



Independent and Combined Effects of Nicotine or Chronic Tobacco Smoking and HIV on the Brain: A Review of Preclinical and Clinical Studies

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Abstract

Tobacco smoking is highly prevalent among HIV-infected individuals. Chronic smokers with HIV showed greater cognitive deficits and impulsivity, and had more psychopathological symptoms and greater neuroinflammation than HIV non-smokers or smokers without HIV infection. However, preclinical studies that evaluated the combined effects of HIV-infection and tobacco smoking are scarce. The preclinical models typically used cell cultures or animal models that involved specific HIV viral proteins or the administration of nicotine to rodents. These preclinical models consistently demonstrated that nicotine had neuroprotective and anti-inflammatory effects, leading to cognitive enhancement. Although the major addictive ingredient in tobacco smoking is nicotine, chronic smoking does not lead to improved cognitive function in humans. Therefore, preclinical studies designed to unravel the interactive effects of chronic tobacco smoking and HIV infection are needed. In this review, we summarized the preclinical studies that demonstrated the neuroprotective effects of nicotine, the neurotoxic effects of the HIV viral proteins, and the scant literature on nicotine or tobacco smoke in HIV transgenic rat models. We also reviewed the clinical studies that evaluated the neurotoxic effects of tobacco smoking, HIV infection and their combined effects on the brain, including studies that evaluated the cognitive and behavioral assessments, as well as neuroimaging measures. Lastly, we compared the different approaches between preclinical and clinical studies, identified some gaps and proposed some future directions.

Keywords Nicotine · Tobacco · HIV · Neuroprotective · Neurotoxicity · Neuroinflammation

Introduction

Tobacco smoking among HIV seropositive (HIV+) adults is twice as prevalent as that in the general population (36% vs. 16–21%) (Mdodo et al. 2015; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2018; Jamal et al. 2018). HIV+ individuals are also more vulnerable to the adverse consequences of tobacco smoking, since population-attributable risk of smoking-related death is almost twice as high in people with HIV (PWH) than in the general population (62% vs. 34%) (Helleberg et al. 2013). Tobacco smoking also leads to poorer viral suppression (Ande et al. 2015; Gamarel et al. 2018) and more years of life lost than HIV-infection alone in PWH (Helleberg et al. 2015). Moreover, treating tobacco smoking in HIV+ individuals is challenging (Ledgerwood and Yskes 2016). For instance, since HIV-infection may accelerate nicotine metabolism in HIV+ smokers (Ashare et al. 2019), they would have stronger tobacco craving, greater withdrawal symptoms (Sofuoglu et al. 2012), and poorer response to

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tobacco cessation treatment (Ledgerwood and Yskes 2016) than individuals without HIV infection.

Furthermore, tobacco smoking may have additional negative impact on brain injury and brain function. Despite effective cART, HIV-associated neurocognitive disorders (HAND) continue to be prevalent in up to half of HIV-infected individuals (McArthur et al. 2010; Saylor et al. 2016; Clifford 2017). In those with HAND, likely etiologies include sustained and widespread neuroinflammation and oxidative stress, which in turn leads to neuronal loss and axonal damage in the brain (McArthur et al. 2010; Saylor et al. 2016). Independent of HIV infection, tobacco smoking may cause increased oxidative stress (Durazzo et al. 2014b), blood-brain barrier impairment (Mazzone et al. 2010), and astroglial and microglial activation (Moreno-Gonzalez et al. 2013), which all may contribute to neuroinflammation (Bradford et al. 2011; Khanna et al. 2013) and subsequent neuronal damage. Studies that compared cognitive function in PWH who smoked and those who did not smoke found that tobacco smoking was associated with worse working memory (Bryant et al. 2013; Harrison et al. 2017), learning (Bryant et al. 2013; Monnig et al. 2016), processing speed (Bryant et al. 2013; Monnig et al. 2016; Harrison et al. 2017), and executive function (Bryant et al. 2013), as well as greater intra-individual variability on response time during the Continuous Performance Task (Harrison et al. 2017). However, two smaller studies found that tobacco smoking was not associated with cognitive decline (Akhtar-Khaleel et al. 2017; Tsima et al. 2018). The effects of smoking on cognition in PWH may be sex-specific. For example, one small study found that HIV+ women who were smokers had better executive function than non-smoking women with HIV (Wojna et al. 2007). Another study also reported tobacco smoking associated with poorer learning in HIV+ men but not in women (Bryant et al. 2013). In contrast, recent studies that evaluated the sex-specific effects on cognitive performance in PWH found that HIV+ women had the poorest performance on various cognitive domains compared to HIV+ men and seronegative men or women; 70% of the HIV+ women were tobacco smokers (Liang et al. 2020). Nevertheless, the underlying cellular and molecular mechanisms for these divergent findings are not fully understood.

Although preclinical studies rarely studied the effects of tobacco smoking in HIV models, extensive *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies were conducted to evaluate the effects of nicotine with HIV viral proteins or in HIV transgenic rodents. In this review, we will first highlight the major findings from preclinical studies that evaluated nicotine's effects on the brain, neuroprotective (including its cognitive enhancing effects) versus nicotine or tobacco smoke's neurotoxic or neuroinflammatory effects, both from *in vitro* and *in vivo* animal models. To evaluate whether some of the animal models have clinical relevance, we will also review the current knowledge from cognitive, behavioral and neuroimaging studies in

human tobacco smokers. Since many tobacco smokers also co-use alcohol and marijuana, data regarding the neurocognitive or neuroimaging outcomes in these co-users will also be reviewed. Next, we will review the current literature on HIV-associated brain injury, including *in vitro* studies that utilized HIV viral proteins or animal models, such as transgenic rodents that over-expressed HIV viral proteins, as well as behavioral and neuroimaging studies from PWH.

Lastly, we will discuss the limited data on the combined effects of nicotine/tobacco and HIV infection on the brain. Very few studies have evaluated the combined effects of nicotine / tobacco smoke and HIV (e.g., with HIV viral proteins) on neurotoxicity/neuroinflammation in preclinical models. Similarly, only a few neurobehavioral and neuroimaging studies specifically evaluated the independent and combined effects of HIV brain infection and chronic tobacco smoking. We will summarize these studies, discuss the discrepancies and the gaps in our knowledge, and hence the research opportunities, that are needed to bridge the preclinical and clinical findings. We will also identify opportunities for future research that are needed to elucidate the mechanisms involved in the highly prevalent co-morbid condition of tobacco smoking in PWH, which will be useful in guiding future preventions or treatments.

Effect(s) of Nicotine/tobacco on Neuroprotection or Neurotoxicity/neuroinflammation

Nicotine and its Receptors

Nicotine is the major component of tobacco and is an addictive chemical. It is metabolized by many enzymes including cytochrome p450 enzymes, uridine 5'-diphosphoglucuronosyl-transferase, flavin-containing monooxygenase, and amine-N-methyltransferase (Albuquerque et al. 2009; Benowitz 2015). Genetics, diets, age, sex, kidney and liver diseases, pregnancy, and oral contraceptives all can affect its metabolism (Dani 2015). Nicotine selectively binds to the nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChR) and triggers psychoactive rewarding effects (Benowitz 2015). Structurally, neuronal nAChR are homopentamers or heteropentamers. Eight α -like subunits, namely $\alpha 2$, $\alpha 3$, $\alpha 4$, $\alpha 5$, $\alpha 6$, $\alpha 7$, $\alpha 9$, and $\alpha 10$ ($\alpha 8$, not found in mammals), and three β subunits ($\beta 2$ - $\beta 4$) have been cloned from neuronal tissues. The most abundant nAChR subtype receptors are $\alpha 4\beta 2$, $\alpha 3\beta 4$, and $\alpha 7$. Because of multiple subunit combinations, these receptors have distinct functional properties. The structure and function of mammalian nAChR are reviewed in more detail elsewhere (Hukkanen et al. 2005; Albuquerque et al. 2009). Neuronal nAChR are distributed throughout the nervous system but most abundantly in the hippocampus, thalamus, and cerebral

cortex (Albuquerque et al. 2009), which correspond to brain regions critical for memory, and brain regions associated with motor and sensory pathways or higher level cognitive function. Therefore, it is conceivable that any alterations in these receptors may lead to neurological and psychiatric disorders.

Neuroprotective Effects of Nicotine

Beneficial effects of nicotine have been noted in patients with mild cognitive impairments (Newhouse et al. 2012) and in patients with Parkinson's disease (Barreto et al. 2015; Nicholatos et al. 2018). Nevertheless, the underlying cellular and molecular mechanisms are not fully understood. In order to delineate nicotine-mediated neuroprotective mechanisms, extensive *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies have been conducted. Major findings from these studies are highlighted below and in Table 1.

Nicotine has been shown to be neuroprotective *in vitro*. For example, nicotine protected primary rat neurons against glutamate-induced cytotoxicity through $\alpha 7$ -nAChR (Kaneko et al. 1997). In primary hippocampal cultures, $\alpha 7$ -nAChR promoted neuronal survival following exposure to excitotoxic stimuli via NMDA receptor activation and a calcium-dependent mechanism (Dajas-Bailador et al. 2000). In mouse cortical neurons, both $\beta 2$ and $\alpha 7$ nAChR were involved in nicotine-mediated neuroprotective effects (Stevens et al. 2003). Moreover, nicotine activated the growth-promoting enzymes Janus Kinase 2 (JAK2) in PC12 cells, as JAK2-specific inhibitor AG-490 blocked the nicotine-induced neuroprotection against amyloid peptide $\beta 1-42$ (Shaw et al. 2003). In a rat genome Affymetrix GeneChip array analysis, nicotine treatment induced up-regulation or down-regulation of several genes such as orphan nuclear receptor (Nr4a1), early growth response (Egr-1), and early growth response 2 (Egr-2) (Belluardo et al. 2005).

The other mechanism of nicotine-mediated neuroprotection is through its upregulation of glial cell line-derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF) and brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) (Belluardo et al. 2005; Ghitza et al. 2010; Takarada et al. 2012; Wei et al. 2015). In rat cortical astrocytes, nicotine increased GDNF expression in a dose-dependent manner (Belluardo et al. 2005; Takarada et al. 2012). In the rat hippocampus, nicotine also significantly increased BDNF mRNA expression (Wei et al. 2015). Given the major neuroprotective roles of GDNF and BDNF in the central nervous system (CNS) (Ghitza et al. 2010), nicotine likely has therapeutic potential for CNS diseases.

Additionally, *in vivo* studies demonstrated the neuroprotective effects of nicotine. For instance, in rat models of focal cerebral ischemia, nicotine administration up-regulated cannabinoid (CB1) receptor expression, ameliorated neurological deficits and reduced the infarct volumes (Chen et al. 2013). CB1 receptor is the first cannabinoid receptor cloned in 1990

(Matsuda et al. 1990) and is rich in neuronal tissue (Straiker et al. 1999), but how it interplays with nicotine is not yet understood. Furthermore, in the intracerebral hemorrhage (ICH) mouse model, intraperitoneal administration of nicotine inhibited apoptosis, increased anti-apoptotic B cell lymphoma-2, and decreased proapoptotic protein Bax in the brain (Hijioka et al. 2011). Nicotine also decreased microglia activation, neutrophil infiltration, and the increased oxidative stress associated with ICH, without changes in hematoma expansion and brain edema (Hijioka et al. 2011). Moreover, in a compressive spinal cord injury (SCI) model, nicotine markedly attenuated inducible nitric oxide synthase (iNOS) expression (Lee et al. 2009). The overexpression of iNOS in SCI increased nitrosylation formation, up-regulated inflammatory genes, and decreased the number of neuronal nuclei (NeuN)-immunoreactive cells. Furthermore, knocking out $\alpha 4$ nAChR in 6-OHAD-induced Parkinson rat models (Ryan et al. 2001) and $\alpha 7$ nAChR in oxygen and glucose deprivation mouse model (Egea et al. 2007) abrogated the neuroprotective effects of nicotine. In non-human primates, chronic nicotine treatment also increased nAChR expression such as $\alpha 4\beta 2$ and $\alpha 3/\alpha 6\beta 2$ and protected dopaminergic neurotoxin-induced lesions in the brain (Bordia et al. 2006; McCallum et al. 2006; Quik et al. 2006; Quik et al. 2010). Taken together, these studies provide overwhelming and compelling evidence for the neuroprotective effects of nicotine in the brain, which are likely mediated by $\alpha 4$ and $\alpha 7$ nAChR.

Nicotine as a Cognitive Enhancer

Despite the strong and consistent findings of the neuroprotective effects of nicotine, very few preclinical studies assessed the possible beneficial cognitive effects of nicotine. Given the high prevalence of tobacco smoking in schizophrenic patients, one study evaluated a maternal immune activation (MIA) schizophrenia rat model, and found that nicotine self-administration significantly ameliorated the cognitive deficits induced by MIA, lending support to the self-medication hypothesis of schizophrenia (Waterhouse et al. 2018). However, in another repeated phencyclidine (PCP) schizophrenia rat model, rats that received chronic nicotine-treatment without the PCP showed improved performance on an attention task, with shortened response latencies, more correct responses and fewer omissions, but nicotine did not attenuate the PCP-induced cognitive deficits (Amitai and Markou 2009). Therefore, although chronic nicotine administration had some pro-cognitive effects, it could not overcome the PCP-induced deficits. In a chronic unpredictable mild stress mouse model, nicotine increased sucrose consumption, but partially rescued the spatial learning and reversal learning deficits on the Morris water maze test in the stressed animals (Shang et al. 2017). In the same study, nicotine also ameliorated the depression-like symptoms and improved the

Table 1 Pre-clinical studies that evaluated nicotine-mediated neuroprotection

Author(s) / Journal(s)	Cell or Animal Model (s)/ Nicotine Dose	Primary Findings
In Vitro Models		
Kaneko et al., <i>Brain Res</i> 1997	Primary culture rat neurons; Nicotine: 10 μ M for 8–24 h	Nicotine protected primary culture rat neurons against glutamate-induced cytotoxicity through α 7 neuronal receptor
Dajas-Bailador et al., <i>Neuropharmacology</i> 2000	Primary hippocampal culture; Nicotine: 10 μ M for 1 h	Nicotine counteracted the NMDA-induced cell death through a Ca^{2+} dependent mechanism.
Stevens et al., <i>J Neurosci</i> 2003	Mouse primary cortical neurons; Nicotine: 10 μ M	Both β 2 and α 7 nAChR mediated nicotine's neuroprotective effects
Shaw et al., <i>J Neurosci</i> 2003	PC 12 cells; Nicotine: 10 μ M	Nicotine-activated Janus Kinase 2, protected against amyloid (1–42)-induced neurotoxicity
Takarada et al., <i>J Neurosci Res</i> 2012	Wistar rat cortical astrocytes; Nicotine: 10–100 μ M	Nicotine increased GDNF mRNA and protein in astrocytes after nicotine (10–100 μ M) exposure
Revathi- Kumar et al., <i>J Neuroinflammation</i> 2016	Cryopreserved human fetal astrocytes; Nicotine: 1, 10, 100 μ M	Nicotine diminished the production of inflammatory cytokines (IL-6, IL-1 β , and TNF- α) in IL-1 β -activated astrocytes
Rodent Models		
Nizri et al., <i>J Immunol</i> 2009	Experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis C57BL/6 mice; Nicotine: 2 mg/kg/day x 28 days	Nicotine attenuated neuroinflammation via suppressing Th1 and Th17 response
Hijioka et al., <i>J Pharmacol Exp Ther</i> 2011	C57BL/6J collagenase-induced Intracerebral Hemorrhage mice; Nicotine: 1 or 2 mg/kg/day, i.p.	Intraperitoneal administration of nicotine inhibited apoptosis, increased the relative expression level of antiapoptotic B cell lymphoma-2
Lee et al., <i>J Neurosci Res</i> 2009	Spinal cord injury mouse; Nicotine: 0.35, 3.5, 7 mg/kg 2 h after trauma	Nicotine attenuated SCI- associated iNOS production
Ryan et al., <i>Br J Pharmacol</i> .2001	6-hydroxydopamine rats; Nicotine: 1 mg/kg, s.c.	Knocking out of α 4 nAChR induced neurodegeneration (indirect evidence for the neuroprotective effect of the receptor)
Egea et al., <i>Neuroscience</i> 2007	OGD or α 7 nAChR mutant mice; Nicotine: 10–100 μ M	Nicotine did not mediate neuroprotection in α 7 nAChR knockout mice.
Bellurado et al., <i>Neuroscience</i> 2005	Male Wistar rats (3 months old); Nicotine: 1 mg/kg, i.p.	Acute intermittent nicotine treatment up-regulated several novel candidate genes such as Nr4a1 (Nurr77), Egr-1 and Egr-2
Huang et al., <i>Neuroscience</i> 2007	Rat Pups from Timed-pregnant Sprague-Dawley rat dams; Nicotine: 6 mg/kg/day x 7 days (P1- P7)	Nicotine led to differential expression of nAChR subtypes in hippocampus and cerebellum.
Wei et al., <i>Neurosci Lett</i> 2015	Male Wistar rats; Nicotine: 0.5 mg/kg, i.p.	Nicotine increased GDNF expression in astrocytes and increases BDNF mRNA expression in hippocampus. Acute nicotine administration attenuated LPS-induced cognitive dysfunction.
Simian Models		
Bordia et al., <i>J Pharmacol Exp Ther</i> 2006; McCallum et al., <i>J Neurochem</i> 2006	Squirrel Monkeys (<i>Saimiri sciureus</i>) Nicotine: 25 μ g/ml to gradual increased to 650 μ g/ml over a 3-month period, Oral	Chronic nicotine treatment increased α 4 β 2 nAChR by > 50% in striatum of both lesioned and un-lesioned monkeys, but the increase was significantly higher in lesioned than in un-lesioned monkeys.
Quick et al., <i>J Mol Neurosci</i> 2010	Female Squirrel Monkeys (<i>Saimiri sciureus</i>) Nicotine: 25 μ g/ml to gradual increase to 650 μ g/ml over a 3 to 4-month period, Oral	Chronic treatment led to increased expression of α 3/ α 6 β 2* and α 4 β 2* nAChR in lesioned monkeys compared to controls. Nicotine also elevated microglia and reduced extracellular deposition of neuromelanin in the substantia nigra of MPTP-lesioned monkeys.
Quick et al., <i>J Neurochem</i> 2006	Squirrel Monkeys (<i>Saimiri sciureus</i>) Nicotine: Started with 25 μ g/mL-1 for one week then 50 μ g/mL, up to 650 μ g/mL, Oral	Chronic nicotine treatment elevated the levels of striatal tyrosine hydroxylase, dopamine transporter, vesicular monoamine transporter, dopamine and nicotinic receptors in MPTP-lesioned animals

S.C.: subcutaneous injection; i.p. intraperitoneally injection

hippocampal synaptic plasticity, as assessed by the long-term potentiation (LTP) and depotentiation recorded in the hippocampal dentate gyrus (Shang et al. 2017). However, at a dose

of 0.4 mg/kg subcutaneous injection, nicotine impaired the contextual learning memory in the F344 rats (Nesil et al. 2015). Furthermore, nicotine administration also increased

behavioral impulsivity in rodent studies (Hosking et al. 2014). Overall, the findings from preclinical models are somewhat controversial regarding the beneficial cognitive enhancing effects of nicotine.

Human laboratory studies also showed that acute nicotine (e.g. nicotine patch) improved performance on fine motor and attentional tasks in both non-smokers and non-deprived smokers (Heishman et al. 2010). However, this improvement has a speed-accuracy tradeoff; nicotine-treated subjects had faster motor response but were less selective and more distracted (Vangkilde et al. 2011). In chronic smokers, they became slower, with longer reaction time, during a spatial attention task at the higher difficulty level after the administration of nicotine (Vossel et al. 2011). The potential benefits of nicotine for improving cognition and mood regulation (Newhouse et al. 2012; Gandelman et al. 2018; Lewis et al. 2018) have led to the current standard treatment of using cholinesterase inhibitors to enhance nAChR activation for the memory deficits in Alzheimer's disease (Jasinska et al. 2014). Furthermore, nicotine patch improved response speed and recall memory in patients with mild cognitive impairment (Newhouse et al. 2012), and reduced depressive symptoms in patient with late life depression (Gandelman et al. 2018). Neural correlates of these therapeutic effects of nicotine were studied using pharmacological functional imaging techniques (Bentley et al. 2011; Sutherland and Stein 2018). After nicotine administration, functional connectivity increased within the executive control network but reduced within the default mode network, with improved to normal levels cognitive performance in nicotine-deprived smokers (Lesage et al. 2017; Lesage et al. 2020). The effects of nicotine on healthy non-smokers were less consistent; while some reported improved cognitive performance (e.g. increased n-back accuracy) and brain network efficiency (Kumari et al. 2003; Lesage et al. 2020), others reported no effects on either their performance or functional connectivity (Lesage et al. 2017). Currently, none of the nAChR ligands has succeeded the phase III clinical trials for treatments of cognitive deficits or mood disorders (Bertrand and Terry 2018). Moreover, changes in the brain after long term NRT have not yet been examined.

Nicotine or Tobacco Smoke-mediated Neurotoxicity and Neuroinflammation in Preclinical Models

Although prior preclinical studies primarily demonstrated nicotine's neuroprotective effects *in vitro* and *in vivo*, and to a lesser degree in some clinical studies, nicotine can also be neurotoxic in certain conditions. In the developing brain, a brief period of continuous or intermittent nicotine exposure led to cellular and neurite damage and altered nAChR

expression (Huang et al. 2007; Dwyer et al. 2009). Nicotine exhibited neurotrophic effects on undifferentiated cells but became neurotoxic to differentiated cells (Abreu-Villaca et al. 2005). During development from fetal-neonatal brain to the mature adult brain, exposure of low-dose nicotine led to irreversible changes in adult brain function (Eriksson 1997). The molecular mechanisms of why and how nicotine is toxic to the developing brain are not well understood. The opposing effects of nicotine on the developing brain compared to the adult brain might, in part, be due to differences in the expression and distribution of nAChR in these different stages of brain development.

Another mechanism for nicotine or tobacco smoke-mediated neurotoxicity is the induction of neuroinflammation. Increased expressions of pro-inflammatory cytokines are major hallmarks of neuroinflammation (Ransohoff 2016; Gilhus and Deuschl 2019). Nicotine suppressed the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines IL-6, IL-1 β , and TNF- α in IL-1 β -activated astrocytes (Revathikumar et al. 2016), and lessened neuroinflammation by suppressing Th1 and Th17 responses (Nizri et al. 2009). However, one study found that nicotine subcutaneous injections led to increased TNF- α expression in rats (Royal et al. 2018). Acute administration of nicotine attenuated lipopolysaccharide-induced cognitive dysfunction, via the suppression of the strong LPS-induced release of IL-1 β , IL-6, and TNF- α (Wei et al. 2015). Additionally, nicotine activation of nAChR, particularly α 7-nAChR, is attributed to its anti-inflammatory activity (Ryan et al. 2001; Wei et al. 2015). Thus, α 7-nAChR agonists such as nicotine are expected to ameliorate neuroinflammation, and benefit those afflicted by neurodegenerative conditions. Overall, the myriad of *in vitro* and preclinical studies demonstrated that nicotine is generally neuroprotective and anti-neuroinflammatory except for its effects in the developing brain (Fig. 1; Table 1).

However, nicotine is typically consumed via tobacco smoking in humans. Besides nicotine, tobacco smoke contains more than 5,000 toxic and carcinogenic chemicals (Talhout et al. 2011). Surprisingly, preclinical studies on tobacco smoke and its effects on the brain are scarce and inconsistent. One study showed a neuroprotective effect, since pre-exposure of cigarette smoke significantly reduced kainic acid-induced mortality and neuron loss in CA1 and CA3 regions of hippocampus in rats (Kim et al. 1999). In contrast, in other rodent studies, tobacco smoke exposure led to increased brain pro-inflammatory cytokines (Khanna et al. 2013) and gene expression (Royal et al. 2018), astroglial and microglial activation (Moreno-Gonzalez et al. 2013) and higher levels of inflammatory cytokines (Bradford et al. 2011). Furthermore, studies of the developing brain in rodents again found that tobacco smoke or its extract exhibited deleterious effects to their brain development, affecting both the cholinergic and the serotonergic systems (Slotkin et al. 2015, 2019).

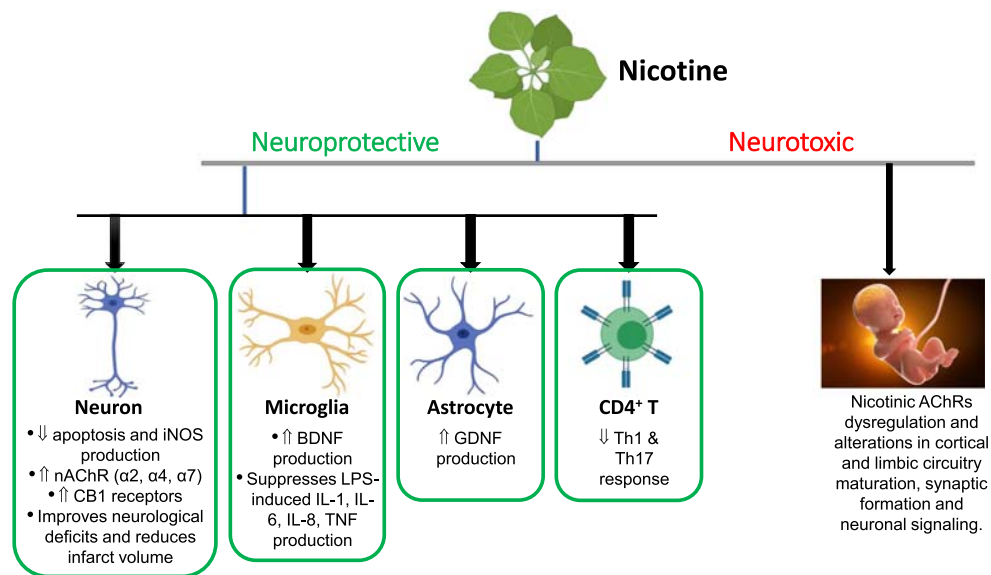


Fig. 1 Nicotine-mediated neuroprotective and neurotoxic effects. Nicotine is neuroprotective through up-regulation of the expression of CB1 receptors, nAChR, and BDNF, and decrease apoptosis and iNOS production in neurons, LPS-induced pro-inflammatory cytokines in microglia, increase GDNF production in astrocytes, and suppression of Th1 and Th17 response in CD4⁺ T cells. In contrast, nicotine may be

neurotoxic through alteration of nAChR expression and damage to neurites in the developing brain. CB1, cannabinoid beta 1 receptor; iNOS, inducible nitric oxide synthase; nAChR, nicotine acetyl choline receptors; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; BDNF, brain-derived neurotrophic factor; GDNF, glial cell line derived neurotrophic factor. Images in the figure were created with BioRender.Com under a paid subscription to SK

Clinical Studies of Tobacco Smoking on Neuroinflammation and Neurotoxicity (Table 2)

In contrast to the sparse preclinical data on the effects of tobacco smoke, a vast number of clinical and epidemiological studies indicate the deleterious effects of tobacco cigarette smoking on human health. Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death and is associated with increased risks for many clinical conditions including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disorders, stroke and cancer. Furthermore, cigarette smoking induces repetitive inflammatory insults and leads to chronic and progressive activation of the immune system (Madani et al. 2018). Similar to the deleterious effects of nicotine or tobacco smoke on the developing brain in preclinical studies, infants or children prenatally-exposed to nicotine, from maternal tobacco smoking during the pregnancy, also showed delayed white matter maturation and lower levels of glial metabolites, especially the girls (Chang et al. 2012; Chang et al. 2016). Furthermore, even second-hand exposure to tobacco smoke during pregnancy increased the risk of developing neurological disorders (Slotkin et al. 2017). However, to understand the mechanisms involved in the neurotoxic effects, more studies are warranted to define the effects of tobacco smoke on the brain, particularly in co-morbid brain disorders.

Tobacco smoke contains high concentrations of free radicals that cause oxidative damage on tissues (Ambrose and Barua 2004). Tobacco smokers showed higher than normal

levels of oxidative stress markers in the brain (Ambrose and Barua 2004; Durazzo et al. 2014b), and a higher level of oxidative stress biomarker (F2-isoprostanes) in the cerebrospinal fluid than non-smokers (Durazzo et al. 2014c), as well as depletion of antioxidants (Ambrose and Barua 2004). Typical oxidative responses include lipid peroxidation, which in turn leads to cell membrane damage (Betteridge 2000). In the brain, lipid peroxidation of the vascular endothelial cells contributes to blood-brain barrier damage, a major pathophysiological consequence following tobacco smoking (Mazzone et al. 2010). These oxidative responses may also lead to direct neuronal damage and promote neuroinflammation. Although it is well known that tobacco smoking promotes systematic inflammation (Levitzy et al. 2008; Madani et al. 2018), few clinical studies directly examined neuroinflammation in tobacco smokers.

Proton magnetic resonance spectroscopy (¹H-MRS) is a non-invasive technique that could measure the concentrations of brain metabolites, including those that reflect the glial contents in the brain, such as the glial marker myoinositol, and metabolites that are found in much higher levels in glia, including soluble choline-containing compounds (Cho) and total creatine. Although elevated Cho and myoinositol levels are considered markers of glial activation indicating neuroinflammation, they also result from ongoing neural repair (Chang et al. 2013). In tobacco smokers, both higher (Gallinat et al. 2007; Durazzo et al. 2016), lower (Mennecke et al. 2014), or normal (Wheelock et al. 2014) Cho concentrations in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) were reported when compared

Table 2 Neuroimaging studies in chronic tobacco smokers

Authors, Journal & year	Participant Characteristics (age, sex, smoking pattern)	Methods / Assessments	Findings
Structural MRI / morphometry			
Brody et al. <i>Biol Psychiatry</i> 2004	19 smokers: 39 ± 10 years, 42% women; >20 cigarettes/day; average 31 pack-years; FTND = 5.1 ± 1.9; 17 non-smokers: age = 38 ± 13; 41% women	Structural MRI: 1.5 T; ROI analyses: DLPFC, ventrolateral PFC, dorsal and ventral ACC, ventral striatum, and thalamus; Voxel-Based Morphometry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smokers had smaller PFC, ACC, and right cerebellum. • Greater smoking pack-year was correlated with lower gray matter densities in PFC.
Durazzo et al. <i>Drug Alcohol Depend</i> 2017,2018	40 smokers: 22–64 years; 15% women; >10 cigarettes/day; average 26 pack-years; FTND = 5 ± 2; 43 non-smokers: 22–70 years, 17% women	Structural MRI: 4T; FreeSurfer; ROIs in bilateral total subcortical lobar white matter (WM) and subcortical nucleus volumes (normalized to ICV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smokers had thinner cortices (PFC, entorhinal, insula, fusiform and middle temporal gyrus) and greater age-related volume reduction in the thalamus, cerebellar cortex, corpus callosum and subcortical lobar white matter compared with non-smokers. • Greater pack-year correlated with smaller amygdala and thinner ACC and middle frontal cortex.
Diffusion tensor imaging (DTI)			
Gons et al. <i>Brain</i> 2011	All subjects with small-vessel disease: 149 non-smokers: 66 ± 9 yrs; 32% men; 275 former smokers: 66 ± 9 years; 67% male; average 22.6 pack-years; abstinent 22 ± 13 years 75 current smokers: 64 ± 9 years; 65% men; average 23.5 pack-years	DTI: 1.5 T; 30 directions; White matter volume measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult smokers had larger white matter lesion volumes, higher mean diffusivity (MD) and lower fractional anisotropy (FA) in both normal and abnormal white matter regions compared with non-smokers. • Lower FA and higher MD correlated with poorer cognition. • Former smokers who quit > 20 years had similar white matter FA and MD compared with non-smokers.
Lin et al. <i>Drug Alcohol Depend</i> 2013	34 smokers: 47 ± 9 years; 79% men; 38 ± 12 cigarettes/day for 26 ± 9 years; FTNC = 8.8 ± 0.7 34 non-smokers: 47 ± 7; 82% men	DTI: 3T, 12 directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smokers had lower FA and axial diffusivity, and higher radial diffusivity (RD) in the anterior corpus callosum. • Longer smoking duration was correlated with higher RD and MD in the genu and rostral body of corpus callosum.
Proton MR Spectroscopy (¹H MRS)			
Janes et al., <i>Neuropsychopharmacology</i> 2013	15 smokers: 26 ± 5 years; 16 ± 4 cigarettes/day; FTNC = 6.1 ± 1.1	¹H MRS with 2D-JPRESS 2.5 h after smoking, Smoking Emotional Stroop task-fMRI: ~4.5 h after smoking; withdrawal-induced craving; 3T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower GABA in the dorsal ACC in smokers correlated with withdrawal-induced poorer performance on Smoking Emotional Stroop and greater negative affect.
Wheelock et al., <i>Frontiers Pharmacology</i> 2014	22 smokers: 36 ± 12 years, 54% women; average 17 cigarettes /day. FTND = 5.9 ± 2	¹H MRS PRESS (Glx/tCr in the dACC) Stroop Color-Naming task-fMRI: 3T; both at baseline and 12 weeks after varenicline treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glx/tCr decreased in the dACC after 12 weeks varenicline treatment. • At baseline, higher Glx/tCr correlated with greater nicotine dependence and craving. Stroop task-related activation decreased in the rostral ACC/mOFC and precuneus after varenicline treatment. • dACC-IPC/r-SOFC connectivity increased and dACC- rostral ACC/mSPFC/MCC/PCC/precuneus connectivity decreased after varenicline treatment.
Durazzo et al., <i>Biol Psychiatry</i> 2016	35 smokers: 49 ± 12 years, 11% women; averaged 18 cigarettes /day; 27 pack-years; FTND = 5 ± 2	¹H MRS with STEAM: 4T: Localized voxels: R_DLPFC and ACC for NAA, tCr, mI, Cho and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smokers showed lower NAA in the DLPFC and ACC, lower glutamate

Table 2 (continued)

Authors, Journal & year	Participant Characteristics (age, sex, smoking pattern)	Methods / Assessments	Findings
	30 non-smokers: 49 ± 10 years, 13% women	Glu; Spectroscopic Imaging at 1.5T ; three 15-mm thick parallel slices for NAA, Cho, Cr and ml.	in the DLPFC, higher Cho in the ACC compared with non-smokers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smokers showed greater age-related glutamate reduction in the ACC and DLPFC, and greater age-related NAA reduction in the DLPFC. Longer duration of smoking was related to lower Glu in the ACC and DLPFC. Higher glutamate and NAA in the DLPFC related to better cognition
Schulte et al., <i>Drug and Alcohol Depend</i> 2017	30 Smokers: 36 ± 10 years, averaged 155 cigarettes/week, FTND = 6.1 ± 2; 61 Smoker + polydrug: 33 ± 7 years, 115 cigarettes/week; FTND = 5.8 ± 2 61 Never-Smokers: 32 ± 10 years; All men for all groups	¹H MRS with MEGA PRESS, edited for GABA (J-difference spectra);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smokers had higher Glx, and similar GABA, Cho, NAA and Cr in the ACC compared with non-smokers. No correlation between metabolites levels and drug use pattern and impulsivity
Positron Emission Tomography (PET)			
Domino et al. <i>Neuroscience</i> 2000	11 Smokers: 34 ± 11 years, all men, average 22.5 ± cigarettes/day	PET with ¹⁸F]fluoro-deoxy-glucose (¹⁸FDG). Withheld smoking overnight and immediately after nicotine or pepper spray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compared to placebo (pepper), nicotine led to increased glucose metabolism in left IFC, PCC and right thalamus, but decreased glucose metabolism in left insular and right inferior occipital gyrus.
Brody et al. <i>Am J Psychiatry</i> 2004	10 Smokers at satiety: 37 ± 16 years, 20% women, average 1.5 ± 0.6 packyear. 10 Smokers at withdrawal: 35 ± 9 years, 30% women, average 1.2 ± 0.4 packyear.	PET with ¹¹C]raclopride for dopamine D2 receptors. Both groups smoked a cigarette immediately before the first scan (baseline). Satiety group smoked another cigarette prior to 2nd scan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cigarette smoke decreased binding in the left ventral caudate/putamen/nucleus accumbens. Decreased binding in above regions correlated with decreased craving on Urge to Smoke Scale.
Zubieta et al. <i>Am J Psychiatry</i> 2005	19 Smokers: 27 ± 10 years, 58% women, average 16 ± 5 cigarettes/day, FTND = 3.6 ± 2	PET with H₂¹⁵O Withheld smoking for 12 hours and scanned every 12 minutes after provided research cigarette to smoke up to 6 scans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoking cigarette increased blood flow (rCBF) in visual cortex and cerebellum and decreased in ACC, right hippocampus and nucleus accumbens. After the first cigarette, decreased rCBF correlated decreased FTND score.
Brody et al. <i>Arch Gen Psychiatry</i> 2006	11 Smokers: 37 ± 12 years, 3 women, average 22 ± 3 cigarettes/day, FTND = 5.9 ± 2.2	PET with 2-FA for α₄β₂ nAChRs Withheld smoking for 2 days and scanned at 5 different levels of cigarette smoking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typical daily smokers had α₄β₂ nAChRs fully occupied throughout the day. Carving scores reduced when α₄β₂ nAChRs was almost fully occupied.
Durazzo et al., <i>Nicotine & Tobacco Res</i> 2016	31 APOE-ε4 + Smokers: 75 ± 6 years, 52% women; 79 APOEε4- Smokers: 77 ± 6 years, 41% women; 41 APOEε4 + Never smokers: 74 ± 8 years, 58% women; 113 APOEε4- Never smokers: 76 ± 7 years, 55% women; All smokers: averaged 26 ± 12 pack-years; 11% were current smokers, formal smokers stopped smoking for 34 ± 12 years	PET with ¹⁸Florbetapir and fluorodeoxyglucose (¹⁸FDG) ADNI neurocognitive battery (learning, memory and executive function domains)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tobacco smoking and APOEε4 carrier status had synergetic lower glucose metabolism, poorer learning and memory function and greater cortical amyloid deposition.
Brody et al. <i>Psychopharmacology (Berl)</i> 2017	30 Smokers: 52 ± 8 years, 20% women, average 14 ± 4 cigarettes/day, FTND = 4 ± 2.3; 15	PET with TSPO tracer ¹¹C]DAA1106 Smokers at satiety status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smokers had less TSPO binding globally, suggested less microglial activation than non-smokers.

Table 2 (continued)

Authors, Journal & year	Participant Characteristics (age, sex, smoking pattern)	Methods / Assessments	Findings
	Non-Smokers: 48 ± 14 years, 26% women		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoking more cigarettes per day correlated with lower TSPO binding globally.
Functional MRI (fMRI)			
Durazzo et al. <i>Addict Biol.</i> 2015	34 Smokers: 47 ± 11 years, 13% women averaged 18 cigarettes/day, 25 pack-years; FTND = 5 ± 2) 27 Never-Smokers: 47 ± 11 years; 15% women	Perfusion MRI with arterial spin labeling (ASL) at 4T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perfusion was reduced in smokers compared with non-smokers in regions within frontal, parietal & temporal cortices Longer duration of smoking negatively correlated with regional perfusion (bilateral and medial OFC, bilateral STG, left cuneus and left frontal pole)
Weiland et al. <i>Hum Brain Mapp</i> 2015	452 Smokers: 31 ± 9 years, 39% women, average 10.8 ± 7 pack-years 198 Non-smokers: 30 ± 9 years, 41% women	Resting-state fMRI (rs-fMRI) at 3T. Withheld smoking for 2 hours prior to the scan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoker had reduced connectivity within ECN (to DLPFC and parietal nodes); ECN connectivity strength correlated negatively with pack years of cigarette use.
Lerman et al. <i>JAMA Psychiatry</i> 2014	37 Smokers; 41 ± 13 years, 51% women, average 16 ± 5 cigarette/day for 24 ± 14 years; FTND = 4.9 ± 1.6	Resting-state & n-back working memory task fMRI at 3T. Withheld smoking for 24 hours vs. smoking satiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower interactions among SAL-ECN-DMN during abstinence than the satiety status. The lower SAL-ECN-DMN interaction during abstinence in the right hemisphere correlated with greater craving, as well as with less working memory task-induced DMN deactivation.
Pharmacological fMRI			
Kumari et al. <i>Neuroimage</i> 2003	12 non-smokers: 20–40 years; right-handed; all men.	Pharmacological task-activated fMRI; verbal and spatial 3-back task; Single nicotine dose (12 µg/kg body weight, single) or saline injection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nicotine led to increased accuracy at all condition and faster response on 3-back. Nicotine increased activation in right ACC, SFG and SPG and decreased activation in the right SPG. Nicotine increased baseline activity in the posterior cingulate, medial occipital lobe, parahippocampal gyrus, cerebellum, and decreased that in the medial prefrontal cortex.
Hong et al. <i>Arch Gen Psychiatry.</i> 2009	19 smokers: 36 ± 11 years; 5 women; 6 smoked 10–15 cigarettes/day; 13 smoked ≥ 15 cigarettes/day; FTND = 4.3 ± 2.4	Pharmacological rs-fMRI at 3T; verbal and spatial 3-back task; Single dose nicotine patch (21 mg for light smoker or 35 mg for heavier smoker) vs. placebo patch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dorsal ACC-striatum FC negatively correlated with FTND, which was not affected by nicotine administration. Nicotine enhanced cingulate-neocortical functional connectivity (SPG, Medial FC).
Lesage et al. <i>JAMA Psychiatry.</i> 2017	24 Smokers: 36 ± 10 years; 12 women; 18 ± 10.6 years of daily smoking; 17 ± 7.9 cigarettes/day; FTND = 5 ± 1.9 20 Non-smokers: 30 ± 7 years; 10 women	Pharmacological rs-fMRI at 3T; probabilistic reversal learning task; single nicotine patch, flexible dose for smokers/ repeated dose of varenicline pill/placebo patch or pill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smokers had decreased reward sensitivity (vs. nonsmokers) in the dorsal striatum and ACC that were not changed by nicotine or varenicline. Abstinent smokers showed decreased meso-corticolimbic activity and impaired cognitive flexibility, which were restored to the level of non-smokers on both drugs.
Lesage et al.	24 Smokers: 36 ± 10 years; 12 women, 18 ± 10.6 years of daily smoking;	Pharmacological rs-fMRI at 3T; Flanker and Go-NoGo task; single	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smokers performed poorer when not taking nicotine patch; Non-smokers

Table 2 (continued)

Authors, Journal & year	Participant Characteristics (age, sex, smoking pattern)	Methods / Assessments	Findings
<i>Neuropsychopharmacology</i> 2020	17 ± 7.9 cigarettes/day; FTND = 5 ± 1.9; 20 Non-smokers: 30 ± 7 years; 10 women	dose nicotine patch right before scan with flexible dose for smokers/ repeated dose of varenicline pill/placebo patch or pill	performed poorer on varenicline on Flanker task, performed better on Go-NoGo when given nicotine patch. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smokers had less activation in right anterior insula and right putamen during correct NoGo inhibition (in both drug and placebo conditions) compared to non-smokers. • Nicotine lowered activation in the dorsal ACC-preSMA during NoGo inhibition among all participants, indicating increased efficiency compared to placebo.

Abbreviations in alphabet order: ACC = anterior cingulate cortex; Cho = choline-containing compounds; DLPFC = dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex; DMN = default mode network; ECN = executive control network; FC = functional connectivity; FTND = Fagerström Test for Nicotine Dependence; GABA = Gamma aminobutyric acid; Glx/Cr = the ratio of glutamate + glutamine over total creatine; IFC = inferior frontal cortex; IPC = inferior parietal cortex; MCC = middle cingulum; Mofc = medial orbitofrontal cortex; mSPFC = medial superiorfrontal; NAA = N-acetyl aspartate; OFC = occipital frontal cortex; PCC = posterior cingulum; PFC = prefrontal cortex; preSMA = supplementary motor area; SAL = salience network; SPG = superior parietal gyrus; STG = superior temporal gyrus; SOFC = superior occipital cortex.

with non-smokers. However, none of these studies found elevated myoinositol in tobacco smokers. The lower or normal Cho and myoinositol levels in smokers suggest the lack of greater than normal microglial content, which is consistent with findings from two PET studies on tobacco smokers (Brody et al. 2017; Brody et al. 2018). Both of these PET studies used [¹¹C]DAA1106 to measure the translocator protein (TSPO) expression, and both studies found lower TSPO tracer binding globally in chronic tobacco smokers compared to the non-smokers, which indicated less activated microglia in the smokers (Brody et al. 2017). Furthermore, higher levels of smoking correlated with lower TSPO tracer binding levels, which is similar to the lower TSPO binding levels in alcoholdependent individuals with greater alcohol consumption (Hillmer et al. 2017; Kalk et al. 2017; Kim et al. 2018). In addition, lower TSPO tracer binding levels also correlated with blunted peripheral immune response (Hillmer et al. 2017) and poorer cognitive function (Kalk et al. 2017). Therefore, the current interpretation of these findings is that since TSPO is located on microglia, the lower TSPO binding levels might indicate microglial cells loss (Hammoud et al. 2019) or microglial dysfunction (Brody et al. 2017; Brody et al. 2018). These findings from MRS and PET studies suggest that tobacco smokers might have impaired microglial function in the brain, which might reflect decreased repair capacity to neurotoxicity or other forms of brain injury.

Consistent with the brain's decreased capacity for repair, neuronal damage or alterations in brain function were consistently found in tobacco smokers from neuroimaging studies (See Table 2 for selected studies). PET studies with

[¹⁸F]fluorodeoxyglucose demonstrated that nicotine may lead to both regional increases and regional decreases in glucose metabolism (Domino et al. 2000), and a study that additionally used florbetapir further demonstrated that tobacco smokers with *APOE*ε4 carrier-status had even lower glucose metabolism, poorer learning and memory function and greater cortical amyloid deposition (Durazzo et al. 2016). Nicotine also occupies the dopaminergic D2 receptors in the basal ganglia region, leading to decreased binding with [¹¹C]raclopride (Brody et al. 2004b), as well as the α₄β₂ nAChRs, as shown by decreased binding with 2-[¹⁸F]fluoro-3-(2(S)-azetidylmethoxy) pyridine (or 2-FA) after nicotine administration (Brody et al. 2006). Therefore, smoking may lead to prolonged binding and desensitization of these receptors.

Structural MRI were most widely used to assess brain injury in tobacco smokers. Compared with non-smokers, chronic tobacco smokers showed smaller volumes (Brody et al. 2004a; Almeida et al. 2008; Yu et al. 2011; Kuhn et al. 2012; Liao et al. 2012; Fritz et al. 2014; Stoeckel et al. 2016) or thinner cortices (Karama et al. 2015) in widespread cortical areas, including prefrontal cortex (Brody et al. 2004a; Almeida et al. 2008; Fritz et al. 2014; Li et al. 2015; Hanlon et al. 2016; Durazzo et al. 2018), ACC (Brody et al. 2004a; Liao et al. 2012; Fritz et al. 2014; Li et al. 2015), superior parietal cortex (Almeida et al. 2008), temporal lobe (Li et al. 2015; Durazzo et al. 2018) and insula (Fritz et al. 2014; Li et al. 2015; Hanlon et al. 2016; Stoeckel et al. 2016; Durazzo et al. 2018), as well as subcortical regions, particularly the thalamus (Almeida et al. 2008; Liao et al. 2012; Durazzo et al. 2017), parahippocampus (Li et al. 2015; Hanlon et al.

2016), hippocampus (Durazzo et al. 2013) and cerebellum (Brody et al. 2004a; Yu et al. 2011; Kuhn et al. 2012). The smaller than normal cortical gray matter regions were observed in both younger (Liao et al. 2012; Li et al. 2015) or older (Almeida et al. 2008; Karama et al. 2015), light or heavy smokers, and current or ex-smokers (Karama et al. 2015). Furthermore, tobacco smoking is a known risk factor for arteriosclerosis, which may lead to reduced brain perfusion and white matter hyperintensities or lesions on T2-weighted MRI scans (Zubieta et al. 2005; Power et al. 2015).

In addition to the macrostructural changes reported with structural MRI, microstructural abnormalities can be assessed with diffusion tensor imaging (DTI), which consistently demonstrated brain abnormalities, even in normal-appearing white matter in tobacco smokers (Gons et al. 2011; Lin et al. 2013; Savjani et al. 2014; Viswanath et al. 2015; Baeza-Loya et al. 2016). DTI measures the degree and direction of water diffusion in tissue, which is affected by axonal density, axonal diameter, and the level of myelination in the white matter (Feldman et al. 2010). Adult tobacco smokers consistently showed lower fractional anisotropy (FA) (Gons et al. 2011; Lin et al. 2013; Savjani et al. 2014; Viswanath et al. 2015; Baeza-Loya et al. 2016) and higher water diffusivity (mean diffusion or radial diffusion) (Gons et al. 2011; Lin et al. 2013; Savjani et al. 2014) in the white matter brain regions compared with those measured in non-smokers. Lower FA indicates lesser axonal fiber coherence or fiber loss, while the elevated diffusivities more often reflect neuroinflammation. These white matter abnormalities are widespread in the brain, but most frequently reported in the corpus callosum (Paul et al. 2008b; Lin et al. 2013; Savjani et al. 2014; Viswanath et al. 2015) and frontal brain regions (Liao et al. 2011; Zhang et al. 2011; Huang et al. 2013; Savjani et al. 2014; Baeza-Loya et al. 2016). These DTI findings are consistent with animal studies that showed cigarette smoke exposure led to lipid oxidative injury and myelination impairment in the frontal white matter regions (Nunez et al. 2016; Yu et al. 2016). Furthermore, nicotine-derived nitrosamine ketone (NNK), one of the tobacco-specific nitrosamines caused fiber degeneration and decreased myelinated fiber density in white matter brain regions in rat models (Yalcin et al. 2015; Papp-Peka et al. 2017).

The brain regions that showed structural abnormalities are also critical hubs in functional networks that were abnormal in smokers. Blood-oxygenation-level-dependent (BOLD) functional MRI (fMRI) studies in smokers consistently found reduced connectivity between the ACC and the striatum, which was recognized as a trait for nicotine addiction; the reduced connectivity also correlated with craving and tobacco dependence severity (Hong et al. 2009; Lerman et al. 2014; Lesage et al. 2017). During withdrawal from tobacco, functional connectivity was elevated in both the insula-default mode and insula-amygdala networks, but reduced in the default mode-

executive control network, as well as the insula-executive control network (Jasinska et al. 2014; Weiland et al. 2015; Sutherland and Stein 2018). These functional connectivity changes were associated with withdrawal symptoms such as negative emotion and impaired inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility, but were restored after tobacco/nicotine re-use (Hong et al. 2009; Lesage et al. 2017; Sutherland and Stein 2018).

¹H-MRS studies in tobacco smokers also showed evidence of neuronal injury since they had lower levels of the neuronal marker N-acetylaspartate (NAA) in multiple brain regions, including the dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) (Durazzo et al. 2016), ACC (Durazzo et al. 2016), midbrain (Durazzo et al. 2004), hippocampus (Gallinat et al. 2007), and frontal white matter (Wang et al. 2009). Several studies also found elevated levels of Glx [glutamate (Glu) + glutamine (Gln)] in the ACC (Mason et al. 2006; Wheelock et al. 2014), which appeared to normalize during withdrawal (Mennecke et al. 2014; Wheelock et al. 2014; Schulte et al. 2017). Furthermore, higher Glx levels correlated with more severe nicotine dependency and heavier smoking (Wheelock et al. 2014). Most previous studies only reported Glx levels and were not able to differentiate Glu from Gln, due to their overlapping proton resonances on MRS. However, more recent studies tried to desegregate these resonances and found higher Gln (Gutzeit et al. 2013) but lower Glu (O'Neill et al. 2014; Durazzo et al. 2016) in the cortical gray matter of tobacco smokers compared to non-smokers. In contrast to the elevated Glx and its association with smoking severity, lower Glu levels also correlated with more number of cigarettes smoked/day over the last 30 days and pack-years of smoking (O'Neill et al. 2014), as well as poorer cognitive function (Durazzo et al. 2016). Abnormally elevated Glx or low Glu levels indicate an interrupted Gln-Glu metabolite cycle between astrocytes (e.g., reduced reuptake of Glu) and neurons (e.g., decreased Glu synthesis or release). Future studies using edited ¹H-MRS that can separately measure Gln and Glu levels are needed to further clarify the pathophysiology involved in the alterations of these metabolites in tobacco smokers. Cortical γ -aminobutyric acid (GABA) is an important inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brain that can be measured with edited MRS, and was found to be reduced (Mason et al. 2006; Janes et al. 2013) or relatively normal (Schulte et al. 2017) in the cortical regions of smokers. The study that found smokers with reduced GABA levels also reported that those with lower levels also had poorer Smoke-Stroop performance and more smoking cue-induced negative emotional affects (Janes et al. 2013). The mechanisms of low GABA levels in tobacco smokers is unclear but might be due to reduced neuronal GABA synthesis, which declines with age and may lead to aging-related cognitive decline (McQuail et al. 2015). In addition, reduced tobacco use was associated with increased glutathione (antioxidant) levels in the ACC,

suggesting that tobacco cessation may lead to recovery from oxidative stress (Chitty et al. 2015).

A likely neurotoxic outcomes of tobacco smoking is poorer cognitive function. Tobacco smoking is a risk factor for dementia (Ott et al. 1998; Wingbermhle et al. 2017). Chronic smokers typically showed poorer memory, attention, processing speed, executive functions and greater impulsivity compared to non-smokers (Durazzo et al. 2010; Campos et al. 2016; Chang et al. 2017; Conti et al. 2019), although such cognitive impairments or behavioral deficits may recover with cessation (Gons et al. 2011). Evidence of brain or functional recovery in the abstainers were shown consistently across various neuroimaging studies. For example, current smokers showed smaller brain volumes compared with ex-smokers (Karama et al. 2015; Elbejjani et al. 2019), suggesting recovery from abstinence. The abnormal DTI metrics found in smokers also appeared to improve after prolonged abstinence from smoking (Gons et al. 2011). In addition, the elevated Glx (Mason et al. 2006; Mennecke et al. 2014; Wheelock et al. 2014; Schulte et al. 2017) or glutathione (Chitty et al. 2015) normalized following smoking cessation, while the abnormal frontostriatal functional connectivity also normalized in tobacco smokers after they stopped or reduced smoking (Garrison et al. 2017).

Clinical Studies of Tobacco Use Disorder With Alcohol or Marijuana Co-use

Tobacco smoking is a strong risk factor for drinking behavior and vice versa (Grucza and Bierut 2006; Weinberger et al. 2013). In one study, 63.1% of current alcohol users were also smokers while 61.9% current smokers were also using alcohol (de Silva et al. 2011). Postmortem studies that evaluated alcoholics with and without tobacco smoking, and tobacco smokers without alcohol use, found generalized white matter atrophy and neuronal loss in the prefrontal cortex only in the alcoholic brains, with no independent effect or additional brain volume loss associated with tobacco smoking (McCorkindale et al. 2016; McCorkindale et al. 2019). However, more recent structural MRI studies, using quantitative morphometry, found smaller brain volumes in multiple brain regions in tobacco smokers than in non-smokers, and greater age-related volume losses in alcoholic smokers (Durazzo et al. 2014b). Further, concurrent excessive alcohol use and smoking showed synergistic effect on deficits in time based prospective memory and worse scores on executive function tasks than users of either substance alone (Luhar et al. 2013; Marshall et al. 2016). In addition, after abstinence from alcohol, cortical gray matter perfusion (Mon et al. 2009) and cognition (Durazzo et al. 2014a; Durazzo et al. 2015) improved in non-smokers but not in smokers. Furthermore, greater number of cigarettes smoked per day correlated with lower cortical perfusion even 5 weeks after abstinence from alcohol (Mon et al. 2009). The mechanisms for these

combined effects might be explained partly from rodent model studies. Alcohol and nicotine-derived nitrosamine ketone (NNK) synergistically induced myelinated white matter fiber tract degeneration and interrupted myelin synthesis and regulation (Tong et al. 2015; Yalcin et al. 2015; Papp-Peka et al. 2017). Specifically, NNK seemed to disrupt myelin sheath specifically, whereas ethanol more likely affected axonal structure (Papp-Peka et al. 2017), and co-administration of NNK and ethanol could lead to severe fiber loss (Tong et al. 2015; Yalcin et al. 2015; Papp-Peka et al. 2017).

Another highly co-used substance in tobacco users is marijuana (or cannabis). Between 2002 and 2014, daily cannabis use increased rapidly from 5% to 9%, most notably amongst current smokers (Goodwin et al. 2018); given the legalization of cannabis, greater co-use of tobacco and cannabis will continue to rise. Approximately 70% of adult marijuana users concurrently smoke tobacco (Schauer et al. 2017; Smith et al. 2020). Δ^9 -tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main psychoactive component of marijuana (Brumback et al. 2016). THC is a major exogenous cannabinoid CB1 receptor agonist, and CB1 receptors are widely distributed in the brain, with higher densities in the cortex, hippocampus, basal ganglia and cerebellum (Brumback et al. 2016). Chronic marijuana use leads to CB1 receptor downregulation mainly in the cortical regions (Hirvonen et al. 2012). Although tobacco smokers also showed wide spread CB1 receptor downregulation in the brain on a PET study (Hirvonen et al. 2018), no study evaluated the combined effects of tobacco and marijuana use on CB1 receptors to determine whether these individuals have even lower levels of CB1 receptors. In addition, heavy marijuana use appears to up-regulate $\alpha 4\beta 2^*$ nAChR in tobacco smokers (Brody et al. 2016), and co-users also tended to have lower dopamine transporter availability than tobacco only smokers (Leroy et al. 2012).

Chronic marijuana use was consistently linked to smaller hippocampi (Chye et al. 2017; Lorenzetti et al. 2019), with smaller volumes in those with greater usage (Chye et al. 2017). Co-users of tobacco and marijuana tended to have even smaller right hippocampal volumes compared with those that used only tobacco, only cannabis or non-using healthy controls (Filbey et al. 2015), but no such additive effect on the brain volume was found in other brain regions (Filbey et al. 2015; Wetherill et al. 2015a; Wetherill et al. 2015b). Acute marijuana use may impair learning and attention/working memory (Broyd et al. 2016); however, this effect may be counteracted with concurrent tobacco smoking as shown in an ecological momentary assessment study of working memory (Schuster et al. 2016). Chronic marijuana use is also associated with cognitive deficits, but the deficits are evident only in those with earlier age of onset, during adolescence, and in regular users (Brumback et al. 2016; Meier et al. 2018). Very few studies examined the cognitive outcomes in co-users. Combined adverse effects on cognition were not found in adult co-users of

cannabis and tobacco (Filbey et al. 2015; Schuster et al. 2015). However, adolescent co-users performed poorer in challenging situations, such as tasks with higher cognitive demand or during nicotine withdrawal (Jacobsen et al. 2007).

Independent Effect(s) of HIV on Neurotoxicity and Neuroinflammation

HIV Proteins and Their Neurotoxicity

HIV infects the CD4 cells, macrophages and monocytes in the periphery. The infected monocytes and macrophages traffic to the brain and infect microglia and astrocytes, which in turn release neurotoxic viral proteins, various cytokines and chemokines, along with other neurochemicals that are related to oxidative stress or excitotoxicity, that ultimately cause HAND. Several HIV viral proteins, particularly those expressed in the era of combination antiretroviral therapy, are important contributors for HIV-associated brain injury that may lead to HAND; HIV proteins Tat, gp120, and Nef, and their neurotoxic effects will be discussed (Table 3; Fig. 2).

Tat is one of the three early-encoded HIV-1 proteins, and is critical for HIV-1 gene transcription and replication (Schwartz et al. 1990). Depending on the viral strain, Tat contains 86 to 101 amino acids that are encoded from two separate exons (Jeang 1996). Tat is detected in the HIV-infected brain (Hudson et al. 2000) and is secreted from HIV-infected microglia and astrocytes (He et al. 1997). Multiple studies have documented Tat-mediated neurotoxicity, but our knowledge regarding the cellular and molecular mechanisms for the neurotoxicity are still evolving. Most recent studies used astrocyte-specific doxycycline-inducible HIV-1 Tat transgenic mice (iTat) (Kim et al. 2003). Tat induced lysosomal exocytosis in astrocytes and directly contributed to astrocyte-mediated neurotoxicity (Fan and He 2016a). Tat also increased glial fibrillary acidic protein (GFAP) and its aggregation, activated unfolded protein response (UPR) and endoplasmic reticulum stress (ER) stress, which ultimately contributed to neurotoxicity (Fan and He 2016b). In addition, Tat impaired neurogenesis through notch signaling pathway (Fan et al. 2016). Tat was also found to be secreted by astrocytes in the form of exosomes (Rahimian and He 2016a), which caused shortened neurites and decreased neuron survival through microRNA-132 (Rahimian and He 2016b).

Tat-mediated neurotoxicity also occurs through a myriad of other mechanisms. For instance, Tat disrupted endolysosomal membrane integrity and affected the function of endolysosomes, which also led to neurotoxicity (Hui et al. 2012). Tat contributed to neuroinflammation through direct induction of both IL-6 and IL-8 production (Nookala and Kumar 2014). In addition, Tat increased the expression of purinergic P2Y4 receptor in astrocytes and receptor signaling

to mediate neuroinflammation via PI3K/AKT- and ERK1/2-dependent pathways (Zhou et al. 2019). Furthermore, Tat activated NMDA receptors (Li et al. 2008), through its interaction with the low-density lipoprotein receptor-related protein (Liu et al. 2000). Activation of NMDA receptors caused neuronal cell death, while NMDA antagonist blocked HIV infection-mediated neuronal toxicity (Shin et al. 2012). Chronic Tat expression induced both oxidative stress and neuroinflammation (Guha et al. 2012).

HIV gp120 is also neurotoxic through multiple mechanisms. Even a brief exposure to gp120 caused neuronal apoptosis (Capo-Velez et al. 2018). Dynamin-dependent endocytosis was critical for gp120 neurotoxicity (Wenzel et al. 2017). gp120 impaired neuronal mitochondrial function and distribution (Avdoshina et al. 2016). In addition, gp120 decreased mature BDNF expression and promoted intracellular and extracellular accumulation of pro-BDNF by affecting furin levels, which altered the balance between anti-apoptotic and pro-apoptotic neurotrophins (Bachis et al. 2012). Furthermore, gp120 modulated the expression of pro-inflammatory chemokine IL-8 in astrocytes via NF- κ B pathway (Shah and Kumar 2010). Binding of gp120 to CXCR4 evoked the release of IL-1 β in microglia and increased the number of inhibitory synapses (Zhang et al. 2019). Collectively, these studies suggest that gp120 is directly involved in neurotoxicity and neuroinflammation. In gp120 transgenic mice, α 7-nAChR were up-regulated on striatal neurons, which led to increases in both intracellular calcium and apoptotic cells (Capo-Velez et al. 2018). The blockade of these events by α 7-nAChR antagonists further confirmed that α 7-nAChR were involved in gp120-induced neurotoxicity (Capo-Velez et al. 2018).

Nef is a 27–32 kDa early viral protein that down-regulates important immune molecules such as MHC-I (Blagoveshchenskaya et al. 2002) and CD4 receptor (Chen et al. 1996; Poe and Smithgall 2009), and promotes HIV infectivity (Rosa et al. 2015; Usami et al. 2015). In the CNS, Nef is abundantly expressed in HIV-infected brains (Saito et al. 1994; Ranki et al. 1995); therefore, Nef likely contributes to HAND. Ectopic expression of Nef increased CCL5 expression in astrocytes involving activation of PI3K/Akt and p38 MAPK pathways, and transcription factors such as NF- κ B, CEBP, and AP-1 (Liu et al. 2014). The increased CCL5 expression then activated microglia to express and release pro-inflammatory cytokines (Skuljec et al. 2011), which further promoted neuroinflammation. Moreover, expression of HIV Nef caused axonal and neurite degeneration, decreased the levels of phosphorylated-Tau but increased the total level of Tau in primary neurons (Sami Saribas et al. 2017). Injection of Nef-transfected astrocytes into the rat hippocampus increased the permeability of blood-brain barrier and up-regulated IL-1 β (Rivera et al. 2019). The increased IL-1 β also led to inflammatory effects in distal organs including lungs and ileum.

Table 3 Pre-clinical studies showing HIV protein-mediated neurotoxicity and/or neuroinflammation

Author(s)	HIV protein	Model (s) used	Primary Findings
In-Vitro Models			
Rahimian et al., <i>J Neuroinflammation</i> 2016; Rahimian et al., <i>J Neurovirol</i> 2016	Tat	human astrocytoma cells U373.MG and U138.MG	Secreted Tat from astrocytes in exosomes caused shortened neurites and decreased neuronal survival through microRNA-132
Hui et al., <i>ASN neuro</i> 2012		Primary cultures of hippocampal neurons embryonic (day 18 Sprague–Dawley rats)	Tat disrupted endo-lysosome membrane integrity and affected functions
Nookala et al., <i>J Neuroinflammation</i> 2014		SVG astrocytes	Tat induced both IL-6 and IL-8 production
Zhou et al., <i>J Neuroinflammation</i> 2019		primary mouse astrocytes from 0- to 1-day-old C57BL/6 mice	Tat increased the expression of purinergic P2Y4 receptor in astrocytes and increased receptors signaling to mediate neuroinflammation via PI3K/AKT and ERK 1/2 dependent pathway.
Li et al., <i>J Neurosci</i> 2008; Liu et al., <i>Nat Med.</i> 2000; Shin et al., <i>Br J Pharmacol</i> 2012		SVGA cells and Primary rat hippocampal neuronal cultures	Tat activated NMDA receptor by interacting low-density lipoprotein receptor related proteins. Activation of NMDA receptors led to neuronal cell death.
Fan et al., <i>J Biol Chem</i> 2016		Primary astrocytes from HIV-1 Tat transgenic (iTat) mice	Tat induced lysosomal exocytosis in astrocytes and directly contributed to astrocytes-mediated neurotoxicity
Bachis et al., <i>J Neurosci</i> 2012	gp120	Rat cortical neurons	gp120 decreased mature BDNF expression and promoted accumulation of intracellular and extracellular pro-BDNF.
Shah et al., <i>J Neuroinflammation</i> 2010		SVGA astrocytes	Gp120 modulated the expression of IL-8 in astrocytes via NF-K β pathway
Zhang et al., <i>J Neurochem</i> 2019		Rat primary hippocampal neurons	Binding of gp120 to CXCR4 led to the release of IL-1 β in microglia and increased the number of inhibitory synapses
Liu et al., <i>Sci Rep</i> 2014	Nef	SVGA astrocytic cell line	Nef induced CCL5 expression in astrocytes through p38-MAPK and PI3K/Akt pathways along with transcription factors NF-k β , CEBP & AP-1
Sami et al., <i>Cell Death Dis</i> 2017		Primary human fetal astrocytes and neurons	Nef caused axonal and neurite degeneration and enhanced total tau protein in primary neurons.
Rivera et al., <i>PLoS One</i> 2019		Primary rat astrocytes	Injection of Nef-transfected astrocytes into the rat hippocampus increased the permeability of blood-brain barrier and upregulated IL-1 β production
Rodent Models			
Fan et al., <i>J Biol Chem</i> 2016	Tat	iTat mice	Tat increased GFAP and its aggregation, activated unfolded protein response, and ER stress
Fan et al., <i>J Biol Chem</i> 2016		iTat mice	Tat impaired neurogenesis via notch signaling pathway
Wenzel et al., <i>J Neuroimmune Pharmacol.</i> 2017	gp120	Gp120 transgenic mice	Upregulated expression of α 7 nAChRs on striatal neurons led to increases in both intracellular calcium and percentage of apoptotic cells
Avdoshima et al., <i>Neurotox Res.</i> 2016		Gp120 transgenic mice	gp120 impaired neuronal mitochondrial function and distribution
Chompre et al., <i>J Neuroinflammation</i> 2013	Nef	Sprague Dawley rats implanted with astrocytes expressing Nef	Nef increased CCL2 expression and infiltration of peripheral macrophages that caused neuronal damage and cognitive impairment
Chompre et al., <i>Neurobiol Dis.</i> 2019		Sprague Dawley rats transfused with astrocytes expressing Nef	Nef utilized TGF β signaling pathway and induced neuroinflammation

Moreover, primary rat astrocytes expressing Nef protein implanted into the hippocampus of rats led to increased chemokine ligand 2 (CCL2) expression that correlated with impaired novel location and novel object recognition, as well as infiltration of peripheral macrophages that eventually caused

neuronal damage and cognitive impairment (Chompre et al. 2013), which was shown to involve the TGF β signaling pathway (Chompre et al. 2019). Therefore, the continued expression of Nef by infected astrocytes, even in the absence of viral replication, could lead to ongoing neuroinflammation and

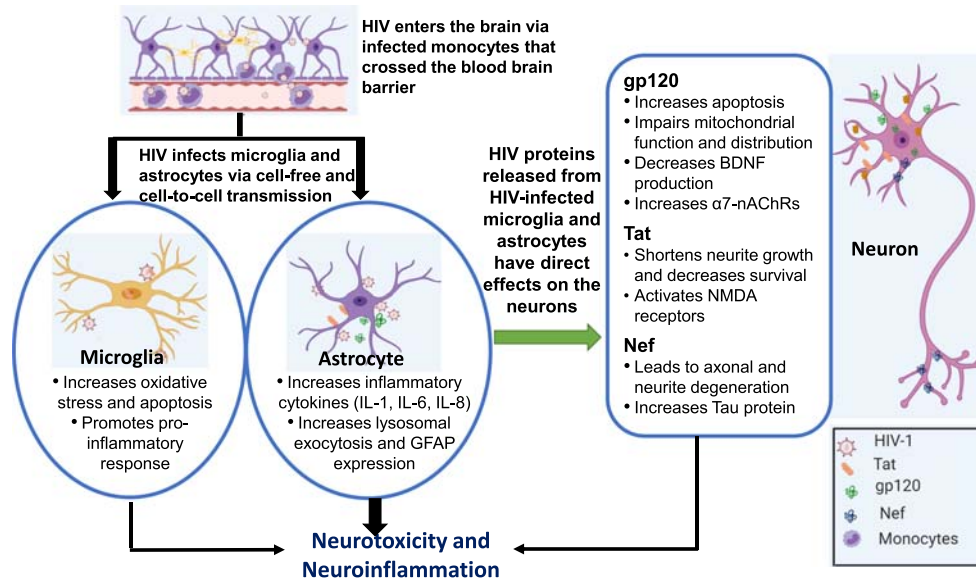


Fig. 2 HIV protein-mediated neurotoxic and neuroinflammatory effects. HIV enters the brain through blood-brain barrier and infects microglia and astrocytes via cell-free and cell-to-cell transmission. Infected microglia and astrocytes then express and secrete viral proteins. Tat increases oxidative stress and apoptosis in microglia. Tat also leads to the up-regulation of GFAP, IL-6, IL-8 and causes oxidative stress and lysosomal exocytosis, induces apoptosis and P2Y4 receptors expression in astrocytes. Furthermore, secreted Tat from microglia and astrocytes activates

NMDA receptors and shortens neurite growth and decreases neuronal survival. gp120 elevates IL-8 and IL-1 secretion in astrocytes. gp120 also leads to increased apoptosis, impairs mitochondrial function and distribution, decreases BDNF production, and increases $\alpha 7$ -nAChR in neurons. Nef up-regulates the production of total tau-protein and leads to the axonal and neurite degeneration in neurons. Images were created with BioRender.com.

eventual neuronal damage and ultimately contribute to HAND.

Taken together, the expression of HIV-1 proteins Tat, gp120 and Nef in infected microglia and astrocytes would result in up-regulated gene expression, increased apoptosis, decreased BDNF production, and increased production of inflammatory cytokines (Fig. 2; Table 3). These combined effects could lead to neurotoxicity and neuroinflammation, and ultimately HAND.

HIV-associated Neuroinflammation and Neurotoxicity - Neuroimaging and Behavioral Studies (See Table 4)

Consistent with the preclinical studies that delineated the neurotoxic and neuroinflammatory effects of HIV viral proteins, HIV+ individuals often demonstrated neuroinflammation (Chang et al. 2002; Paul et al. 2008a), disrupted white matter microstructural integrity (Chang et al. 2008b; O'Connor et al. 2017; Liang et al. 2018) and neuronal damage (Paul et al. 2008a). Postmortem studies in HIV + patients consistently showed evidence of neuronal loss, neuroinflammation with activated microglia and astrocytes, and HIV-related leukoencephalopathy (Vago et al. 2002; Silva et al. 2012). Numerous cognitive and neuroimaging studies in PWH also demonstrated these brain abnormalities, both in patients with or without HAND (Chang and Shukla 2018).

For example, neuroinflammation with glial activation was observed in medication-naïve HIV patients, as well as in PWH maintained on cART, as elevated levels of glial markers on ¹H MRS, including Cho (Chang et al. 1999a; Chang et al. 2002; Paul et al. 2008a) or myoinositol (Chang et al. 1999a; Chang et al. 2002) in the frontal lobe or basal ganglia (Chang et al. 1999a; Chang et al. 2002; Paul et al. 2008a; Chang et al. 2014). These elevated MRS glial markers may normalize or improve in HIV patients who were initiated and maintained on cART for 9 months (Chang et al. 1999b). However, elevated MRS glial markers may also reflect ongoing repair since newly diagnosed HIV + patients who were started and maintained on cART showed persistently or even higher levels of total creatine, Cho and myoinositol 3-months later (Chang et al. 2003), and higher Cho compounds were also observed in those with well-controlled viral loads and milder forms of HAND (Alakkas et al. 2019). Furthermore, with prolonged cART, chronically HIV-infected individuals again showed elevated frontal white matter myoinositol that correlated with poorer fine motor function, and worse fluency, especially in those with the *APOE*ε4 allele (Chang et al. 2014).

Recent PET studies also demonstrated greater binding of various tracers to TSPO, a marker of microglial activation, in the frontal, temporal, parietal and occipital lobes, and globus pallidus of HIV-infected persons (Coughlin et al. 2014; Vera et al. 2016). Higher TSPO binding in some of the brain regions also correlated with poorer cognitive performance in HIV-infected individuals (Vera et al. 2016;

Table 4 Selected Neuroimaging Studies in HIV + Individuals

Author Journal-Year	Participant Characteristics (Age, Sex, HIV Disease)	Methods / Assessments	Findings
Structural MRI / Morphometry Studies			
Tate et al. <i>J Neurovirol.</i> 2011	216 HIV: 48 ± 9 years, 88% men, 181 ADC < 0.5/ANI; 35 ADC ≥ 1/MND/HAD; HIV duration = 12 ± 6 years) 139 SN: 37 ± 14 years, 48% men	Structural MRI at 1.5 T; manually traced; width and area of the corpus callosum (CC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptomatic HIV+ showed reduced width and area across all sub-regions of CC than SN and shorter width in isthmus and genu than asymptomatic group. • No difference between asymptomatic group and SN group • Lower nadir CD4 correlated with smaller area in the posterior middle body of CC; lower CD4 correlated with shorter width in genu, isthmus and splenium of CC. Advanced ADC stage correlated with smaller area in genu and isthmus of CC.
Chang et al. <i>Neuroimage</i> 2011	47 HIV + APOEε4-: 47 ± 1 years, 94% men, 79% on cART; 22 HIV + APOEε4+: 48 ± 3 years, 86% men, 82% on cART; 54 SN APOEε4-: 46 ± 2 years, 91% men; 16 SN APOEε4+: 46 ± 3 years, 81% men	Structural MRI at 3T; FreeSurfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+ subjects had smaller brain volumes than SN subjects regardless of HAND status, although smaller white matter, amygdala, thalamus and hippocampal volumes did correlate with cognitive deficits. • Only SN subjects with APOEε4 showed antagonistic pleiotropy effect on cognition and brain volume. • HIV + with APOEε4 showed premature aging with neurodegeneration.
Guha et al. <i>J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr</i> 2016	146 HIV: 41 ± 17 years, 55% men; HIV duration = 9 ± 7 years, 84% on cART, 63% viral suppression, HAND status not available 51 SN: 35 ± 15 years, 45% men	Structural MRI at 3T; FreeSurfer (regional volumes were composited into cortical, subcortical and non-specific components); ICV normalized volume, NPTs (execution, memory and processing speed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV had smaller cortical volume and greater age-related volume reduction in the subcortical region than SN individuals. • Age and nadir CD4 predicted cortical volume while age and recent viral load predicted subcortical volumes. • Cortical volume was positively correlated with global cognition.
Sanford et al. <i>J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr</i> 2017	125 HIV: 47 ± 12 years, 64% men, HIV duration = 11 ± 8 years, 90% on cART, 75% viral suppression, HAND status not available; 62 SN: 45 ± 12 years, 55% men	Structural MRI at 3T; voxel-based morphometry and deformation-based morphometry; NPTs (execution, memory and processing speed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV had thinner cortex, lower subcortical white matter densities and worse cognition compared with SN participants. Worse cognition was correlated with thinner cortex but not subcortical volume. • Lower Nadir CD4 was correlated with smaller subcortical volume and larger 3rd ventricle. • Current CD4, current plasma viral load and cART treatment were not correlated with regional brain volume.
Diffusion Tensor Imaging (DTI) studies			
Chang et al. <i>J Neuroimmune Pharmacol</i> 2008	39 HIV: 47 ± 2 years, HIV duration = 13 ± 1 years, 56% viral suppression 32 SN: 47 ± 1 years, participants in both groups were predominantly men.	DTI (12 directions) at baseline and 1-year follow-up; 3T; NPTs (all 7 relevant cognitive domains)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At baseline, HIV showed higher MD in the frontal WM, parietal WM than SN participants. • At 1-year follow-up: HIV showed increased MD in genu CC, but not SN. • Typical age-related increases in MD in genu of CC and age-related increases in FA in putamen were seen only in SN.

Table 4 (continued)

Author Journal-Year	Participant Characteristics (Age, Sex, HIV Disease)	Methods / Assessments	Findings
Pfefferbaum et al. <i>AIDS</i> 2009	42 HIV: 42 ± 10; 69% men, HIV duration = 8 ± 6 years, 19% viral suppression, cognitively intact 88 SN: 45 ± 10; 48% men	DTI (6 directions) at 1.5 T; FA AD, and RD on major white matter fiber tracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in FA in the frontal WM and putamen, as well as changes in MD in the genu of CC correlated with changes in global cognitive deficit scores. • Cognitively intact HIV + had higher AD than SN in the posterior CC, internal and external capsules, superior cingulate bundles and was even higher in those with AIDS. • Higher log viral load and self-reported peripheral neuropathy were associated with higher AD.
Ragin et al. <i>Ann Clin Transl Neurol</i> 2015	15 HIV: 35 ± 11 years, 93% men, HIV duration < 100 days, 8 on cART, 20 SN: 32 ± 9 years; 80% men	Structural MRI at 3T; FreeSurfer ROIs based DTI (64 directions), ROIs included cerebral cortex, cerebral white matter, CC, caudate, putamen, thalamus, and hippocampus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+ had smaller total parenchyma, larger third ventricle and brainstem than SN. • HIV+ had lower FA in the CC and higher MD in the caudate than SN. • Higher CD4 count correlated with higher FA in the CC and higher MD in the caudate. • Higher level of plasma immune markers correlated with smaller parenchyma volume and higher caudate-MD but did not correlated with CC-FA
Su et al. <i>AIDS</i> 2016	100 HIV: 49–61 years, aviraemic ≥ 12 months, 93% men who have sex with men (MSM), HIV duration 13.4 years. 16% cognitively impaired; 70 SN: 49–59 years, 87% MSM	DTI (64 directions) at 3T; analyzed with tract-based spatial statistics (TBSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+ showed lower average FA, higher average MD in the whole brain and lower FA in widespread white matter regions.
Proton MR Spectroscopy Studies (¹H-MRS)			
Ernst et al. <i>J Magn Reson Imaging</i> 2010	27 HIV: 47 ± 2 years, 96% men, HIV duration = 13 ± 1 years; 18 HIV-cognitive deficits: 45 ± 3 years, 89% men, HIV duration = 10 ± 1 years; 46 SN: 43 ± 2 years, 80% men	¹H MRS TE-averaged PRESS at 3T; Glutamate levels in the frontal GM, frontal WM and basal ganglia; NPTs: processing speed, learning, memory, verbal fluency, executive function, attention, and fine motor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glutamate levels in the parietal gray matter: HIV + with cognitive deficit < HIV normal cognition < SN • Lower glutamate levels in the parietal WM, frontal cortex and basal ganglia correlated with poorer processing speed. Lower glutamate in the parietal WM also correlated with poorer memory while lower glutamate the frontal cortex correlated with poorer working memory.
Chang et al. <i>Neurology</i> 2014	80 HIV: 47.3 ± 1.1 years, 91.3% men, 23 APOE ε4+ 97 SN: 44.7 ± 1.3 years, 87.6% men; 28 APOE- ε4+	¹H MRS, PRESS at 3T in four brain regions (ACC, frontal and parietal WM, basal ganglia) NPTs assessed all relevant cognitive domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+ subjects showed persistent elevation and lack of normal age-dependent increase in myo--inositol, which suggest that persistent glial activation attenuated the typical antagonistic pleiotropic effects of APOEε4 on neuroinflammation. • APOEε4 negatively affects energy metabolism (tCr) in brain regions rich in dopaminergic synapses. • The combined effects of HIV infection and APOEε4 may lead to greater cognitive deficits, especially in those with greater neuroinflammation.

Table 4 (continued)

Author Journal-Year	Participant Characteristics (Age, Sex, HIV Disease)	Methods / Assessments	Findings
Mohamed et al. <i>AJNR Am J Neuroradiol</i> 2018	24 Asymptomatic HIV (age = 60 ± 6 years, 71% men, HIV duration = 19 ± 9 years); 21 Symptomatic HIV (age = 58 ± 5 years, 76% men, HIV duration = 19 ± 9 years)	¹H MRS with STEAM at 7T: NAA, Glutamate, Cho and mI in the frontal WM, PCC, precuneus, left hippocampus and left basal ganglia, NPTs : all relevant cognitive domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+ symptomatic group had lower NAA/tCr in the frontal WM, PCC and precuneus as well as lower Glutamate/tCr in the precuneus compared with HIV asymptomatic group. • Lower NAA/Cr in the frontal WM and PCC, and lower Glu/Cr in the frontal WM and the precuneus all correlated with poorer cognition.
Alakkas et al. <i>J Neurovirol</i> 2019	253 HIV: 44 ± 8 years, 81% men, 50% viral suppressed, 152 no HAND, 54 ANI, 37 MND, 10 HAD) from CHARTER study.	¹H MRS with PRESS at 1.5T (NAA, Cho, MI and Cr in the middle FGM, right FWM and right basal ganglia), sMRI (cortical GM, subcortical GM, abnormal WM and total WM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+ with any kind of HAND had smaller cortical and subcortical gray matter volume and more white matter lesion compared with cognitive unimpaired HIV + individuals • ANI and MND had higher Cho in the FWM and HAD and ANI HAD lower NAA in the basal ganglia.
Functional MRI (fMRI) Studies			
Chang et al. <i>Ann Neurol</i> 2004	18 HIV : 38 ± 2 years, 4 women (15 on HIV meds; average plasma Log viral load 3.2 ± 0.3; ADC stage 0–1) 18 SN : 38 ± 2 years, 4 women	Task-activated fMRI at 4T; visual attention task with parametric design (tracking 2, 3 or 4 balls)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV showed similar task performance vs. SN • HIV showed decreased activation in brain regions within the visual attention network, but increased activation in adjacent or contralateral brain regions. • Cognitive performance, CD4, and viral load all correlated with activated BOLD signals in brain regions that activated more in HIV subjects.
Ernst et al. <i>Ann Neurol</i> 2009	31 HIV : 50 ± 2 years; 1 woman; all on HIV meds, 32 SN : 47 ± 2 years; 4 women; None of the subjects had HAND	Task-activated fMRI at 3T; visual attention task (tracking 2,3,4 balls) at baseline and 1-year follow-up. NPTs (7 cognitive domains)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV showed increased brain activation while SN showed decreased brain activation on a visual attention task after one-year. These findings indicate decline neural efficiency in the HIV-infected brain since they had to compensate with greater activation to maintain normal cognitive function.
Thomas et al. <i>Neurology</i> 2013	58 HIV : 41 ± 14 years; 90% men; 44% on cART; 22% with substance use positive (mostly marijuana); 53 SN : 44 ± 14 years; 51% men	Resting fMRI at 3T; two 6-minute; eyes open on fixed cross.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV had decreased FC in DMN, CON, and SAL. • HIV had lower FC in the DMN-DAN, DMN-SAL and CON-SMN, and CON-SAL. • Clinical markers (plasma HIV viral load or CD4(+) cell count) and cognitive impairment did not correlate with FC measures. • Aging correlated with less FC in the DMN, SAL and DMN-SAL. No HIV-by-aging interaction.
Egbert et al. <i>Prog Neuropsychopharmacol Biol Psychiatry</i> 2019	54 HIV+ : 25–75 years (all taking cART) 54 SN : 25–69 years All men, None with HAND	Resting fMRI at 3T; 5-mins; eyes open on no target.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+: both greater or lesser FCs within DMN, FPN, SMN or DMN-SMN.

Table 4 (continued)

Author Journal-Year	Participant Characteristics (Age, Sex, HIV Disease)	Methods / Assessments	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correlations between NPTs and various connectivity networks: positive in HIV+ but negative in SN • HIV had age-related decreases, while SN had age-related increases. in several functional connectivity networks 		
Positron Emission Tomography (PET)			
Coughlin et al. <i>J Neuroviral</i> 2014	23 HIV: 47 ± 7 years, all on cART and with viral suppression. 12 SN: 40 ± 11 years. Sex information not available.	PET with TSPO tracer ¹¹[C]DPA-713	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+ had higher TSPO binding than SN in temporal, frontal, parietal and cingulate cortex and white matter. • HIV+ with HAD had even higher TSPO binding in frontal and parietal cortex than HIV+ no-HAND • Asymptomatic HIV+ had higher TSPO binding in the temporal, occipital and cingulate cortex and white matter than SN.
Rubin et al. <i>AIDS</i> 2018	21 HIV: 48 ± 8 years, HIV duration average 14 years, all on cART and with viral suppression.	PET with TSPO tracer ¹¹[C]DPA-713 NPTs (with 7 cognitive domains)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, higher binding correlate with poorer cognition (e.g. higher binding in the middle frontal gyrus correlated with poorer working memory, executive function, verbal memory and motor skill). • However, higher binding in the thalamus correlated with better verbal memory.
Boerwinkle et al. <i>J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr</i> 2020	24 HIV: 57 ± 6 years, 75% men, HIV duration 18 ± 8 years, all on Cart and with viral suppression. 13 SN: 58 ± 7 years, 69% men	PET with TSPO tracer ¹¹[C]PBR28 NPTs (processing speed, executive function, learning and memory)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TSPO binding was similar between HIV and SN in the 30 ROIs. • Among HIV+, higher binding in the frontal, parietal and occipital cortex and thalamus correlated with poorer executive function. Higher binding in the parietal cortex also correlated with poorer global function.
Ances et al. <i>Neurology</i> 2010	10 HIV: 52 ± 6 years, 45% men, average viral load 2.47 copies/mm ³ , intact cognition 20 SN: 47 ± 6 years, 80% men	PET with amyloid tracer ¹¹[C]-Pittsburgh compound B (PiB) CSF Aβ42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV with normal or low CSF Aβ42 had similar ¹¹C-PiB binding compared to SN with normal CSF Aβ42. • SN with low CSF Aβ42 had higher binding level than other groups. • CSF Aβ42 level did not correlate with ¹¹C-PiB binding.
Mohamed et al. <i>J Neuroviral</i> 2020	48 HIV: 59 ± 5 years, 71% mem, HIV duration 19 ± 9 years, all on Cart, 92% viral suppression, 12 with ANI, 12 with MND and 11 with HAD 25 SN: 64 ± 8 years, 88% men,	PET with amyloid tracer ¹⁸[F] AV-45 (florbetapir) CSF Aβ42 and tau NPTs: (processing speed, executive function, learning and memory, visual construction and memory, and motor skill)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global and regional binding level did not different between HIV serostatus and HAND status, except for HIV + had higher binding in the Centrum semiovale than SN. • Among those > 50 years old, HIV+ had higher binding in multiple regions than SN (frontal, parietal, PCC, precuneus, centrum semiovale and putamen).

Table 4 (continued)

Author Journal-Year	Participant Characteristics (Age, Sex, HIV Disease)	Methods / Assessments	Findings
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive performance did not correlate with global or regional binding levels. • No difference on CSF Aβ42 and tau levels by HIV serostatus.
Multimodal Imaging			
Cloak et al., <i>J Neuroimmunol</i> 2004	11 HIV: 35 \pm 3 years, 10 men, 6/11 on cART, 1/11 viral suppressed, 9 had HAND, with 2 missing) 14 SN: 31 \pm 3 years 11 men)	DWI: mean diffusion; ¹H MRS with PRESS at 1.5T (NAA, Cr, Cho, ml in the parietal WM); NPTs (NPZ-8 scores)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared to SN, HIV+ individuals had higher mean diffusion and higher levels of Cho and myoinositol in the frontal WM • HIV subjects also had poorer cognitive performance than SN • HIV subjects with higher mean diffusion also had higher myoinositol and poorer cognitive performance
Paul et al. <i>J Int Neuropsychol Soc</i> 2008	22 HIV: 38 \pm 4 years, 19 men (17 with HAND) 20 SN: 35 \pm 10 years, 9 men	¹H MRS with PRESS (MI/tCr, NAA/tCr, Cho/tCr, NAA/Cho, and NAA/MI in the putamen), sMRI (caudate and putamen), NPTs (with all relevant cognitive domains)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+ individuals had lower NAA, higher Cho and smaller volume in the basal ganglia. • Lower NAA was correlated with smaller volume in the putamen. • Both lower NAA and smaller caudate and putamen volume were correlated with poorer cognitive performance.
Vera et al. <i>Neurology</i> 2016	12 HIV (cognitively healthy): 42 \pm 6 years, all men, HIV duration = 15 years, all on cART, all virally suppressed 10 SN: 41 \pm 9 years; all men	PET with [¹¹C] PBR28 for TSPO; DTI (68 directions) at 3T; TBSS CSF biomarkers (HIV-RNA, eotaxin, MIP-1 β , IL-8 and IL-10); TSPO genotype, NPTs: Speed, visual and verbal learning and executive function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV+ had higher TSPO binding in the parietal, occipital lobes and globus pallidus compared with SN group • Among HIV+ individuals, greater binding in the hippocampus, amygdala and thalamus were associated with poorer global cognition. • Among HIV+ individuals, greater binding was correlated with higher mean diffusion in most white matter tracts. • TSPO binding was not correlated with CSF chemokine

Abbreviations: in alphabet order: ADC = AIDS dementia complex; ANI = Asymptomatic neurocognitive disorder; Cho = choline-containing compounds; CON = control network; tCr = total creatine; CSF = cerebrospinal fluid; DAN = dorsal attention; DMN = default mode network; FA = fractional anisotropy; GM = gray matter; HAD, HIV-associated dementia; HAND, HIV associated neuropsychological disorder; ICV, total intracranial volume; MD = mean diffusivity; ml, myo-inositol; MND, mild neurocognitive disorder; NAA, N-acetyl aspartate; NPTs, neuropsychological tests; ROI = region of interest; SAL, salience network; SMN, sensorimotor network; SN, HIV seronegative controls; TBSS = tract-based spatial statistics; TSPO = translocator protein; WM, white matter

Rubin et al. 2018; Boerwinkle et al. 2020). In contrast, lower TSPO binding were found in simian immunodeficiency virus (SIVsm804E)-infected macaques, suggesting marked glial loss, along with focal and diffuse microglia activation on postmortem immunostaining, especially in those with high CSF viral loads (Hammoud et al. 2019). Another MRI technique, DTI, can assess neuroinflammation and microstructural abnormalities. Elevated brain diffusivity indicates neuroinflammation while lower FA reflects lesser neuronal integrity on DTI. HIV-infected individuals consistently showed such abnormalities on DTI metrics in the white

matter in various brain regions, especially in the larger white matter tracts such as the corpus callosum (Chang et al. 2008b; Pfefferbaum et al. 2009; O'Connor et al. 2017; Liang et al. 2018). The elevated brain diffusivity in HIV-infected persons were observed even in those who were newly infected (Ragin et al. 2015) or aviremic (Su et al. 2016), and correlated with elevated glial marker myoinositol (Cloak et al. 2004), and with poorer cognitive function (Wang et al. 2020), which further indicates that neuroinflammation has a mediating role in HAND.

In addition to the persistent neuroinflammation, cognitive deficits or HAND may also result from neuronal damage, which can be due to the direct neurotoxic effects from the HIV viral proteins (gp120, Tat, Nef), as well as from oxidative stress, glutamate-mediated excitotoxicity and from certain antiretroviral medications. PET studies that evaluated beta-amyloid (A β) deposition, using [^{11}C]-Pittsburgh compound B (PiB) (Ances et al. 2010), or [^{18}F] AV-45 (florbetapir) (Mohamed et al. 2020) did not find elevated A β binding in HIV+ individuals with or without HAND, suggesting that beta-amyloid did not contribute to HAND in middle aged HIV patients. However, on ^1H MRS, lower than normal levels of the neuronal marker NAA were found in the frontal brain regions, basal ganglia (Chang et al. 2002; Paul et al. 2008a; Alakkas et al. 2019) and parietal cortex (Chang et al. 1999a; Mohamed et al. 2018) of HIV patients with HAND, but not those without HAND (Chang et al. 2002). Repeatedly, the abnormally lower NAA levels were reported in antiretroviral-naïve patients with HIV-associated dementia (Chang et al. 2002), as well as cART treated HIV patients with cognitive impairment (Mohamed et al. 2018), and those with HAND (Alakkas et al. 2019).

Another MRS marker to assess neuronal health is the brain glutamate, which was found to be reduced in the frontal and parietal brain regions in HIV+ compared with seronegative individuals, and the lower levels of glutamate also correlated with the more severe cognitive deficits (Ernst et al. 2010; Mohamed et al. 2018). Lower brain glutamate in HIV patients reflects depletion of intracellular glutamate due to several mechanisms. First, reduced re-uptake and recycling of the released glutamate back to the neurons occurred with neuroinflammation, when the excitatory amino acid transporters on the activated astroglia could not reuptake the extracellular glutamate (Zou and Crews 2005). Second, exposure of astrocytes to HIV-1 or the envelope glycoprotein gp120 also reduced their ability to transport glutamate (Wang et al. 2004), which also could lead to excitotoxicity and neuronal injury. Third, both nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs) and oxidized proteins from oxidative stress could lead to mitochondrial toxicity that inhibit glutamate synthesis via the TCA cycle (Dagan et al. 2002). Using an edited MRS technique, brain glutamate levels indeed negatively correlated with the number of NRTIs taken by PWH (Ernst et al. 2010).

Furthermore, evidence for brain injury that might have resulted from either neuroinflammation or neuronal injury were found with brain atrophy on MR morphometry. HIV+ individuals often showed smaller cortical or subcortical volumes (Paul et al. 2008a; Guha et al. 2016; Sanford et al. 2017) as well as smaller white matter volumes, especially in HIV+ patients with the *APOE* ϵ 4 allele (Chang et al. 2011). However, younger HIV+ individuals with normal diffusivity (Tate et al. 2011; Towgood et al. 2012) and HIV+ individuals without cognitive deficits (Chang et al. 2011) may also show similar brain atrophy. Furthermore, in a study that used both MRS and morphometry to assess brain abnormalities in non-demented HIV

patients, lower NAA correlated with smaller putamen, and both were associated with poorer cognition (Paul et al. 2008a). Therefore, brain atrophy may correlate with cognitive deficits, but it can occur in PWH with or without cognitive impairment.

A sensitive measure of brain function that reflects the neuronal health of PWH can be derived from BOLD-fMRI studies. BOLD-fMRI consistently showed abnormal brain connectivity at resting-state (rsfMRI) or abnormal brain activation during specific tasks (task-fMRI) in those with HAND, as well as in those without HAND. Specifically, HIV+ individuals showed reduced functional connectivity in cortical networks such as the default mode network (DMN) and the salience network (SAL) (Thomas et al. 2013; Plessis et al. 2014), as well as cortical-subcortical networks (Ortega et al. 2015), even at the resting state. Compared to SN individuals, HIV+ also had lesser between-network connectivity (Thomas et al. 2013; Plessis et al. 2014), and those with lower connectivity had poorer cognitive performance (Egbert et al. 2019). Furthermore, compared to cognitively normal PWH, functional connectivity in those with HAND were even lower (Ann et al. 2016) and decreased faster with aging (Groff et al. 2020). However, clinically stable HIV+ individuals who were able to maintain normal cognitive function over a 30-month period showed no structural brain changes but increased resting functional connectivity in the visual network, frontal-parietal network and the cerebellar network, reflecting a successful neuronal adaptive response to the ongoing HIV-mediated neurotoxicity among those with good clinical outcomes (Correa et al. 2017). Neuronal adaptation to HIV infection is more readily observed in task-fMRI studies, since the tasks require greater neuronal modulation and may be applied in a parametric design to assess the cognitive load effects (i.e., analogous to a stress test). Similar to the adaptive response seen with rsfMRI, HIV+ individuals typically showed greater neuronal activation than SN controls, indicating greater usage of brain reserve to compensate for the brain injury. Therefore, even PWH without HAND show similarly greater BOLD activation on task-activated fMRI (Ernst et al. 2002). On tasks that used a parametric design with increasing attentional load, PWH showed lesser brain activation in the normal network, but greater activation in brain regions that were adjacent or contralateral to brain regions that were activated in seronegative controls (Chang et al. 2001; Chang et al. 2004), and greater activation in those reserve brain regions correlated to better performance (Chang et al. 2004). Moreover, in a longitudinal fMRI study, cognitively normal and stable HIV patients again showed greater activation than SN controls at baseline, as well as increased brain activation when performing the same cognitive task one year later, indicating declined neural efficiency, while SN controls showed decreased activation due to greater efficiency from practice effects (Ernst et al. 2009). These findings demonstrate that BOLD-fMRI is highly sensitive for detecting neuronal injury in PWH, and can demonstrate decline in neuronal function even in those without HAND.

Combined Effect(s) of HIV and Nicotine/tobacco on Brain injury

Although tobacco smokers with PWH typically start smoking cigarettes at an early age, and were addicted to nicotine with an altered or adapted brain system, prior to their HIV infection, pre-clinical studies that evaluated the combined effects of HIV and nicotine/tobacco smoking in the brain typically used the HIV transgenic (Tg) rat models (Table 5). Such preclinical experimental designs and model thus could only evaluate how nicotine might have protected or exacerbated the brain injury associated with the ongoing HIV gene product-mediated neurotoxicity, which began since birth in these animals. The HIV-1 Tg rat was developed using a noninfectious transgene, with a portion of the viral gag-pol region deleted from the infectious HIV-1 plasmid pNL4-3, leading to expression of seven

of the nine HIV genes, and similar neuropathological findings in patients with HIV encephalitis (Reid et al. 2001). In HIV-1 Tg rats, nicotine exposure showed neuroprotective effects by blunting the changes in gene expression resulting from signaling pathways (Cao et al. 2013; Li et al. 2013). Major signaling pathways involved were Wnt/ β -catenin signaling and ephrin B signaling in the prefrontal cortex, cAMP-responsive element-binding protein (CREB) signaling and glutathione metabolism pathway in dorsal hippocampus, tricarboxylic acid cycle and calcium signaling in the dorsal striatum (Nesil et al. 2015). In addition, chronic nicotine treatment ameliorated the disrupted synaptic plasticity formation and calcium signaling that were mediated by the HIV gene expression in HIV-1 Tg rats (Cao et al. 2016). Furthermore, chronic nicotine treatment decreased $\alpha 3$, $\beta 3$, $\beta 4$ nAChR subunits but increased expression of $\alpha 4$ and $\alpha 6$ in the ventral tegmental area of HIV-1 Tg rats

Table 5 Combined effects of nicotine and/or tobacco smoke and HIV infection in the rat brains

Author(s)	Animal Model/ Nicotine Dose administered	Primary Findings
Rodent Model		
Li et al., <i>PLoS One</i> 2013; Cao et al., <i>PLoS One</i> 2013	HIV-1 Tg Rats Nicotine: 0.25 mg/kg, s.c. twice a day x 17 days	HIV gene expression in HIV Tg rats led to changes in many genes and signaling pathways. Nicotine restored impaired gene expression in this model.
Nesil et al., <i>Mol Brain</i> 2015	HIV-1 Tg Rats Nicotine: 0.4 mg/kg, s.c., daily x 15 days	HIV-1 proteins disrupted synaptic plasticity and chronic treatment improves synaptic plasticity.
Cao et al., <i>J Neurovirol</i> 2016	HIV-1 Tg Rats Nicotine: 0.4 mg/kg s.c., daily x 27days	Chronic nicotine treatment decreased $\alpha 3$, $\beta 3$, $\beta 4$ nAChR subunits but increased the expression of $\alpha 4$ and $\alpha 6$ in the ventral tegmental area of HIV-1 Tg rats.
Yang et al., <i>Nicotine Tob Res</i> 2017	HIV-Tg Rats Nicotine: 0.4 mg/kg s.c., daily x 27days	Nicotine significantly modulated the expression of genes in HIV-1 Tg rats that are implicated in drug addiction and novelty-seeking behavior. <i>Drd3</i> and <i>Grm2</i> in the prefrontal cortex and <i>Drd5</i> and <i>Gabar6</i> in the ventral tegmental area were significantly upregulated whereas <i>Drd5</i> was downregulated in the nucleus accumbens.
Yang et al. <i>J Neuroimmune Pharmacol</i> 0.2016	HIV-1 Tg Rats Nicotine: 0.4 mg/kg daily, s.c. x 27days	HIV-1 gene expression affected multiple immune related genes in different regions of HIV-1 Tg rats. Nicotine or HIV-1 Tg both suppressed the expression of some of these genes. However nicotine added to HIV-1 Tg rats led to interactive effect, with greater expression of IL-1 (proinflammatory), but may attenuate the excess expression of Irf7 (apoptotic) in the nucleus accumbens.
Royal W III et al., <i>J Neurovirol</i> 2018	HIV-1 Tg Rats Nicotine: 0.5 mg/kg/day, s.c., 5 days a week x 6 weeks. Cigarette Smoke: 2 cigarette (0.7 mg nicotine/cig)/day, 5 days a week x 6 weeks.	HIV-1 Tg rats showed higher expression of pro-inflammatory cytokines IL-1, IL-6, and TNF- α . Exposure of smoke shows worsen effects than nicotine alone in the HIV-1 Tg rats.
Rodent Behavioral Model		
Gonzalez-Lira et al., <i>Neurosci Lett</i> 2006	HIVgp120 intra-cerebro-ventricularly treated rats; Nicotine: 1.5 mg/kg, i.p., daily x 5 days	Nicotine prevented HIVgp120-induced equilibrium control deficit on a rotarod task.
Vigorito et al., <i>J Neurovirol</i> 2013	HIV-1 Tg Rats; Nicotine: 0.25 mg/kg s.c., daily x 17 days	Nicotine did not ameliorate the spatial leaning deficit in HIV-1Tg rats.
Nesil et al. <i>Mol Brain</i> 2015	HIV-1 Tg Rats; Nicotine: 0.4 mg/kg s.c., daily x 15 days	Nicotine enhanced working memory performance in Y-maze and contextual fear memory in the passive avoidance test in HIV-1Tg rats.

S.C.= subcutaneous injection; i.p.= intraperitoneally injection

(Adinoff 2004; Midde et al. 2011). However, nicotine also significantly enhanced the expression of host genes in HIV-1 Tg rats that were implicated in drug addiction and novelty-seeking behavior (e.g., dopamine D4 receptor gene, DRD5) (Wingo et al. 2016; Yang et al. 2017). Collectively, these pre-clinical studies suggest that nicotine is neuroprotective in the context of HIV gene expression but may increase the addictive behaviors.

Although nicotine showed anti-inflammatory effects in cell cultures and other mouse models (Nizri et al. 2009; Revathikumar et al. 2016), there is no evidence that nicotine suppresses neuroinflammation in HIV animal models. In fact, nicotine modulated the over-expression of multiple immune-related genes that were altered by HIV gene expression in the HIV-1 Tg rats (Yang et al. 2016). Furthermore, nicotine exposure increased inflammatory cytokine gene expression in HIV-1 Tg rats (Royal et al. 2018). Activation of nicotine $\alpha 7$ -nAChR activation is critical in the cholinergic anti-inflammatory pathway (Ryan et al. 2001; Wei et al. 2015); both chronic nicotine exposure (Marks et al. 1993; Jasinska et al. 2014) and HIV- gp120 led to upregulated $\alpha 7$ -nAChR in peripheral immune cells from humans (Delgado-Velez et al. 2015). However, the upregulated $\alpha 7$ -nAChR in immune cells from HIV+ women failed to induce an anti-inflammatory effect in cultured lipopolysaccharide-treated monocyte-derived macrophages (MDM), suggesting that HIV may disrupt the cholinergic-mediated anti-inflammatory response (Delgado-Velez et al. 2015). On the contrary, $\alpha 7$ -nAChR antagonist bupropion reduced inflammatory chemokines in those MDM with up-regulated $\alpha 7$ -nAChR (Delgado-Velez et al. 2015). Bupropion also improved locomotor impairment in gp120-transgenic mice (Capo-Velez et al. 2018). Furthermore, up-regulation of $\alpha 7$ -nAChR led to neuronal cell death by promoting an increase in Ca²⁺ entry (Ballester et al. 2012; Capo-Velez et al. 2018). In another mouse study, HIV gp120-induced brain amyloid-beta accumulation was found in a $\alpha 7$ -nAChR-dependent manner, but was blocked by an $\alpha 7$ -nAChR antagonist (Liu et al. 2017). In addition, although nicotine was found to improve performance on a series of learning and behavior tasks, this effect was not observed in HIV-1 Tg rats (Royal et al. 2018). Several studies also showed moderate and inconsistent effects of nicotine on cognitive performance in HIV animal models. For instance, nicotine treatment did not ameliorate the spatial learning deficit in HIV-1 Tg rats and even slightly worsened their performance (Vigorito et al. 2013). However, nicotine, but not saline, enhanced the contextual memory in HIV-1 Tg rats (Nesil et al. 2015) and prevented HIV gp120-induced motor disturbance when treated simultaneously in rats (Gonzalez-Lira et al. 2006). Furthermore, in these experiments (Vigorito et al. 2013; Nesil et al. 2015), nicotine did not enhance the performance in wild-type rats. Overall, the effects of nicotine administration on neuroinflammation and cognitive function in the HIV animal models remain unclear.

Consistent with the absence of anti-inflammatory effects of nicotine in HIV animal models, tobacco smoke promoted

inflammation in the HIV-1 Tg rat model and in PWH (Table 6). In HIV-1 Tg rats, exposure to regular cigarette smoke or nicotine-free cigarette smoke induced higher pro-inflammatory cytokines TNF- α , IL-1, and IL-6 than nicotine alone in the brain lysates (Royal et al. 2018). Similarly, among individuals with HIV infection, tobacco smokers showed higher serum pro-inflammatory chemokines, microglobulin, cyclophilin A, and RANTES, which indicated more systemic immune activation than HIV + non-smokers (Steel et al. 2018). Since tobacco smoke may aggravate neuroinflammation through interrupted BBB integrity (Mazzone et al. 2010) and increased oxidative stress (Ghosh et al. 2009; Ande et al. 2013; Louboutin and Strayer 2014), these mechanisms may be even more evident in HIV+ smokers. However, no data are available regarding the neuroinflammatory cytokine or chemokine levels in relation to BBB integrity or oxidative stress in HIV + tobacco smokers.

Several clinical studies evaluated cognitive function in HIV+ individuals with or without tobacco smoking and found conflicting results. For example, several studies of PWH reported tobacco smoking was associated with worse working memory (Bryant et al. 2013; Harrison et al. 2017), learning (Bryant et al. 2013; Monnig et al. 2016), processing speed (Bryant et al. 2013; Monnig et al. 2016; Harrison et al. 2017), and executive function (Bryant et al. 2013), as well as larger intra-individual variability on response time during the Continuous Performance Task (Harrison et al. 2017), while others reported no effect of tobacco smoking on cognitive decline. (Akhtar-Khaleel et al. 2017; Tsimas et al. 2018). A small study even found that tobacco smoking might have beneficial effects on cognition in HIV+ women compared with that in HIV+ men (Wojna et al. 2007; Bryant et al. 2013). However, these previous studies were not designed to evaluate the possible interactive or additive effects between HIV infection and tobacco smoking on cognition (Wojna et al. 2007; Bryant et al. 2013; Monnig et al. 2016; Tsimas et al. 2018), since they mixed the current smokers with former smokers (Wojna et al. 2007; Tsimas et al. 2018), and lacked seronegative smoker controls or detailed smoking patterns (Akhtar-Khaleel et al. 2017). A structural MRI study found smaller cortical gray matter volumes and poorer cognitive function in the smoking, compared to non-smoking, HIV-seropositive heavy drinkers (Durazzo et al. 2007), suggesting deleterious additive effects of HIV infection and smoking in heavy drinkers on the brain. Another study that also used a 2 \times 2 designed to evaluate the independent and combined or interactive effects of tobacco smoking and HIV-serostatus found additive adverse effects on impulsivity, neurocognitive functions and psychopathological symptoms, with HIV+ smokers having the worst cognitive performance and most prevalent psychopathological symptoms among all participant groups (Chang et al. 2017). Furthermore, these HIV+ smokers showed highest brain diffusivity on DTI that indicated additive or synergistic effects on neuroinflammation and disrupted white matter integrity

Table 6 Neuroimaging or behavioral studies on the combined effects of tobacco smoking and HIV infection

Author Journal- Year	Participant Characteristics (age sex, HIV diseasae)	Smoking pattern	Methods / Assessments	Findings
Durazzo et al. <i>Alcohol</i> .2007	27 HIV + S + Alcohol: 44 ± 5 years, 89% men, 41% on HAART, 35% viral suppressed; 17 HIV + Alcohol: 44 ± 5 years, 88% men, 82% on HAART, 35% virally suppressed); 27 SN: 43 ± 9 years; 82% men	Smokers: smoking nearly daily for 6 months prior to the study.	Structural MRI at 1.5 T; Customized ROIs (frontal, temporal, parietal, and occipital), lateral ventricles, thalamus, caudate, lenticular nuclei, brainstem, and cerebellum; NPTs: Executive skills, fine motor skills, Learning and memory, working memory, visuospatial, postural stability	• HIV-seropositive smokers with heavy drinking had poorer learning, memory and execution, as well as smaller cortical volumes compared with non-smoking seropositive heavy drinkers.
Changet al. <i>J Neuroimmune Pharmacol</i> 2017	22 HIV + S: 46 ± 11 years, 91% men, HIV duration = 19 ± 9 year, 91% viral suppressed, 91% on cART; 14 with HAND); 25 HIV: 47 ± 12 years, 96% men, HIV duration = 15 ± 21 year, 76% viral suppressed, 88% on cART; 8 with HAND); 26 SN + S: 44 ± 9 years, 92% men; 9 with HAND-Equivalent 27 SN: 44 ± 11, 92% men, 6 with HAND-Equivalent	SN + S: 18 ± 9 cigarettes/day, 22.3 pack-years; FTND = 4.8 ± 2.4 HIV + S: 18 ± 12 cigarettes/day; 22.6 pack--years; FTND = 3.4 ± 2.2	Psychopathological symptoms with Symptom Check List (SCL-90); NPTs in 7 domains (processing speed, learning, memory, verbal fluency, executive function, attention, and fine motor function), Iowa Gambling Test, Wisconsin Card Sorting Test, Barrett Impulsivity Scale	• HIV and tobacco smoking showed additive adverse effects in all cognitive domains. impulsivity, and all psychopathological symptoms, especially depressive symptoms
Akhtar-Khaleel et al., <i>J Neurovirol.</i> 2017	53 HIV + S; 100 HIV + FS; 65 HIV; 72 SN + S; 172 SN + FS; 120 SN; all at 50 years old, all men. MACS Cohort Study	Smoking information not available	NPTs: Trail Making A, Trail Making B, and Symbol Digit Modalities	• Baseline smoking status did not correlate with cognition decline 5 years later in any participant group.
Liang et al. <i>J Neuroimmune Pharmacol</i> 2018	24 HIV + S: 45 ± 2 years; 92% men, 11 ± 2 years HIV duration, 96% on cART 25 HIV: 47 ± 2 years; 100% men, 16 ± 4 years HIV duration; 92% on cART; 26 SN + S: 44 ± 2 years, 92% men); 25 SN: 44 ± 2 years, 88% men	SN + S: 18 (5–40) cigarettes/ day; 20.1 pack--years HIV + S: 16 (3–40) cigarettes/ day 22.8 pack--years	DTI (12 directions) at 3T; NPTs in 7 domains (Processing speed, learning, memory, verbal fluency, executive function, attention, and fine motor function)	• Additive adverse effects of HIV infection and tobacco smoking on both cognition and on the white matter integrity.

cART = combination antiretroviral therapy; FTND = Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence; HIV + S = seropositive smokers; HIV + FS = seropositive former smokers; HIV = seropositive non-smokers; SN + S = seronegative smokers; SN + FS = seronegative former smokers; SN = seronegative non-smokers; DTI = diffusion tensor imaging; NPTs = neuropsychological tests

compared to either HIV-seronegative smokers or HIV+ non-smokers, and these white matter microstructure abnormalities predicted poorer verbal fluency, attention and psychomotor speed only in HIV+ smokers (Liang et al. 2018).

Comparing Pre-clinical and Clinical Research Regarding the Interactive or Combined Effects of Nicotine/smoking and HIV on the Brain (Fig. 3; Table 7)

1 **HIV viral proteins in preclinical studies of HIV versus HIV infection in clinical studies.** As can be seen in Table 7, preclinical studies typically evaluated a single HIV viral protein to delineate the neurotoxic effects, which are necessary to elucidate the mechanism(s) or

neurotoxicity involved with each of these viral proteins. However, since humans infected with HIV are exposed to the virus with all the viral neurotoxic proteins, as well as the hosts' neuroinflammatory responses to the infection for many years, the chronicity of the infection with the combined neurotoxic exposure is particularly difficult to model from preclinical studies.

2 **Timing of HIV viral protein exposure differs in preclinical versus clinical studies:** HIV-1 transgenic (HIV-1 Tg) rodent model was widely used in recent years to study how HIV-1-infection might impact the brain or other organs, as in the context of nicotine/tobacco exposure. Some investigators posited that since they have ongoing low levels of HIV expression of the viral proteins gp120 and Tat, that the resultant pathology mimics PWH who are taking cART with only plasma viral suppression but have

Table 7 Preclinical versus clinical studies of HIV and nicotine or tobacco use

Points to Consider	Preclinical Studies	Clinical Studies
HIV viral proteins	HIV viral proteins (Tat, gp120, Nef) were always evaluated individually <i>in vitro</i> or <i>in vivo</i>	Persons with HIV infection (PWH) were exposed to all the HIV neurotoxic viral proteins throughout their infection.
Timing of HIV protein exposure	7 of 9 viral genes are expressed in HIV-1 Tg rats throughout their lifespan	HIV infection is typically sexually transmitted and hence occurs after puberty; few patients with vertical transmission have the infection since birth
Nicotine vs. tobacco smoke	Typically used nicotine administration (s.c., i.p. or oral); only one study used tobacco smoke	Tobacco smoke is inhaled and absorbed through the lungs; tobacco cigarettes contains nicotine plus many other substances that may also be neurotoxic
Other drugs used concurrently	Rarely if ever would preclinical studies assess more than one drug in the model	Polysubstance use is common amongst PWH, especially with cannabis, alcohol and other stimulants
Antiretroviral medications	None of the models reviewed used antiretroviral medications	Almost all clinical studies evaluated PWH who were maintained on cART
Nicotine's cognitive enhancing or anti-depressive effects	Very few studies evaluated cognitive enhancing effects of nicotine in preclinical models	Clinical studies of nicotine's cognitive enhancing or anti-depressive effects have not passed Phase III, and none of the studies were done in PWH

ongoing residual viruses (Han et al. 2018). As described above, these HIV-1 Tg rats express HIV neurotoxic proteins throughout their lifespan including the critical periods of brain development. Therefore, it is perhaps a good model for studying the effects of vertical transmission of HIV during birth from their mothers, or to study the effects of HIV on adolescent brain development (Moran et al. 2012). However, this model can be used to show how an

addictive substance such as nicotine or tobacco smoke might further impact the HIV-infected brain. In our previous study of HIV + smokers, the participants had been infected with HIV on average for about 10 years, but had smoked tobacco cigarettes daily for approximately 26 years (Chang et al. 2017). Therefore, animal models to emulate the human condition should use inducible models, such as the gp120 mice that would express

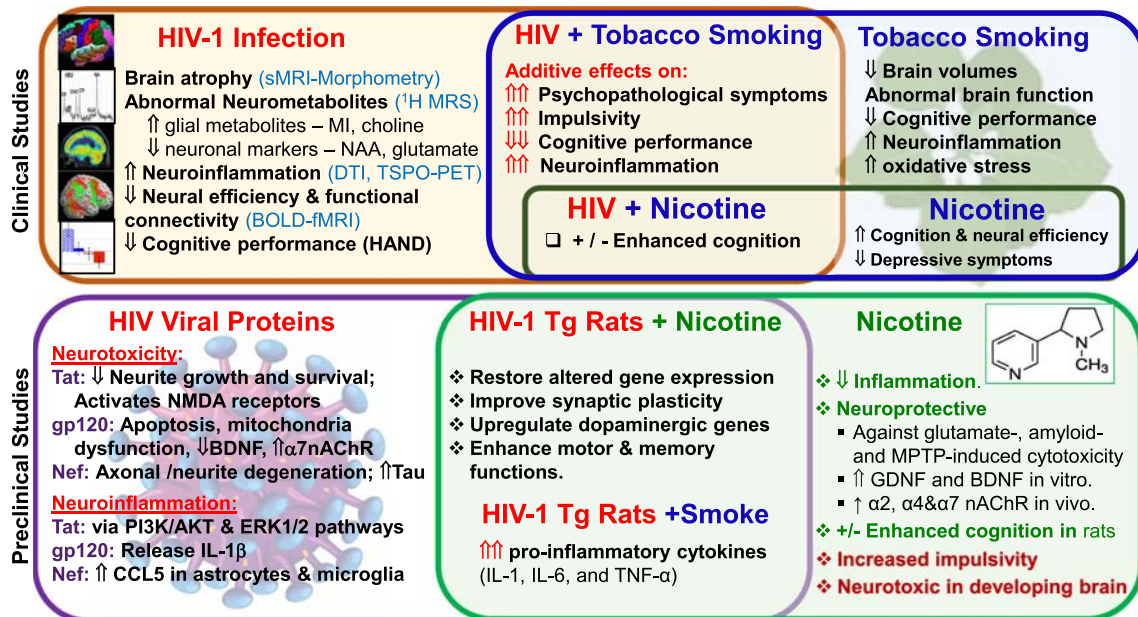


Fig. 3 Independent and combined effects of HIV and tobacco/nicotine. **Left top and bottom panels:** Both clinical studies of HIV infected persons and preclinical studies using viral proteins *in vitro* or *in vivo* in animal models showed HIV led to neurotoxicity and neuroinflammation. **Right top and bottom panels:** While clinical studies of tobacco smoking consistently showed deleterious effects of smoking, clinical and preclinical studies that used nicotine showed mild cognitive

enhancement, neuroprotective and possibly anti-inflammatory effects. In the developing brain, however, nicotine is neurotoxic. **Middle overlapping panels:** Clinical studies of persons with HIV who were smokers typically showed additive deleterious effects of HIV and tobacco smoking. However, in the preclinical studies, when nicotine was administered to the HIV-1 Tg rats, the neurotoxic effects of HIV were attenuated, but tobacco smoke worsened the inflammatory cascade

gp120 (Toggas et al. 1994), or HIV-1 Tat transgenic mice (iTat mice) that would express brain-specific Tat protein, only when the animals are treated with doxycycline (Kim et al. 2003; Langford et al. 2018). The iTat mice were used to evaluate the combined or deleterious effects of opiates and cocaine use behavior in PWH, with doxycycline fed simultaneously (Hauser et al. 2009; Fitting et al. 2010) or prior to (Fitting et al. 2012; Paris et al. 2014; Mediouni et al. 2015) the study drug. However, in the human studies, the typical PWH tobacco smokers had been smoking for more than two decades. Therefore, to more accurately model the human condition, future studies should start with a drug self-administration model, prior to exposure of the HIV proteins, after the brain is in a nicotine-dependent or an “addicted” state. Many PWH also started smoking during their adolescent years when the brain is still developing and may be more vulnerable to the toxic or inflammatory effects of tobacco smoking. The vulnerability of the developing brain to neurotoxic substances was also demonstrated in those who smoked cannabis at an earlier age (Hurd et al. 2019). Hence, more studies are needed to evaluate the effects of adolescent tobacco/nicotine use before the additional impact of HIV in the adult brain.

3 Nicotine administration versus tobacco smoking:

Almost all preclinical *in vitro* or animal model studies used nicotine administration as a model to evaluate the combined effects of HIV and nicotine dependence (i.e., tobacco smoking). In addition, not all nicotine administration evaluated the “chronic” model, such as those that administered the nicotine daily for almost a month. The dosages of nicotine used across the different animal studies also varied widely and should be tested in a systematic manner. As discussed above, the typical preclinical studies found nicotine to have neuroprotective effects, but tobacco smoke led to activation of proinflammatory cascades. Therefore, using tobacco smoke to develop the drug self-administration and addictive model, and subsequently induce the expression of HIV viral protein in the setting of an addicted brain, would be the best approach to evaluate the additional effects of HIV in the brains of chronic tobacco smokers.

4 Nicotine or tobacco in preclinical studies versus polysubstance use in clinical studies:

Poly-substance use is common amongst PWH, and as reviewed above, marijuana and alcohol are commonly co-used in tobacco smokers and in PWH. These additional substances co-used are additional challenges to both preclinical and clinical research when the goal is to unravel or delineate the reciprocal effects of HIV neurotoxicity or neuroinflammation in the nicotine/tobacco-addicted brain. However, no preclinical study evaluated the combined effects of tobacco with these other commonly co-used substances, with or without HIV.

- 5 Additional interactive effects of antiretroviral medications:** Since almost all clinical studies of PWH involved those who are taking antiretroviral medications, which can lead to additional interactive effects with HIV and nicotine/tobacco on brain pathology. These complicated interactions are reviewed in this same Special Issue (Ghura et al. 2019). For instance, nicotine might increase BBB penetration, and therefore increase the neurotoxicity of HIV medications such as NRTIs (Ernst et al. 2010) or HIV protease inhibitors (Manda et al. 2010). Furthermore, HIV infection can enhance nicotine metabolism (Earla et al. 2014; Ashare et al. 2019), interrupt dopaminergic function (Gaskill et al. 2017) and induce reward deficit (Kesby et al. 2016); all of these processes may worsen the tobacco smoking behaviors (Manda et al. 2010). In particular, striatal dysfunction might further increase the potential and severity of substances abuse or addiction, both for nicotine and other substances (Volkow et al. 2017). Whether chronic nicotine/tobacco exposure augment striatal dopaminergic dysfunction in PWH is unclear. A PET study that measured D2 receptors, using [C11]-raclopride, in HIV + patients with or without cocaine use, did find downregulation of the D2 receptors in those who also smoked tobacco cigarettes (Chang et al. 2008a).
- 6 Nicotine’s cognitive enhancing effects:** To study the nicotine-HIV interaction and clarify the role of nicotine in the context of HIV infection is important since nicotine replacement treatment (NRT) is the main pharmacological treatment for smoking cessation and considered the first line of treatment by providers (Shahrir et al. 2020). Other than NRT, bupropion and varenicline are the second and third most common medications for smoking cessation (Shahrir et al. 2020). However, the long-term effects of these three medications on neuroHIV are unknown. While some suggested nicotine might be useful to treat HAND by lessening the neuroinflammation in people with HIV (Han et al. 2018), others are less optimistic about this treatment approach (Capo-Velez et al. 2018). The few pre-clinical studies that used the schizophrenia or stress rodent models found nicotine had some cognitive enhancing effects but also led to increased impulsivity. The clinical studies that evaluated the cognitive effects of nicotine were also unclear since there were speed-accuracy trade off in the performance. No clinical study was conducted to evaluate the effects of nicotine in PWH. Therefore, more studies are needed to understand the complex interactive effects between HIV and nicotine/tobacco smoking both in the preclinical conditions, as well as in PWH. Furthermore, dopamine increased HIV replication in human macrophages via activation of dopamine receptors (Gaskill et al. 2014), and it is not known whether nicotine /tobacco smoking also contributed to the high viral

replication observed in HIV + smokers (Ande et al. 2015; Gamarel et al. 2018). Therefore, more preclinical studies are needed to elucidate the impact of chronic nicotine/tobacco on dopamine-mediated neuroinflammation and the cognitive outcomes in HIV transgenic models.

Some Gaps in Knowledge and Future Directions

Preclinical studies consistently demonstrated neuroprotective and anti-inflammatory effects of nicotine, and neurotoxic and neuroinflammatory effects of HIV viral proteins in cell cultures or animal models. These studies are useful for elucidating the individual contributions or mechanisms of nicotine or each of the viral proteins (gp 120, Tat or Nef), and how each component impacted the brain at the neuronal, receptor, specific glial cell responses or gene-expression level. However, the cell culture and the majority of the animal models did not evaluate the effects of tobacco smoking that occur in human chronic tobacco smokers. The *in vitro* studies also did not evaluate the concurrent direct and indirect effects of HIV infection on the brain, which would be exposed to all neurotoxic components of the virus and impacted by the hosts' neuroinflammatory responses from the CNS astroglia and microglia. With the *in vivo* models, HIV-1 Tg rats or the SIV models provided better simulations of the human conditions of either HIV infection or tobacco smoking; however, except for one study (Royal et al. 2018), these studies used nicotine administration rather than tobacco smoke. Therefore, these studies typically found that nicotine restored the altered gene expression, improved synaptic plasticity, restored motor deficits and enhanced memory function in HIV animal models (Fig. 3). In contrast, clinical studies showed clear evidence that chronic tobacco smoking and HIV-infection led to additive effects on cognitive deficits, more prevalent psychopathological symptoms, greater impulsivity, as well as smaller brain volumes and greater white matter microstructural abnormalities that reflected greater neuroinflammation, compared with HIV+ non-smokers. However, whether the greater brain functional and structural abnormalities are due to greater nicotine-mediated dopamine release (Brody et al. 2004b), down-regulated dopaminergic function, or neuroinflammation will need to be evaluated further. Although inflammatory markers in the CSF may reflect neuroinflammation, ¹H-MRS and PET with TPSSO tracers that assess microglia activation can evaluate regional or global neuroinflammation in the brains of PWH or those with combined HIV and tobacco smoking. Other mechanisms that might lead to cognitive deficits in HIV+ smokers are the potential impacts of chronic tobacco/nicotine exposure and HIV infection on the cholinergic system, which has been studied in animal models but not in humans. Moreover,

longitudinal studies are also necessary to monitor and assess the causation between chronic tobacco smoking/nicotine exposure and greater brain injury and higher risk of HAND that are observed in HIV infected tobacco smokers versus non-smokers. Such studies may help guide future preventive approaches or novel therapeutic treatments for HAND.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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