

The Interaction of Ammonium, Sulfonium, and Sulfide Analogues of Metoclopramide with the Dopamine D₂ Receptor

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Received May 21, 1993*

A series of permanently charged ammonium and sulfonium analogues of metoclopramide as well as a permanently uncharged sulfide analogue were synthesized and evaluated for their ability to inhibit apomorphine-induced responses on mouse striatal slices. Three of the four permanently charged analogues were found to inhibit apomorphine's effects, although at higher concentrations than either metoclopramide or its dimethyl analogue. In contrast, the sulfide analogue was inactive at concentrations up to 100 μ M. These findings are consistent with earlier studies of chlorpromazine and sulpiride analogues and provide further evidence that dopamine antagonists bind in their charged molecular forms to anionic sites on the D₂ receptor. Further, the results of this study in conjunction with those of our earlier sulpiride study would seem to indicate that differences in the biological profiles of metoclopramide, a type 1 benzamide useful as a gastric prokinetic agent, and sulpiride, a type 2 benzamide useful for its antipsychotic effects, are not due to any appreciable differences in the binding of the basic nitrogen atom of these molecules.

Substituted o-methoxybenzamides (orthopramides) possess a wide variety of pharmacological actions based at least in part upon their ability to act as dopamine D₂ receptor antagonists. These agents display neuroleptic, antidyskinetic, antiemetic, antimanic, gut motility, and antiulcer effects.¹⁻⁴ Tremendous structural variability is seen within this class of agents; however the substituted o-methoxybenzamides can be represented by one of the two general structures (1A or 1B) shown in Chart I.⁵ Benzene is the most common aromatic ring, and the basic side-chain nitrogen is separated from the benzamide nitrogen by either two or three carbon atoms. Hadley has classified the substituted benzamides into four structural types based on the structures of their side chains. Type 1 benzamides, exemplified by metoclopramide (2), have an acyclic side chain and a two-carbon spacing between the benzamide and tertiary nitrogen atoms; type 2 benzamides, exemplified by sulpiride (3) and raclopride (4), contain a 2-pyrrolidinylmethyl side chain; type 3 agents, exemplified by emonapride (5), contain a 3-pyrrolidinyl side chain; and type 4 agents, exemplified by cisapride (6), contain a 4-piperidyl side chain.⁵

Most of the current research involving the benzamides is centered around the development of either atypical neuroleptic agents⁶⁻¹⁰ or gastric prokinetic agents.^{11,12} Benzamides containing either a 2-pyrrolidinylmethyl or a 3-pyrrolidinyl side chain are potent dopamine D₂ receptor antagonists with a low tendency to produce extrapyramidal side effects. As a result, raclopride and several other type 2 and type 3 benzamides are currently undergoing clinical evaluation as atypical antipsychotic agents.^{13,14} In contrast, metoclopramide and cisapride are used to stimulate gastrointestinal motility and are useful in the treatment of a number of GI disorders.¹⁵ The mechanism of action

of these latter drugs is not completely understood but is thought to involve serotonin-mediated release of acetylcholine in the gut.^{11,15} Unlike raclopride and other related compounds, the therapeutic effects of metoclopramide are not related to its blockade of dopamine D₂ receptors.^{11,16} In fact, metoclopramide's antagonism of D₂ receptors is responsible for extrapyramidal side effects and thus limits its clinical utility.¹¹

Recent studies have attempted to identify those structural features of the substituted benzamides which either improve,^{7-10,17} in the case of pyrrolidine-containing antipsychotic agents, or abolish,^{11,12} in the case of gastric prokinetic agents, binding to the dopamine D₂ receptor. A common structural feature of the benzamides as well as all dopamine antagonists is a basic nitrogen atom. At physiological pH, an equilibrium between a charged ammonium ion and an uncharged amine exists for these compounds. Over the past several years, our laboratory has been interested in determining which of these two molecular species is most important for binding to the dopamine receptor. In a recent study,¹⁸ permanently charged pyrrolidinium (7, Chart II) and tetrahydrothiophenium (8) analogues of sulpiride were evaluated and were found to retain the ability to both bind and act as antagonists at the dopamine D₂ receptor. In contrast, a permanently uncharged tetrahydrothiophene (9) analogue was inactive at concentrations up to 100 μ M. The results of this study were consistent with the results of an earlier study on permanently charged analogues of chlorpromazine¹⁹ and provided further evidence that dopamine antagonists bind in their charged molecular forms to anionic sites on the dopamine D₂ receptor.

While the pharmacological differences between the various structural subtypes of benzamides may be due to differences in distribution, toxicity, or a variety of binding factors, we were interested in determining if type 1 and type 2 benzamides have similar or dissimilar requirements for the binding of the basic nitrogen atom. In the present study, we extended our previous work to the synthesis

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• Abstract published in *Advance ACS Abstracts*, September 15, 1993.

Chart I. Structural Subtypes of Benzamides

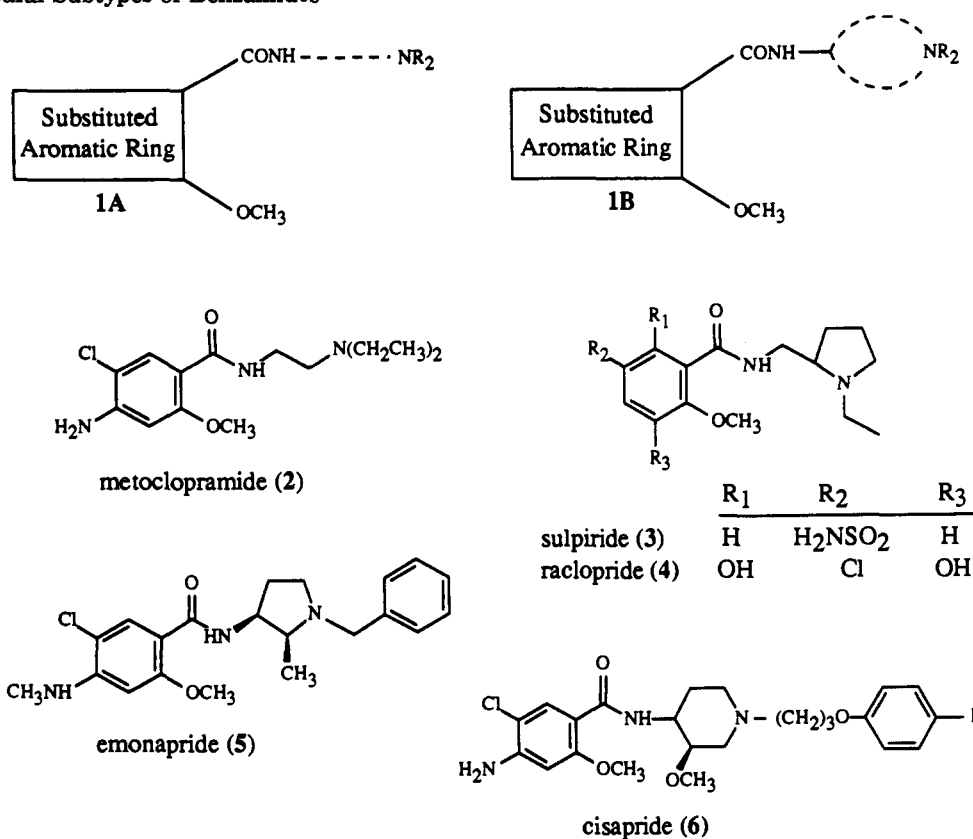
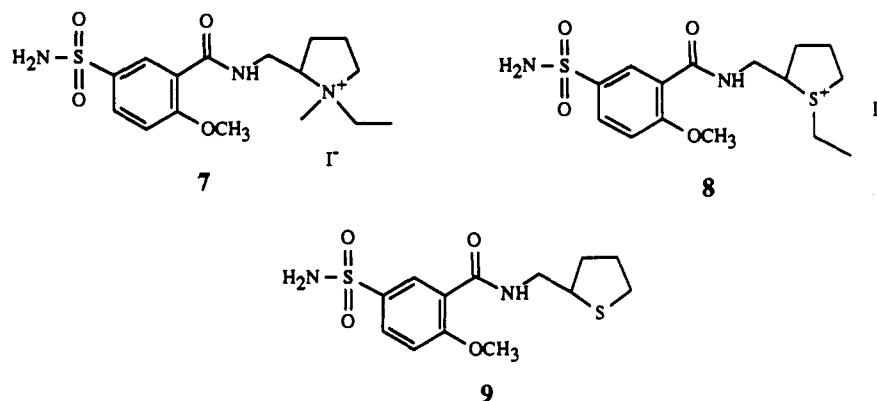


Chart II. Permanently Charged and Uncharged Sulpiride Analogues

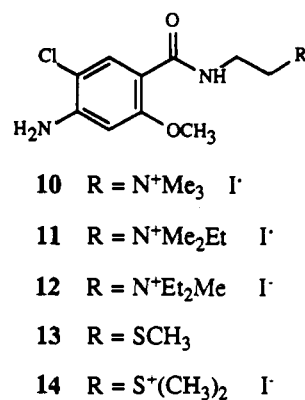


and *in vitro* evaluation of a series of ammonium (10–12), sulfide (13), and sulfonium (14) analogues of metoclopramide. The activities of these compounds were compared to those of the analogous sulpiride analogues to determine if type 1 benzamides, like type 2 benzamides, bind in their charged molecular forms to anionic sites on the dopamine D₂ receptor.

Chemistry

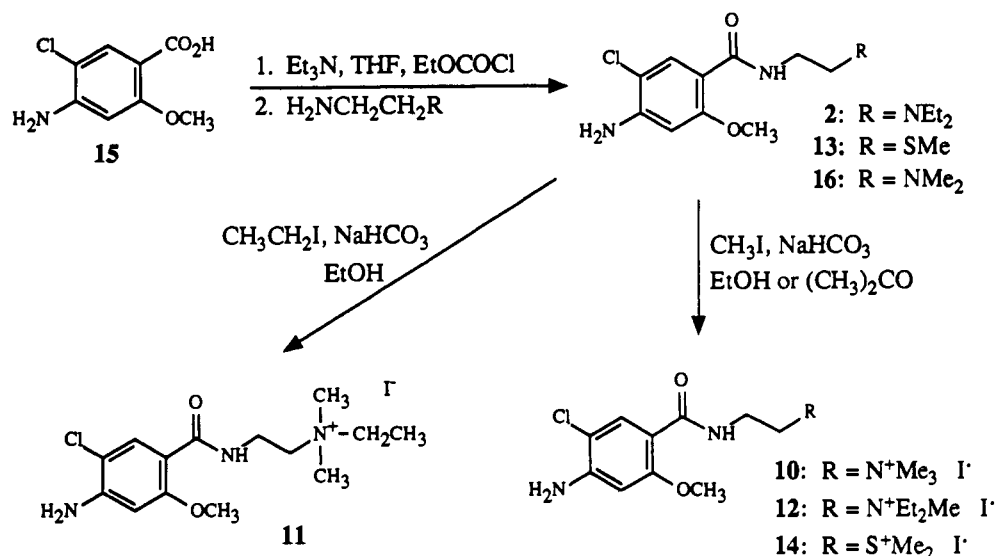
The syntheses of the target compounds were completed in a straightforward manner and are shown in Scheme I. Commercially available 4-amino-5-chloro-2-methoxybenzoic acid (15) was activated with ethyl chloroformate,²⁰ and the resulting adduct was reacted *in situ* with the appropriately substituted ethylamine. Metoclopramide (2) and its dimethyl analogue (16) were prepared using *N,N*-diethylethylenediamine and *N,N*-dimethylethylenediamine, respectively, while the methyl sulfide analogue was acquired using *S*-methyl-2-aminoethanethiol. This

Chart III. Target Compounds



latter compound was synthesized according to the procedure of Burfield *et al.*²¹ The quaternary ammonium compounds (10–12) were then obtained by reacting the appropriate amine (2 or 16) with NaHCO₃ and either

Scheme I



methyl or ethyl iodide. The reaction of metoclopramide with ethyl iodide consistently produced extremely poor yields of the desired compound, despite the use of a variety of reaction conditions. For this reason, the triethylammonium analogue is not included in this study. Finally, reaction of 13 with methyl iodide produced the sulfonium salt, 14.

Biological Results and Discussion

Metoclopramide (2), its dimethyl analogue (16), and each of the five target compounds (10–14) were evaluated for their ability to antagonize apomorphine's effect on potassium-evoked [³H]acetylcholine release. Apomorphine, a dopamine agonist, inhibits the potassium-induced release of acetylcholine from rat striatal slices by stimulating D₂ receptors. Our previous studies with chlorpromazine¹⁸ and sulpiride¹⁹ have demonstrated a good correlation between this functional assay and the ability of a compound to displace [³H]spiperone from dopamine D₂ receptor binding sites. The ED₅₀ values for apomorphine in the absence and presence of the various antagonists as well as the calculated antagonist equilibrium dissociation constants (*K_B* values) for all compounds are summarized in Table I. The ED₅₀ values for apomorphine were relatively consistent within an experiment but varied among experiments. Consequently, for each experiment, the effects of apomorphine in the absence of antagonist was determined concurrently with the effects of apomorphine in the presence of antagonist. Thus, a separate apomorphine control group is presented for each apomorphine-antagonist group.

As expected, metoclopramide (2) and its dimethyl analogue (16) were found to antagonize the actions of apomorphine at the D₂ receptor. Metoclopramide, with a calculated *K_B* of 0.09 μM, was twice as potent as its dimethyl analogue. Three of the four permanently charged analogues—the trimethylammonium salt 10, the diethylethylammonium salt 11, and the dimethylsulfonium salt 14—were also found to inhibit apomorphine's effects, although at higher concentrations (from 12 to 57 times) than either metoclopramide or 16. In contrast, the diethylmethylammonium salt 12 and the permanently uncharged sulfide analogue 13 were inactive at concentrations up to 100 μM. With the exception of compound 12, these results are consistent with those of our earlier

Table I. The Effect of Various Metoclopramide Analogues on Agonist-Induced Inhibition of the K⁺-Evoked Release of [³H]Acetylcholine from Striatal Slices

compd		ED ₅₀ (μM) (95% C.I.) ^a	<i>K_B</i> (μM)
2	Apo ^b	0.047 (0.036–0.063)	0.09
	Apo + 2 (1 μM)	0.576 (0.23–1.5)	
10	Apo	0.045 (0.025–0.083)	5.1
	Apo + 10 (30 μM)	0.310 (0.212–0.47)	
11	Apo	0.069 (0.048–0.107)	3.9
	Apo + 11 (100 μM)	1.85 (1.31–2.69)	
12	Apo	0.092 (0.087–0.102)	NS ^c
	Apo + 12 (100 μM)	0.090 (0.063–0.134)	
13 ^d	Apo	0.096 (0.036–0.269)	NS ^c
	Apo + 13 (100 μM)	0.112 (0.052–0.248)	
14	Apo	0.039 (0.026–0.056)	2.1
	Apo + 14 (30 μM)	0.603 (0.322–1.129)	
16	Apo	0.032 (0.008–2.04)	0.18
	Apo + 16 (10 μM)	1.824 (0.69–4.98)	

^a 95% confidence intervals for the ED₅₀ values for apomorphine in the absence and presence of antagonist. These values were used to determine statistically significant antagonism. ^b Apo = Apomorphine. ^c No statistically significant antagonism observed. ^d Compound 13 was dissolved in a special event (3 parts PEG 400, 1 part 95% ethanol, and 1 part DMSO). The final concentration of the solvent in the medium was 0.5%. The apomorphine control group for this experiment also contained 0.5% of the solvent.

studies with chlorpromazine¹⁸ and sulpiride.¹⁹ In all of our studies, permanently charged ammonium and sulfonium salts retained the ability to act as dopamine antagonists, while permanently uncharged sulfide analogues were inactive. The lower potency of 10, 11, and 14 as compared to metoclopramide and 16 is also consistent with our earlier findings and may be due to the inability of these permanently charged compound to form a reinforced ionic bond with an anionic site on the dopamine D₂ receptor.¹⁹

Metoclopramide, a tertiary amine, exists in solution as an equilibrium mixture of charged ammonium and uncharged amine species. As a result, it is difficult to establish which of these two molecular species is actually responsible for its dopamine antagonist activity. There is not universal agreement as to which molecular species, charged or uncharged, is most important for the binding of dopamine antagonists to the dopamine receptor,^{3,22–24} however, the results of this study provide further evidence that dopamine antagonists bind in their charged molecular forms to anionic sites on the D₂ receptor. In view of this, the inactivity of the diethylmethylammonium salt (12) was

unexpected and is puzzling. At present, we do not have a good explanation for this discrepancy in our theory. It is possible that the inactivity of 12 is due to steric factors and that a critical volume surrounding the charged nitrogen has been exceeded. This supposition is however somewhat weakened by the facts that metoclopramide is twice as active as its dimethyl analogue and that the dimethyl-ethylammonium salt (11) is slightly more potent than the trimethylammonium salt (10). We are currently investigating the inactivity of this compound.

Notwithstanding the inactivity of 12, the results of this study in conjunction with those of our earlier sulpiride study¹⁹ would seem to indicate that metoclopramide, a type 1 benzamide useful as a gastric prokinetic agent, and sulpiride, a type 2 benzamide useful for its antipsychotic effects, both require a basic nitrogen atom in its charged molecular form for binding to D₂ receptor. Thus, differences in their biological profiles do not appear to be due to any appreciable differences in the binding of the basic nitrogen atom.

Experimental Section

Melting points were determined in capillary tubes on a Thomas-Hoover apparatus and are uncorrected. ¹H NMR spectra were recorded on an IBM NR/250 FT NMR (250 MHz). Chemical shifts are expressed in ppm (δ) downfield from the internal standard tetramethylsilane (TMS). Elemental analyses were performed by Galbraith Laboratories, Inc., Knoxville, TN and were within ±0.4% of calculated values. IR spectra were recorded either on a Perkin-Elmer 1430 infrared spectrometer or Perkin-Elmer 1760X FT-IR spectrometer as KBr pellets. Mass spectra were obtained with a Kratos MS 25RFA double focusing mass spectrometer. All chemicals were obtained from Aldrich Chemical Co. and were used without purification.

General Procedure for the Synthesis of Compounds 2, 13, and 16. 4-Amino-5-chloro-2-methoxybenzoic acid (2.01 g, 10 mmol) was suspended in THF (35 mL), and triethylamine (1.42 mL, 10 mmol) was added. The mixture was cooled to 0 °C and ethyl chloroformate (0.96 mL, 10 mmol) was added slowly. The whole mixture was stirred at 0 °C for 1 h and then filtered. The filtrate was transferred to a 100-mL, round-bottomed flask, and the appropriate amine (10 mmol) was added. The resulting solution was stirred at room temperature for 3 h. The solvent was then removed, and the untreated residue was directly recrystallized from warm absolute ethanol.

4-Amino-5-chloro-*N*-[(diethylamino)ethyl]-2-methoxybenzamide (Metoclopramide, 2). *N,N*-Diethylethylenediamine was added to the filtrate. Recrystallization gave an off-white crystalline solid (2.17 g, 73%): mp 144–146 °C; ¹H NMR (250 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.21 (br, 1H, NH), 8.12 (s, 1H, C₆-ArH), 6.29 (s, 1H, C₃-ArH), 4.38 (s, 2H, NH₂), 3.88 (s, 3H, OCH₃) 3.48 (m, 2H, NHCH₂) 2.61 (t, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 2H, NHCH₂CH₂N), 2.56 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 4H, NCH₂CH₃) 1.04 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 6H, NCH₂CH₃); IR (KBr, cm⁻¹) 3410, 3330, 3225 (NH and NH₂), 1635 (C=O); mass spectrum (FAB); 300 (M⁺), 184, 99 (base), 87, 58. Anal. (C₁₄H₂₂ClN₃O₂) C, H, N.

***N*-[(2-Methylthio)ethyl]-4-amino-5-chloro-2-methoxybenzamide (13).** *S*-Methyl-2-aminoethanethiol²¹ (0.91 mL, 10 mmol) was added to the filtrate. After removal of the solvent, 10 mL of CHCl₃ was added to the residue, and the solution was kept at 0 °C overnight. The solution was filtered, and the precipitate was dissolved in warm methanol. The suspended solid was filtered out and the methanol was removed. The residue was recrystallized from warm ethanol to provide off-white, needle-like crystals (1.31 g, 48%): mp 118–120 °C; ¹H NMR (250 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.12 (s, 1H, C₆-ArH), 6.30 (s, 1H, C₃-ArH), 4.37 (s, 2H, NH₂), 3.92 (s, 3H, OCH₃) 3.65 (q, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 2H, NHCH₂), 2.73 (t, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 2H, SCH₂), 2.15 (s, 3H, SCH₃); IR (KBr, cm⁻¹) 3440, 3380, 3300, 3220 (NH and NH₂), 1640 (C=O); mass spectrum (FAB); 274, 201, 184 (base). Anal. (C₁₁H₁₅ClN₂O₂S) C, H, N.

4-Amino-5-chloro-*N*-[(dimethylamino)ethyl]-2-methoxybenzamide (6). *N,N*-Dimethylethylenediamine was added to

the filtrate. Recrystallization gave off-white crystals (1.72 g, 63%): mp 164–166 °C; ¹H NMR (250 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.09 (s, 2H, NH and C₆-ArH), 6.27 (s, 1H, C₃-ArH), 4.42 (s, 2H, NH₂), 3.86 (s, 3H, OCH₃), 3.50 (m, 2H, NHCH₂), 2.49 (t, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 2H, NHCH₂CH₂N), 2.28 (s, 6H, NCH₃); IR (KBr, cm⁻¹) 3480, 3360, 3318, 3220 (NH and NH₂), 1635 (C=O); mass spectrum (FAB); 272 (M⁺), 201, 184, 71, 58 (base). Anal. (C₁₂H₁₈ClN₃O₂) C, H, N.

General Procedure for the Synthesis of Trialkylammonium Iodides (10–12). 4-Amino-5-chloro-*N*-[(diethylamino)ethyl]-2-methoxybenzamide (10 mmol) was dissolved in absolute ethanol (50 mL) by gently heating the mixture. The solution was then allowed to cool to room temperature, and NaHCO₃ (1.83 g, 20 mmol) was added. The mixture was stirred for a few minutes, and iodoalkane (5 mL) was added slowly. The whole mixture was stirred for 3 h at room temperature, during which time a white solid gradually fell out of the solution. The solvent and excess iodoalkane were removed, and the residue was dissolved in hot methanol and filtered to remove excess NaHCO₃. The methanol was removed, and the residue was dissolved in hot CHCl₃ and then filtered. The precipitate was recrystallized from warm absolute ethanol.

[2-(4-Amino-5-chloro-2-methoxybenzamido)ethyl]trimethylammonium Iodide (10). Iodomethane (5 mL) was added to a solution of 16 (2.71 g, 10 mmol). Recrystallization from absolute ethanol provided 3.32 g (80%) of off-white crystals: mp 230–231 °C; ¹H NMR (250 MHz, D₂O) δ 7.66 (s, 1H, C₆-ArH), 6.47 (s, 1H, C₃-ArH), 3.83 (s, 3H, OCH₃), 3.80–3.83 (t, partially obscured by OCH₃, 2H, NHCH₂), 3.52 (t, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 2H, NCH₂), 3.17 (s, 9H, NCH₃); IR (KBr, cm⁻¹) 3420, 3380, 3320, 3200 (NH and NH₂), 1640 (C=O); mass spectrum (FAB) 286, 227 (base), 180, 135, 85, 58. Anal. (C₁₃H₂₁ClN₃O₂) C, H, N.

[2-(4-Amino-5-chloro-2-methoxybenzamido)ethyl]dimethylethylammonium Iodide (11). Iodoethane (5 mL) was added to a solution of 16 (2.71 g, 10 mmol). Recrystallization from absolute ethanol afforded 2.05 g (48%) of an off-white crystalline solid: mp 198–200 °C; ¹H NMR (250 MHz, D₂O) δ 7.62 (s, 1H, C₆-ArH), 6.43 (s, 1H, C₃-ArH), 3.81 (s, 3H, OCH₃) 3.77 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 2H, NHCH₂), 3.38–3.48 (m, 4H, 2 × NCH₂), 3.10 (s, 6H, NCH₃), 1.34 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H, NCH₂CH₃); IR (KBr, cm⁻¹) 3420, 3380, 3325 (NH and NH₂), 1635 (C=O); mass spectrum (FAB) 300, 227 (base), 180, 135, 85, 58. Anal. (C₁₄H₂₃ClN₃O₂) C, H, N.

[2-(4-Amino-5-chloro-2-methoxybenzamido)ethyl]diethylethylammonium Iodide (12). Iodomethane (5 mL) was added to a solution of 2 (3.00 g, 10 mmol). Recrystallization from absolute ethanol yielded 2.17 g (49%) of off-white crystals: mp 212–215 °C; ¹H NMR (250 MHz, D₂O) δ 7.60 (s, 1H, C₆-ArH), 6.41 (s, 1H, C₃-ArH), 3.81 (s, 3H, OCH₃) 3.73 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2H, NHCH₂), 3.38 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 6H, NCH₂), 3.01 (s, 3H, NCH₃), 1.31 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 6H, NCH₂CH₃); IR (KBr, cm⁻¹) 3415, 3380, 3330, 3220 (NH and NH₂), 1635 (C=O); mass spectrum (FAB) 314, 227 (base), 184, 135, 72. Anal. (C₁₅H₂₅ClN₃O₂) C, H, N.

[2-(4-Amino-5-chloro-2-methoxybenzamido)ethyl]dimethylsulfonium Iodide (14). Compound 13 (1.00 g, 3.61 mmol) was dissolved in 50 mL of warm acetone. Iodomethane (2.5 mL) was added, and the solution was heated to reflux for 3.5 h. The solution was cooled to room temperature, and a solid gradually precipitated from the solution upon cooling. The suspension was filtered, and the precipitate was recrystallized from warm methanol to give pale yellow plates (0.62 g, 40%): mp 134–136 °C; ¹H NMR (250 MHz, D₂O) δ 7.62 (s, 1H, C₆-ArH), 6.45 (s, C₃-ArH), 3.81 (s, 3H, OCH₃), 3.81 (t, partially obscured by OCH₃, 2H, NHCH₂) 3.50 (t, *J* = 5.7 Hz, 2H, CH₂S) 2.90 (s, 6H, SCH₃); IR (KBr, cm⁻¹) 3450, 3370, 3330 (NH and NH₂) 1635 (C=O); mass spectrum (FAB) 289, 227 (base), 184, 119. Anal. (C₁₂H₁₈ClN₂O₂S) C, H, N.

Measurement of the K⁺-Induced Release of [³H]Acetylcholine from Striatal Slices. This assay was run in an identical manner as described in our earlier publication.¹⁹ Further experimental details can be found there. Striatal slices from reserpine and α-methyl-*p*-tyrosine-treated mice were incubated with [³H]choline for 20 min at 37 °C. The slices were washed as previously described and where then incubated in a medium containing 250 μM α-methyl-*p*-tyrosine and various concentrations of apomorphine or apomorphine plus the test drug in the

presence of high K^+ (13.8 mM) for two (5-min) periods. The percentage of the tissue tritium released into the medium by the high K^+ was calculated by subtracting basal release.

Analysis of Data. The ED_{50} and the confidence interval (C.I.) values for apomorphine in the presence and absence of test drug were determined using a nonlinear regression procedure. Apomorphine concentration-response curves for inhibiting the potassium-evoked release of [3H]acetylcholine were generated in the presence and absence of a given concentration of antagonist. The antagonist equilibrium dissociation constants (K_B values) were then calculated from the equation

$$K_B = [B]/(DR - 1)$$

where B is the concentration of antagonist used, and DR is the ratio of the concentrations of apomorphine required to produce a half-maximal inhibitory effect on [3H]acetylcholine release in the presence and absence of antagonist.²⁵ Due to variability among the experiments, a group containing apomorphine plus the test drug was always run concurrently with a control group containing apomorphine alone for each set of determinations. The level of significance employed for all statistical tests was $P < 0.05$.

Acknowledgment. Support for this work was provided by a grant from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (RO1-NS17907). The authors also thank Marlene Muscik for her help in the preparation of this document.

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