Slowing of Sodium Channel Opening Kinetics in Squid Axon by Extracellular Zinc

WM. FRANK GILLY and CLAY M. ARMSTRONG

From the Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole, Massachusetts 02543; and the Department of Physiology, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104

ABSTRACT

The interaction of Zn ion on Na channels was studied in squid giant axons. At a concentration of 30 mM Zn$^{2+}$ slows opening kinetics of Na channels with almost no alteration of closing kinetics. The effects of Zn$^{2+}$ can be expressed as a "shift" of the gating parameters along the voltage axis, i.e., the amount of additional depolarization required to overcome the Zn$^{2+}$ effect. In these terms the mean shifts caused by 30 mM Zn$^{2+}$ were +29.5 mV for Na channel opening (ON) kinetics ($t_{1/2}$ ON), +2 mV for closing (OFF) kinetics ($t_{OFF}$), and +8.4 mV for the $g_{Na}$-$V$ curve. Zn$^{2+}$ does not change the shape of the instantaneous $I-V$ curve for inward current, but reduces it in amplitude by a factor of $\sim 0.67$. Outward current is unaffected. Effects of Zn$^{2+}$ on gating current (measured in the absence of TTX) closely parallel its actions on $g_{Na}$. ON gating current kinetics are shifted by +27.5 mV, OFF kinetics by +6 mV, and the $Q-V$ distribution by +6.5 mV. Kinetic modeling shows that Zn$^{2+}$ slows the forward rate constants in activation without affecting backward rate constants. More than one of the several steps in activation must be affected. The results are not compatible with the usual simple theory of uniform fixed surface charge. They suggest instead that Zn$^{2+}$ is attracted by a negatively charged element of the gating apparatus that is present at the outer membrane surface at rest, and migrates inward on activation.

INTRODUCTION

Divalent cations affect the generation of action potentials, but the mechanisms involved are not yet entirely understood. Probably the most well known example is the action of Ca$^{2+}$ on Na channels in the squid giant axon. In voltage-clamp experiments, Frankenhaeuser and Hodgkin (1957) showed that for a given depolarization fewer channels opened, and opened more slowly, in high Ca$^{2+}$ than in normal sea water. Upon repolarization, the channels closed more rapidly in high Ca$^{2+}$. These effects were summarized with a simple and useful rule: raising the external Ca$^{2+}$ concentration fivefold is roughly equivalent to hyperpolarizing the membrane by 15 mV. This idea has dominated...
subsequent characterization of the effects of many other divalent cations, particularly the transition metals (see, for example, Hille et al., 1975; Arhem, 1980).

To explain the mechanism of calcium's action, Frankenhaeuser and Hodgkin followed a suggestion by A. F. Huxley and postulated that Ca\(^{2+}\) accumulates near negative charges, e.g., phospholipid head groups, fixed on the membrane's outer surface. The fixed charges electrostatically polarize the external medium and concentrate cations in an aqueous layer several angstroms thick next to the membrane. Divalent cations are attracted more strongly than monovalents, and enrichment of cations effectively "neutralizes" the negative surface charge. Electrical influence of the fixed surface charges and adjacent counterions spreads into the membrane and influences the gating apparatus of the ionic channels. Altering surface charge density by changing the divalent cation concentration is therefore proposed to change, or bias, the electric field sensed by the gating apparatus.

Several more detailed treatments of the fixed surface charge theory have been presented (Quincke, 1861; Chandler et al., 1965; Gilbert and Ehrenstein, 1969; Cole, 1969; McLaughlin et al., 1971; Brown, 1974; D'Arrigo, 1978). It is worth pointing out that although there is evidence for negative charges on membranes (Segal, 1968), there is no independent evidence for fixed charges that are near enough to the channels to influence their behavior. Such charges are theoretical constructs invoked only to explain the action of divalent cations on the channels.

If the hypothetical surface charges were uniformly or regularly distributed, changing the surface potential by adding Ca\(^{2+}\) would be, to a channel's gating apparatus, indistinguishable from a hyperpolarizing change in membrane voltage. This is a fundamental prediction of the theory. Thus, it is said that changing Ca\(^{2+}\) shifts the gating parameters along the voltage axis, and that raising Ca\(^{2+}\) shifts them to the right. The criterion for fulfilling this prediction is that divalent cations should perturb or shift opening rates, closing rates, and the steady state conductance-voltage relation by identical bias voltages. This criterion has not been satisfied for any biological membrane system.

One major discrepancy between published results and theory concerns the unusually large effect of certain divalent cations on the opening kinetics of Na (and K) channels. Dodge (1961) first showed that Ni ions drastically slowed the rate at which Na current (\(I_{\text{Na}}\)) developed in frog node while shifting the conductance-voltage relation very little (see also Hille, 1968). Qualitatively similar results have been reported for other polyvalent metal ions (Takata et al., 1966; Arhem, 1980).

A second difficulty concerns the theoretically equal effects of divalent cations on channel opening and closing rates; this has never been verified experimentally. Although Frankenhaeuser and Hodgkin (1957) found that high Ca speeded closing of Na channels, quantitative interpretation of this result in terms of surface charge theory is equivocal. Calcium ions are now known to enter open Na channels, particularly at negative voltages, and impede Na influx (Woodhull, 1973; Taylor et al., 1976). Effects of high
An obvious alternative to the simple fixed surface charge hypothesis, which we explore here, is the idea that the Na channel gating charge itself polarizes the medium next to the membrane and interacts with cations there.

This paper is the first of two describing the effects of zinc (II), a divalent transition metal cation, on activation of Na and K channels in squid axon. The effects of Zn^{2+} are not compatible with the uniform fixed surface charge hypothesis. Our results suggest that negative gating charges reside at the membrane's outer surface at rest, where they interact with Zn ions, thus stabilizing the resting state. We further suggest that this negative charge migrates inward during activation, generating a transient outward gating current.

Some of these results have appeared in preliminary form (Armstrong and Bezanilla, 1975; Armstrong and Gilly, 1979; Gilly and Armstrong, 1980a and b, 1981).

METHODS

All experiments were performed on cleaned, internally perfused axons of Loligo pealei at the Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole, MA. The voltage clamp, electrodes, chamber, and computer data acquisition system were identical to those described in detail previously (Armstrong and Gilly, 1979).

External solutions contained either 0 or 116 mM NaCl, 10-15 mM CaCl_2, and 540 mM (for 0 Na) or 424 mM (for 116 Na) Tris 7.0 (Sigma Chemical Co., St. Louis, MO). 0 Na was used for measuring gating current (I_g), and 116 Na was used for I_{Na}. pH was 7.0-7.2. Zinc-containing solutions at this pH required isosmotic replacement of some Tris 7.0 with Tris free base. A ratio of Tris base to Tris free base of 0.04:1.0 proved suitable; the final Tris concentrations were ~23.9 mM base and 471 mM 7.0 for 0 Na plus 30 Zn, and 17.9 mM base and 353 mM 7.0 for 116 Na plus 30 Zn. Only results with 30 mM ZnCl_2 are reported in this paper. This concentration is close to the solubility limit at pH 7, and a single experiment with 50 mM ZnCl_2 showed no obviously greater effects.

The internal solution normally used contained 150 mM tetrathylammonium (TMA) glutamate, 50 mM TMA-fluoride, 10 mM Tris 7.0, and sufficient sucrose to maintain osmolality at 1,040 mosmol/kg. For one experiment (Fig. 5B) 20 mM Na glutamate was added to this solution.

Usually I_{Na} (plus I_g) was recorded first in 116 Na ± 30 Zn (i.e., with or without 30 Zn). The measurements were then repeated in 0 Na ± 30 Zn to measure I_g alone. I_{Na} traces were subsequently generated by subtraction of the appropriately scaled 0 Na record from the 116 Na one. Tetrodotoxin (TTX) was not routinely used for I_g measurements (except in conjunction with Figs. 6 and 11). The reason, which will be discussed in this paper, involves an antagonism between Zn^{2+} and TTX. To minimize contamination of I_g records by residual ionic currents through Na channels, both ends of the fiber in the air gaps outside the guard regions of the chamber were carefully washed with the appropriate 0 Na solution. If this precaution was taken, and sufficient time was allowed to wash out internal K completely, acceptable I_g records were obtained (see also Results).

Linear ionic and capacity currents were removed from all traces with the P/4 procedure (Armstrong and Bezanilla, 1974) with control pulses taken at a very
negative voltage as indicated in the figure legends. Baselines for \( I_{\text{Na}} \) on traces were fit to the points preceding the pulse; those for \( I_{\text{Na}} \) off and all \( I_g \) traces were fit to points at the end of the sampling period. Normally \( I_{\text{Na}} \), and occasionally \( I_g \), was measured using compensation for 1 ohm \( \cdot \) cm\(^2\) of series resistance. Holding potential was -80 mV, and all experiments were performed at 8°C.

**RESULTS**

*Na Channels Open Slowly but Close Normally in the Presence of Zinc*

Fig. 1 summarizes the major effects of \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) on Na channels. Fig. 1A shows \( I_{\text{Na}} \) (plus \( I_g \)) before, during, and after the application of \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \). The important features are: (a) Na channels open more slowly in the presence of \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) (\( I_{\text{Na}} \) on), but (b) close normally after repolarization (\( I_{\text{Na}} \) off). (c) The peak current is smaller in \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \). (d) These effects of \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) are reversible, and nearly complete recovery occurred in this experiment. The data are from an axon in which inactivation was removed by internal pronase treatment (Armstrong et al., 1973), but \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) acts identically in partially pronased (e.g., Fig. 2) or nonpronased (e.g., Fig. 13) axons. Pronase was routinely used in \( I_{\text{Na}} \) experiments in order to see activation kinetics uncomplicated by inactivation.

Kinetic effects (a) and (b) are better illustrated in Fig. 1B, in which the current trace recorded in \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) has been scaled to match the maximum amplitude of the control current (average of the before and after records). Slowing of opening kinetics is obvious, whereas no change in closing kinetics is detectable.

Similar effects of \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) are seen over the full voltage range of activation, as illustrated in Fig. 1C. \( I_g \) has been removed by subtraction in these records. For the depolarization to +50 mV, which should open nearly all the channels, on kinetics are slowed, and steady state current in \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) is 17% smaller than normal. At every other voltage \( I_{\text{Na}} \) is also slower and smaller in \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \). There is a much greater decrease in steady state current produced by \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) for small depolarizations, e.g., 67% at -30 mV.

The hypothetical bias voltage introduced by divalent cations that neutralizes fixed surface charge should slow opening (on) kinetics, while accelerating the closing (off) rate. In addition, the equilibrium level of open channels achieved at any voltage should be perturbed by the identical bias voltage. Fig. 1 shows that such is not the case, and this conclusion is strengthened in the following sections.

*Slowing of on Kinetics by Zinc*

Changes in on kinetics of Na channels caused by \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) are indicated in Fig. 2. In each set of records the dotted trace is \( I_{\text{Na}} \) in 30 mM \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) at the indicated voltage, whereas the solid traces are control currents obtained at different voltages (see labels on Fig. 2) and scaled in amplitude to match the peak \( I_{\text{Na}} \) in \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \). Comparison in this manner expresses the \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) effect as the separation, or "shift," in millivolts of the control and \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \)-modified currents that best superimpose.

As seen in Fig. 2, the shift in on kinetics determined by superposition is not the same at all voltages. The \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) trace at -30 mV (Fig. 2A) matches fairly
FIGURE 1. Effects of 30 mM ZnCl₂ in the presence of 12 mM CaCl₂ on Iₐ. A. Iₐ as Na channels open (Iₐ on) during a voltage-clamp depolarization to +20 mV and close (Iₐ off) after repolarization to −80 mV. The trace of largest amplitude is control Iₐ (Iₐ has not been subtracted out) in 116 Na. The smallest trace is Iₐ in 116 Na + 30 Zn²⁺. Recovery after Zn²⁺ exposure is shown by the middle trace. Inactivation of Iₐ is greatly reduced due to internal pronase treatment at the beginning of the experiment. B. Zn²⁺ trace from left panel has been scaled 1.33× to match the peak control Iₐ (average of before and after Zn from left panel). Slowing of on kinetics is obvious; off rates are indistinguishable. C. Iₐ in 116 Na ± 30 Zn²⁺ at a series of voltages as indicated. Iₐ has been removed by subtraction of the appropriate 0 Na records (see Methods). Smaller trace of each pair is that in Zn²⁺. Same axon as in A, JN229B. Control pulses: P/4 from −120 mV.
well with the control trace at $-40$ mV, i.e., on kinetics are shifted approximately $+10$ mV. The $+60$-mV trace in Zn$^{2+}$ (Fig. 2D), however, superimposes with the control obtained at $+20$ mV, which indicates a shift of about $+40$ mV. At $0$ mV (Fig. 2B) and $+30$ mV (Fig. 2C) the shifts are $+10$-$20$ mV and $+20$-$30$ mV, respectively.

**OFF Kinetics of $I_{Na}$ Are Not Sensitive to Zinc**

Changes in closing kinetics produced by Zn$^{2+}$ are much smaller than the effects on opening. Fig. 3 shows $I_{Na}$ tails at various voltages after a pulse to 0 mV. The Zn$^{2+}$ trace is the dotted one in each set of records, and the scaled control records at three different voltages (see labels) are the solid ones. In all cases the Zn$^{2+}$ and control traces nearly superimpose, indicating almost no change in the rate of channel closing.

**Zinc Shifts the Steady State $g_{Na}$-$V$ Relation**

Sodium conductance was determined from tail current amplitude at $-60$ mV, as indicated in the inset to Fig. 4A. Current ($I_{tail}$) was read $50 \mu s$ after the return to $-60$ mV and adjusted as described in the figure legend. Thus, all
Figure 3. Superposition of $I_{Na\text{ off}}$ traces recorded in $116 \text{ Na} \pm 30 \text{ Zn}^{2+}$ at different voltages after a 1-ms pulse to 0 mV. The figure is analogous to Fig. 2, but illustrates the rate of channel closing instead of opening. $I_{Na\text{ off}}$ in 30 $\text{ Zn}^{2+}$ was recorded at the indicated voltage; control currents were recorded as indicated in parentheses. Vertical $I_{Na}$ scale bar applies to $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ traces only; controls have been scaled to match the peak amplitude of the $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ trace. In no case is the time course of $I_{Na\text{ off}}$ greatly altered by $\text{Zn}^{2+}$. Same axon as Fig. 2.
THE JOURNAL OF GENERAL PHYSIOLOGY

VOLUME 79 • 1982

Published June 1, 1982

Downloaded from on June 19, 2017
measurements are made under the same driving force, and \( I_{Na}(V) \) is a measure of the maximum fraction of channels that open at each voltage.

Fig. 4A is a plot of the fraction of open channels vs. \( V \) without (closed dots) and with (open dots) \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \). Asterisks represent the \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) values multiplied by 1.33 to match the saturating value of 1.0 in the control solution. The number of channels opening at negative \( V \) is greatly decreased by \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \), whereas at very positive \( V \) the effect is small. The dashed curve represents a +8-mV shift of the solid curve drawn by eye through the control points. It adequately fits the normalized \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) data, which indicates a shift of the \( g_{Na} - V \) relation by this amount.

Zinc consistently reduced maximal \( g_{Na} \) (see Table I), but a detailed study of this effect was not carried out. Other divalent cations, including \( \text{Ca}^{2+} \), appear to act similarly (Brismar, 1980; Arhem, 1980). The mechanism is not clear, but may involve a decrease in single-channel conductance (Conti et al., 1976).

**Comparison of Zinc Effects on Opening and Closing Kinetics**

In contrast to predictions based on surface charge theory, the \( g_{Na} - V \) shift is not equal to those for \( \text{ON} \) and \( \text{OFF} \) kinetics. Figs. 4B and C directly compare shifts of kinetics and of the \( g_{Na} - V \) curve. In each figure points are plotted for two runs in 30 mM \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) (open symbols), which bracketed the control measurements. Half-time to peak current (\( t_{1/2\, \text{ON}} \)) is the measure of \( \text{ON} \) kinetics. Fig. 4B shows that a +12-mV shift of the control \( t_{1/2\, \text{ON}} - V \) relation (solid curve) fits the \( \text{Zn}^{2+} \) data (dashed curve) for small pulses, but not for large ones, where a much larger shift would be required (see also Fig. 2). Control and \( \text{Zinc}^{2+} \) \( t_{1/2\, \text{ON}} - V \) curves may approach different asymptotes at very positive potentials.
but accurate measurement is difficult because of contamination by gating current.

Off kinetics are plotted as the time constant of tail current decay (τ_{off} vs. V) in Fig. 4C. Both control and Zn^{2+} traces were generally well fit with a single exponential. Values of τ_{off} from two Zn^{2+} runs (open symbols) and one control run plotted against V indicate that there is no systematic effect of Zn^{2+} within experimental accuracy. In a few experiments, a slight shift (speeding) of off kinetics was observed (see Table I), but it was always far smaller than the shift in on kinetics.

These three differential effects of Zn^{2+} were observed in every fiber studied: (a) a strong shift of on kinetics, equivalent to +25–30 mV worth of membrane potential, (b) a smaller effect on the equilibrium level of open channels (less than a +10 mV shift in the g_{Na}V relation), and (c) essentially unaffected off kinetics. Results from five fibers in which complete measurements were performed are summarized in Table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiber</th>
<th>on Kinetics</th>
<th>off Kinetics</th>
<th>g-V curve</th>
<th>g_{max} (Zn)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AU188C</td>
<td>+30 to +40</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU188D</td>
<td>+20 to +25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JL288D</td>
<td>+30 to +40</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE056A</td>
<td>+30 to +40</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JN229B</td>
<td>+20</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>+29.5</td>
<td>&lt;+2</td>
<td>+8.4</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effect of 30 mM ZnCl_{2} in the presence of 10 mM CaCl_{2} on Na channel activation determined from I_{Na} measurements. "Shifts" of the apparent voltage dependence of opening (on) kinetics were determined by superimposing traces recorded at different voltages (large depolarizations) in the presence and absence of Zn^{2+} (e.g., Fig. 2). Shifts of closing (off) kinetics were determined from plots of τ_{off} vs. V with and without Zn^{2+} (e.g., Fig. 4C). Shifts of g_{Na}V relation were determined from similar plots (e.g., Fig. 4A). Mean values were obtained by averaging values for the individual fibers, or of the midpoint of the range indicated.

Zinc Does Not Enter and Plug Na Channels

Divalent cations also interact with Na channels in ways that are not thought to involve fixed surface charge. Woodhull (1973) postulated that external Ca ions and protons are drawn into Na channels at negative voltages and plug the conducting pore. Attraction to the pore grows with internal negativity, making the plugging voltage dependent. These ideas explain the Ca^{2+}-induced changes in the shape of the instantaneous I_{Na}V relation in squid axon (Taylor et al., 1976). In the presence of high Ca^{2+}, many Na channels are blocked at negative voltages but conduct normally at positive voltages. Changes in closing (and possibly opening) kinetics caused by high Ca^{2+} (Frankenhaeuser and Hodgkin, 1957) may reflect this phenomenon to an unknown extent.
Zinc does not block Na channels in such an obviously voltage-dependent manner. Fig. 5A shows instantaneous $I_{Na}-V$ curves obtained in the control solution (12 mM Ca$^{2+}$, filled circles) and after adding 30 mM Zn$^{2+}$ (open circles). Current amplitude was measured at the plotted $V$ after a brief activating pulse to +80 mV. At negative voltages $I_{Na}$ is smaller in Zn$^{2+}$, but the $I-V$ curve has approximately the same shape as the control. Nonlinearity in the control $I-V$ curve probably results from plugging of Na channels by 12 mM Ca$^{2+}$, a nonlinearity that is not augmented by the addition of 30 mM Zn$^{2+}$. The triangles give the $I_{Na}-V$ curve for the same axon in 50 mM Ca$^{2+}$ (no Zn$^{2+}$). The additional 38 mM Ca$^{2+}$ increases the nonlinearity of the curve and induces a negative resistance region. The qualitative difference between the 50 Ca$^{2+}$ and 30 Zn$^{2+}$ $I-V$ curves indicates that Zn$^{2+}$ does not act like Ca$^{2+}$.

Similar results from an axon that contained 20 mM Na in the internal perfusate are shown in Fig. 5B. The Zn$^{2+}$-induced reduction of inward $I_{Na}$ is not voltage dependent, as shown by scaling the Zn$^{2+}$ points by a factor of 1.49 (asterisks). The scaled Zn$^{2+}$ curve almost perfectly matches the control curve from +30 to -120 mV. Thus, Zn$^{2+}$ reduces inward $I_{Na}$ by a voltage-independent mechanism.
Surprisingly, Zn$^{2+}$ does not reduce outward $I_{\text{Na}}$ in Fig. 5B, although it did slow the development of the outward $I_{\text{Na}}$ tails (unpublished data). The mechanism by which Zn$^{2+}$ reduces inward $I_{\text{Na}}$ without changing outward current is unknown and deserves further investigation.

**Zinc and Its Effect on Na Channel Gating Current ($I_g$)**

Another signal generated during Na channel activation and deactivation is gating current, a capacitive charge movement reflecting operation of the channels’ voltage sensors. If Zn$^{2+}$ affects Na channels by interaction with the gating apparatus, gating current should be sensitive to Zn$^{2+}$. Because of an antagonism between Zn$^{2+}$ and tetrodotoxin (TTX; see also below), we found it necessary to obtain $I_g$ records in the absence of TTX. The possibility that residual ionic current through unpoisoned Na channels may complicate the observations to be subsequently described must be dealt with first.

Armstrong and Bezanilla (1974) showed that TTX does not markedly affect the time course or amplitude of $I_g$ ON. We have more critically re-examined this question and confirm their conclusion. Examples of $I_g$ ON before and during TTX application are shown in Fig. 6 for two different voltages. The no-TTX records are the ones of larger amplitude, and the change in gating current upon addition of TTX is obtained by subtraction ($\Delta I$). Baselines to the $\Delta I$ traces were re-fitted to the points preceding the pulse.

At +40 mV no inward $\Delta I$ current can be seen. The TTX trace superimposes nearly perfectly on the control if scaled $1.10X$. More serious contamination should exist at 0 mV, where the driving force is larger, and there is a small inward difference current that has the approximate time course of $I_{\text{Na}}$ (see Fig. 2). From these records we conclude that contamination by ionic current is acceptably small.

**Zinc Slows $I_g$ ON, but Does Not Greatly Affect $I_g$ OFF**

Gating current transients during ($I_g$ ON) and after ($I_g$ OFF) a 0.5-ms pulse to +40 mV are shown in Fig. 7A. Charge carried across the membrane during the ON transient ($Q_{\text{ON}} = 1,680 \text{ e}^-/\mu\text{m}^2$) approximately equals the OFF charge ($Q_{\text{OFF}} = 1,970 \text{ e}^-/\mu\text{m}^2$). $Q_{\text{OFF}}$ exceeds $Q_{\text{ON}}$ probably because of a small Ca influx through Na channels (Meves and Vogel, 1973; Meves, 1975; Taylor et al., 1976).

This fiber (and all others for $I_g$ data reported here) was not pronased, and the inactivation mechanism is thus operational. Pronase treatment itself does not alter the time course of $I_g$ ON or of $I_g$ OFF for a brief pulse (Armstrong and Bezanilla, 1977; Swenson et al., 1981), thus justifying comparison of our $I_{\text{Na}}$ and $I_g$ data (see below).

Zinc affects $I_g$ in ways parallel to its action on $I_{\text{Na}}$. Superposition of $I_g$ before (solid trace) and during (dotted trace) Zn$^{2+}$ exposure in Fig. 7B shows that $I_g$ ON is significantly slowed, whereas the time course of $I_g$ OFF is little changed. Total charge transferred at this voltage is unaltered by Zn$^{2+}$ ($Q_{\text{ON}} = 1,670 \text{ e}^-/\mu\text{m}^2$), and approximate $Q_{\text{ON}}:Q_{\text{OFF}}$ equality is maintained ($Q_{\text{OFF}} = 1,990 \text{ e}^-/\mu\text{m}^2$).
Slowing of $I_{g}$ on by Zn$^{2+}$ is more severe for large depolarizations, as was the case with $I_{Na}$. Fig. 7C shows $I_{g}$ on records with (dotted traces) and without Zn$^{2+}$ over a large range of voltage. At +50 and +30 mV the peak of $I_{g}$ is depressed and delayed, the subsequent decay is slowed, and total charge transfer is not much affected. For the smallest pulse illustrated, to −30 mV, the time course of $I_{g}$ on is not greatly changed, but the total charge transferred
FIGURE 7. Effect of 30 mM Zn\(^{2+}\) on gating current (\(I_g\)). A. \(I_g\)\(_{on}\) during a 0.5-ms pulse from −80 mV to +40 mV and \(I_g\)\(_{off}\) after return to −80 mV are illustrated. \(I_g\) was recorded in 0 Na (no TTX) using standard methods (see Methods, this paper, and also Armstrong and Gilly, 1979). Charge transferred in the \(on\) transient approximately equals that in the \(off\) response. B. Effect of 30 mM Zn\(^{2+}\) on \(I_g\) recorded exactly as in A. Dotted Zn\(^{2+}\) trace has been plotted along with the solid control trace from A. The peak \(I_g\)\(_{on}\) is decreased in amplitude and prolonged; the subsequent decay of \(I_g\)\(_{on}\) is slowed. \(I_g\)\(_{off}\) is little changed by Zn\(^{2+}\); a slight acceleration is seen. Total charge transferred in \(on\) and \(off\) responses is also unaffected by Zn\(^{2+}\). C. \(I_g\)\(_{on}\) at a series of voltages as indicated in the absence (solid traces) and presence (dotted traces) of 30 mM Zn\(^{2+}\). The slowing of \(I_g\)\(_{on}\) kinetics in Zn\(^{2+}\) seen with the large pulses (e.g., +30 and +50 mV) is not so apparent with small pulses (e.g., −30 mV). Charge transferred for the small pulses is much smaller in Zn\(^{2+}\) than in the control traces. Axon SE058B. Control pulses: P/4 from −130 mV.
is substantially reduced. For intermediate-sized pulses, the Zn effect is between the small and large pulse extremes.

The results in Fig. 7 show that Zn$^{2+}$ apparently slows the gating reaction leading to Na channel opening, but the gating apparatus can still close the channel at the normal rate upon repolarization. In qualitative agreement with results on $I_{\text{Na}}$, Zn$^{2+}$ produces a large effect on the kinetics of $I_g$ on and a much smaller effect on $I_g$ off. For large pulses the number of operational channels, as judged by the total gating charge transferred is apparently not reduced by Zn$^{2+}$.

Quantifying the Zn$^{2+}$ Effects on Gating Current

To quantitatively compare the action of Zn$^{2+}$ on $I_g$ and $I_{\text{Na}}$, the following approaches have been taken: (a) $I_g$ on kinetics are examined by superposition of records obtained with and without Zn$^{2+}$ at different voltages; (b) a measurement of $I_g$ off kinetics is obtained by fitting a single exponential to $I_g$ off records after a strong, brief pulse; and (c) the total amount of gating charge transferred, measured by integration of $I_g$ on at various voltages, is used in determining the steady state $Q$-$V$ distribution.

**$I_g$ on Kinetics**

Fig. 8 illustrates $I_g$ on records before (solid traces) and during Zn$^{2+}$ application in which direct comparison of on kinetics is possible because approximately equal charge transfer occurred. At very positive voltages, $Q_{\text{max}}$ is not much changed by Zn$^{2+}$ (e.g., Figs. 7 and 10), and in Fig. 8A the +30-mV control matches both amplitude and time course of the Zn$^{2+}$ trace at +60 mV fairly well. Thus, about +30 mV of additional depolarization are necessary to overcome the effect of Zn$^{2+}$ at very positive voltages.

Zinc affects $I_g$ on kinetics for a small depolarization to a lesser extent. $Q_{\text{ON}}$ for a small pulse is decreased by Zn$^{2+}$ (e.g., Figs. 7 and 10), and in Fig. 8B the control -40-mV trace is indistinguishable from the -30-mV Zn$^{2+}$ trace. This +10-mV shift of $I_g$ on kinetics due to Zn$^{2+}$ for a small pulse compared with +30 mV for a large one agrees with the disproportionate effect of voltage on the slowing of $I_{\text{Na}}$ kinetics by Zn$^{2+}$.

**$I_g$ off Kinetics**

Examples of exponential fits to $I_g$ off at -80 mV in the presence and absence of Zn$^{2+}$ are shown in Fig. 9A. The time constant is 230 $\mu$s in both cases. Fig. 9B is a plot of the time constant of $I_g$ off vs. $V$ with (open circles) and without Zn (closed symbols). The dashed curve reproduces the solid curve through the control points after shifting by +6 mV. Thus, Zn$^{2+}$ causes a small speeding of the return of gating charge to its resting position. The effect is substantially smaller than the +30-mV shift of $I_g$ on kinetics, however. Direct comparison of these values for on and off shifts is not so important as establishing the general idea that Zn$^{2+}$ appears to affect the channel in a state-dependent way. More specifically, Zn$^{2+}$ interacts more favorably with the channel in its closed state than in the open state, as indicated by a severely hindered opening rate in contrast with a minimally (if at all) promoted closing rate.

**Steady State Q-V Distribution**

$Q_{\text{ON}}$ with (open symbols) and without
Zn$^{2+}$ is plotted vs. $V$ in Fig. 10. At negative $V$, e.g., -50 to -20 mV, Zn$^{2+}$ decreases $Q_{ON}$, but beyond 0 mV $Q_{ON}$ is increased by ~10%. A small increase in total gating charge in Zn$^{2+}$ was consistently seen, but is not completely understood. A similar increase in $Q_{ON}$ was found when Ca$^{2+}$ was increased from 10 to 50 mM (no Zn$^{2+}$). An increase in total $Q$ with Ca$^{2+}$ or Zn$^{2+}$ was also observed in the presence of TTX (unpublished data). A possible explanation is that increased divalent cation concentrations remove slow inactivation (Adelman and Palti, 1969), which may have been present at the holding potential (~80 mV), in the presence of our control 10-mM Ca$^{2+}$ solution (Armstrong and Bezanilla, 1974; Meves, 1974; Meves and Vogel, 1977; Rudy, 1978).

**Figure 8.** Effect of 30 mM Zn$^{2+}$ on $I_{K}$ on kinetics for a large (A) and small (B) depolarization. $I_{K}$ on in 30 Zn$^{2+}$ in both figures is the dotted trace recorded at the indicated voltage. Solid traces are control $I_{K}$ on records at the voltages indicated in parentheses. No scaling is involved in this comparison; $I_{K}$ on in 0 Na ± 30 Zn$^{2+}$ at these particular voltages involves approximately equal charge transfer, allowing direct comparison of kinetics. As was the case with $I_{Nax}$ on kinetics, the slowing of $I_{K}$ on by Zn$^{2+}$ is more pronounced at more positive voltages. Same axon as Fig. 6.
**Figure 9.** Effect of 30 mM Zn\(^{2+}\) on \(I_{g, \text{OFF}}\) kinetics. A. \(I_{g, \text{OFF}}\) traces at -80 mV after a 0.5-ms pulse to 50 mV. Control and Zn traces are illustrated with fitted exponentials superimposed. Fitting was from peak of \(I_{g}\) trace to about 10 points before change of sampling rate. A time constant of 230 \(\mu\)s fits both control and Zn\(^{2+}\) records. Axon AU318D. Control pulses: P/4 from -150 mV; holding potential = -90 mV. B. Time constant of \(I_{g, \text{OFF}}\) decay obtained as in A at different voltages. (●) and (▲) are before and after Zn\(^{2+}\); (○) represents 30 Zn\(^{2+}\). Solid curve through control points has been shifted by +6 mV to give the dashed curve that fits the Zn\(^{2+}\) points reasonably well. Same axon as Fig. 6.
If the separation of the two $Q-V$ curves in Fig. 10 is measured near the half-maximal point ($N = \sim 1,000$ $e^-/\mu m^2$ at $-20$ mV), $Zn^{2+}$ causes a shift of about $+8$ mV. Scaling the $Zn^{2+}$ points $0.94X$ to match the saturating level of the control points increases the apparent shift to about $+10$ mV. These figures

![Figure 10](image)

**Figure 10.** $Zn^{2+}$ effect on the steady state $Q-V$ relation. $Q_{ON}$ values were obtained by integrating traces like those in Fig. 6C using the computer. Baselines were fit to final 1-2 ms of the records. (bjerg) is the average of before and after $Zn$; (O) is in 30 $Zn^{2+}$. The effect on the $Q-V$ curve can be approximately described as a shift of about $+8$ mV, the separation of the solid and dashed lines. Same axon as Fig. 6.

are substantially smaller than the maximal shift of $+30$ mV of $I_g$ on kinetics, and are again in qualitative agreement with results on $g_{Na}$.

For direct comparison with the $g_{Na}$ results, the equivalent shifts of $I_g$ parameters produced by 30 mM $Zn^{2+}$ from the two most complete experiments
are indicated in Table II. Mean values from the \( g_{Na} \) results in Table I are also given. In each case, good agreement exists between the \( Zn^{2+} \) effect measured from \( I_{Na} \) and \( I_g \) records. \( g_{Na} \) kinetics are greatly affected by \( Zn^{2+} \), the \( g-V \) and \( g-V \) curves are affected less, and \( off \) kinetics are least affected. These results thus support the proposal that the primary effects of \( Zn^{2+} \) on \( g_{Na} \) are mediated by the interaction of \( Zn^{2+} \) with the gating apparatus.

**Tetrodotoxin Interferes with the Action of Zinc**

The effects on \( I_g \) produced by \( Zn^{2+} \) described above are not seen with TTX-poisoned fibers. Fig. 11 shows typical results from a \( Zn^{2+} \) experiment in the presence of \( 2 \times 10^{-7} M \) TTX. \( I_g \) ON with (dotted traces) and without \( Zn^{2+} \) are shown at several voltages. Only for the largest pulse to +60 mV is a change with \( Zn^{2+} \) application evident, and this is qualitatively different from the change seen in the absence of TTX. Comparison of Figs. 7C and 11 suggests that when TTX is bound to the external mouth of the Na channel (Narahashi et al., 1967; Hille, 1975), it interferes with zinc's action on the gating apparatus. The antagonism between \( Zn^{2+} \) and TTX was not studied in detail.

**DISCUSSION**

Externally applied Zn ions slow ON kinetics of both \( I_{Na} \) and \( I_g \) as Na channels open, without altering \( off \) kinetics. This cannot be explained as neutralization by Zn of a uniformly distributed layer of fixed surface charge. This surface charge theory predicts that both ON and \( off \) kinetic parameters must be equally shifted along the voltage axis, and that the effect of \( Zn^{2+} \) should be indistinguishable from a voltage change. Our results do not meet this prediction, nor can they be explained by postulating that \( Zn^{2+} \) serves as

---

**TABLE II**

"SHIFTS" OF GATING CURRENT PARAMETERS BY 30 mM Zn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiber</th>
<th>ON Kinetics</th>
<th>OFF Kinetics</th>
<th>Q-V curve</th>
<th>( \frac{Q_{max} (Zn)}{Q_{max} (control)} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mV</td>
<td>mV</td>
<td>mV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU318B</td>
<td>+20 to +30</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE038B</td>
<td>+30</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+8 to +10</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( I_g ) mean</td>
<td>+27.5</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+6.5</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( g_{Na} ) mean</td>
<td>+29.5</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+8.4‡</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effect of 30 mM ZnCl₂ in the presence of 10 mM CaCl₂ on Na channel activation determined from \( I_g \) measurements. "Shifts" of the apparent voltage dependence of opening (on) kinetics were determined by superimposing traces recorded at different voltages (large depolarizations) in the presence and absence of \( Zn^{2+} \) (e.g., Fig. 8A). Shifts of \( off \) kinetics were determined from plots of \( \tau_{off} \) vs. \( V \) with and without \( Zn^{2+} \) as described in Fig. 9B. Shifts of the Q-V relation were estimated near the midpoint of the curve as indicated in Fig. 10. Mean values were calculated as described in Table I.

* Measurement was made at -90 mV only (see Fig. 9A). Bottom row of entries contains the mean values from Table I for the effects of 30 mM Zn²⁺ on \( I_{Na} \).

‡ Shift of \( g_{Na} \) Q-V curve.
a voltage-dependent plug of Na channels. Instead, a more intimate interaction between Zn$^{2+}$ and Na channel gating charge seems necessary.

One possibility, proposed by Tsien (1974) to account for the action of epinephrine on K channels in cardiac Purkinje fibers, is easily described in
terms of an energy barrier over which a charged, intramembranous gating particle must jump in order for the channel to undergo the transition between resting and activated states. Because the forward and backward rate constants of the reaction "depend upon opposite approaches to the energy barrier, they must in turn depend upon the electric field over different segments of the particle's path through the membrane." Shrager (1974) has made similar suggestions in regard to protons acting on K channels in crayfish axon.

We have incorporated their ideas into an explanation that also takes into account the following three considerations. (a) Opening and closing of Na channels involves movement of gating charges through the membrane electric field, manifested as gating current. (b) The hydrophobic interior of the membrane is hostile to free charge, making it likely that gating charge occupies stable positions only at the membrane surfaces. (c) Gating charge at a membrane surface would polarize the adjacent aqueous medium, attracting cations or anions, depending on its charge.

Fig. 12 presents a simplified model satisfying these points. The gate pictured in Fig. 12A is controlled by a single negatively charged gating particle, with resting (OFF) position at the outer membrane surface and activated position at the inner surface. Movement of the charge on depolarization opens the gate and simultaneously produces an outward gating current. A positively charged particle moving in the opposite direction could equally well be imagined, but, as explained in the following paper on K channels (Gilly and Armstrong, 1982), this is not compatible with the effects of Zn\(^{2+}\) and Hg\(^{2+}\).

Fig. 12B is an energy diagram for the opening reaction (Glasstone et al., 1941), relating the potential energies of the resting \((U_R)\) and the activated \((U_A)\) states to the forward and backward rate constants of the reaction, \(\alpha\) and \(\beta\). \(U_B-U_R\) and \(U_B-U_A\) are the respective energies of the opening and closing
transitions, and are related to $\alpha$ and $\beta$ by the equations:

$$\alpha = Ce^{-(\frac{k_a}{kT})}$$

$$\beta = Ce^{-(\frac{k_b}{kT})}.$$ 

$C$ is a constant that determines the absolute reaction rate.

In its resting position the gating charge polarizes the external medium, attracting divalent cations more strongly than monovalents (Fig. 12A). Electrostatic attraction between gating charge and counterion would stabilize the gating charge at its resting position. In the energy diagram, stabilization is indicated as a lowering of the energy $U_R(U_R, Zn)$. This increases the energy barrier for the resting $\rightarrow$ activated transition and decreases $\alpha$.

With sufficient depolarization, the gating charge jumps to the inner membrane surface (Fig. 12A) and the previously enriched counterions quickly diffuse away from the membrane, making the solution adjacent to the charge's off position electrically neutral. Thus, the presence of divalent cations in the external solution does not affect the gating particle in the activated position and leaves $\beta$ unchanged.

This simple gating model explains in principle how $Zn^{2+}$ can slow $I_{Na}$ and $I_g$ kinetics without altering off rates. With a decreased $\alpha$ and unchanged $\beta$, the equilibrium number of open channels in a population [proportional to $\alpha/(\alpha + \beta)$ in the simple model] would also be smaller than normal at any voltage where $\beta$ was not negligibly small. These are the three effects of $Zn^{2+}$ that we have described in detail in the Results.

**Modeling the Zinc Effect on Na Channel Activation**

The principles just discussed can be readily incorporated into a gating model that accurately predicts $g_{Na}$, $I_g$, and the $Zn^{2+}$ effect. The kinetic scheme used was (see also Armstrong and Gilly, 1979):

In this scheme, $X_6$ through $X_2$ are closed states; $X_1^*$ is the only conducting state, and $X_1 Z$ and $X_2 Z$ are inactivated states. The first four steps are fast and involve gating charge movement ($Q_g$) equivalent to the transfer of one electronic charge all the way across the membrane. The final step is slow and is accompanied by the apparent transfer of two electronic charges. That the rate-limiting last step is more voltage sensitive than the early steps (i.e.,
involves more gating charge movement) has now been verified experimentally (Gilly et al., 1981).

Some of the steps may involve disappearance of a negative charge from the membrane's outer surface on activation, as in the simple model described above. These steps would be expected to be sensitive to Zn ions in the external medium. To ascertain how many such steps there might be, we have tested three variations of the kinetic model above and found that two of them give a reasonable fit to the Zn\(^{2+}\) data. The three cases were:

Model I: zinc only interacts with gating charges when the channel is in the fully closed (resting) state by creating a special state, \(X_{Zn}\), to the left of \(X_6\). Zinc thus temporarily paralyzes the entire channel at the onset of activation but does not alter any of the subsequent rate constants in the sequence. The reaction would therefore be formally slightly different than the simple model discussed above and can be represented (see also Armstrong and Gilly, 1979):

\[
\begin{array}{c}
X_{Zn} \\
\alpha_{Zn}
\end{array} \xleftarrow{} X_6 \xleftarrow{} X_5 \xleftarrow{} X_4 \ldots \\
\beta_{Zn}
\]

Model II: according to the principles discussed in conjunction with the simple gating model, zinc interacts with each gating charge and slows all forward rate constants in the six-state activation sequence equally but does not alter any reverse rate constants. Thus, \(\alpha\)'s in Zn\(^{2+}\) are smaller than the control \(\alpha\) values by a constant fraction at all voltages.

Model III: zinc selectively slows the first (\(X_6 \rightarrow X_5\)) and last (\(X_2 \rightarrow X_1^*\)) steps only, but again does not alter the backward rate constants, or any of the other forward rate constants.

Sample calculations for the control case and for the three Zn models (see also below) are shown in Fig. 13, and parameters of the fits are listed in Table III. Experimental \(I_{Na}\) and \(I_g\) records at several voltages are illustrated along with the corresponding calculations. The uppermost set of traces in Fig. 13A shows control data records (averages of before and after Zn\(^{2+}\)) at +10 mV along with the calculated traces (solid curves). Control records and their fits at other voltages are given as the upper set of traces in Figs. 13B–D, and voltage is indicated in each case. As can be seen, the fits are acceptable, and the model thus predicts the correct time course and amplitude of both \(I_{Na}\) and \(I_g\) over the full range of activation in the absence of Zn\(^{2+}\).

As indicated in Table III, there are several significant constraints to the control fitting. (a) Ratios of forward to backward rate constants (i.e., equilibrium constants) were predicted according to a Boltzman distribution as described in the legend. (b) The calculated conductance was scaled by the correct driving force for each voltage. (c) The rate of inactivation (given by \(k\) and \(\lambda\)) was nearly independent of voltage. The final slow phase of \(I_g\) at +50 mV is not accounted for by this model. Part of this slow charge movement may be related to K channel activation, and the remainder is unexplained (Gilly and Armstrong, 1980c).

Calculations for the Zn\(^{2+}\) effect at +10 mV using model I are shown in Fig. 13A directly below the control traces. Although good fits can be obtained to
FIGURE 13. Calculations based on the model described in the text and more completely in Armstrong and Gilly (1979) for control $I_{Na}$ and $I_g$ on and for zinced $I_{Na}$ and $I_g$ on with Zn models I, II, and III. In each pair of superimposed traces, the solid trace is the calculation and the dotted one is the experimental record. $I_{Na}$ data from the same axon as in Fig. 6; $I_g$ data from SE058A of the same squid. A. Control and Zn I–III traces and calculated fits at +10 mV. Two cases for model I are shown. Either $I_g$ or $I_{Na}$ can be fit, but not both simultaneously. Models II and III both give good fits to both $I_{Na}$ and $I_g$. B–D. Control and Zn model II fits at -30, -10, and +50 mV, as indicated. See text and Table III for details.
TABLE III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voltage (mV)</th>
<th>$\alpha_1$</th>
<th>$\alpha_2$</th>
<th>$\beta_1$</th>
<th>$\beta_2$</th>
<th>$\kappa$</th>
<th>$\lambda$</th>
<th>Initial Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+50 mV (Fig. 13D)</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>$X_6 = 1.0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+10 mV (Fig. 13A)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>$X_6 = 1.0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-10 mV (Fig. 13C)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>$X_6 = 1.0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-30 mV (Fig. 13B)</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>$X_6 = 1.0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+40 mV (Fig. 14)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>$X_6 = 1.0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-80 mV (Fig. 14)</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>See legend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Parameters used in calculating $I_N$ and $I_{Na}$ traces with control and zinc models I, II, and III. All rate constants are given in ms$^{-1}$. References to appropriate figures are given in parentheses. $\alpha$ and $\beta$ were assumed to hold to the relations:

$$\frac{\alpha}{\beta} = \exp \left[ \frac{Q_s (V - V_s)}{25 \text{ meV}} \right] \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\alpha}{\beta} = \exp \left[ \frac{Q_t (V - V_t)}{25 \text{ meV}} \right],$$

where $Q_s = 1$ and $Q_t = 2$ electronic charges, respectively, and $V_s = -29.5$ mV. To fit currents after zincking the fiber, $\alpha$ and $\alpha_1$ were reduced as indicated in table for models II and III; $\beta$ and $\beta_1$ were unchanged. This corresponds to $\bar{P}_s$ and $\bar{P}_t$ values, respectively, of $-18$ to $-20.5$ mV and $-23.7$ to $-24.7$ mV for model II, and $-10.5$ and $-19.4$ mV for model III. $I_{Na}$ at every voltage was scaled relative to that calculated at +50 mV by the appropriate difference in driving force, $(V_{Na} - V)/(V_{Na} - 50)$; $V_{Na}$ was estimated to be +75 mV by extrapolation of the $I_{Na} V$ curve at very positive voltages. All $I_{Na}$ traces in Zn$^{2+}$ were calculated with the same scaling factor as for controls, but reduced by a constant factor of 0.75 at all voltages. The scaling factor for $I_g$ was kept constant for $I_g$ on at all voltages, both in controls and Zn$^{2+}$, but the factor was increased by 1.10 for Zn$^{2+}$. $I_g$ off scaling factor for controls and Zn$^{2+}$ was increased by 1.18 to match the $onoff$ inequality discussed in the text. Initial conditions for $I_g$ off were taken as those existing at the end of the $I_g$ on calculation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$X_s^c$</th>
<th>$X_2$</th>
<th>$X_3$</th>
<th>$X_4$</th>
<th>$X_5$</th>
<th>$X_6$</th>
<th>$X_7^c$</th>
<th>$X_8$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0.7926</td>
<td>0.0835</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.0007</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>0.0165</td>
<td>0.0096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc</td>
<td>0.6131</td>
<td>0.2446</td>
<td>0.0375</td>
<td>0.0091</td>
<td>0.0003</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>0.0697</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
either $I_{Na}$ or $I_g$ separately, both waveforms cannot be acceptably fit with a single choice of $\alpha_{Zn}$ and $\beta_{Zn}$. At more negative voltages the result of attempting to fit both $I_{Na}$ and $I_g$ simultaneously is even worse (not illustrated); at +50 mV (not illustrated) the fits are only slightly better than at +10 mV. Clearly model I is inadequate. Similarly, slowing only the last step (or any other single step) is also insufficient to model the $Zn^{2+}$ effects on both $I_g$ and $I_{Na}$ (not illustrated).

Fits with models II and III at +10 mV are shown as the bottom sets of traces in Fig. 13A. In model II, $Zn^{2+}$ slowed every forward rate constant by a factor of 0.63. For model III, $\alpha$’s for the $X_6 \rightarrow X_5$ and the $X_2 \rightarrow X^*_1$ transitions only were both slowed by a factor of 0.45. Both models give very good fits to $I_{Na}$ and $I_g$.

With the same $Zn^{2+}$-induced reduction of $\alpha$ values, models II and III give good fits over the full voltage range of activation. Figs. 13B–D presents control fits and model II fits at −30, −10, and +50 mV. The reduction of forward rate constants by $Zn^{2+}$ amounted to a factor of 0.63–0.7 over this large voltage range. Model III (not illustrated) also gave acceptable fits over the entire voltage range with the reduction in $\alpha$ for the first and last steps being essentially independent of voltage.

Fig. 14 shows that model II adequately fits both $I_g$ ON (+40 mV) and $I_g$ OFF (−80 mV) if all $\alpha$’s are reduced by ~0.65X by $Zn^{2+}$. In agreement with observation (see also Fig. 6B), the model predicts that $I_g$ OFF in $Zn^{2+}$ is slightly larger in amplitude and faster than the control. This is not caused by an effect of the altered $\alpha$ values of the actual activated to resting transitions of the gating charges, but reflects the difference in the distribution of channels among the states at the end of the brief activating pulse (see the legend to Table III). Because $I_g$ ON is slower in $Zn^{2+}$, more channels are still in closed states at pulse end. Rapid return of these channels to the $X_6$ state upon repolarization is responsible for the acceleration of $I_g$ OFF predicted and observed in $Zn^{2+}$.

We do not find a speeding of $I_{Na}$ OFF tails, however, nor does the model predict such an effect. Both experimental (see Fig. 3) and calculated (bottom pair of traces in Fig. 14, $g_{Na}$: with and without $Zn^{2+}$) kinetics for $I_g$ OFF are unaltered by $Zn^{2+}$.

Modification of the control model to predict the effects of $Zn^{2+}$ on both $I_{Na}$ and $I_g$ over the full range of activation is thus very simple, and we feel that two important conclusions can be drawn from these calculations. At least two charge movement steps must be independently slowed by $Zn^{2+}$. Moreover, the interaction of a $Zn$ ion and gating charge is, strictly speaking, not voltage dependent but state dependent—the same reduction in $\alpha$ caused by stabilization of the closed state of the channel fits the opening kinetics at any activating voltage. This means that the $Zn$ ion does not see an appreciable fraction of the membrane electric field.

*Do Other Divalent Cations Act Like Zinc?*

The relevance of our findings on $Zn$ to other polyvalent cations remains to be established and is an important question. To our knowledge, Ca is the only
divalent cation for which Na channel on and off kinetics have been previously reported. Calcium slows $I_{Na}$ on kinetics, but as discussed earlier it also enters and blocks Na channels, making analysis of $I_{Na}$ off difficult. High Ca apparently does, however, slow $I_{g}$ on without much altering $I_{g}$ off (Moore, 1978; Moore et al., 1977), which suggests that Ca may affect Na channel gating in basically the same manner as Zn does.

Results presented in this paper show that Zn ions do not affect Na channel gating via a bias voltage caused by neutralization of a sheet of fixed surface
charge. In the case of Zn, it is more realistic to consider a quite specific interaction of a divalent cation and the voltage sensor/gating apparatus of the Na channel. The interaction we propose is an electrostatic stabilization of exposed negative gating charges at the external membrane surface when the channel is closed.

Alternative proposals involving more complicated surface charge schemes cannot be entirely dismissed, however. For example, Zn$^{2+}$ might be bound, not by a uniform sheet of fixed charge, but by a special charge close to the Na channel gating apparatus. Such binding of one or several Zn ions would result in a nonlinear electric field within the membrane interior, but unless the opening and closing gating reactions took place in different regions of the membrane, the Zn$^{2+}$ effect should still be indistinguishable from a membrane voltage change. The model we present provides a mechanism for moving the gating particles around in the membrane where different Zn$^{2+}$-induced fields might exist. Although we cannot say with certainty whether Zn$^{2+}$ is bound near the Na channel or is free in solution, we regard this for the present as academic. In the next paper we discuss more fully the implications of this question. Although fixed surface charges undoubtedly exist in nerve (see Introduction), it is clearly not necessary to postulate a significant role of such charges in mediating the action of extracellular Zn ions on Na channel gating.

Received for publication 1 September 1981 and in revised form 1 March 1982.

REFERENCES


CHANDLER, W. K., A. L. HODGKIN, and H. MEVES. 1965. The effect of changing the internal


