



## Review article

# The effect of psychotropic drugs on cortical excitability and plasticity measured with transcranial magnetic stimulation: Implications for psychiatric treatment

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Transcranial magnetic stimulation  
Pharmacology  
Excitability  
Plasticity

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) is an emerging treatment for neuropsychiatric disorders. Patients in rTMS treatment typically receive concomitant psychotropic medications, which affect neuronal excitability and plasticity and may interact to affect rTMS treatment outcomes. A greater understanding of these drug effects may have considerable implications for optimizing multi-modal treatment of psychiatric patients, and elucidating the mechanism(s) of action (MOA) of rTMS.

**Method:** We summarized the empirical literature that tests how psychotropic drugs affect cortical excitability and plasticity, using varied experimental TMS paradigms.

**Results:** Glutamate antagonists robustly attenuate plasticity, largely without changes in excitability *per se*; anti-epileptic drugs show the opposite pattern of effects, while calcium channel blockers attenuate plasticity. Benzodiazepines have moderate and variable effects on plasticity, and negligible effects on excitability. Antidepressants with potent 5HT transporter inhibition reduce both excitability and alter plasticity, while antidepressants with other MOAs generally lack either effect. Catecholaminergic drugs, cholinergic agents and lithium have minimal effects on excitability but exhibit robust and complex, non-linear effects in TMS plasticity paradigms.

**Limitations:** These effects remain largely untested in sustained treatment protocols, nor in clinical populations. In addition, how these medications impact clinical response to rTMS remains largely unknown.

**Conclusions:** Psychotropic medications exert robust and varied effects on cortical excitability and plasticity. We encourage the field to more directly and fully investigate clinical pharmaco-TMS studies to improve outcomes.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. TMS: biophysical aspects

Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) is one of a family of non-invasive, device-based technologies for modulating the function of the human brain, and the most widely-adopted in both clinical and experimental settings. When the simulator pulses the magnetic field at the scalp, this field passes across the skull and intervening tissues to reach the brain without attenuation, where it induces a low-amplitude current in the cortex, flowing parallel to the surface of the coil. The magnetic field strength falls sharply with distance from the coil, under general conditions penetrating approximately 2 cm beneath the cortical surface. However, higher stimulation intensities can induce fields to a depth of 3–4 cm (Terao and Ugawa 2002), and the cortical volume of

stimulation can be as large as several cm<sup>3</sup> (Opitz et al., 2011). The neuronal populations affected, their cellular sites of depolarization, and the dynamics of local circuit effects are generally complex and very sensitive to the intensity, pattern and spatial orientation of stimulation, and is further described elsewhere (Muller-Dahlhaus et al., 2013). In addition, changes in cortical signaling even with lower intensities can lead to downstream effects in cortical circuits, which can be detected with non-invasive methods such as functional MRI (fMRI) or electroencephalography (EEG).

### 1.2. TMS measures of cortical excitability and plasticity

Single- or multiple pulse TMS is a valuable experimental probe of cortical excitability and plasticity (Ziemann et al., 2008). Neural excitability is typically defined as the threshold for neuronal action

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2019.04.067>

Received 8 November 2018; Received in revised form 3 March 2019; Accepted 8 April 2019

Available online 10 April 2019

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potential generation, and excitability is a function of various factors, such as the location and function of post-synaptic receptors that mediate changes in neuronal membrane potential, ion fluxes across diverse membrane-bound ion channels, and structural features such as the location of the axon initial segment (Keck et al., 2017). Cortical excitability in humans is typically evaluated by determining the Motor Threshold (MT), defined by convention as the stimulation intensity that elicits either overt muscle contraction or alternatively compound Motor Evoked Potentials (MEPs) measured by electromyography (EMG) on 50% of single-pulse TMS (spTMS) trials. MT can be assessed as “resting” MT (rMT), i.e. with fully-relaxed target muscles, or “active” MT (aMT), with moderate isometric contraction of target muscles, which generally lowers the threshold from rMT.

Plasticity refers to changes over time in the structure or function of neurons, which can arise from both experience and genetically-programmed effects. The mechanisms subserving plasticity in the central nervous system include changes in excitability via long-term potentiation and long-term depression of synapses, synaptogenesis and synaptic elimination, and neurogenesis (Bruehl-Jungerman et al., 2007; Cooke and Bliss, 2006). There are now several experimental TMS paradigms to non-invasively probe cortical plasticity in human subjects. These serve as the experimental measures of plasticity to test pharmacological effects, which in turn may modify rTMS therapeutic effects. In Paired Associative Stimulation (PAS), typically the median nerve is activated by bipolar stimulation at the wrist, along with spTMS to the representation of the same hand in primary motor cortex (contralateral to that hand) (Carson and Kennedy, 2013; Ziemann et al., 2008). The interstimulus interval (ISI) between these two stimulations determines how the TMS pulse modifies the median nerve stimulation effect, which is observed at the level of the cortex, in a manner consistent with spike-timing dependent plasticity (see discussion in Muller-Dahlhaus et al., 2010). An ISI of 25 milliseconds (PAS25) results in potentiation that resembles long-term potentiation (LTP) in animal studies; longer ISIs have no effect. In contrast, an ISI of 10 ms (PAS10) results in attenuation, analogous to the long-term depression (LTD) observed in animal studies (Ziemann et al., 2008). Another stimulation protocol that is increasingly used in both research and treatment protocols is theta-burst stimulation (TBS). This “patterned” TMS paradigm typically employs 50 Hz pulse triplets applied at 200 ms intervals, i.e. a theta frequency, which replicates a common paradigm used to optimize LTP induction in animal models and tissue preparations (Huang et al., 2005; Ziemann et al., 2008). Trains of TBS repeated at 10 s intervals (intermittent TBS, or iTBS) tend to be facilitatory, i.e. LTP-like, whereas trains that are delivered at 200 ms intervals without interruption (continuous TBS, or cTBS) tend to induce long-term depression (LTD)-like responses (Cardenas-Morales et al., 2010; Suppa et al., 2016). PAS and TBS-induced changes are typically referred to as “LTP-like” or “LTD-like” because they resemble the large-scale physiological (and behavioral) manifestations of enduring physiological changes observed with LTD (or LTD) induction in animal models, yet in humans it remains unclear if these reflect the same cellular processes that mediate LTP/LTD, and in the same neuronal populations (Pell et al., 2011). In any event, TBS has demonstrated clinical efficacy in depression (Chung et al., 2015a,b), which may speak to the role of disturbed plasticity in this illness. Other mechanisms may mediate clinical efficacy of TBS, such as the modulation of dysfunctional brain networks (Anderson et al., 2016), which is not necessarily inconsistent with effects on plasticity. Plasticity is also commonly evaluated by single-pulse TMS in conjunction with practice-based changes in neural phenomena such as cortical mapping of motor output to targeted muscles. Measures of higher-order phenomena such as homeostatic plasticity and metaplasticity can also be achieved using TMS paradigms (Karabanov et al., 2015; Thickbroom, 2007), but have not yet been employed in pharmacology studies. Studies of excitability and plasticity largely have been restricted to motor systems, probably largely due to the objective and reliable measures of output that can be assessed. It is critical that

plasticity also be assessed in prefrontal cortical non-motor areas as well because these are the primary targets of therapeutic rTMS in psychiatry (Hill et al., 2016). An emerging literature has employed EEG to study on-line TMS effects in non-motor areas, including in combination with plasticity-inducing TMS paradigms such as TBS (see Chung et al., 2015a,b; Thut and Pascual-Leone, 2010). This literature has identified varied effects of these TMS paradigms on TMS-evoked potentials, oscillatory phenomena, and spatial connectivity changes, which could represent enduring expressions of cortical plasticity. This approach has been recently employed to study the effects of drugs such as GABA-ergic agents, with the potential to understand how drugs may modify TMS-induced plasticity (Premoli et al., 2017). Some of the challenges with the TMS-EEG approach include the resource-intensiveness of EEG in clinical settings; the relatively greater across-subject variability in the functional neuroanatomy of frontal cortical regions, compared to sensorimotor cortex; general limitations on spatial inferences with the use of scalp EEG; and on a conceptual level, the unresolved question of whether these EEG measures truly reflect plasticity processes such as LTP or LTD (discussed in Cooke and Bliss, 2006, and Pell et al., 2011).

The variability of TMS-induced effects on excitability and plasticity in motor systems has been evaluated for paradigms such as PAS and TBS (Ziemann et al., 2008). Typically, reasonable within-subject reliability is observed, though interestingly, across-subjects variability is notable, for instance so-called “paradoxical” effects of iTBS on LTD-like effects on MEP amplitude, and the reversal of direction of TBS effects that is dependent on the time interval between TBS cycles. These appear to be important expressions of variability that are not yet well-understood. To date, there is a paucity of information about the reliability of drug-induced changes in these phenomena; this remains an important issue for further empirical study.

### 1.3. Neuronal ion channels and central neurotransmitter systems

Biophysical models of magnetic stimulation generally extend the classic Hodgkin and Huxley model, with roles for sodium, potassium, and calcium channels present on neuronal plasma membranes (Wagner et al., 2007). This suggests important implications for the actions of pharmacological agents that directly (e.g. antiepileptic drugs) or indirectly (e.g., monoaminergic drugs) affect fluxes across these channels. Antiepileptic drugs generally have potent effects on ion-channel activity in cortical neurons, especially sodium and/or calcium channels, and as a result robustly modify neuronal and behavioral effects of TMS (see below). As a rule, drugs with psychotropic effects modify neuronal signaling via neurotransmitter receptor-mediated effects on cell-membrane currents that are modulated on short (e.g. glutamate agents) or long/varied (e.g. monoaminergic agents) time scales. Each of these neurotransmitters is associated with multiple ion-channel types and subtypes, with effects mediated by multiple intracellular second messenger systems. Many also are associated with transmitter receptor subtypes that have opposing effects on second messengers (e.g. D1 vs D2 receptors), with divergent anatomical distributions and cellular localization (Cooper et al., 2003). These features of brain neurotransmitter systems are the primary basis for the complex, multiphasic and non-linear effects observed when neurotransmission is modified with chemical (i.e. pharmacological) or electrical perturbations. These features also render it difficult to predict the precise effects of psychotropic drugs in modifying magnetic stimulation effects on cortical cells and circuits and associated behavior, especially for those drugs with a multiplicity of actions (e.g. antipsychotics). This is one critical reason why empirical studies of drug-TMS interactions are important to conduct in human subjects, as it is not straightforward to predict how these drugs might ultimately affect clinical responses from animal or tissue models alone (Littman and Williams, 2005). It will be equally essential to conduct these experiments in patient populations (and not just healthy subjects) because many clinical disorders are characterized by disturbances in neurotransmitter system function. There are an

insufficient number of these latter studies in psychiatry for an informative review here.

#### 1.4. Repetitive TMS: biological and clinical effects

When applied in rhythmic trains or pulses in treatment sessions over a period of weeks (repetitive TMS, or rTMS), changes in excitability, plasticity, and signaling in the brain become sustained and have robust antidepressant effects (Chen et al., 2013; Schutter, 2009; Slotema et al., 2010) with preliminary evidence for efficacy in schizophrenia, treatment-resistant anxiety, and other disorders (Chervyakov et al., 2015; Slotema et al., 2010). While the efficacy trials of rTMS for the treatment of major depressive disorder (MDD) were performed in unmedicated subjects (O'Reardon et al., 2007), the treatment most commonly is administered in routine practice to patients who are concurrently receiving antidepressants, mood stabilizers, anticonvulsants or other drugs known to affect excitability or plasticity (Carpenter et al., 2012; McClintock et al., 2018).

In addition, the mechanisms of action (MOA) for rTMS and psychotropic drugs are likely to have considerable overlap and are not mutually-exclusive of one another. They include changes in neurotransmitter signaling, gene expression, neurotrophic and neuroprotective effects, and oscillatory patterns of distributed brain circuits (Chervyakov et al., 2015; Cirillo et al., 2017). One particularly intriguing line of investigation addresses the restoration of neural plasticity, which has been implicated in both the pathophysiology of depression and the action of antidepressant medication (Cantone et al., 2017; Eliwa et al., 2017). There may be significant interactions between electromagnetically induced neural excitation and cellular drug effects, both of which affect excitability and plasticity. Such potential interactions may have great relevance to clinical rTMS treatment, yet have not been adequately studied. These pharmacological interactions with TMS, and their potential effects on clinical efficacy, are the subject of this review.

#### 1.5. The present review

We searched the peer-reviewed literature for studies of psychotropic drug effects on cortical excitability and plasticity as measured in these experimental paradigms. This review updates previous published reviews addressing this topic (Paulus et al., 2008; Ridding and Ziemann, 2010; Ziemann et al., 2015), with a greater emphasis presently on psychotropic drugs and psychiatric treatment implications. We organized the literature by major drug classes as they are configured for clinical indications, rather than according to MOA. This strategy was employed because the members of a clinically-defined drug class are generally very heterogeneous in their MOA, and often neurochemical effects are shared among drugs in different classes (e.g. antidepressants and psychostimulants). These are important considerations when crafting a polypharmacy regimen for patients who are either complicated in symptom profile or treatment-resistant. The heterogeneity within classes, and lesser degree of overlap across classes, does pose challenges for making inferences from the experimental literature reviewed below. Nonetheless, clinically-defined classes map onto clinical indications in the most straightforward manner, and it is this level of organization that clinicians will have to consider when integrating psychopharmacology with TMS to optimize treatment responses (the primary MOA for each drug is indicated in the tables).

This literature predominantly uses experimental TMS paradigms to investigate excitability and plasticity processes, rather than the repetitive TMS protocols which are utilized for clinical interventions, so the relationship of the reported phenomena to TMS as it is used clinically remains to be elaborated. In addition, these studies are almost exclusively conducted in healthy subject samples, so the question of how psychotropic drugs modulate these phenomena in psychiatric populations (which may have disturbances in either neurotransmitter

systems, and/or cortical circuits that directly respond to rTMS) is a key research problem deserving of future study.

## 2. Method

We conducted a systematic review. We initially searched PubMed for all English-language, peer-reviewed publications with the full text available, using all combinations of search terms A) “transcranial magnetic stimulation”, “excitability”, “motor threshold”, “plasticity”, “paired associative stimulation”, “theta burst”, with B) each of the drug category names indicated below. Existing reviews (and their reference lists) that addressed this topic were also evaluated for additional reports. We excluded papers reporting on studies conducted in animal models, studies using other non-invasive neuromodulation methods such as transcranial direct current stimulation, and the few published TMS/pharmacology papers reporting on studies of clinical populations, because of the limited number of non-systematic studies, and/or heterogeneous patient populations. We also generally excluded papers reporting on drugs which are not clinically-indicated for psychiatric disorders, with the exception of those which may be informative based on selective MOA (e.g. selective ion-channel blockers) or have implications for psychiatric disorders (e.g., the GABA<sub>B</sub> receptor agonist baclofen). This combined search strategy yielded 3525 articles, of which 69 were included based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria.

With exceptions as noted below, the existing literature uses single-dose or very short-term oral dosing designs (e.g., 4–7 days), probably largely based on practicality. It is also important to consider that the doses of many of these drugs are subtherapeutic for psychiatric conditions. We also excluded experimental paradigms that evaluate the several interesting inhibitory/facilitatory phenomena that can be measured with TMS (e.g., short- and long-interval cortical inhibition [SICI and LICI]; cortical silent period [CSP]; intracortical facilitation [ICF]). While these measures appear to be informative of dynamics in local cortical circuitry and are altered in some psychiatric conditions, they are not altered in a disease-specific pattern, with minimal evidence found to date that they are associated with clinical response to rTMS treatment or clinical outcome in general (see discussions in (Bunse et al., 2014; Kaskie and Ferrarelli, 2018)). In addition, length considerations preclude the review of these latter measures.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Glutamate agents

This class of drugs is summarized in Table 1. *N*-Methyl D-Aspartate receptor antagonists (NMDAR) exhibit inconsistent effects on excitability measured as changes in MT. Wohlfarth et al. (2000) found no effect of acamprosate on MEP facilitation or inhibition in a paired-pulse stimulation paradigm, although the rMT was increased with single-pulse TMS. Similarly, there was no effect of either dextromethorphan (DMX) (Wankerl et al., 2010; Ziemann et al., 1998) or memantine (Huang et al., 2007; Schwenkreis et al., 1999) on rMT. In two studies of ketamine, one found dose-related decreases in rMT and aMT with subanesthetic doses (Di Lazzaro et al., 2003), while the other study found no effect on rMT with slightly lower doses (Hoffken et al., 2013). It remains unclear if these discrepancies relate to differences in bioavailability, given the differing doses and measures of circulating levels, or other methodological differences.

In contrast, the administration of NMDAR antagonists is associated with robust, consistent attenuation of plasticity. DMX abolished the LTP-like MEP response in the PAS25 paradigm (Stefan et al., 2002; Weise et al., 2017), the LTD-like MEP response to PAS10 (Wolters et al., 2003), as well as the LTP-like MEP response to cTBS300 (Wankerl et al., 2010). Interestingly, DMX also abolished the effect of the calcium channel-blocker nimodipine, which when given alone reversed the MEP facilitation with cTBS300 (Wankerl et al., 2010). In another study,

**Table 1**  
Excitability and plasticity effects of glutamate agents.

| Drug                          | MOA                                  | References               | Dose   | TMS paradigm | Measure                                 | Results   |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------|---|---|
| <b>Cortical excitability</b>  |                                      |                          |  |              |   |   |
| Ketamine                      | NMDAR antagonist                     | Hoffken et al., 2013     | 10, 30, 50 mg/mL serum                       | sPTMS        | MEP                                     | No effect on rMT  |
| Ketamine                      | NMDAR antagonist                     | Di Lazzaro et al., 2003  | 0.01, 0.02, 0.04 mg/kg/min i.v.              | sPTMS        | MEP                                     | ↓ rMT and ↓ aMT (dose-related)                              |
| Memantine                     | NMDAR antagonist                     | Schwenkreis et al., 1999 | 10–30 mg p.o. qd. escalating doses<br>8 days | sPTMS        | MEP                                     | No effect on rMT  |
| Dextromethorphan              | NMDAR antagonist                     | Huang et al., 2007       | 25 mg p.o. × 3 days                          | sPTBS        | MEP                                     | No effect on rMT  |
| Acamprosate                   | NMDAR antagonist                     | Ziemann et al., 1998     | 150 mg p.o.                                  | sPTMS        | MEP                                     | No effect on rMT  |
| <b>Cortical plasticity</b>    |                                      |                          |  |              |   |   |
| Dextromethorphan              | NMDAR antagonist                     | Wankner et al., 2010     | 120 mg p.o.                                  | sPTMS        | MEP                                     | No effect on rMT  |
| Dextromethorphan              | NMDAR antagonist                     | Wohlforth et al., 2000   | 1998 mg p.o. qd × 7 days                     | sPTMS        | MEP                                     | ↑ rMT   |
| Dextromethorphan + nimodipine | NMDAR antagonist + L-VGCC antagonist | Stefan et al., 2002      | 150 mg p.o.                                  | PAS25        | MEP amplitude                           | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished)                             |
| Dextromethorphan              | NMDAR antagonist                     | Wankner et al., 2010     | 120 mg p.o.                                  | cTBSS300     | MEP amplitude                           | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished)                             |
| Dextromethorphan + nimodipine | NMDAR antagonist + L-VGCC antagonist | Wankner et al., 2010     | 120 mg p.o. + 30 mg p.o.                     | cTBSS300     | MEP amplitude                           | DMX abolished the NDP-induced reversal of LTP-like response |
| Dextromethorphan              | NMDAR antagonist                     | Wolters et al., 2003     | 150 mg p.o.                                  | PAS10        | MEP amplitude                           | ↓ LTD-like response (abolished)                             |
| Dextromethorphan              | NMDAR antagonist                     | Weise et al., 2017       | 120 mg p.o.                                  | PAS25        | MEP amplitude                           | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished)                             |
| Dextromethorphan + nimodipine | NMDAR antagonist + L-VGCC antagonist | Weise et al., 2017       | 120 mg p.o. + 30 mg p.o.                     | PAS25        | MEP Amplitude                           | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished)                             |
| Memantine                     | NMDAR antagonist                     | Huang et al., 2007       | 25 mg p.o./3 days                            | iTBS         | MEP amplitude                           | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished)                             |
| Memantine                     | NMDAR antagonist                     | Huang et al., 2007       |  | cTBS         | MEP amplitude                           | ↓ LTD-like response (abolished)                             |
| Memantine                     | NMDAR antagonist                     | Schwenkreis et al., 2005 | 20–30 mg p.o. (weight-adjusted)              | sPTMS        | Practiced APB motor output<br>map shift | No effect   |
|                               |                                      | Schwenkreis et al., 2005 | 10 or 10–30 mg p.o./day over 8 days          | sPTMS        | Practiced APB motor output<br>map shift | Abolished map shift with practice                           |

when DMX was administered together with nimodipine, the LTP-like response to PAS25 was abolished in the face of an increase in static excitability (measured by PAS5000, which does not induce plasticity responses) that was not observed for either drug alone (Weise et al., 2017). Memantine also abolishes both the LTP-like and the LTD-like MEP responses to iTBS and cTBS, respectively (Huang et al., 2007). An 8-day regimen of memantine blocked the shift in topographic mapping for the abducens pollicis brevis muscle with practice, while a single dose had no effect (Schwenkreis et al., 2005). Taken together, these results suggest a robust yet complex pattern of effects of NMDAR antagonists on cortical plasticity processes measured with TMS, potentially mediated by non-linear effects on calcium influx across neuronal membranes.

### 3.2. Antiepileptic agents

This class of drugs is summarized in Table 2. Medications that were originally developed for seizure disorders have found considerable use in a range of psychiatric conditions, especially bipolar-spectrum disorders and other disorders of impulse control (Rogawski and Loscher, 2004b). While the efficacy of anticonvulsants as adjunctive treatment in treatment-resistant unipolar MDD remains to be firmly established, they nevertheless are widely used, often for co-morbid anxiety and/or irritability. As a class, these medications have heterogeneous MOAs (Rogawski and Loscher, 2004a) for their effects on epilepsy and probably also for psychiatric conditions. These MOAs include blockade of voltage-gated (especially sodium and calcium) ion channels and increased gamma-butyric acid (GABA) signaling. A few antiepileptic agents also exhibit glutamate receptor antagonism; the only drug among these that is used in psychiatry is topiramate (with kainate [KA] and  $\alpha$ -amino-3-hydroxy-5-methyl-4-isoxazolepropionic acid [AMPA] receptor antagonism) (Rogawski and Loscher, 2004b). We therefore review only the literature that examines effects of those antiepileptic drugs which are commonly-used in psychiatry (e.g., we exclude levetiracetam and phenytoin).

Given that antiepileptic drugs therapeutically modulate brain excitability, it is appropriate that this is the most widely-tested class for effects on cortical excitability measured with TMS. Carbamazepine, a sodium channel blocker (Rogawski and Loscher, 2004a), shows consistent effects to increase both rMT and aMT with single doses (Lang et al., 2013; Menzler et al., 2014; Ziemann et al., 1996) as well as a 4-week dose escalation schedule (Lee et al., 2005). In contrast, Inghilleri et al. (2004) found no effects on rMT or aMT with 7 days of treatment, while the MEP facilitation observed with 5 Hz rTMS was abolished.

These investigators also tested gabapentin, which blocks high-voltage activated (HVA) calcium channels and increases GABA turnover (Rogawski and Loscher, 2004a). They found a pattern of effects very similar to those they observed with carbamazepine: treatment for 7 days abolished MEP facilitation after 5 Hz rTMS, with no effects on rMT or aMT. Two other studies reported no effects of gabapentin on rMT or aMT (Rizzo et al., 2001; Ziemann et al., 1996).

Lamotrigine shares effects on high voltage activated (HVA)-calcium channels with gabapentin, though it does not have established GABA effects. In contrast to gabapentin, lamotrigine does consistently raise rMT and aMT in single doses (Borojerdi et al., 2001; Li et al., 2009; Tergau et al., 2003; Ziemann et al., 1996), in a dose-dependent manner during a one-day dose-escalation (Tergau et al., 2003), and in a 4-day dose escalation protocol up to 200 mg/day (Lee et al., 2005).

Topiramate also exhibits HVA-calcium channel blockade, but it also blocks sodium channels, has GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor agonist activity, and KA/AMPA receptor antagonist activity (Rogawski and Loscher, 2004a). Like gabapentin, it generally lacks effects on rMT or aMT, with varied administration protocols including single doses (Reis et al., 2002), 7 days fixed dosing (Inghilleri et al., 2004), or 4-day dose escalation up to 100 mg (Inghilleri et al., 2006). However, each of these multi-day drug

**Table 2**  
Excitability and plasticity effects of antiepileptic drugs and other ion channel blockers.

| Drug                         | MOA   | References              | Dose                                       | TMS paradigm                              | Measure                    | Results   |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|---|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Cortical excitability</b> |   |                         |  |   |                            |   |
| Carbamazepine                | I <sub>NaP</sub> inhibition   | Lang et al., 2013       | 300 mg p.o. × 2                            | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT and aMT   |
| Carbamazepine                |   | Inghilleri et al., 2004 | 900–1200 mg p.o. × 7 days                  | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | No effect on rMT or aMT                                 |
| Carbamazepine                |   | Lee et al., 2005        | 200–800 mg p.o./day 4-week dose escalation | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT; persisted after acute drug withdrawal            |
| Carbamazepine                |   | Menzler et al., 2014    | 400 mg p.o.                                | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT (no effect of SCN1A genotype)                     |
| Carbamazepine                |   | Ziemann et al., 1996    | 600 mg p.o.                                | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT and aMT   |
| Gabapentin                   | HVA Ca <sup>2+</sup> (α2δ) inhibition ↑GABA turnover  | Inghilleri et al., 2004 | 900–1200 mg p.o. × 7 days                  | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | No effect on rMT or aMT                                 |
| Gabapentin                   |   | Rizzo et al., 2001      | 800 mg p.o.                                | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | No effect   |
| Gabapentin                   |   | Ziemann et al., 1996    | 1200 mg p.o.                               | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | No effect on rMT or aMT                                 |
| Lamotrigine                  | I <sub>NaP</sub> inhibition HVA Ca <sup>2+</sup> inhibition   | Lee et al., 2005        | 50–200 mg p.o./day 4-week dose escalation  | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT; resolved after acute drug withdrawal             |
| Lamotrigine                  |   | Tergau et al., 2003     | 325 mg p.o.                                | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT   |
| Lamotrigine                  |   | Tergau et al., 2003     | 25–150 mg p.o. q2hr dose-escalating        | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT dose dependent                                    |
| Lamotrigine                  |   | Li et al., 2004         | 325 mg p.o.                                | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT   |
| Lamotrigine                  |   | Li et al., 2009         | 325 mg p.o.                                | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT   |
| Lamotrigine                  |   | Ziemann et al., 1996    | 300 mg p.o.                                | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT and aMT   |
| Lamotrigine                  |   | Borojerdj et al., 2001  | 200 mg p.o.                                | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | ↑ rMT   |
| Topiramate                   |   | Inghilleri et al., 2004 | 75 mg p.o. × 7 days                        | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | No effect on rMT or aMT                                 |
| Topiramate                   |   | Inghilleri et al., 2006 | 25–100 mg p.o./day 4-week dose escalation  | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | No effect on rMT  |
| Topiramate                   |   | Reis et al., 2002       | 50, 200 mg p.o.                            | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | No effect on rMT or aMT                                 |
| Valproic acid                | I <sub>NaP</sub> & I <sub>NaP</sub> inhibition T-type Ca <sup>2+</sup> inhibition ↑GABA Turnover                            | Reis et al., 2002       | 1250 mg p.o.                               | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | Non-sig ↑ rMT   |
| Valproic acid                |   | Zunhammer et al., 2011  | 800 mg p.o.                                | spTMS                                     | MEP                        | Trend-level ↑ rMT                                       |
| <b>Cortical plasticity</b>   |   |                         |  |   |                            |   |
| Carbamazepine                |   | Inghilleri et al., 2004 | 900–1200 mg p.o. × 7 days                  | 5 Hz rTMS                                 | MEP amplitude facilitation | ↓ Facilitation (abolished)                              |
| Gabapentin                   |   | Inghilleri et al., 2004 | 900–1200 mg p.o. × 7 days                  | 5 Hz rTMS                                 | MEP Amplitude facilitation | ↓ Facilitation (abolished)                              |
| Gabapentin                   | HVA Ca <sup>2+</sup> (α2δ) inhibition ↑GABA turnover  | Heidegger et al., 2010  | 1100 mg p.o.                               | PAS25                                     | MEP amplitude              | No effect on LTP-like MEP response                      |
| Lamotrigine                  | I <sub>NaP</sub> inhibition HVA Ca <sup>2+</sup> inhibition   | Deivendahl et al., 2013 | 300 mg p.o.                                | PAS25                                     | MEP amplitude              | ↓ LTP-like MEP response (0, 30 min post)                |
| Lamotrigine                  |   | Deivendahl et al., 2013 |  | PAS25                                     | MEP amplitude              | ↓ LTD-like* MEP response (60 min post)                  |
| Topiramate                   | I <sub>NaP</sub> & I <sub>NaP</sub> inhibition HVA Ca <sup>2+</sup> inhibition GABA <sub>A</sub> agonist KA/AMPA antagonist | Inghilleri et al., 2004 | 75 mg p.o. × 7 days                        | 5 Hz rTMS                                 | MEP amplitude facilitation | ↓ Facilitation (abolished)                              |
| Topiramate                   |   | Inghilleri et al., 2006 |  | 5 Hz rTMS                                 | MEP amplitude facilitation | ↓ Facilitation (abolished)                              |
| Topiramate                   |   | Heidegger et al., 2010  | 100 mg p.o.                                | PAS25                                     | MEP amplitude              | No effect on LTP-like MEP response                      |
| Ethosuximide                 | T-type VGCC antagonist  | Weise et al., 2017      | 750 mg p.o.                                | PAS25                                     | MEP Amplitude              | Reversed the LTP-like response                          |
| Other ion-channel agents     |   |                         |  |   |                            |   |
| Nimodipine                   | L-type VGCC antagonist  | Wanknerl et al., 2010   | 30 mg p.o.                                 | cTBS300                                   | MEP amplitude              | Reversed LTP-like response                              |
| Nimodipine                   |   | Wanknerl et al., 2010   | 15 mg, 30 mg p.o.                          | cTBS300 after 1.5 min vol thumb abduction | MEP amplitude              | Reversed LTP-like response; 30 mg effect > 15 mg effect |
| Nimodipine                   |   | Weise et al., 2017      | 30 mg p.o.                                 | PAS25                                     | MEP amplitude              | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished)                         |
| Nimodipine                   |   | Wolters et al., 2003    | 30 mg p.o.                                 | PAS10                                     | MEP amplitude              | ↓ LTD-like response (abolished)                         |

administration protocols was associated with abolished MEP facilitation in response to 5 Hz rTMS (Inghilleri et al., 2004, HYPERLINK \l "bib41" 2006 ).

Finally, valproic acid is an antiepileptic that is widely-used for bipolar-spectrum conditions, with neurochemical effects that include blockade of sodium channels and T-type calcium channels, and increased GABA turnover (Rogawski and Loscher, 2004a). It appears to have very modest effects on MT, with trend-level (not statistically-significant) effects to raise rMT (Reis et al., 2002; Zunhammer et al., 2011).

Taken together, this literature suggests a highly-variable pattern of effects of antiepileptic drugs on cortical excitability measured with TMS, in both single- and multi-dose administration protocols. Intriguingly, the comparison between gabapentin and lamotrigine effects suggests that the GABA agonist effects (associated with gabapentin) may mitigate the effects of HVA-calcium channel blockade on cortical excitability. Because no other antiepileptic drugs currently available appear to be pure HVA-calcium channel blockers (Rogawski and Loscher, 2004a), this hypothesis awaits proper testing in humans with TMS paradigms.

Unlike studies of excitability, there is a relative paucity of studies testing antiepileptic drug effects on TMS-related plasticity measures. In one study, lamotrigine decreased both the LTP-like MEP response to PAS 25 (at 0 and 30 min post-administration) and the paradoxical LTD-like MEP response to PAS25 (at 60 min post-administration) (Delvendahl et al., 2013). Inghilleri et al. (2004, 2006) found the MEP facilitation that is observed with 5 Hz rTMS to be abolished with carbamazepine, gabapentin and topiramate. In contrast, neither gabapentin nor topiramate showed effects on the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 (Heidegger et al., 2010). It is useful to note that the T-type voltage gated calcium channel blocker ethosuximide reversed the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 (Weise et al., 2017). While this literature overall remains limited in scope and somewhat variable in aspects of both treatment and measurement design, it suggests that antiepileptic drugs may decrease cortical excitability without affecting cortical plasticity, generally the reverse of NMDAR antagonists. This conclusion must be carefully tempered with the recognition that these drugs are highly heterogeneous and the experimental designs are highly variable.

### 3.3. Other ion-channel antagonists

This class of drugs is summarized in Table 2. Drugs with selective actions at voltage-gated ion channels include not only the antiepileptic agents reviewed above, but also other drugs for conditions such as cardiovascular illness and peripheral neurological conditions. Their selective MOA may inform our understanding of MOA of therapeutic rTMS. In addition, psychiatry patients may also take these medications for medical indications while undergoing rTMS treatment for concurrent psychiatric problems. To date, these medications have not been well-studied for effects on excitability or plasticity via TMS. Nimodipine is an L-type voltage-gated calcium channel (VGCC) blocker which abolished the LTD-like response to PAS10 (Wolters et al., 2003) and the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 (Weise et al., 2017), and reversed the LTP-like MEP response to cTBS300 (Wankerl et al., 2010). Nimodipine also reversed the LTP-like MEP response to cTBS300 after 90 s of voluntary thumb abduction, with a relatively larger effect with the larger dose (Wankerl et al., 2010). Ethosuximide, a T-type VGCC blocker, reversed the LTP-like facilitation of PAS25 into a depressive (LTD-like) pattern (Weise et al., 2017). These findings suggest significant effects of VGCC blockers in inhibiting (or altering) plasticity.

### 3.4. GABA agonists: benzodiazepines and baclofen

This class of drugs is summarized in Table 3. Benzodiazepines (BDZ) all strongly bind to the BDZ binding site of GABA<sub>A</sub> receptors, but vary considerably in their affinity for GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor subunits. The clinical

**Table 3**  
Excitability and plasticity effects of GABA drugs.

| Drug                       | MOA                                | References                 | Dose                         | TMS paradigm  | Measure  | Results   |  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--|---|--|
| Diazepam                   | GABA <sub>A</sub> receptor agonist | Mohammadi et al., 2006     | 5 mg p.o.                    | spTMS         | MEP  | No effect on rMT or aMT                               |  |
| Diazepam                   |                                    | Palmieri et al., 1999      | 3.75 mg p.o.                 | spTMS         | MEP  | No effect on rMT or aMT                               |  |
| Lorazepam                  |                                    | Di Lazzaro et al., 2000a,b | 2.5 mg p.o.                  | spTMS         | MEP amplitude  | No effect on rMT or aMT                               |  |
| Lorazepam                  |                                    | Kimiskidis et al., 2006    | i.v. to 29 ng/mL plasma      | spTMS         | MEP  | ↓ Max rMEP recruitment curve; no effect on aMEP curve |  |
| Lorazepam                  |                                    | Ziemann et al., 1996       | 2.5 mg p.o.                  | spTMS         | MEP  | No effect on rMT or aMT                               |  |
| Lorazepam                  |                                    | Borojerdi et al., 2001     | 0.038 mg/kg p.o.             | spTMS         | MEP  | No effect on rMT or aMT                               |  |
| Zolpidem                   |                                    | Mohammadi et al., 2006     | 10 mg p.o.                   | spTMS         | MEP  | No effect on rMT or aMT                               |  |
| Baclofen                   | GABA <sub>B</sub> receptor agonist | Ziemann et al., 1996       | 50 mg p.o.                   | spTMS         | MEP  | No effect on rMT or aMT                               |  |
| <b>Cortical plasticity</b> |                                    |                            |                              |               |  |   |  |
| Diazepam                   |                                    | Heidegger et al., 2010     | 20 mg p.o.                   | PAS25         | MEP amplitude  | Trend-level effect on LTP-like MEP response           |  |
| Diazepam                   | Ziemann et al., 2001               | 2 mg p.o.                  | spTMS + ischemic nerve block | MEP amplitude | ↓ practice-related change in biceps map (abolished)          |   |  |
| Baclofen                   | McDonnell et al., 2007             | 50 mg p.o.                 | PAS20                        | MEP amplitude | ↓ LTP-like MEP response (switch to LTD-like in 5/7 subjects) |   |  |

implications of this variability remain unclear. A relatively recent class of quasi-BDZ drugs is FDA-approved for sleep disorders (e.g., zolpidem), and these also act at the GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor (at a binding site distinct from the BDZ site). Baclofen is also included in this review as the sole GABA<sub>B</sub> receptor agonist in routine clinical use, as its unique MOA may have implications for rTMS treatment of psychiatric conditions where GABA<sub>B</sub> receptor dysfunction is evident (Bowery, 2006).

In general, BDZ as a class do not appear to affect MT as measured in spTMS paradigms. The following drugs (all single oral dose, except where indicated) show no effects on rMT and/or aMT: alprazolam, diazepam (Mohammadi et al., 2006; Palmieri et al., 1999) and lorazepam, given orally (Borojerdj et al., 2001; Di Lazzaro et al., 2000a; Ziemann et al., 1996) and i.v. (Kimiskidis et al., 2006). Similarly, neither zolpidem (Mohammadi et al., 2006) nor baclofen (Ziemann et al., 1996) altered rMT or aMT. It therefore is clear that, at least in single doses, GABA receptor agonists do not affect cortical excitability as measured by spTMS. These drugs have been studied less in TMS plasticity paradigms. Here, diazepam 20 mg showed a trend-level effect on the LTP-like response to PAS25 (Heidegger et al., 2010) and attenuated the practice-related change in the topographic map for the biceps measured with spTMS and transient ischemic nerve block (Ziemann et al., 2001). On the other hand, baclofen 50 mg attenuated the LTP-like MEP response to PAS20, with a switch to a LTD-like pattern of inhibition in 5/7 subjects (McDonnell et al., 2007). GABA receptor drugs have not been tested to date in stimulation paradigms such as TBS. Therefore, it remains unclear whether they may modify other types of plasticity phenomena.

#### 4. Antidepressants

This class of drugs is summarized in Table 4. Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) have variable but generally insignificant catecholaminergic effects. Among these, citalopram and escitalopram are the most highly-selective for the serotonin (5HT) transporter over the norepinephrine (NE) transporter (NET; Owens et al., 2001; Tatsumi et al., 1997). Citalopram appears to increase the rMT, between 0 and 3.5 h after i.v. administration (Minelli et al., 2010), and at 2.5 h after oral administration (Robol et al., 2004). Escitalopram (the pure S-enantiomer of racemic citalopram) has not been studied for effects on cortical excitability measured with TMS. Sertraline (which also has significant NET and dopamine transporter [DAT] inhibition) (Owens et al., 2001; Tatsumi et al., 1997) had no effect on rMT or aMT in one study (Ilic et al., 2002). Paroxetine (which also has modest NET inhibition as well as anti-muscarinic activity; Sanchez et al., 2014) showed no effect on rMT or aMT (Gerdelat-Mas et al., 2005) with either single-dose or 3-day dosing. Clomipramine, a tricyclic antidepressant that is a highly-potent 5HT inhibitor that also inhibits NET, does increase rMT after i.v. infusion (Manganotti et al., 2001; Minelli et al., 2010), and aMT as well (Manganotti et al., 2001). Interestingly, reboxetine, a selective NET inhibitor (Kasper et al., 2000), decreased rMT in one study (Herwig et al., 2002), though in other studies showed no effect on rMT or aMT (Kuo et al., 2017; Plewnia et al., 2002). Selegiline (also known as L-deprenyl) is a selective and non-reversible inhibitor of monoamine oxidase B isozyme (MAO-B, which preferentially degrades catecholamines over 5HT; Fisar, 2016), and appears to have no effects on rMT or aMT (Ziemann et al., 1997). Finally, mirtazapine is an antagonist at both  $\alpha_2$  adrenergic and 5HT<sub>1B/1D</sub> receptors (inhibitory autoreceptors for NE and 5HT, respectively) and therefore increases synaptic NE and 5HT. It showed no effect on rMT or aMT (Munchau et al., 2005). Taken together, these results suggest that antidepressants with potent 5HT transport inhibition (e.g. citalopram, clomipramine), whether accompanied with NET inhibition or not, decrease cortical excitability, whereas antidepressants with either less-potent 5HT transport inhibition (paroxetine), or alternatively other MOAs such as effects on catecholamine transport (reboxetine) or degradation (selegiline), or 5HT/NE autoreceptor inhibition (mirtazapine), are variable or

**Table 4**  
Excitability and plasticity effects of antidepressant drugs.

| Drug                       | MOA<br>Cortical excitability                           | References                | Dose                         | TMS paradigm | Measure                                | Results   |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|--|---|
| Citalopram                 | 5HT transporter inhibition                             | Minelli et al., 2010      | 40 mg i.v.                   | spTMS        | MEP                                    | ↑ Resting MT 0–3.5 h post                                   |
| Citalopram                 | 5HT and NE transporter inhibition                      | Robol et al., 2004        | 30 mg p.o.                   | spTMS        | MEP                                    | ↑ Resting MT 2.5 h post                                     |
| Clomipramine               | 5HT and NE transporter inhibition                      | Manganotti et al., 2001   | 25 mg i.v.                   | spTMS        | MEP                                    | ↑ Resting and active MT at 4 h post                         |
| Clomipramine               | 5HT <sub>1B/2A</sub> /Alpha <sub>2</sub> AR antagonist | Minelli et al., 2010      | 25 mg i.v.                   | spTMS        | MEP                                    | ↑ Resting MT 0–8 h post                                     |
| Mirtazapine                | 5HT <sub>1B/2A</sub> /Alpha <sub>2</sub> AR antagonist | Munchau et al., 2005      | 30 mg p.o. healthy subjects  | spTMS        | MEP                                    | No effect on rMT or aMT                                     |
| Mirtazapine                | 5HT transporter inhibition                             | Munchau et al., 2005      | 30 mg p.o. Epilepsy patients | spTMS        | MEP                                    | ↓ aMT; no effect on rMT                                     |
| Paroxetine                 | 5HT transporter inhibition                             | Gerdelat-Mas et al., 2005 | 20 mg p.o. × 30 days         | spTMS        | MEP                                    | No effect on resting or active MT                           |
| Paroxetine                 | NET transporter inhibition                             | Gerdelat-Mas et al., 2005 | 20 mg p.o. single-dose       | spTMS        | MEP                                    | No effect on resting or active MT                           |
| Reboxetine                 | NET transporter inhibition                             | Herwig et al., 2002       | 4 mg p.o.                    | spTMS        | MEP                                    | ↓ rMT   |
| Reboxetine                 | NET transporter inhibition                             | Plewnia et al., 2002      | 4 mg, 8 mg p.o.              | spTMS        | MEP                                    | No effect on rMT  |
| Reboxetine                 | NET transporter inhibition                             | Kuo et al., 2017          | 8 mg p.o.                    | spTMS        | MEP                                    | No effect on rMT or aMT                                     |
| Selegiline                 | MAO inhibitor  | Ziemann et al., 1997      | 5 mg p.o.                    | spTMS        | MEP                                    | No effect on resting or active MT                           |
| Sertraline                 | 5HT and DA transporter inhibition                      | Ilic et al., 2002         | 100 mg p.o.                  | spTMS        | MEP                                    | No effect on resting or active MT                           |
| <b>Cortical plasticity</b> |  |                           |                              |              |  |   |
| Citalopram                 | 5HT transporter inhibition                             | Batsikadze et al., 2013   | 20 mg p.o.                   | PAS10        | Serial MEP amplitude                   | ↓ LTD-like response (0–90 min)                              |
| Citalopram                 | 5HT transporter inhibition                             | Batsikadze et al., 2013   | 20 mg p.o.                   | PAS25        | Serial MEP amplitude                   | ↑ LTP-like response (0–30 min)                              |
| Fluoxetine                 | 5HT and NE transporter inhibition                      | Pleger et al., 2004       | 20 mg p.o.                   | spTMS        | Practiced spTMS-induced Movement       | No effect on practice-related changes in motor map          |
|                            |  | McDonnell et al., 2018    | 20 mg p.o.                   | spTMS        | Practiced spTMS-induced thumb movement | No effect on practice-related changes in movement direction |

**Table 5**  
Excitability and plasticity effects of catecholaminergic drugs.

| Drug                         | MOA   | References                       | Dose                                    | TMS paradigm                       | Measure                          | Results   |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Cortical excitability</b> |   |                                  |   |                                    |                                  |   |
| Bromocriptine                | D <sub>2</sub> agonist  | Ziemann et al., 1997             | 5 mg p.o.                               | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| Cabergoline                  | D <sub>2</sub> /5HT <sub>2A</sub> agonist                             | Korchounov et al., 2007          | 2 mg p.o.                               |                                    | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| l-DOPA                       | DA precursor  | Ziemann et al., 1997             | 100/300 mg p.o.                         | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| Amphetamine                  | DAT/NET inhibitor   | Ziemann et al., 2002             | 10 mg p.o.                              | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT  |
| Amphetamine                  | DAT/NET inhibitor   | Ziemann et al., 2002             | 10 mg p.o.                              | 0.1 Hz rTMS + ischemic nerve block | MEP amplitude                    | Trend-level suppression of ↑ MEP  |
| Amphetamine                  | DAT/NET inhibitor   | Borojerdj et al., 2001           | 10 mg p.o.                              | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT  |
| Methylphenidate              | DAT/NET inhibitor   | Gilbert et al., 2006             | 30 mg p.o.                              | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| Antipsychotics               |   |                                  |   |                                    |                                  |   |
| Haloperidol                  | D <sub>2</sub> antagonist; 5HT <sub>2</sub> and adrenergic antagonist | Ziemann et al., 1997             | 2.5 mg p.o.                             | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| Quetiapine                   | D <sub>2</sub> antagonist; 5HT <sub>2</sub> and adrenergic antagonist | Langguth et al., 2008            | 100 mg p.o., or 100 mg p.o. qd X 5 days | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| Sulpiride                    | D <sub>2</sub> /5HT <sub>2</sub> antagonist                           | Ziemann et al., 1997             | 200 mg p.o.                             | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| <b>Adrenergic agents</b>     |   |                                  |   |                                    |                                  |   |
| Guanfacine                   | NET inhibitor   | Gilbert et al., 2006             | 60 mg p.o.                              | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| Yohimbine                    | Alpha <sub>2</sub> AR agonist   | Korchounov 2003                  | 2 mg p.o.                               | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| Yohimbine                    | Alpha <sub>2</sub> AR antagonist                                      | Plewonia et al., 2001            | 20 mg p.o.                              | spTMS                              | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT   |
| <b>Cortical plasticity</b>   |   |                                  |   |                                    |                                  |   |
| Pergolide                    | D <sub>1</sub> /D <sub>2</sub> agonist                                | Lang et al., 2008                | 0.125 mg p.o.                           | 1 Hz rTMS                          | MEP amplitude                    | ↑ MEP suppression 0–20 min post   |
| Bromocriptine                | D <sub>2</sub> agonist  | Fresnoza et al., 2014            | 2.5, 10, 20 mg p.o.                     | PAS25                              | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTP-like response (0–30 min) all doses; abolished for 2.5 and 20 mg doses     |
| Bromocriptine                | D <sub>2</sub> agonist  | Fresnoza et al., 2014            | 2 mg p.o.                               | PAS10                              | MEP amplitude                    | LTD-like response (0–90 min) abolished for 2.5 and 20 mg doses; 10 mg no effect |
| Cabergoline                  | D <sub>2</sub> agonist  | Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011     | 2 mg p.o.                               | PAS25                              | MEP amplitude                    | No effect   |
| Cabergoline                  | D <sub>2</sub> agonist  | Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006    | 2 mg p.o.                               | spTMS                              | Practiced spTMS-induced movement | ↑ Practice effect during/after practice   |
| Ropinirole                   | D <sub>2</sub> /D <sub>3</sub> agonist                                | Monte-Silva et al., 2009         | 0.125, 0.25, 0.5, 1.0 mg p.o.           | PAS25                              | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished) at 0.125 and 1.0 mg; no effect at any dose      |
| Ropinirole                   | D <sub>2</sub> /D <sub>3</sub> agonist                                | Monte-Silva et al., 2009         | 0.125, 0.25, 0.5, 1.0 mg p.o.           | PAS10                              | MEP amplitude                    | No effect at any dose   |
| Non-selective DA agents      |   |                                  |   |                                    |                                  |   |
| l-DOPA                       | DA precursor  | Kuo et al., 2008                 | 100 mg p.o.                             | PAS25                              | MEP amplitude                    | ↑ LTP-like response (5–120 min post)  |
| l-DOPA                       | DA precursor  | Thiruganasambandam et al., 2011a | 25, 100, or 200 mg p.o.                 | PAS25                              | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished) 25 mg; prolonged effect 100 mg; reversed 200 mg |
| l-DOPA                       | DA precursor  | Thiruganasambandam et al., 2011a | 25, 100, or 200 mg p.o.                 | PAS10                              | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTD-like response (abolished) 25 mg; no effect 100 mg; prolonged 200 mg       |
| Amphetamine                  | DAT and NET inhibitor   | Tegenthoff et al., 2004          | 20 mg p.o.                              | spTMS                              | Practiced spTMS-induced movement | ↑ practice-related changes in motor map   |
| Methylphenidate              | DAT and NET inhibitor   | Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011     | 40 mg p.o.                              | PAS25                              | MEP Amplitude                    | No effect   |
| Methylphenidate              | DAT and NET inhibitor   | Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006    | 40 mg p.o.                              | spTMS                              | Practiced spTMS-induced movement | ↑ Practice effect during/after practice   |
| Antipsychotics               |   |                                  |   |                                    |                                  |   |
| Haloperidol                  | D <sub>2</sub> antagonist; 5HT <sub>2</sub> and adrenergic antagonist | Meintzschel 2006                 | 2.5 mg p.o.                             | PAS25                              | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished)   |
| Haloperidol                  | D <sub>2</sub> antagonist; 5HT <sub>2</sub> and adrenergic antagonist | Meintzschel 2006                 | 2.5 mg p.o.                             | spTMS                              | Practiced spTMS-induced movement | ↓ Practice effect during/after practice (abolished)                             |
| Sulpiride                    | D <sub>2</sub> and 5HT <sub>2</sub> antagonist                        | Monte-Silva et al., 2011         | 400 mg p.o.                             | iTBS                               | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished)   |
| Sulpiride                    | D <sub>2</sub> and 5HT <sub>2</sub> antagonist                        | Monte-Silva et al., 2011         | 400 mg p.o.                             | cTBS                               | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTD-like response (abolished)   |
| Sulpiride                    | D <sub>2</sub> and 5HT <sub>2</sub> antagonist                        | Nitsche et al., 2009             | 400 mg                                  | PAS25                              | MEP amplitude                    | Trend-level ↑ LTP-like response (5 min post)                                    |
| Sulpiride                    | D <sub>2</sub> and 5HT <sub>2</sub> antagonist                        | Nitsche et al., 2009             | 400 mg                                  | PAS10                              | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTD-like response (abolished)   |

(continued on next page)

Table 5 (continued)

| Drug               | MOA                                      | References                    | Dose          | TMS paradigm | Measure                          | Results   |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Sulpiride + L-DOPA | D <sub>2</sub> antagonist + DA precursor | Nitsche et al., 2009          | 400 mg/100 mg | PAS25        | MEP amplitude                    | Trend-level ↑ LTP-like response (5–30 min post) |
| Sulpiride + L-DOPA |  | Nitsche et al., 2009          |               | PAS10        | MEP Amplitude                    | No effect                                       |
| Adrenergic agents  |  | Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011  | 1 mg p.o.     | PAS25        | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTP-like response (abolished)                 |
| Prazosin           | α <sub>1</sub> antagonist                | Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006 | 1 mg p.o.     | spTMS        | Practiced spTMS-induced movement | Non-sig ↑ effect during practice                |

ineffective at altering cortical excitability measured with spTMS.

Only three studies have been conducted testing antidepressant effects on plasticity measures with TMS. In one (Batsikadze et al., 2013), citalopram decreased the LTD-like MEP response in the PAS10 paradigm between 0 and 90 min post-dose, and increased the LTP-like response in the PAS25 paradigm between 0 and 30 min post-dos. In contrast, fluoxetine (an SSRI with relatively greater affinity for NET) had no effect on practice-related changes in topographic mapping of motor activity (Pleger et al., 2004), or on practice-related changes in TMS-induced thumb movements (McDonnell et al., 2018). The relatively rapid effects of citalopram in the first of these studies suggests an effect mediated by 5HT receptor-linked effects on neuronal membrane excitability rather than slower downstream, intracellular effects on second messenger systems and gene expression.

#### 4.1. Catecholamine agents

This class of drugs is summarized in Table 5. There is a diversity of drugs in the pharmacopoeia that have primary effects on either NE and/or dopamine (DA). These include the classic psychostimulants, which are generally potent NET and DAT inhibitors (Minzenberg, 2012). Amphetamine has no effect on rMT (Boroojerdi et al., 2001; Ziemann et al., 1997), and only a trend-level suppression of the increased MEP observed with 0.1 Hz rTMS and transient ischemic nerve block (Ziemann et al., 2002). Neither methylphenidate (Gilbert et al., 2006) nor L-DOPA, a precursor to DA (dosed with benzaseride to block peripheral drug conversion), alter rMT or aMT (Ziemann et al., 1997). No effect on rMT or aMT was observed with the relatively selective D<sub>2</sub> agonists bromocriptine (Ziemann et al., 1997) or cabergoline (Korchounov et al., 2007). Adrenergic drugs appear to have no effect on rMT or aMT, including the highly-selective NET inhibitor atomoxetine (Gilbert et al., 2006), the α<sub>2</sub> agonist guanfacine (Boroojerdi et al., 2001) or the α<sub>2</sub> antagonist yohimbine (Plewnia et al., 2001). Similarly, antipsychotics appear to have no effect on rMT or aMT. This includes the potent (and relatively selective) D<sub>2</sub> antagonist haloperidol (Ziemann et al., 1997), the mixed D<sub>2</sub>/5HT<sub>2</sub> antagonist sulpiride (Ziemann et al., 1997) and quetiapine (a potent 5HT<sub>2</sub> antagonist but relatively weak D<sub>2</sub> antagonist; (Arnt, 1998), the latter drug administered either as single-dose or once-daily for 5 days (Langguth et al., 2008).

The relative lack of effect on cortical excitability measured with TMS contrasts sharply with the consistent effects of these drugs on plasticity measures with TMS. For example, L-DOPA alters LTP-like responses to PAS25, in a complex, non-linear dose-response pattern. 100 mg enhanced the LTP-like response between 5 and 120 min post-dose in one study (Kuo et al., 2008); in another study using PAS25, 25 mg abolished this response, whereas 100 mg prolonged the LTP-like response after a delay, and 200 mg reversed the LTP-like response altogether (Thirugnanasambandam et al., 2011b). The MEP response to PAS10 was comparable but not identical in this same study: 25 mg showed the same pattern of effects, 100 mg showed no effect, and 200 mg prolonged rather than reversed the LTP-like effect (Thirugnanasambandam et al., 2011b). Methylphenidate, a transport inhibitor with relatively greater potency at DAT than NET, enhanced the practice effect on spTMS-induced movement, both during and after practice (Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006), though it failed to modify MEP enhancement with PAS25 (Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011). Amphetamine also enhanced practice-related changes in cortical motor mapping (Tegenthoff et al., 2004). The selective DA agents also show consistent effects on plasticity. Pergolide, a mixed D<sub>1</sub>/D<sub>2</sub> agonist, increased the MEP suppression induced with 1 Hz rTMS between 0 and 20 min post-dose (Lang et al., 2008). Bromocriptine attenuated the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 at 2.5, 10 and 20 mg between 0 and 30 min post-dose, with the high and low doses abolishing the MEP effect; a similar pattern was found in PAS10 though the intermediate 10 mg dose had no effect (Fresnoza et al., 2014). Cabergoline in contrast, had no

effect on MEP response to PAS25 (Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011), though it did increase the practice effect on spTMS-induced movement both during and after the practice period (Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006). And ropinirole, a D<sub>2</sub>/D<sub>3</sub> agonist, abolished the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 at 0.125 and 1 mg, with no effect at the intermediate dose of 0.5 mg, nor drug effect on MEP response to PAS10 at any of these doses (Monte-Silva et al., 2009). Antipsychotics also show consistent effects to attenuate plasticity processes. Haloperidol abolished the MEP response to PAS25 (Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011) and the practice effect on spTMS-induced movement, both during and after practice (Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006). Sulpiride abolished the LTP-like response to iTBS and the LTD-like MEP response to cTBS (Monte-Silva et al., 2011), and abolished the LTD-like MEP response to PAS10 (Nitsche et al., 2009). This dose did show a trend-level increase in the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 at 5 min post-dose, but otherwise was without effect in this experimental paradigm (Nitsche et al., 2009). Two studies tested the plasticity effects of prazosin, which is a relatively selective  $\alpha_1$  adrenergic receptor antagonist currently in clinical use for nightmares associated with PTSD. Prazosin abolished the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 (Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011), though it also showed a trend-level increase in the practice effect on spTMS-induced movement, during the practice phase (Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006).

One notable feature in this literature, particularly observed with DA drug effects on plasticity processes, is the reasonably consistent finding of non-linear effects, typically with intermediate doses showing lesser effects than high or low doses. This may represent non-linear effects at individual DA receptor subtypes or possibly a more complex scenario representing the interaction of DA receptor subtypes. This could include the balance of D<sub>1</sub> and D<sub>2</sub> (or D<sub>3</sub>) binding, as D<sub>1</sub>- and D<sub>2</sub>-like receptors have opposing effects on cyclic-AMP-dependent intracellular processes. Alternatively, it could reflect opposing effects on DA signaling of activation at post-synaptic DA receptors versus presynaptic (terminal) autoreceptors, which generally bind the native ligand with relatively higher affinity and inhibit DA release. For instance, it is well-established that antipsychotics potently block both pre- and post-synaptic D<sub>2</sub> receptors, leading to complex changes in both the balance of DA release versus post-synaptic receptor activation on one hand, and the balance between D<sub>1</sub> and D<sub>2</sub> receptor activation on the other. These competing scenarios may be addressed using drug-combination study designs. In one such example (Nitsche et al., 2009), co-administration of L-DOPA with sulpiride reversed the attenuated LTD-like MEP response to PAS10 found with sulpiride alone, and also led to a more sustained (though still trend-level) increase in MEP response to PAS25, again compared to sulpiride alone. These latter findings suggest that altering the balance between D<sub>1</sub> and D<sub>2</sub> receptor binding may in turn affect plasticity responses to TMS. One clinical implication of this type of result is that drug treatment regimens that include multiple drugs with divergent actions within the same neurochemical system (e.g., DA) may have complex, paradoxical, or unpredictable effects on the clinical response to TMS.

#### 4.2. Cholinergic agents

This class of drugs is summarized in Table 6. Tacrine is an acetylcholine (ACh) esterase inhibitor, used primarily in degenerative disorders of cognition such as Alzheimer's disease. It showed no effect on rMT or aMT (Korchounov et al., 2005). Similarly, atropine, a non-selective muscarinic receptor antagonist, failed to modify rMT (Liepert et al., 2001). In contrast, scopolamine, another non-selective muscarinic antagonist, decreased rMT and showed a trend-level decrease of aMT (Di Lazzaro et al., 2000b). As a class, cholinergic drugs show a general pattern analogous to that of catecholaminergic drugs (i.e., minimal effects on cortical excitability, and significant, consistent effects on cortical plasticity). For example, a different acetylcholinesterase inhibitor, rivastigmine, enhanced and prolonged both

the LTP-like MEP response in PAS25, and the LTD-like effect of PAS10 (Kuo et al., 2007); tacrine increased the practice effect on spTMS-induced movement after the practice period (Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006), though it had no effect on LTP-like MEP responses to PAS25 (Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011). Direct ACh receptor-binding drugs do show consistent effects on plasticity processes. Biperiden, a non-selective muscarinic antagonist, decreased the LTP-like response to PAS25 (Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011) and the practice effect on spTMS-induced movement, both during and after the practice period (Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006). Nicotine, in contrast, has complex, non-linear effects on plasticity processes. Nicotine nasal spray decreased the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 between 0 and 30 min post-dose, and the LTD-like response to PAS10 between 0 and 90 min post-dose (Grundey et al., 2012). A nicotine oral lozenge, however, showed a biphasic effect on the LTP-like response to iTBS, with attenuation at 5 min and then enhancement at 10–40 min post-dose (Swaine et al., 2009). A transdermal nicotine dose extended the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 by 30 min, yet abolished the LTD-like MEP response to PAS10 (Thirugnanasambandam et al., 2011a). Varenicline, a partial agonist at the  $\alpha_4\beta_2$ -nicotinic receptor with efficacy for tobacco smoking cessation, increased the LTP-like MEP response to PAS25 between 0 and 60 min post-dose, with the lowest dose decreasing the LTD-like MEP response to PAS10 between 0 and 60 min post-dose (Batsikadze et al., 2013). Taken together, cholinergic modulation of TMS plasticity effects is a complex, multi-phasic or non-linear function of dose, similar to catecholamine effects, reflecting the dynamics of cholinergic signaling (Picciotto et al., 2012).

#### 4.3. Miscellaneous agents

These drugs are summarized in Table 7. Lithium had no effect on rMT or aMT at any of 3 doses (Hubers et al., 2014), though the intermediate dose changed the LTD-like MEP response to PAS22 to a LTP-like pattern. There was a non-significant increase in the positive MEP response among subjects who initially showed a “paradoxical” LTP-like MEP response without drug, with no effect observed among LTD-like responders in PAS15 (Voytovich et al., 2012). Rimonabant is a cannabinoid-1 receptor antagonist which was briefly in use for weight loss, though it was later removed from the US market due to concerns about induction of suicidal ideation. This drug decreased aMT with a trend-level decrease in rMT as well (Oliviero et al., 2012). And amantadine, a drug with diverse neurochemical actions (Perez-Lloret and Rascol, 2018), had no effect on rMT or aMT (Reis et al., 2006) (Table 7).

#### 4.4. Implications for clinical psychiatry and future research directions

Changes in both cortical excitability and plasticity processes have clear consequences for the use of TMS. In routine clinical practice, when patients adjust concurrent medications with excitability effects (e.g. antiepileptic agents), clinicians will typically re-evaluate excitability measured by MT and adjust the stimulation intensity accordingly. This simple strategy compensates for the drug effect and may compensate for any potential diminution of clinical efficacy. Increases in stimulation intensity, however, may result in an increased incidence of adverse events from rTMS such as headache or discomfort, stimulation of peripheral nerves in the head, and other side effects such as anxiety or insomnia. It also should be noted also that it remains unclear whether changes in the “set-point” of cortical excitability have a clinically significant effect on the brain's potential for plasticity responses and therapeutic efficacy (Keck et al., 2017). For instance, altered excitation/inhibition balance has been suggested in disorders such as schizophrenia and autism (Foss-Feig et al., 2017), and it remains possible that interventions such as rTMS or psychotropic drugs remediate these disturbances. In general, meta-plasticity factors have yet to be fully-investigated in humans, yet it seems likely that the brain's capacity for plasticity may not be a simple linear function of

**Table 6**  
Excitability and plasticity effects of cholinergic drugs.

| Drug                       | MOA  | References                        | Dose                            | TMS paradigm | Measure                          | Results  |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Atropine                   | Muscarinic antagonist                                    | Liepert et al., 2001              | 1 mg p.o.                       | spTMS        | MEP                              | No effect on rMT   |
| Scopolamine                | Muscarinic antagonist                                    | Di Lazzaro et al., 2000a,b        | 0.006 mg/kg i.v.                | spTMS        | MEP                              | ↓ rMT; trend-level ↓ aMT                                     |
| Tacrine                    | Acetylcholinesterase inhibitor                           | Korchounov et al., 2005           | 40 mg p.o.                      | spTMS        | MEP                              | No effect on rMT or aMT                                      |
| <b>Cortical plasticity</b> |  |                                   |                                 |              |                                  |  |
| Biperiden                  | Non-selective muscarinic antagonist                      | Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011      | 8 mg p.o.                       | PAS25        | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTP-like response  |
| Biperiden                  | Non-selective muscarinic antagonist                      | Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006     | 8 mg p.o.                       | spTMS        | Practiced spTMS-Induced Movement | ↓ practice effect during/after practice (abolished)          |
| Nicotine                   | Nicotinic agonist  | Grundey et al., 2012              | 1 mg nasal spray                | PAS25        | Serial MEP amplitude             | ↓ LTP-like response (0–30 min)                               |
| Nicotine                   | Nicotinic agonist  | Grundey et al., 2012              |                                 | PAS10        |                                  | ↓ LTD-like response (0–90 min)                               |
| Nicotine                   | Nicotinic agonist  | Swayne et al., 2009               | 4 mg lozenge p.o.               | iTBS         | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTP-like response (5 min); ↑ LTP-like response (10–40 min) |
| Nicotine                   | Nicotinic agonist  | Thirugnanasambandam et al., 2011b | 15 mg/16 h transdermal          | PAS25        | MEP amplitude                    | LTP-like response extended 30 min                            |
| Nicotine                   | Nicotinic agonist  | Thirugnanasambandam et al., 2011b |                                 | PAS10        | MEP amplitude                    | ↓ LTD-like response (abolished)                              |
| Rivastigmine               | Acetylcholinesterase inhibitor                           | Kuo et al., 2007                  | 3 mg p.o.                       | PAS25        | MEP amplitude                    | ↑ LTP-like response (20–30 min post)                         |
| Rivastigmine               | Acetylcholinesterase inhibitor                           | Kuo et al., 2007                  |                                 | PAS10        | MEP amplitude                    | ↑ LTD-like response (10–120 min post)                        |
| Tacrine                    | Acetylcholinesterase inhibitor                           | Korchounov and Ziemann, 2011      | 40 mg p.o.                      | PAS25        | MEP amplitude                    | No effect  |
| Tacrine                    | Acetylcholinesterase inhibitor                           | Meintzschel and Ziemann, 2006     | 40 mg p.o.                      | spTMS        | Practiced spTMS-induced movement | ↑ Practice effect after practice                             |
| Varenicline                | α <sub>4</sub> β <sub>2</sub> -nicotinic partial agonist | Batsikadze, 2015                  | 0.1, 0.2, or 0.3 mg p.o. vs PLC | PAS25        | Serial MEP Amplitude             | ↑ LTP-like response (0–60 min) all doses                     |
| Varenicline                | α <sub>4</sub> β <sub>2</sub> -nicotinic partial agonist | Batsikadze, 2015                  |                                 | PAS10        |                                  | ↓ LTD-like response (0–60 min) 0.1 mg dose only              |

**Table 7**  
Excitability and plasticity effects of miscellaneous psychotropic drugs.

| Drug                         | MOA                               | Dose                   | References             | TMS paradigm | Measure | Results  |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------|---------|--|
| <b>Cortical excitability</b> |                                   |                        |                        |              |         |  |
| Amantadine                   | Multiple actions                  | 50, 100 mg p.o.        | Reis et al., 2006      | spTMS        | MEP     | No effect on rMT or aMT  |
| Lithium                      | Multiple actions                  | 450, 900, 1350 mg p.o. | Hubers et al., 2014    | spTMS        | MEP     | No effect on rMT or aMT  |
| Rimonabant                   | Cannabinoid 1 receptor antagonist | 20 mg p.o.             | Oliviero et al., 2012  | spTMS        | MEP     | Trend-level ↓ rMT; sig ↓ aMT   |
| <b>Cortical plasticity</b>   |                                   |                        |                        |              |         |  |
| Lithium                      | Multiple actions                  | 900 mg p.o.            | Voytovich et al., 2012 | PAS22        |         | Reversed LTD-like responders to LTP-like; non-sig ↑ on LTP-like responders |
| Lithium                      |                                   |                        | Voytovich et al., 2012 | PAS15        |         | No effect on LTD-like responders   |

**Table 8**  
Summary of drug class effects on cortical excitability and plasticity.

| Drug Class                                      | Excitability       | Plasticity         | Notes on plasticity effects                         |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|---|
| Glutamate (NMDAR) antagonists                   | ±                  | ↓ LTP ↓ LTD        |   |
| Antiepileptic agents                            |                    |                    |   |
| Carbamazepine                                   | ↓                  | ↓ facilitation     |   |
| Gabapentin                                      | ±                  | ↓ facilitation     |   |
| Lamotrigine                                     | ↓                  | ↑ LTP ↓ LTD        | Effects on paradoxical LTD in PAS25                 |
| Topiramate                                      | ± (↓ facilitation) | –                  |   |
| Valproic Acid                                   | ±                  | ND                 |   |
| Voltage-gated Ca <sup>2+</sup> channel blockers | ND                 | ↓ LTP              | Dose-related  |
| GABA agonists                                   |                    |                    |   |
| GABA-A agents                                   | –                  | ±                  |   |
| GABA-B agents                                   | –                  | Switch LTP to LTD  |   |
| Antidepressants                                 |                    |                    |   |
| TCAs  | ↓                  | ND                 |   |
| SSRIs   | ↓                  | ↑ LTP ↓ LTD        |   |
| MAOIs   | –                  | ND                 |   |
| Atypical ADDs                                   | –                  | ND                 |   |
| Selective DA agents                             | ±                  | ↓ LTP              | Effects for low & high doses; medium dose no effect |
| Non-selective DA agonists                       | –                  | Biphasic ↑ & ↓ LTP | Effects for low & high doses; medium dose no effect |
| Antipsychotics                                  |                    |                    |   |
| Typical APDs                                    | –                  | ↓ LTP              |   |
| Atypical APDs                                   | –                  | ↑ & ↓ LTP ↓ LTD    | LTD effect blocked with co-admin L-DOPA             |
| Adrenergic agonists                             | –                  | ↓ LTP              |   |
| Cholinergic Antagonists                         | ±                  | ↓ LTP              |   |
| Cholinergic agonists                            |                    |                    |   |
| Nicotine  | ND                 | ↓ LTP ↓ LTD        | Biphasic ↓ LTP & ↑ LTP with iTBS                    |
| Varenicline                                     | ND                 | ↑ LTP ↓ LTD        | ↑ LTP all doses; ↓ LTD 0.1 mg dose only             |
| AChE inhibitors                                 | –                  | ↑ LTP              |   |
| Lithium   | –                  | Switch LTD to LTP  |   |
| Cannabinoid antagonist                          | ↓                  | ND                 |   |

excitability, especially given the myriad cellular and local-circuit processes that affect excitability of individual neurons and populations of neurons. Furthermore, as discussed above, excitability generally is assessed in motor cortex, while treatment usually is administered to association cortices that have a different neuron populations, laminar structure, and short- and long-range connectivity, and may have distinct excitability profiles, including with TMS (Hill et al., 2016; Kahkonen et al., 2004).

In addition, interventions such as TMS or pharmacology are well-known to be state-dependent, i.e. the initial state of the brain determines how the brain responds to the intervention (Silvanto et al., 2008). The effects of arousal state, attentional focus, priming interventions, or recent environmental exposures can each affect the degree or even the direction of brain and behavioral responses to TMS, for instance. Because many classes of psychotropic drugs also affect global processes such as arousal state, it seems likely that the effects of these drugs on physiological (and clinical) responses to TMS could be mediated via these state-dependent processes. This scenario may be challenging to fully-evaluate, given the need for on-line monitoring of the state-related process that is hypothesized to be in effect, in concert with the intervention and the outcome measure. However, these types of investigations may be uniquely informative of how drugs and TMS

effects interact.

Neural plasticity may be manifest in time-varying, experience-dependent changes in excitability, but also can be expressed in changes in other aspects of neural signaling or structural changes (Bruehl-Jungerman et al., 2007). Antidepressant action for instance is linked with synaptogenesis and/or neurogenesis (Eliwa et al., 2017; Santarelli et al., 2003), and therefore essential physiological effects of interventions may be independent of direct neurochemical changes in excitability *per se*. Therefore, concurrent medications which alter plasticity processes may exert important effects on therapeutic responses to rTMS. Drugs which have simple, monotonic effects to attenuate plasticity (e.g. ion-channel blockers) may therefore emerge as relatively contraindicated with rTMS treatment, if evidence becomes available that these drugs negatively impact clinical outcome. For many other psychotropic drug classes, the scenario may be more complex, given the non-linear profile of dose-response effects. Dopaminergic drugs represent a paradigmatic example. These drugs as a rule have a restricted dose range where outcomes are optimized (whether biological effects, cognitive performance, or target symptom severity) and beyond which symptoms may be exacerbated. These non-linear dynamics at individual receptor subtypes may reflect not only the degree of receptor activation, but also the balance of activation across receptor subtypes

with opponent actions and varying time-scales of effects manifest in target neuron subpopulations. The optimal drug regimen for concurrent rTMS treatment may therefore require careful titration of dose in the face of ongoing TMS effects, which could be challenging given the time-varying emergence of clinical response in routine rTMS treatment. In addition, the considerable heterogeneity in pharmacological actions of both individual drugs and drug classes has been widely appreciated, and it remains possible that clinical efficacy for major psychiatric illnesses requires the interaction at multiple targets of individual drugs (Roth et al., 2004). Drug combination studies (e.g. Wankerl et al., 2010; Nitsche et al., 2009) may aid in the disambiguation of experimental effects to inform this issue.

It is important to consider that this empirical literature (summarized in Table 8) largely employs healthy subject samples, with single-dose or very short-term drug treatment regimens, often with doses that are subtherapeutic for clinical conditions, and almost exclusively with experimental TMS paradigms that differ from the rTMS that is used clinically. Therefore, each of these study design features will have to be adjusted in future work for the clinical scenario, to more directly inform how these modulatory effects may translate to clinical effects and outcomes.

Given the current state of our knowledge, a simple dictum is to aim for parsimony in concurrent drug treatment, with the least-burdensome regimen and highest level of evidence to support the use of specific agents in the clinical conditions under treatment. This can be challenging, given that at present, most TMS treatment candidates are highly treatment-resistant, often with significant co-morbid conditions, and polypharmacy therefore tends to be the rule rather than the exception. Nonetheless, some clinical strategies commonly-used for these patients have scant supporting evidence, such as the use of antiepileptic drugs in unipolar major depression, or the concurrent use of multiple antidepressants within a single subcategory. These strategies may have additive or even synergistic effects to attenuate plasticity and therefore they should be used only with caution. A more intriguing consideration is the identification or development of drugs which may actually *promote* plasticity in a manner that can augment the clinical response to rTMS. This would represent a major advance, to not merely avoid drugs that blunt rTMS efficacy, but rather to establish multi-modal treatment to enhance outcome over that found in either component alone. Cortical plasticity is either mediated or modulated by a number of neurotransmitter receptors that are targeted by the current pharmacopoeia, such as NMDAR, AMPA, D1 and beta-adrenergic receptors (Gu, 2002), and in principle these drugs could work in a synergistic manner to plasticity-induction with rTMS. While drugs with direct effects on effectors of plasticity (e.g. AMPAkinase) have not yet gained use in psychiatry, there is evidence for a causal role of plasticity in the behavioral effects of existing antidepressants (Santarelli et al., 2003). There is also evidence for synergistic effects with the integration of antidepressant medication and psychotherapy, at least for certain patient populations (Karyotaki et al., 2016), and in principle, this should be attainable for integrating drugs and device-based interventions such as TMS. It would be prudent for the field to engage in lines of investigation such as these, to better-serve our patients who do not benefit from simpler, more conventional treatment approaches.

#### Role of funding source

The present work was supported by the Neuromodulation Division at the Semel Institute, Department of Psychiatry, UCLA School of Medicine.

#### Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

#### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**M.J. Minzenberg:** Investigation, Writing - original draft.  
**A.F. Leuchter:** Conceptualization, Writing - original draft.

#### Acknowledgments

The authors have no acknowledgments.

#### Supplementary materials

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:10.1016/j.jad.2019.04.067.

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