adequate match of the model was further evaluated by comparing the modeled predictions of Cd^{2+} effects on the voltage dependence of I_{AB} and on the time dependence of I_{AB}. A representative example is showed in Fig. 8, E and F. The I_{AB} activation curve in control and 0.5 mM Cd^{2+} solutions are displayed in Fig. 8E (circles and triangles, respectively). The theoretical curve for the control solution was obtained from Eq. 5, and the experimental values in Cd^{2+} solution were fitted to Eq. 9, where fitting parameters were: K' = 1.6 ± 0.1 mM⁻¹ and K = 8.5 ± 0.5 mM⁻¹ (which were acceptably close to those obtained from mean values of Fig. 8, B and C). The \(\tau_{AB}-V_m\) relationships in control and in 0.5 mM Cd^{2+} solutions are shown in Fig. 8F. The theoretical curve for the control solution was obtained from Eq. 6. For 0.5 mM Cd^{2+}, the solution of Eq. 10 (continuous line) (where K and K' took the values obtained for the I_{AB} activation curve) reproduced acceptably well the experimental values. Hence, the model also reproduced quantitatively the Cd^{2+}-effects on G_{AB}, the I_{AB} activation curve, and the kinetic behavior of I_{AB}.

Therefore, this simple kinetic model explains how Cd^{2+} can reduce G_{AB}, slow down the activation kinetic of I_{AB} without affecting the I_{AB} deactivation rate, and shift the current's voltage-dependence to negative V_m.
A similar effect was described by Gilly and Armstrong (1982) in squid axon where Zn\(^{2+}\) slowed down the Na\(^{+}\) channel activation but not its deactivation. After their interpretation, we suggest that Cd\(^{2+}\) would be attracted by a negatively charged component of the gating apparatus. The binding of Cd\(^{2+}\) would stabilize the gating apparatus at its resting position, increasing the energy barrier for the transition from the closed to the open channel states, thus, decreasing the activation rate constant and slowing down the activation of the \(I_{AB}\) channels. Accordingly, the energy barrier for the transition from the open to the closed channel states, and therefore the deactivation rate \(\beta\), would be unaffected since Cd\(^{2+}\) had drifted away during activation. Therefore, we conclude that Cd\(^{2+}\) acted by interfering with the gating mechanisms of \(I_{AB}\) channels, slowing down their opening. This conclusion is in agreement with the shift in the voltage-dependence of \(I_{AB}\), because higher hyperpolarizations could partly counteract Cd\(^{2+}\) effects.

**Blockade of \(I_{L}\).** The blocking effect of Cd\(^{2+}\) upon the instantaneous linear current \(I_{L}\) is an intriguing result. The Cd\(^{2+}\) blockade of \(G_{L}\) was dose-dependent (but never total, saturating between 3 to 10 mM Cd\(^{2+}\)) and highly variable between different fibers. Therefore, a precise quantitative description of the Cd\(^{2+}\) blockade of \(G_{L}\) could not be performed. Nevertheless, it was always clear that \(G_{L}\) was not totally reduced at [Cd\(^{2+}\)]\(_{o}\) which totally abolished \(G_{AB}\) (Fig. 1). Therefore, although the Cd\(^{2+}\) sensitive component of \(I_{L}\) could result from the same channel as \(I_{AB}\), the above evidence argues in favor of different entities for \(I_{L}\) and \(I_{AB}\) channels which are blocked by low concentrations of extracellular Cd\(^{2+}\). Alternatively, the variability of the Cd\(^{2+}\) blockade of \(I_{L}\) and the Cd\(^{2+}\) resistance of part of \(I_{L}\) could be explained if \(I_{L}\) is a combination of currents through Cd\(^{2+}\)-sensitive \(I_{AB}\) channels and Cd\(^{2+}\)-insensitive leak channels.

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