

• 研究构想(Conceptual Framework) •

催产素影响条件化恐惧情绪加工的 认知机制及神经基础*

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摘要 恐惧是一种与进化密切相关的情绪, 对人类的生存与适应具有重要价值。过度的恐惧可能会导致恐惧症、焦虑症和创伤后应激障碍等病理性恐惧的产生。而催产素对各种病理性恐惧的干预和治疗具有重要的价值。因此, 研究拟采用行为和 fMRI 技术, 系统探究催产素影响条件化恐惧情绪加工的认知神经机制。重点关注: (1)催产素影响恐惧习得的认知神经机制; (2)催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固的认知神经机制; (3)催产素影响恐惧记忆再巩固的认知神经机制; (4)催产素影响恐惧消退的认知神经机制。这项研究的开展对于探究催产素影响条件化恐惧情绪加工的认知神经机制具有很高的科学价值, 对于各种病理性恐惧的干预与治疗也具有重要的应用价值。

关键词 恐惧, 情绪记忆, 杏仁核, 腹内侧前额叶, 认知神经机制

分类号 B842; B845

1 研究意义

恐惧是一种与进化密切相关的情绪, 它可以激发一系列的防御机制, 对人类的生存具有重要适应性价值。然而, 当动物或人类长期处于恐惧状态时, 可能发展为焦虑症、恐惧症和创伤后应激障碍(posttraumatic stress disorder, PTSD)等精神疾病, 对其身心健康和发展都会造成严重的负面影响。条件性恐惧以巴甫洛夫经典条件反射为基础, 是研究恐惧症、焦虑症和 PTSD 等相关恐惧情绪障碍的经典动物模型。催产素(oxytocin, OXT)又被称为缩宫素, 是一种产生自下丘脑的神经肽, 同时作用于外周神经系统和中枢神经系统(MacDonald & MacDonald, 2010)。下丘脑的催产素神经元投射到杏仁核、海马、中脑和额叶等脑区, 同时催产素也调节着下丘脑-垂体-肾上腺(HPA)轴和自主神经系统的功能, 从而对恐惧习

得和消退过程发挥调控作用(Hasan et al., 2019)。催产素在社会认知、情绪和记忆等方面发挥着重要作用(Bartz et al., 2011; Campbell, 2010); 同时, 在恐惧症、焦虑症和 PTSD 等情绪障碍的临床治疗和干预中也具有重要的价值(Berardis et al., 2013; MacDonald & Feifel, 2014; Rich & Caldwell, 2015)。

虽然, 先前研究者对催产素影响恐惧习得与表达和恐惧消退的认知神经机制开展了相关研究(Cavalli et al., 2017; Eckstein et al., 2015; Eckstein et al., 2017; Eckstein et al., 2016; Hu et al., 2019; Petrovic et al., 2008), 然而, 这些研究并没有从脑网络(习得网络与消退网络)交互角度出发进行探究; 同时, 病理性恐惧(恐惧症、焦虑症和创伤后应激障碍)研究发现, 催产素能减弱杏仁核(Amygdala)的活动, 同时也能改变突显网络(Salience network including Amygdala, dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC), insula)的活动, 增强腹内侧前额叶(ventromedial prefrontal cortex, vmPFC)和杏仁核(Amygdala)与海马(Hippocampus)之间的功能连接, 从而增加腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)

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对情绪自上而下的调节能力(Domes et al., 2007; Riem et al., 2011; Sripada et al., 2013; Striepens et al., 2012), 但少有研究系统从催产素影响条件化恐惧习得和消退的认知神经机制角度进行探究; 同时, 恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固作为恐惧情绪加工中的两个核心过程, 以往研究发现杏仁核(Amygdala)、腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)和海马(Hippocampus)可能是恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的神经基础, 对随后恐惧消退具有重要的价值(Feng et al., 2014; Feng et al., 2016; Schiller et al., 2013; Schiller et al., 2010)。然而, 催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的认知神经机制研究几乎是一片空白。只有准确把握了催产素影响恐惧情绪加工的各个阶段(习得、巩固、再巩固和消退)的核心机制(包括认知机制和神经机制), 才能深入理解恐惧情绪加工的神经网络模型, 为病理性恐惧(恐惧症、焦虑症、创伤后应激障碍)的临床干预和治疗提供指导。

因此, 本项目拟利用行为和功能性磁共振(fMRI)技术, 从认知机制和神经基础两个方面系统探究(1)催产素影响恐惧习得和消退的认知神经机制; (2)催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的认知神经机制。本项目的开展对于探究催产素影响条件化恐惧情绪加工的认知神经机制具有很高的科学价值, 对于各种病理性恐惧(恐惧症、焦虑症和 PTSD)的干预与治疗也具有重要的应用价值。具体而言: (1)首先, 本项目的研究系统探究了催产素影响条件化恐惧记忆习得、巩固、再巩固和消退的认知神经机制, 对于建构和完善恐惧情绪加工的神经网络模型具有重要的科学价值; (2)其次, 将催产素与恐惧习得、巩固、再巩固和消退结合起来, 应用在恐惧症、焦虑症和创伤后应激障碍(PTSD)等病理性恐惧的临床治疗中, 其应用价值也显而易见。

2 研究现状和发展动态分析

2.1 恐惧情绪加工的4个过程

条件性恐惧情绪加工过程分为恐惧习得(fear acquisition)、恐惧记忆巩固(fear memory consolidation)、恐惧记忆再巩固(fear memory reconsolidation)和恐惧消退(fear extinction)四个过程(Feng et al., 2014; Feng et al., 2016; Monfils et al., 2009; Schiller et al., 2013; Schiller et al., 2010; 冯攀等, 2018)。具体说来, 恐惧习得以巴甫洛夫的

经典条件反射为基础, 训练过程中, 无条件刺激(unconditioned stimulus, US, 如电击或恐惧图片)与中性刺激(conditioned stimulus, CS, 如几何图形或声音)进行匹配训练, 后来仅呈现中性刺激CS时, 动物或人类就会表现恐惧反应; 条件性恐惧习得后, 处于睡眠或休息状况下, 恐惧记忆处于巩固过程中; 当对记忆进行唤醒后(再次呈现一次CS或CS和US配对呈现), 睡眠或休息状态下, 恐惧记忆处于再巩固过程中; 然而, 在恐惧记忆再巩固窗口中, 如果仅呈现条件刺激CS, 那么动物或人类先前习得的恐惧就会逐渐消退, 其中唤醒和恐惧记忆再巩固窗口是消退效果保持的两个必不可少的条件, 唤醒后, 恐惧记忆处于不稳定的状态, 在恐惧记忆再巩固窗口内(唤醒后1 h之内)进行消退, 新的记忆可以改写之前的恐惧记忆(Feng et al., 2014; Feng et al., 2016; Monfils et al., 2009; Schiller et al., 2013; Schiller et al., 2010; 冯攀等, 2018; 冯攀等, 2022; 廖素群, 郑希付, 2016)(图1)。

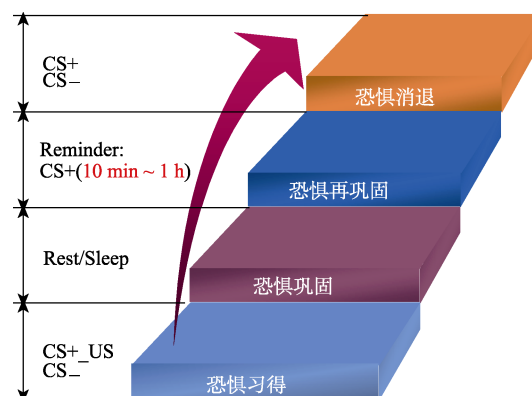


图1 恐惧情绪加工的4个过程

2.2 恐惧情绪加工的认知神经机制

2.2.1 恐惧习得和消退的认知神经机制

前人关于恐惧习得的研究和元分析发现, 杏仁核(Amygdala)、脑岛(insula)、背侧前扣带回(dACC)和中脑等脑区共同构成了恐惧习得的神经网络(Etkin & Wager, 2007; Feng et al., 2023; Feng et al., 2022; Fullana et al., 2016; Linnman et al., 2012; Mechias et al., 2010; Milad, Quirk, et al., 2007; 冯攀, 冯廷勇, 2013; 冯攀, 郑涌, 2015)。最近, Feng 等人从睡眠剥夺角度探究了睡眠剥夺影响恐惧习得的认知神经机制, 研究结果发现在恐

惧习得的过程中,睡眠剥夺增强了基底杏仁核的活动;同时,左侧基底杏仁核在睡眠剥夺影响条件化恐惧习得过程中发挥着中介作用(Feng et al., 2023)。

前人关于恐惧消退的研究和元分析发现,杏仁核(Amygdala)、海马(hippocampus)、腹内侧前额叶(ventromedial prefrontal cortex, vmPFC)、背外侧前额叶(dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, dlPFC)和腹外侧前额叶(ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, vlPFC)等脑区共同构成了恐惧消退的神经网络,它们的活动及其功能连接在恐惧消退中发挥着重要作用(Diekhof et al., 2011; Fullana et al., 2018; Gottfried & Dolan, 2004; Kalisch et al., 2006; Menz et al., 2016; Milad et al., 2005; Milad, Quirk, et al., 2007; Milad, Wright, et al., 2007; Phelps et al., 2004)。

2.2.2 恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的认知神经机制

前人研究发现在记忆巩固阶段,杏仁核(Amygdala)与背侧前扣带回(dACC)、海马(Hippocampus)与脑岛(insula)间的功能连接显著增强,而杏仁核与内侧前额叶(mPFC)间的功能连接则显著减弱。脑与行为关系的分析表明,杏仁核(Amygdala)与内侧前额叶(mPFC)功能连接的变化程度能够预测个体习得后的主观恐惧水平(Feng et al., 2014)。同时,Feng等人从睡眠剥夺角度探究了睡眠剥夺影响恐惧记忆巩固的认知神经机制,进一步建构和完善了恐惧记忆加工的神经网络模型。在恐惧记忆巩固中,睡眠剥夺会增强杏仁核的活动,并减弱腹内侧前额叶的活动;进一步的相关分析表明,睡眠剥夺组杏仁核活动变化程度与个体恐惧习得效果呈现显著的正相关,而控制组腹内侧前额叶活动变化程度与个体恐惧习得效果呈现显著的正相关(Feng, Becker, Feng & Zheng, 2018);在恐惧记忆巩固过程中,睡眠剥夺增强了杏仁核与脑岛间的功能连接,减弱了腹内侧前额叶与杏仁核间的功能连接;进一步的相关分析表明,睡眠剥夺组杏仁核与脑岛间的功能连接变化程度与个体恐惧习得效果呈现显著的正相关,而控制组腹内侧前额叶与杏仁核功能连接的变化程度与个体恐惧习得效果呈现显著的负相关(Feng, Becker, Zheng & Feng, 2018)。

Feng等人从脑区功能分离的角度出发,探究了恐惧记忆再巩固的认知神经机制。在恐惧记忆再巩固的过程中,与非唤醒组相比,恐惧记忆唤醒组的背侧前扣带回(dACC)和腹内侧前额叶

(vmPFC)等脑区的活动更加活跃;而且,再巩固阶段腹内侧前额叶的活动在一定程度上可以预测随后的消退效果(Feng et al., 2015)。同时,Feng等人从脑区功能整合的角度出发,探究了恐惧记忆巩固的认知神经机制。在恐惧记忆再巩固过程中,相比非唤醒组,唤醒组的杏仁核(Amygdala)与腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)间的功能连接明显增强;而且,杏仁核与腹内侧前额叶间的功能连接能够预测随后的消退效果(Feng et al., 2016)。

2.3 催产素影响恐惧情绪加工的神经基础

在催产素影响恐惧情绪表达的研究中,大量研究发现,催产素降低了杏仁核对恐惧相关刺激(恐惧面孔或恐惧眼睛等社会性刺激)的活动水平,同时,催产素也降低了杏仁核与脑干、梭状回之间的功能连接(Domes et al., 2007; Gamer et al., 2010; Kanat et al., 2015; Kirsch et al., 2005; Tost et al., 2010)。同时,在创伤后应激障碍和广泛性焦虑障碍等病理研究中,催产素也降低了杏仁核对恐惧相关刺激的活动水平(Flanagan et al., 2019; Labuschagne et al., 2010)。在催产素影响恐惧习得的研究中,催产素会抑制恐惧习得过程,并减弱杏仁核、伏隔核、脑岛、前扣带回和梭状回等脑区的活动水平(Cavalli et al., 2017; Petrovic et al., 2008)。一项研究探究了催产素如何影响社会性刺激和非社会性刺激,研究结果发现,在恐惧习得过程中,催产素促进了以社会性刺激为条件性刺激的恐惧学习,同时也提高了后中扣带回(posterior midcingulate cortex, pmCC)的激活水平;然而,催产素却降低了以非社会性刺激为条件性刺激的恐惧学习,增强了亚膝前扣带回(subgenual anterior cingulate cortex, sgACC)的激活水平。这说明催产素随社会性刺激和非社会性刺激的条件性恐惧习得过程是不同的,在未来的研究中也需要考虑不同性质的条件性刺激材料(Eckstein et al., 2016)。

在催产素影响恐惧消退的研究中,行为上研究发现,催产素促进了恐惧消退过程,在消退返回阶段恐惧程度更低,尤其是在唤醒后在恐惧记忆再巩固窗口内进行消退,催产素促进恐惧消退的效果会更好(Acheson et al., 2013; Hu et al., 2019)。神经机制研究发现催产素减弱了杏仁核与背侧前扣带回等脑区在恐惧消退过程中的激活程度,同时也增强了额叶与杏仁核和杏仁核与楔前叶间的功能连接(Eckstein et al., 2015; Eckstein et al.,

2017; Petrovic et al., 2008)。研究结果可能提示, 催产素对于增加额顶控制区对于恐惧加工的核心脑区(即杏仁核)的自上而下的调控功能增强, 为理解催产素在恐惧的认知神经机制中所发挥的作用提供了初步证据。

但先前对催产素影响恐惧情绪加工的认知神经机制的理解仍不够完整和深入。随着网络科学技术和研究者们对人脑功能和组织的理解的加深, 研究者开始应用网络分析方法(network analysis)来探索大脑的功能和组织(Bassett & Sporns, 2017; Bullmore & Sporns, 2009, 2012)。网络分析技术是一种量化和定量分析的方法, 可以将复杂系统抽象为网络结构, 通过分析网络的节点、边缘、聚类(node, edge, cluster)等特征来理解系统的结构和功能。相比传统的功能磁共振成像(fMRI)方法, 网络分析方法可以更细致地分析脑区之间的相互作用和信息传递, 从而对人脑的功能和组织提供更全面的认识(Bassett & Gazzaniga, 2011; Bullmore & Sporns, 2012; Power et al., 2011; Thiebaut de Schotten & Forkel, 2022)。研究者们已经成功使用网络分析的方法, 在视知觉、语义加工、认知发展和精神障碍等领域获得了重要的发现并给出了重要的启示(Fair et al., 2008; Gratton et al., 2016; Menon, 2011; Stam, 2014; Supekar et al., 2009)。然而, 先前的有关研究并没有从恐惧情绪

加工的神经网络及交互(恐惧习得和消退网络)角度出发进行探究, 因而无法深入理解催产素影响恐惧情绪加工的认知神经机制; 更为重要的是, 恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固作为恐惧情绪加工中的两个核心过程, 对随后恐惧消退具有重要的价值(Feng et al., 2014; Feng et al., 2016; Feng et al., 2013; Schiller et al., 2013; Schiller et al., 2010); 催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的认知神经机制的研究几乎是一片空白。只有准确和全面地把握了——尤其是以脑网络的方法对大脑的内在机制进行揭示——催产素影响恐惧情绪加工的各个阶段的核心机制(包括认知机制和神经基础), 才能深入理解恐惧情绪加工的神经网络模型和为病理性恐惧(恐惧症、焦虑症、创伤后应激障碍)的临床干预和治疗提供指导。

3 研究构想

本项目拟采用行为研究方法和功能性磁共振技术(fMRI), 从催产素主线出发, 系统考察催产素影响恐惧情绪加工(习得、巩固、再巩固和消退)的认知机制、神经基础和临床机理。项目的整体研究框架与技术路线如图所示(图2)。该项目将重点考察催产素影响恐惧习得、巩固、再巩固和消退的认知神经机制; 同时, 未来的研究也将试图探究催产素如何影响病理性恐惧人群(恐惧症、焦

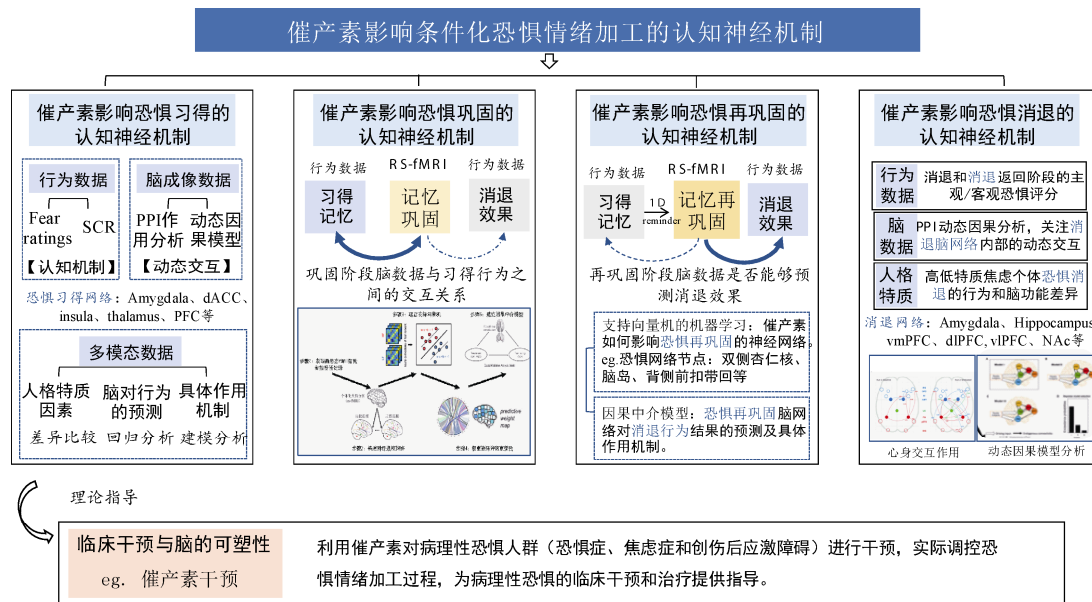


图2 整体研究框架与技术路线

虑症和创伤后应激障碍)条件化恐惧情绪加工过程,尤其是恐惧习得和消退过程,为病理性恐惧的临床干预和治疗提供指导。

3.1 催产素影响恐惧习得的认知神经机制

研究1拟采用任务态fMRI技术,拟探究催产素影响恐惧习得认知神经基础。采用2(实验处理:催产素组和安慰剂组) $\times$ 2(刺激类型:CS+和CS-)混合实验设计。其中实验处理为被试间变量,刺激类型为被试内变量。被试被随机分为催产素实验组和安慰剂对照组,并被随机使用了24个国际单位(international unit, IU)的催产素(OXT)或者安慰剂(PLC)。条件性恐惧习得以经典条件反射范式为基础。条件刺激为黄、蓝方块(CS+和CS-),非条件刺激(US)为电击。对CS+实施37.5%的部分强化,即有37.5%的CS+伴随着200 ms电击shock,而CS-后至始至终未跟着电击。在恐惧习得阶段,记录着被试的皮肤电SCR水平(客观恐惧水平),同时所有被试在每个条件性刺激出现后,需要对CS+和CS-的主观恐惧程度在1至7点量表上进行评分(主观恐惧水平)。研究1拟从以下分析思路探究催产素影响恐惧习得的认知神经机制:(1)运用心身交互作用(Psycho-physiological interactions, PPI)和动态因果模型(dynamic causal modeling)分析,考察催产素如何影响条件化恐惧习得的神经反应模式;(2)中介分析或建模方式考察催产素如何通过恐惧习得网络来影响主客观恐惧水平。

3.2 催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固的认知神经机制

研究2拟采用静息态fMRI技术,拟探究催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固认知神经基础。研究2分为两个阶段进行,每个被试在进行条件性恐惧习得任务前,对其进行8 min的静息态扫描(Rest1),作为基线静息态baseline,然后进行条件化恐惧习得,然后吸入鼻喷催产素OXT或安慰剂PLC,被试被随机分为催产素实验组和安慰剂对照组,并被随机使用了24个国际单位(international unit, IU)的催产素(OXT)或者安慰剂(PLC)。45分钟后对每个被试进行8 min的静息态扫描(Rest2),以此静息态作为恐惧记忆的巩固过程。恐惧习得过程与研究1相同。所有过程均记录着皮肤电和收集着主观恐惧水平。研究2拟从以下分析思路探究催产素影响恐惧巩固的认知神经机制:(1)应用支持向量机的机器学习方法及传统统计方法,对比催产素组和安慰剂组在恐惧记忆巩固阶段中脑功能

(脑网络功能连接矩阵、ReHo指标、fALFF指标等)的差异,系统阐明催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固的认知神经机制;(2)使用因果中介模型,考察催产素如何通过恐惧巩固网络来预测恐惧的习得或消退效果。

3.3 催产素影响恐惧记忆再巩固的认知神经机制

研究3拟采用静息态fMRI技术,拟探究催产素影响恐惧记忆再巩固认知神经基础。研究3分进行:恐惧习得和恐惧记忆再巩固。第一天进行恐惧习得过程。恐惧习得过程与研究1相同;第二天,催产素组和安慰剂组分别给予等量鼻喷催产素和安慰剂,被试被随机分为催产素实验组和安慰剂对照组,并被随机使用了24个国际单位(international unit, IU)的催产素(OXT)或者安慰剂(PLC)。45 min后,所有被试进行恐惧唤醒(仅仅呈现一次CS+),10 min后进行8 min的静息态扫描,作为恐惧记忆再巩固的静息态。所有过程均记录着皮肤电和收集着主观恐惧水平。研究3拟从以下分析思路探究催产素影响恐惧巩固的认知神经机制:(1)应用支持向量机的机器学习方法及传统统计方法,对比催产素组和安慰剂组在恐惧记忆再巩固阶段脑功能(脑网络功能连接矩阵、ReHo指标、fALFF指标等)的差异,系统阐明催产素影响恐惧记忆再巩固的认知神经机制;(2)采用因果中介模型,考察催产素如何通过恐惧再巩固网络来预测恐惧的习得或消退效果。

3.4 催产素影响恐惧消退的认知神经机制

研究4拟采用任务态fMRI技术,拟探究催产素影响恐惧消退认知神经基础。采用2(实验处理:催产素组和安慰剂组) $\times$ 2(人格特质:高特质焦虑和低特质焦虑) $\times$ 2(刺激类型:CS+和CS-)混合实验设计。被试被随机分为催产素实验组和安慰剂对照组,并被随机使用了24个国际单位(international unit, IU)的催产素(OXT)或者安慰剂(PLC)。为了排除安慰剂效应和探究催产素影响恐惧消退和消退返回阶段的认知神经机制,我们进行了以下给药方式的不同组合。研究4分为三个阶段(恐惧习得、消退和再消退)进行,每个阶段分别在独立的三天完成(第一天、第二天和第三天)。所有被试在第一天进行条件化恐惧习得(实验流程同研究1);第二天,将所有被试分为三组,其中两组接受鼻喷安慰剂,一组接受等量的催产素;45 min后,所有被试进行唤醒后消退训练,仅呈

现条件性刺激 CS。第三天,之前(第二天)接受安慰剂组的两组被试一组继续接受安慰剂,一组接受催产素,之前接受催产素组的被试接受安慰剂;实验处理 45 min 后,所有被试接受 4 次 US,然后进行消退返回训练。所有过程(习得、消退和消退返回)均记录着皮肤电和收集着主观恐惧水平。研究 4 拟从以下分析思路探究催产素影响恐惧消退的认知神经机制:(1)运用心身交互作用(Psychophysiological interactions, PPI)和动态因果模型(dynamic causal modeling)分析,考察催产素如何影响条件化恐惧消退的神经反应模式,重点关注其对恐惧消退网络(Amygdala, Hippocampus, vmPFC, dlPFC, vlPFC, nucleus accumbens (NAc)和 PAG 等脑区)内部的动态交互的影响;(2)中介分析或建模方式考察催产素如何通过恐惧消退网络来影响主观客观恐惧水平。(3)探究催产素如何作用于高低特质焦虑的恐惧消退神经网络。

4 理论建构

首先,先前对催产素影响恐惧习得和消退的认知神经机制进行了相关探究,但没从恐惧的习得和消退的神经网络出发,深入探究催产素如何影响恐惧习得和消退的神经网络;元分析研究结果发现:杏仁核(Amygdala)、背侧前扣带回(dorsal anterior cingulate gyrus, dACC)、脑岛(insula)和丘脑(thalamus)等脑区共同组成了恐惧习得的神经网络(Etkin & Wager, 2007; Fullana et al., 2016; Mechias et al., 2010),杏仁核(Amygdala)、海马(hippocampus)、腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)、背外侧前额叶(dlPFC)和腹外侧前额叶(vlPFC)等脑区共同组成了恐惧消退的神经网络(Diekhof et al., 2011; Fullana et al., 2018; Gottfried & Dolan, 2004; Kalisch et al., 2006; Menz et al., 2016; Milad, Wright, et al., 2007; Phelps et al., 2004)。同时,病理性恐惧(恐惧症、焦虑症和创伤后应激障碍)研究发现,催产素能减弱杏仁核的活动,同时也能改变突显网络(Amygdala, dACC, insula)的活动。增强腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)和杏仁核(Amygdala)与海马(Hippocampus)之间的功能连接,从而增加腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)对情绪自上而下的调节能力(Domes et al., 2007; Riem et al., 2011; Sripada et al., 2013; Striepens et al., 2012),但很少有研究从条件化恐惧习得和消退角度进行探究。同时,也有研

究发现,特质焦虑与恐惧情绪加工过程息息相关,具体说来,特质焦虑水平越高,成年被试的杏仁核对阈下和阈上恐惧面孔的反应就越强,而且杏仁核的活动水平与特质焦虑分数呈现正相关(Admon et al., 2009; Etkin et al., 2004; Stein et al., 2007);同时,已有研究发现,催产素对高低特质焦虑个体在情绪加工过程中的作用是不同的(Kou et al., 2021; Kou et al., 2022; Xin et al., 2020)。具体说来,对于高特质焦虑个体,催产素减弱了杏仁核和脑岛的活动,进而促进了自上而下的情绪调节过程;而对于低特质焦虑个体,催产素增强了杏仁核的活动,进而增强了自下而上的注意和警觉(Xin et al., 2020);对于高特质焦虑个体来说,低频催产素处理能减弱杏仁核、脑岛和额叶对威胁性刺激的活动(Kou et al., 2022)。但少有研究探究催产素如何作用于高低特质焦虑个体的条件性恐惧习得和消退神经网络,进而影响恐惧习得和消退过程。因此,本项目拟从恐惧习得和消退的神经网络及交互出发,系统探究催产素影响恐惧习得和消退的认知神经机制,从而完善催产素影响恐惧习得和消退的神经网络模型;同时也拟探究催产素如何作用于高低特质焦虑个体的恐惧习得和消退网络,进而探究催产素影响高低特质焦虑个体条件化恐惧习得和消退的机制。

其次,恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固作为恐惧情绪加工中的两个核心过程,杏仁核(Amygdala)、腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)和海马(Hippocampus)可能是恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的神经基础,与恐惧习得和消退密切相关(Feng et al., 2014; Feng et al., 2015, 2016; Schiller et al., 2013; Schiller et al., 2010)。然而,催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的认知神经机制研究几乎是一片空白。研究证明静息态功能磁共振是研究大脑自发活动和功能连接的重要工具(Buckner & Vincent, 2007; Friston et al., 1997; Greicius et al., 2003; Raichle et al., 2001),同时,前人运用静息态磁共振对恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固过程进行了研究(Feng, Becker, Feng & Zheng, 2018; Feng, Becker, Zheng & Feng, 2018; Feng et al., 2014; Feng et al., 2016; Schultz et al., 2012; van Marle et al., 2010)。具体说来,对于恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的神经基础,目前研究者主要从大脑静息态方面进行了考察。Feng 等人从脑区功能分离和功能整合角度出发对恐惧记忆巩固的神经基础

进行了探究。研究发现,在记忆巩固阶段,杏仁核(Amygdala)与背侧前扣带回(dACC)、海马(Hippocampus)与脑岛(insula)间的功能连接显著增强,而杏仁核与内侧前额叶(mPFC)间的功能连接则显著减弱(Feng et al., 2014)。同时,前人也从睡眠剥夺角度出发,探究了恐惧记忆巩固的神经基础。结果发现在恐惧记忆巩固阶段,睡眠剥夺会增强杏仁核(Amygdala)的活动,并减弱腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)的活动(Feng, Becker, Feng & Zheng, 2018);同时,睡眠剥夺增强了杏仁核与脑岛间的功能连接,减弱了腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)与杏仁核(Amygdala)间的功能连接(Feng, Becker, Zheng & Feng, 2018)。在恐惧记忆再巩固的神经基础方面,Feng等人的研究结果发现,在恐惧记忆再巩固过程中,与非唤醒组相比,唤醒组的背侧前扣带回(dACC)和腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)等脑区的活动更加活跃(Feng et al., 2015);同时,在恐惧记忆再巩固的过程中,相比非唤醒组,唤醒组的杏仁核(Amygdala)与腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)间的功能连接明显增强(Feng et al., 2016)。以往的研究发现记忆巩固和再巩固的时间窗口和唤醒是恐惧记忆产生效果及消退的两大必要条件(Agren et al., 2012; Feng et al., 2015, 2016; Schiller et al., 2010),且唤醒条件下鼻喷催产素的效果更好(Hu et al., 2019)。同时,也有研究发现,特质焦虑与恐惧记忆巩固过程息息相关。具体说来,前人一项研究发现,恐惧记忆巩固过程中腹内侧前额叶与脑岛的功能连接与特质焦虑呈现显著的正相关(Feng et al., 2014)。同时,催产素受体存在于大脑信息处理和记忆的核心区域,包括海马、纹状体、杏仁核、下丘脑、伏隔核和中脑,动物和人类研究也表明催产素具有促进记忆或遗忘的作用,取决于传输的时间、环境、性别和剂量等因素(Chini et al., 2014; Eckstein et al., 2015; Eckstein et al., 2016; Farley et al., 2019; Gimpl & Fahrenholz, 2001; Szafoni & Piegza, 2022; Thirtamara Rajamani et al., 2023)。催产素是如何影响高低特质焦虑个体恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的神经网络,进而影响恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固过程的呢?因此,本项目拟采用静息态磁共振技术(RS-fMRI),系统探究催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的神经机制,从而完善催产素影响恐惧巩固和再巩固的神经网络模型。同时也拟探究催产素如何作用于高低特质焦

虑个体的恐惧巩固和再巩固网络,进而探究催产素影响高低特质焦虑个体条件化恐惧巩固和再巩固的机制。

最后,将催产素应用在正常人身上研究的成果转化到临床精神病学研究上尤为重要,目前已知催产素对病理性恐惧如恐怖症、焦虑症和创伤后应激障碍(PTSD)存在一定的干预效果(Flanagan et al., 2019; Koch et al., 2014; Kou et al., 2022; Labuschagne et al., 2010)。研究表明,鼻喷催产素可以改善社交焦虑症(SAD)患者的社交行为,降低患者的焦虑水平(Neumann & Slattery, 2016; Voncken et al., 2021);减弱杏仁核对恐惧的反应性(Labuschagne et al., 2010)等。在对PTSD的研究中,研究者依据催产素在PTSD干预和治疗过程中的作用,如鼻喷催产素会减弱杏仁核的过度活动,增强杏仁核与vmPFC和海马之间的功能连接从而增加腹内侧前额叶(vmPFC)对情绪自上而下的调节能力(Domes et al., 2007; Riem et al., 2011; Schiller et al., 2013; Schiller et al., 2010)等,提出鼻喷催产素可以作为一种强化心理治疗的辅助策略(Koch et al., 2014)。但前人仅通过催产素本身或催产素与心理疗法结合来进行研究,未从恐惧的习得、巩固、在巩固和消退的角度出发。对于恐惧习得和消退过程的研究,有助于理解和完善已有的催产素影响恐惧习得和消退的神经网络模型;对于恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固过程的研究,尤其是在睡眠和唤醒条件下的催产素作用,有助于深入理解这些疾病的记忆形成和巩固机制(Feng, Becker, Zheng & Feng, 2018; Feng et al., 2023; Feng et al., 2014)。这对于设计干预措施、改善患者的记忆过程,以及减缓或预防这些疾病的发展具有积极的临床应用前景。其次,特质焦虑与恐惧情绪加工的关联以及催产素在不同特质焦虑个体中的不同作用(Acheson et al., 2013; Etkin et al., 2004; Feng et al., 2014; Kou et al., 2021; Kou et al., 2022; Stein et al., 2007; Xin et al., 2020),为个体化治疗提供了新的可能性。根据研究结果,针对高特质焦虑个体和低特质焦虑个体的不同神经网络反应,可以制定更为精准的干预策略,个体化地选择治疗手段,提高治疗的效果和预测性。因此这项研究的成果将为恐怖症、焦虑症和PTSD等病理性恐惧的临床治疗提供新的神经生物学基础,为个体化治疗和精准药物干预提供科学支持。

有望为这些精神障碍的治疗开辟新的研究方向。

综合而言,本项目拟采用任务态磁共振技术(task fMRI),系统探究催产素影响恐惧习得和消退的认知神经机制;采用静息态磁共振技术(RS-fMRI),深入探究催产素影响恐惧记忆巩固和再巩固的神经机制。首先,本项目的研究系统探究了催产素影响条件化恐惧记忆习得、巩固、再巩固和消退的认知神经机制,对于建构和完善恐惧情绪加工的神经网络模型具有重要的科学价值;(2)其次,对于恐惧症、焦虑症和创伤后应激障碍(PTSD)等病理性恐惧的临床治疗的应用价值也显而易见;(3)科学研究与临床应用相结合,强化科学研究的应用价值;将催产素应用到恐惧症、焦虑症和创伤后应激障碍(PTSD)等病理性恐惧的临床干预和治疗中。

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Cognitive neural mechanisms underlying the impact of oxytocin on conditioned fear processing

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Abstract: Fear is a basic emotion that plays an important role in human survival and adaptation. However, excessive fear may lead to conditions such as phobia, anxiety disorder and PTSD. Oxytocin is a promising pharmacological agent to enhance treatment response in fear-related disorders. Therefore, through the combination of behavioral and fMRI research, the project systematically investigated neural mechanisms underlying the impact of oxytocin on fear processing. The contents of this project include: (1) Examining neural mechanisms underlying the impact of oxytocin on fear acquisition; (2) Investigating neural mechanisms underlying the impact of oxytocin on fear consolidation; (3) Exploring neural mechanisms underlying the impact of oxytocin on fear reconsolidation; (4) Studying neural mechanisms underlying the impact of oxytocin on fear extinction. Thus, the implementation of this project will contribute important scientific value to investigation of neural mechanisms underlying the impact of oxytocin on fear processing. Moreover, the findings also provide an approach of potential intervention and treatment for the fear-related disorders.

Keywords: fear, emotional memory, amygdala, ventromedial prefrontal cortex, cognitive neural mechanisms