Exploring the fascinating world of insect Orcokinins: A nature's tiny messengers

Alagesan Keerthana, Logeswaran K. and Vinod Kumar Dubey

Insects play a crucial role not just as pollinators and decomposers, but also as subjects of scientific curiosity. One such area that has piqued the interest of researchers is the study of neuropeptides in insects, particularly orcokinins. Orcokinins are a class of neuropeptides that play critical roles in the nervous systems of insects and other arthropods. These small, protein like molecules function as chemical messengers, facilitating communication between neurons and influencing a variety of physiological processes. Initially discovered in the crayfish *Orconectes limosus*, orcokinins have since been identified in a wide range of insect species.

Orcokinins are involved in several key functions, including the regulation of muscle contractions, modulation of heart rate, and coordination of circadian rhythms. They are particularly significant in the neuroendocrine regulation of ecdysis (the process of moulting) and reproduction, making them essential for the growth, development, and reproductive success of insects. Given their diverse roles, orcokinins are of great interest to researchers aiming to understand the complex hormonal and neural networks that govern insect behavior and physiology.

In addition to their biological significance, orcokinins present potential targets for pest control strategies. By disrupting the normal functioning of these neuropeptides, it may be possible to develop novel methods for managing pest populations, thereby reducing the reliance on traditional chemical insecticides. This dual significance in both fundamental research and applied science underscores the importance of studying orcokinins within the broader context of neuroendocrinology and evolutionary biology.

What is Insect Orcokinins?

The term "orcokinin" is derived from two Greek words "orcos" (pulse) and "kinein" (to move). Orcokinins (OKs) are neuropeptides found in insects. They were initially identified in crustaceans due to their myotropic activity. In insects, the OK gene gives rise to two distinct families of conserved mature neuropeptides: OKA and OKB. Although orcokinins are well-conserved across insect species, their precise physiological role remains elusive. These peptides are synthesized in the nervous tissues and act on specific receptors, influencing various physiological processes such as energy metabolism, osmoregulation, and mating behaviour in insects as summarized in (Table 1 and Fig.1). These peptides are characterized by a conserved N-terminal motif Asn-Phe-Asp-Glu-Ile-Asp-Arg (NFDEIDR). The C-terminal sequences are divergent among the isoforms.

Significance of Orcokinins in Pest Management

The study of orcokinins is not merely an academic interest; it holds practical implications for pest management and eco-friendly agriculture. By understanding the roles of these neuropeptides, researchers can aim to develop targeted strategies for pest control that minimize the environmental impact. Modulating orcokinin pathways could potentially disrupt essential physiological processes in pests, offering a more sustainable and eco-friendly approach to pest management.

Challenges and Future Directions

1. The diversity of insect species adds another layer of complexity, requiring a detailed understanding of orcokinins across different taxa.

Table 1: Roles of Orcokinins in Insect Physiology

Insect Species		Role of Orcokinin in Insect Physiology	References
Common Name	Scientific Name		
Fruit fly	*Drosophila melanogaster* Meigen	Involvement in the control of reproductive processes	Silva et al., 2021
		Regulation of mating behaviours	
Mosquito	*Anopheles albimanus* Wiedemann	Regulation of ecdysis	Alvarado-Delgado et al., 2018
		Involvement in the control of reproductive processes	
Cockroach	*Leucophaea maderae* Korchi	Regulation of circadian locomotor activity	Wei and stengl, 2011
Silkworm	*Bombyx mori* Linnaeus	Involvement in neuronal regulation of ecdystero-dogenesis	Tanaka, 2021
Kissing bug	*Rhodnius prolixus* Stal	Regulation of ecdysis	Wulff et al., 2018
Red flour beetle	*Tribolium castaneum* Herbst	Involvement in awakening activities and controlling circadian rhythms.	Jiang et al., 2015

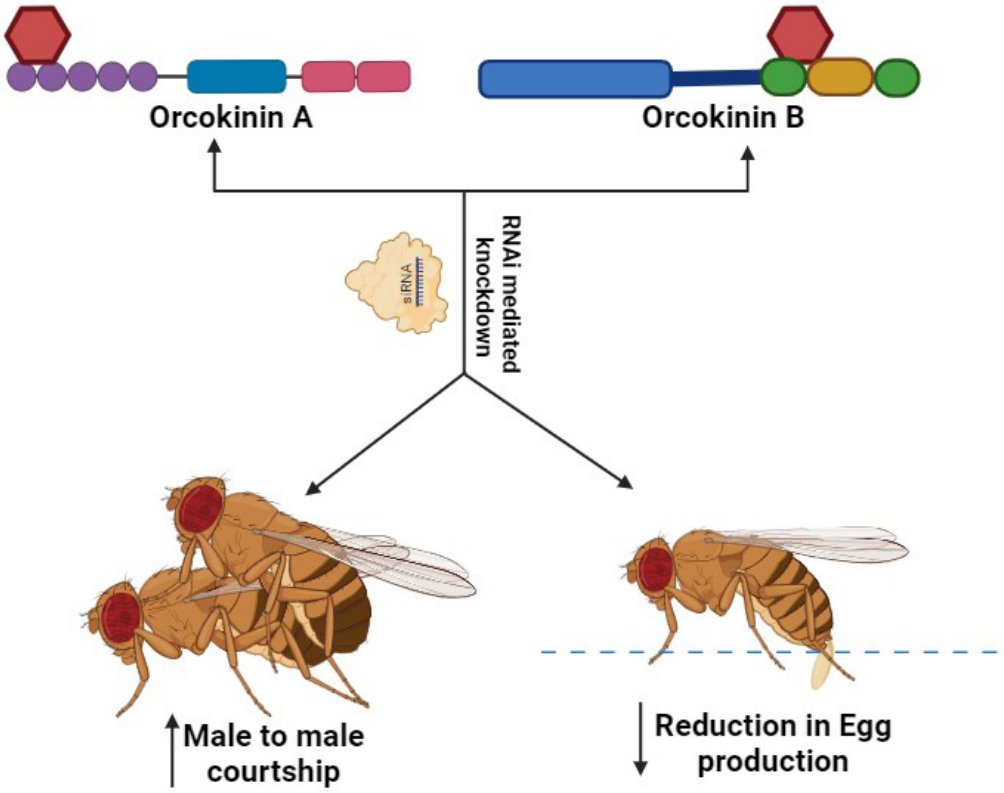

Fig. 1: Regulation of mating behaviours in ***D. melanogaster***

2. Researchers also face challenges in unravelling the complexity of neuropeptide signalling and its integration into broader physiological networks

The future of orcokinin research holds promising outcomes as scientists delve deeper into the molecular and physiological intricacies of these neuropeptides. Advancements in genomics, proteomics, and neuroimaging techniques will likely contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of orcokinins and their roles in insect biology.

Conclusion

Insect orcokinins represent a captivating avenue of scientific inquiry, offering insights into the intricate web of molecular signalling that governs insect physiology. As researchers continue to unlock the secrets of these tiny messengers, the potential applications in pest management and agriculture underscore the importance of understanding the roles these neuropeptides play in the lives of insects. The world of orcokinins is undoubtedly complex, but its exploration promises a deeper understanding of insect biology and novel practical solutions for the sustainable management of insect pests.

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AUTHORS

Alagesan Keerthana*
Department of Agricultural Entomology, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore-641003
Tamil Nadu, India

Logeswaran K
Division of Entomology & Nematology, Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bangalore-560089
Karnataka, India

Vinod Kumar Dubey
Department of Entomology, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa, Samastipur-848125
Bihar, India

*E-mail: alagesankeerthana@gmail.com