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Bradykinesia is driven by cumulative beta power during continuous movement and alleviated by GABAergic modulation in Parkinson's disease.

Emma Prokic¹, Gavin L. Woodhall¹, Adrian Williams², Ian M. Stanford¹, Stephen D. Hall^{3*}

¹Aston University, United Kingdom, ²University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, United Kingdom, ³Brain Research & Imaging Centre, University of Plymouth, United Kingdom

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Author contribution statement

EP: Experimental design, data collection, analysis and manuscript preparation. GLW: Experimental design, analysis and manuscript preparation. ACW: Experimental design, PD assessment support and manuscript preparation. IMS: Experimental design, analysis and manuscript preparation. SDH: Experimental design, analysis and manuscript preparation.

Keywords

GABA, Movement, oscillations, parkinson's, Magnetoencephalography (MEG)

Abstract

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Spontaneous and 'event-related' motor cortex oscillations in the beta (15-30Hz) frequency range, are well established phenomena. However, the precise functional significance of these features is uncertain. An understanding of the specific function is of importance for the treatment of Parkinson's disease (PD), where attenuation of augmented beta throughout the motor network coincides with functional improvement. Previous research using a discrete movement task, identified normalisation of elevated spontaneous beta and post-movement-beta-rebound following GABAergic modulation.

Here we explore the effects of the GABA-A modulator, zolpidem, on beta power during the performance of serial movement in seventeen (15M, 2F; mean-age 66±6.3 years) PD patients, using a repeated-measures, double-blinded, randomised, placebo-control design. Motor symptoms were monitored before and after treatment, using time-based Unified Parkinson's Disease Rating Scale measurements and beta oscillations in primary motor-cortex (M1) were measured during a serial-movement task, using magnetoencephalography.

We demonstrate that a cumulative increase in M1 beta power during a 10s tapping trial is reduced following zolpidem, but not placebo, which is accompanied by an improvement in movement speed and efficacy. This work provides a clear mechanism for the generation of abnormally elevated beta power in PD and demonstrates that peri-movement beta accumulation drives the slowing, and impaired initiation, of movement. These findings further indicate a role for GABAergic modulation in bradykinesia in PD, which merits further exploration as a therapeutic target.

Contribution to the field

The involvement of aberrant oscillatory signatures, throughout the motor network, has been demonstrated in many electrophysiological studies of Parkinson's. In particular, the presence of augmented beta (15-30Hz) activity, has been posited as a pathological signature of the disorder. However, the mechanisms associated with the emergence and obstruction of typical function is generally unclear. This work describes a high-resolution neuroimaging study using magnetoencephalography, in seventeen Parkinson's disease (PD) patients. It shows that slowing (bradykinesia) in a serial-movement task is driven by progressive augmentation of peri-movement beta. It also demonstrates that alleviation of bradykinesia by low-dose administration of the GABA-A modulator zolpidem, is mediated through a reduction in beta amplitude. This work demonstrates a functional connection between established neural network signatures and prominent symptoms in Parkinson's.

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Ethics statements

Studies involving animal subjects

Generated Statement: No animal studies are presented in this manuscript.

Studies involving human subjects

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Inclusion of identifiable human data

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In review

Data availability statement

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In review

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Emma J. Prokic^{1,2}; Ian M. Stanford ¹; Gavin L. Woodhall ¹, Adrian C. Williams³ and Stephen D. Hall^{4*}.

1. School of Life and Health Sciences, Aston University, Birmingham, UK

2. Department of Biosciences, University of Helsinki, Finland.

3. Queen Elizabeth Hospital, University Hospital Birmingham, West Midlands, UK

4. Brain Research & Imaging Centre, University of Plymouth, Devon, UK.

*Corresponding Author:

Prof. Stephen D. Hall

Brain Research & Imaging Centre

University of Plymouth

Plymouth

PL4 8AA

Stephen.D.Hall@Plymouth.ac.uk

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Abstract

Spontaneous and ‘event-related’ motor cortex oscillations in the beta (15-30Hz) frequency range, are well established phenomena. However, the precise functional significance of these features is uncertain. An understanding of the specific function is of importance for the treatment of Parkinson’s disease (PD), where attenuation of augmented beta throughout the motor network coincides with functional improvement. Previous research using a discrete movement task, identified normalisation of elevated spontaneous beta and post-movement-beta-rebound following GABAergic modulation.

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We demonstrate that a cumulative increase in M1 beta power during a 10s tapping trial is reduced following zolpidem, but not placebo, which is accompanied by an improvement in movement speed and efficacy. This work provides a clear mechanism for the generation of abnormally elevated beta power in PD and demonstrates that peri-movement beta accumulation drives the slowing, and impaired initiation, of movement. These findings further indicate a role for GABAergic modulation in bradykinesia in PD, which merits further exploration as a therapeutic target.

Keywords: Magnetoencephalography (MEG), Oscillations, Movement, GABA, Zolpidem

1. Introduction

Spontaneous beta frequency (15-30Hz) oscillations are a prominent electrophysiological signature of the primary motor cortex (M1) in humans (Hall et al., 2010a; Jensen et al., 2005) and animal models (Murthy and Fetz, 1996). Beta oscillations have been posited as an 'idling' rhythm of the motor system (Stancák and Pfurtscheller, 1996), in line with the conceptual need for a carrier signal to facilitate temporal binding of functional performance (Singer, 1999). From a functional perspective, beta power in M1 modulates in a task-dependent manner in relation to various phases of movement. Specifically, a bilateral reduction in beta is observed during movement preparation (Pfurtscheller and Berghold, 1989), with a further reduction in power at the onset of movement, referred to as movement-related beta desynchronisation (MRBD) (Gaetz et al., 2011; Hall et al., 2011). Beta power appears to be minimised during dynamic movement periods (Doyle et al., 2005; Kilavik et al., 2012; Stancák and Pfurtscheller, 1997), where a reduction in beta power lasts as long as the total movement (Stancák and Pfurtscheller, 1996). Conversely, there appears to be an increase in beta power associated with static postural maintenance (Baker et al., 1997; Conway et al., 1995; Spinks et al., 2008).

Following the completion or termination of movement, there is a transient increase in beta oscillatory power, which is elevated above the pre-movement baseline (Hall et al., 2010a; 2011; Jurkiewicz et al., 2006; Stancák and Pfurtscheller, 1996) a phenomenon referred to as post-movement beta rebound (PMBR). With regard to functional significance, MRBD is a prerequisite for recruitment of functional assemblies ahead of movement (Rhodes et al 2018), but is not dependent upon force, speed, direction (Waldert et al., 2008) or movement time (Cassim et al., 2000). The functional significance of PMBR is unclear, although it has been postulated as a marker of sensory reafference following movement (Cassim et al., 2001) and appears to serve an inhibitory function (Heinrichs-Graham et al., 2017). The interaction between MRBD and PMBR during the performance of serial movements is uncertain. However, it has been shown that beta activity is suppressed according to the likelihood of new motor processing, such that phasic suppression of beta activity prior to movement is replaced by a persistent suppression during a sequence of related movements, such as in finger tapping (Joundi et al., 2013). In healthy humans, ability to effectively initiate movement is dependent upon an ability to achieve an absolute level of pre-movement desynchronisation (Heinrichs-Graham and Wilson, 2016) and fast finger tapping produces a persistent state of cortical beta desynchronisation during movement (Muthukumaraswamy, 2010).

In Parkinson's disease (PD) exaggerated beta oscillations are observed in recordings from subcortical structures, such as the subthalamic nucleus (STN), and cortex of both animal models (Chen et al., 2007; Mallet et al., 2008; Sharott et al., 2005) and PD patients (Cassidy et al., 2002; Pollok et al., 2012). There is some uncertainty regarding the importance of spontaneous cortical beta power in PD, as observations are typically in early-stage PD and show variation between participants (Hall et al., 2014), but an association between abnormal pre-movement desynchronisation and deficits in movement initiation, support a role in akinetic symptoms in PD (Heinrichs-Graham et al., 2013). Similarly, several studies report that this exaggerated beta power is attenuated following treatment with either L-DOPA (Kühn et al., 2006; Silberstein et al., 2005) or deep brain stimulation (Eusebio et al., 2011; Kühn et al., 2008), both of which are associated with relief of PD symptoms. We have previously reported that sub-sedative doses (2-5mg) of the GABA_A alpha-1 receptor modulator zolpidem, improves cognitive and motor abilities of patients after stroke (Hall et al., 2010b) and idiopathic PD (Hall et al., 2014), coincident with a reduction in beta power. This is consistent with previously observed GABA-mediated improvements in PD (Daniele et al., 1997). In healthy controls, elevation of endogenous GABA levels is known to increase baseline beta power (Muthukumaraswamy et al., 2013), as seen following administration of benzodiazepines (Hall et al., 2010a; Jensen et al., 2005). From a functional perspective, the benzodiazepine Bromazepam, which has high alpha-2 and low alpha-1 subunit affinity for the GABA_A receptor, has been shown to have positive effects on motor learning involving focused attention in healthy participants (Cunha et al., 2006).

Our previous research using magnetoencephalography (MEG) in PD, used the sedative hypnotic zolpidem to modulate activity at the GABA-A alpha-1 subunit. This demonstrated that PD patients exhibit impaired desynchronisation in the movement preparation phase and increased amplitude and latency of the PMBR phase (Hall et al., 2014). These differences were reduced following administration of zolpidem and accompanied by improvement in symptomatic severity, measured by motor examination (Part III) of the Unified Parkinson's Disease Rating Scale (UPDRS). Given the evidence surrounding the potential for exaggerated beta in the motor system to impair effective movement in PD, via impediment of desynchronisation, it is important to understand the potential role of peri-movement beta power in this process. Here, we address this question through the investigation of oscillatory power, using MEG, in a serial movement task, using a simple finger tapping paradigm. Following our previous study (Hall et al., 2014), we further explore the mechanisms of GABA-mediated

functional improvements with low-dose zolpidem, in a cohort of PD patients presenting with unilateral symptoms.

We hypothesise that increased PMBR amplitude and latency in PD, will produce a progressive accumulation of beta power over time, resulting in higher peri-movement beta amplitude that impairs the ability to initiate subsequent movements. Furthermore, we postulate that greater peri-movement beta power will coincide with an increased inter-tap interval (ITI). We predict that zolpidem will reduce peri-movement beta power, affording an improvement in the performance of the finger-tapping speed and stability.

2. Methods

2.1. Participant Training and Assessment

We recruited 17 participants (15M, 2F), mean age 66 ± 6.3 years, with a history of unilateral PD symptoms, following previous research (Hall et al., 2014). Consistent with ethical approval, patients continued with their prescribed medication during their participation in the experiment. Details of medication and other particulars were recorded for each participant (see Table 1 for details), although individual medication doses were not recorded. Drug and control experiments were conducted at the same time interval following medication, in order to control for effects of other drugs. Five participants were eventually excluded from the analysis as bilateral impairments were observed at baseline. Participants attended the laboratory over two days, on which identical experimental protocols were used, with the exception of drug condition. A double blinded and randomised approach was used to assign the order for each participant to either the drug-active (zolpidem) or placebo session. Prior to each neuroimaging experiment, each participant was trained in the motor task. Specifically, participants placed their hands on a magnetically-silent acrylic plate, with the position of a flexible paddle beneath the index finger monitored using infra-red light.

2.2. Motor Task and Symptom Assessment

As part of a functional task to localise M1, based upon PMBR (Hall et al., 2011; Jurkiewicz et al., 2006; McAllister et al., 2013), participants performed a visual reaction time task, in which they responded as quickly as possible to a change in visual cue with abduction of either the left or right index finger e.g. (McAllister et al., 2013).

The serial motor finger-tapping task, consisted of six 10s tapping trials, interleaved by 15s periods of inactive rest. Participants were instructed to tap as quickly as possible following the onset of a ‘Start’ cue, until the presentation of a ‘Stop’ cue. Stimuli were presented on a projector screen, 1m in front of the participant. Finger taps were recorded and analysed, based upon triggers digitised from the infra-red signals. The participant was instructed to relax their hand when the cue disappeared. Cue onset was jittered, to minimise prediction effects. Participants rested their arm in a comfortable position, with the elbow and the lower arm resting on a flat surface. Prior to each MEG session, participants completed a series of tasks included in the UPDRS motor examination (part III). This included finger tapping (FT), hand movement (HM), rapid alternating movement (RAM), leg agility (LA), time to Stand (TS), time to walk (TW). Performance was quantified based upon the time taken to complete each task, rather than the typical 5-point scale, to increase sensitivity and reduce the variance of intra-rater assessment (see figure 1 for details). For each task, the rater used a stopwatch to record the time-taken to complete a pre-determined number of repetitions or distance.

2.3. MEG and EMG recordings

In each experiment, participants with normal or corrected to normal vision were seated in a 306-channel MEG system (Elekta, Finland). MEG data were acquired at a sampling rate of 1000 Hz with a 50 Hz notch filter and 0.1-300 Hz bandpass filters. MEG data were co-registered with each participant’s anatomical MRI, obtained using a 3T MRI system (Siemens Magnetom Trio). This was achieved through surface matching of the MRI with a three-dimensional digitization of the participant’s scalp (Fastrak, Polhemus, USA). Head position was monitored throughout, based upon the digitized position of five surface-mounted electromagnetic coils, positioned around the head. Electromyography (EMG), native to the MEG system, was used to record muscle activity from two disc electrodes placed upon the first dorsal interosseous (FDI) muscle, simultaneously measured with the MEG acquisition.

At the end of the baseline (BL) recording session, participants were administered either oral zolpidem (0.05 mg/kg) or placebo, consistent with previously reported effective sub-sedative doses (Hall et al., 2010b). An identical second MEG recording session was initiated 50 min after the zolpidem administration, with participants required to repeat the same rest and movement periods. Participants therefore completed a total of 4 MEG sessions (BL, zolpidem and BL, placebo).

2.4. Data Analysis

Left and right M1 was localized using the synthetic aperture magnetometry (SAM) beamforming method (Hillebrand et al., 2005). Specifically, following finger movement, we identified the location of maximal contralateral beta power (15-30Hz) increase in the PMBR period (500-1000ms post movement termination) compared to rest (-2000 to -1500ms pre movement onset), following previous studies (Hall et al., 2011). Regions of interest (ROIs) identified from the beamforming analysis were used to determine the placement of virtual electrodes (VE) (Hall et al., 2005; Hillebrand et al., 2005), which were used to reconstruct neuronal network activity, specific to M1, over the envelope of the entire experiment. The power profile of the oscillatory activity was determined using Morlet-wavelet time–frequency analysis of the virtual electrode output over the 1–100Hz range in frequency bins of 0.5 Hz. For each participant, the individual beta peak was determined as the maximal peak of power spectral density in the 15-35Hz range. This peak was then used to compute beta power changes in all subsequent analyses. Data from M1, contralateral to the affected hand, were grouped for further analysis and comparisons made between the baseline and drug (zolpidem) and control (placebo) conditions.

To determine the extent to which beta power increases during serial movement tasks (perimovement period), we used a cumulative summation (cusum) computation (Matlab R2019, Mathworks USA) to identify the progressive accumulation of power in the beta frequency range during the finger tapping exercise. Specifically, the envelope of peak beta power during finger tapping was reconstructed for each participant, in each condition. Data were converted to a zero-mean distribution, followed by sequential computation of the summed value of each sample over a 10s period. We further explored whether a causal relationship exists between augmented beta and impaired sequential movement in PD. Peak beta power in the VE plots were used to reconstruct the profile of beta fluctuation associated with each tap during finger tapping. The ITI and inter-tap variance (ITV) were computed as the mean and range, respectively, of the time between taps during the tapping task. Beta power was computed following each finger tap for each individual, for each condition. This was based upon the maximal beta amplitude in the interval between completion and initiation of movements, derived from the rectified EMG. Subsequently, we computed the number of taps in the average ITI following each beta peak, in order to determine the relationship between beta amplitude and movement ability. All data are graphically represented as mean normalised change (%)±S.D. Groups were analysed using Two-way repeated measures ANOVA, with within-

subject factors of ‘condition’ (pre/post drug treatment) and ‘drug’ (placebo/zolpidem). Post-hoc t-test comparisons are reported with Sidak’s correction for comparisons. When only two groups were compared, a two-tailed paired t-test was used. No significant interactions were observed unless otherwise stated in the text.

Patient ID	Gender	Dominant Hand	Age (Years)	Medication	Time Since Diagnosis (Years)	Impaired Side (L/R)	Δ UPDRS Zolpidem [#]	Δ UPDRS Placebo [#]
1	M	R	60	Ropinirole, Sinemet ¹	5	L	-12.80	2.07
2	F	R	67	Sinemet Plus	1	L	-1.41	-4.54
3	M	R	67	Madopar ² , Pramiprexole, Rasagiline, Sinemet ¹	*	R	-12.79	3.03
4	M	R	72	Amantadine, Ropinirole CR, Sinemet CR ¹ , Stalevo ³	*	L	-12.05	-3.39
5	F	R	60	Co-careldopa ⁴ , Rasagiline	12	L	-1.17	9.62
6	M	R	67	Madopar ² , Ropinirole, Selegiline	6	R	-7.44	4.06
7	M	R	82	-Sinemet Plus ¹ , Selegiline	5	R	-5.54	11.18
8	M	R	50	Ropinirole MR	*	L	-13.45	-5.25
9	M	R	72	Pramiprexole CR	3	R	-10.96	-12.54
10	M	R	69	Requip XL ⁵ , Stalevo ³	6	R	-14.06	-12.63
11	M	R	57	Pramiprexole, Selegiline	*	R	-2.37	-8.48
12	M	R	67	Rasagiline, Sinemet ¹	4	L	-5.75	2.23

Table 1. Participant information summary. ¹ Carbidopa/L-dopa, ² benserazide/L-dopa, ³ L-dopa/carbidopa/entacapone, ⁴ carbidopa/L-dopa, ⁵ ropinerole. MR = modified release, CR = controlled Release. [#]Mean change in time taken to complete each motor performance measurements. *Time since diagnosis longer than 5-years, exact duration data were not available.

3. Results

3.1. UPDRS Measures

The time-based UPDRS approach demonstrated a significant effect of time on the improvement in the symptomatic severity of participants ($F_{(1,11)}=12.00$, $p=0.003$). Post-hoc analysis confirmed a significant improvement following administration of zolpidem ($t_{(11)}=3.34$, $p=0.007$) that was not seen following placebo ($t_{(11)}=1.557$, $p=0.25$) (Figure 1A). Further analysis of individual symptoms, using Sidak’s multiple comparison test, confirmed a

significant reduction ($t_{(11)}=2.36$, $p=0.04$; $-1.59\pm0.62s$) in the time taken to complete the finger-tapping (FT) task (20-taps) following zolpidem, which was not seen in the placebo condition ($t_{(11)}=0.19$, $p=0.85$; $0.28\pm1.2s$) (Figure 1B FT). Further analysis, using one-way repeated measures ANOVA, confirmed that there were no significant differences in tapping performance between the six tapping trials ($F_{(5,66)}=1.97$, $p=0.12$); confirming that fatigue was not a driver of the observed changes. Additionally, a similar improvement was observed in the leg-agility (LA) task, where significant reduction in the time taken to complete 20 leg lifts following zolpidem ($t_{(11)}=2.39$, $p=0.04$; $-0.72\pm0.91s$) was not observed following placebo ($t_{(11)}=1.56$, $p=0.24$; $-0.42\pm0.80s$) (Figure 1B, LA).

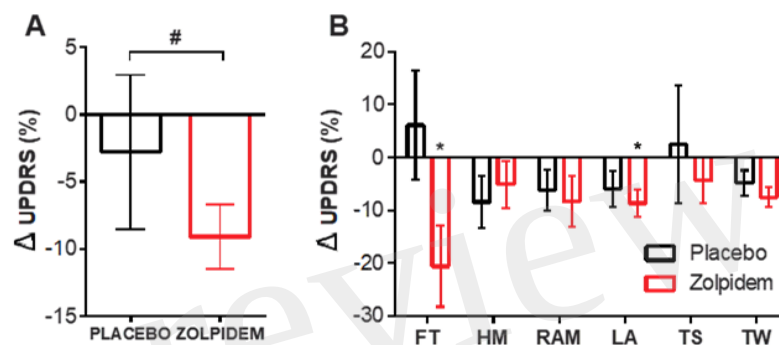


Figure 1. Motor performance measurements following placebo and zolpidem. (A) Total change (%) in motor performance score following placebo (black) and zolpidem (red). # indicates significant difference ($p=0.003$) between conditions. (B) Motor performance, based upon UPDRS part III, was quantified (time to complete) and improvement between BL and drug condition calculated. Change (%) in scores are shown for placebo (black) and zolpidem (red) with significant change (* $p<0.05$) indicated for finger tapping and leg agility (FT = Finger tapping, HM = Hand movement, RAM = Rapid alternating movement, LA = Leg agility, TS = Time to Stand, TW = Time to walk).

3.2. Reaction time and Tapping Speed

Measurement of choice reaction-time, using randomised left and right index finger movement cues, demonstrated no significant main effect of condition ($F_{(1,11)}=0.0003$, $p=0.98$) or drug ($F_{(1,11)}=0.09$, $p=0.78$) on the reaction time speed (placebo= $29.8\pm31.8ms$; zolpidem= $-28.5\pm35.6ms$) (Figure 2A). Analysis of the finger-tapping task, completed in the MEG, was consistent with UPDRS findings (Figure 1B). A significant increase was observed in the number of taps completed following zolpidem ($t_{(11)}=2.61$, $p=0.03$; 1.21 ± 0.56 Taps), that was not observed following placebo ($t_{(11)}=2.08$, $p=0.11$; 2.17 ± 1.34 Taps) (Figure 2B). Consistent with an increase in tapping speed, a significant reduction in the ITI was observed following zolpidem ($t_{(11)}=2.85$, $p=0.02$; $-26.68\pm10.49ms$) but not placebo ($t_{(11)}=0.25$, $p=0.96$;

2.46±5.10ms) (Figure 2C). Furthermore, analysis of the ITV, which reflects the number of hastening and faltering events during the tapping task, revealed a significant reduction of ITV following zolpidem ($t_{(11)}=2.55$, $p=0.05$; -35.58±17.38ms) but not placebo ($t_{(11)}=0.29$, $p=0.95$; 15.08±17.86ms) (Figure 2D). Analysis of tremor amplitude, as measured by the 3-7Hz frequency range power in the rectified EMG, revealed a significant main effect of drug ($F_{(1,11)}=9.49$, $p=0.03$), confirmed by post-hoc analysis as an amplitude reduction following zolpidem ($t_{(11)}=2.80$, $p=0.04$; -12.58±16.04 μ V/Hz) but not placebo ($t_{(11)}=0.05$, $p=0.99$; 1.52±2.50 μ V/Hz) (Figure 2Ei). This reduction is evident in the mean EMG power spectral density measures for each condition (Figure 2Eii).

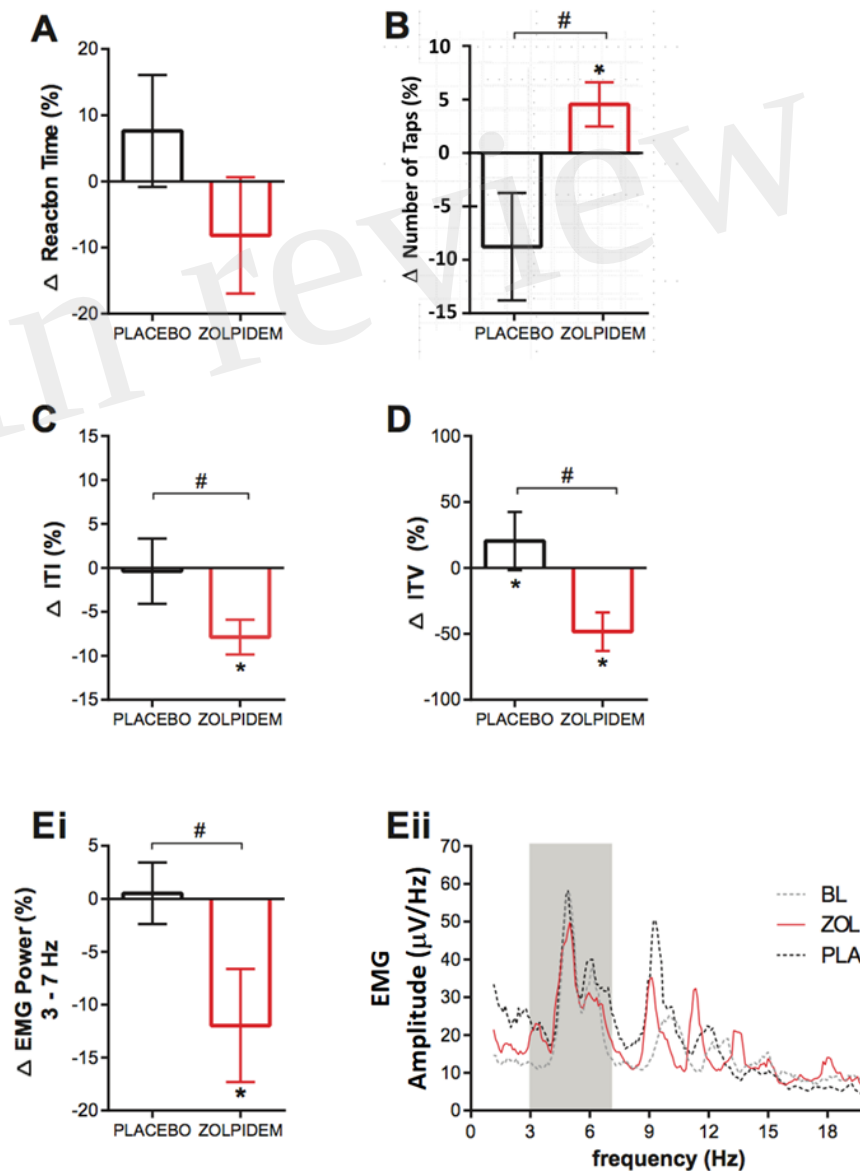


Figure 2. Functional measurements before and after placebo and zolpidem during MEG scanning. (A) Change (%) in latency of reaction time (RT) measured during the cued index-finger response task before and after placebo (black) and zolpidem (red). No significant effect of drug was observed ($p=0.78$). (B) Mean change (%) in the number of taps completed in 10s following placebo (black) and zolpidem (red), shows a significant difference (#) between conditions ($p=0.03$). (C) Change (%) in the mean ITI during the completion of the 10s tapping task following placebo (black) and zolpidem (red). Shows a significant difference (#) between conditions ($p=0.02$). (D) Change (%) in the inter-tap-variance (SD) following placebo (black) and zolpidem (red). Shows a significant difference (#) between conditions ($p=0.05$). (Ei) Change (%) in EMG power in the 3-7Hz frequency range following placebo (black) and zolpidem (red), which reveals a significant difference (#) following zolpidem ($p=0.04$). (Eii) Shows the complete power spectral density profile of the EMG during baseline and after placebo and zolpidem. Grey box shows 3-7 Hz range.

3.3. Beta Power and Movement Ability

Time-frequency analysis revealed an increase in beta power in the 10s tapping period compared to the 2s pre-movement baseline, which was more pronounced in the placebo than the zolpidem condition (Figure 3A&B). The accumulation of beta power over the 10s period of finger tapping, in each condition, was computed using the cumulative summation (cumsum) method (Matlab R2019, Mathworks USA). This revealed a significant main effect of drug ($F_{(1,11)}=3.96$, $p=0.05$), characterised by substantial accumulation of beta power in the baseline and placebo conditions, but not in the zolpidem condition, where beta was suppressed below the pre-movement baseline (Figure 3C). Post-hoc analysis confirmed a significant reduction in the accumulation of beta power following zolpidem ($-740 \pm 548 \text{ nAm}^2/\text{Hz}$; $t_{(11)}=2.39$, $p=0.03$) that was not observed following placebo ($1763 \pm 1389 \text{ nAm}^2/\text{Hz}$; $t_{(11)}=0.66$, $p=0.52$) (Figure 3D). Frequency analysis, visualised as power spectral density estimation (Figure 3E) demonstrates that the reduction in cumulative beta power occurs with a peak at approximately 25Hz, when compared to placebo. Further analysis of peak inter-tap beta, derived from the maximal beta amplitude in the interval between finger taps, revealed a significant main effect of drug ($F_{(1,11)}=7.28$, $p=0.012$) on inter-tap beta amplitude following zolpidem ($-258.6 \pm 123.5 \text{ nA}/\text{Hz}$; $t_{(11)}=3.91$, $p=0.026$) but not placebo ($-0.85 \pm 2.70 \%$; $t_{(11)}=0.84$, $p=0.11$; $42.3 \pm 126.8 \text{ nA}/\text{Hz}$).

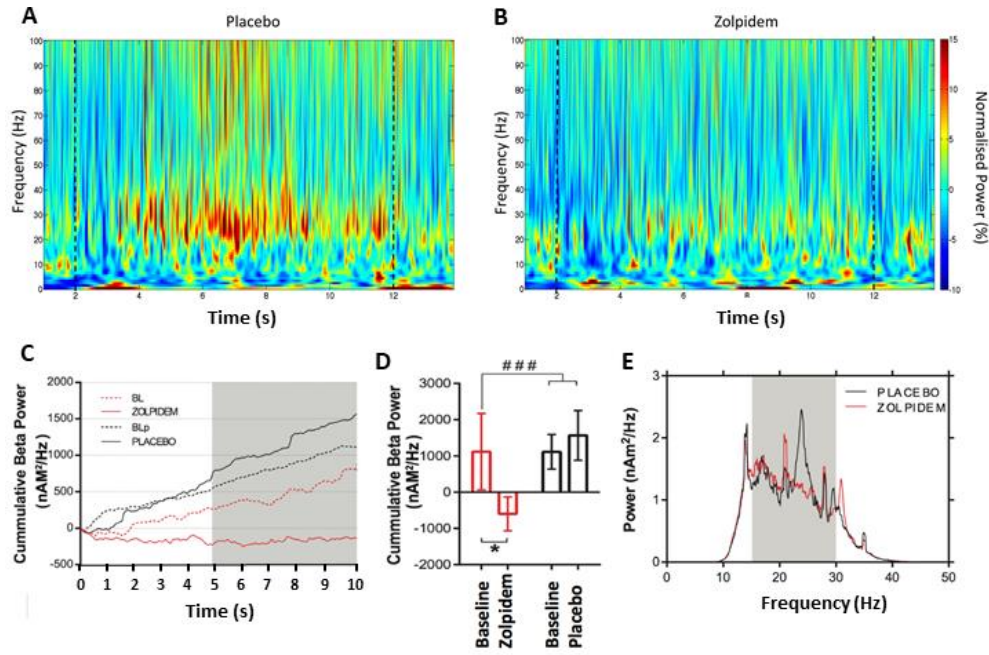


Figure 3. Beta power accumulation during the serial movement phase. Morlet-Wavelet time-frequency spectrograms showing grand average power change, normalised to the pre-movement period for: (A) Placebo and (B) Zolpidem. Dashed lines indicate the start and end of movement in each condition. (C) Cumulative power (nAm²/Hz) in the beta (15-30Hz) frequency bin, during performance of the rapid tapping task. Graph demonstrates accumulation of beta power during baseline and placebo (dashed and solid back) and baseline and zolpidem (dashed and solid red) respectively. A clear increase in beta power is observed in both baseline and placebo conditions, but not following zolpidem, where suppression below baseline levels occurs. Grey box indicates the time interval where a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) can be seen between zolpidem and placebo conditions. (D) Mean cumulative beta (nAm²/Hz) in the baseline-and-placebo (black) and baseline-and-zolpidem (red) conditions. Shows a significant difference (#) between drug conditions, with a significant difference (*) between zolpidem and baseline ($p = 0.03$), but not between placebo and baseline conditions ($p = 0.52$). (E) Power spectral density plot during the tapping period following placebo (black) and zolpidem (red). Shows the significant reduction in the beta power to be centred around 25Hz. Grey box shows the 15-30Hz bin used to compute the power change.

Subsequent analysis of the causal relationship between peri-movement beta power and movement ability was performed by computing the number of finger taps, derived from the rectified EMG, occurring within each participant's mean ITI following each inter-tap beta peak (Figure 4A). In the baseline and placebo conditions, an inverse correlation was observed between the number of taps performed and beta amplitude ($R^2 = 0.96$, $p = 0.003$). Following administration of zolpidem, a substantial reduction in beta power was observed, with greatest reduction associated with the absence of taps ($R^2 = 0.58$, $p = 0.14$, Figure 4B).

Power-independent analysis of the number of taps/peak-beta event, revealed no significant change ($t_{(11)}=1.21$, $p=0.28$) in the mean number of taps following each peak between placebo (1.48 ± 0.95) and zolpidem (1.36 ± 0.31) conditions. However, a substantial change in the variance was observed indicating a reduction in the number of zero and multiple taps (Figure 4C). Analysis of the individual beta peak events revealed a significant main effect of drug on the number of single taps ($F_{(1,11)}=6.02$, $p=0.03$). Sidak corrected post-hoc comparison confirmed a significant increase in the number of single taps following zolpidem ($20.04\pm1.52\%$; $t_{(11)}=3.36$, $p=0.0079$), but not following placebo ($6.78\pm9.83\%$; $t_{(11)}=0.6$, $p=0.62$). This is likely to be accounted for by modest and non-significant changes to the number of missed and multiple taps (Figure 4D).

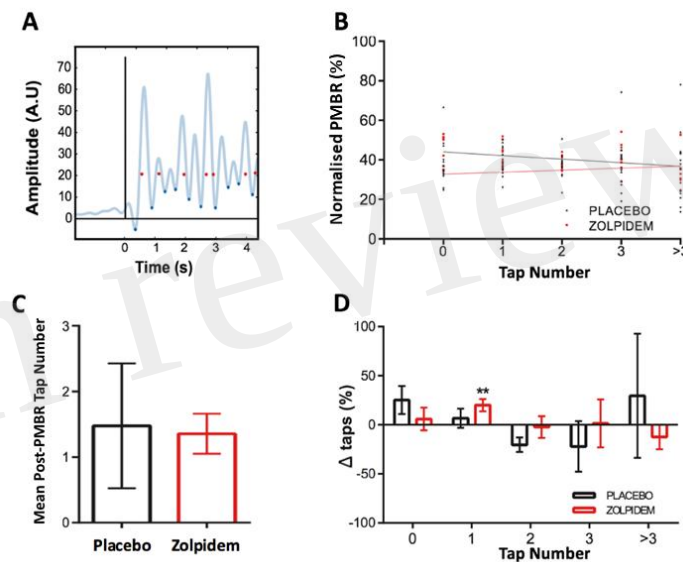


Figure 4. Peri-movement beta power and movement execution. (A) Shows the method for determining the relationship between high peri-movement beta and movement execution. Trace shows rectified EMG trace (example from a single participant) from which the onset of movement was determined (blue diamonds) and temporally co-registered with the peak of each beta peak (red dots), determined from MEG virtual electrode (black line indicates task 'Start' cue). (B) The amplitude peak beta (normalised as a percentage of the largest response) was computed following each event and assigned to the corresponding number of movements (taps) generated in the subsequent ITI. Mean amplitude of beta peaks and lines-of-best-fit are shown for events in the placebo (black dots and line) and zolpidem (red dots and line) conditions. Plot shows the association between peak beta power and number of taps and significant reduction in the amplitude of beta in zero movement condition following zolpidem. (C) The mean number of taps per peak beta event (independent of power) is shown for the placebo (black) and zolpidem (red) conditions. There is no significant difference in the mean number of events, but a notable reduction in the variance of the number of taps following zolpidem. (D) The change in the composition of missed, single and multiple taps in the placebo (black) and zolpidem (red) condition. A significant increase (***) in the number of single taps ($p=0.008$).

4. Discussion

This study expands upon previous observations that PMBR is elevated in PD patients, to demonstrate a progressive accumulation of beta power during the course of a serial tapping task. Further analysis shows that the ability to generate individual taps is directly associated with beta power in the preceding interval. Improvement in motor performance, observed following administration of zolpidem is associated with a reduction in the accumulation of peri-movement beta power.

4.1. Peri-movement beta as an inhibitory signal in PD

These experiments demonstrate an important mechanism by which abnormally elevated beta power following movement may impair the ability of patients to perform subsequent and therefore serial movements in PD. As demonstrated in previous experiments, there appears to be an augmentation of beta oscillatory power throughout the motor network of PD patients (Cassidy et al., 2002; Pollok et al., 2012; Stoffers et al., 2008), which appears to be reduced following effective therapeutic treatment that improves symptomatic presentation (Eusebio et al., 2011; Kühn et al., 2006; Silberstein et al., 2005). Importantly, however, although numerous studies imply a connection between the beta signal and movement impairments in PD, the causal association is at present inconclusive (Jenkinson and Brown, 2011; Timmermann and Florin, 2012). However, the changes observed in these cases are typically modest, offering an inconclusive explanation for augmented spontaneous beta power as a mechanism for inhibition of movement. A common limitation of laboratory studies exploring motor function is the discrete nature of the tasks, in which participants are typically required to perform individual movements separated by several seconds. Given that the majority of movements, and the impairments that arise PD are serial in nature and form part of a sequence of repeated or interconnected actions, it is unsurprising that studies of discrete individual movements are unable to offer adequate explanation for the effect of augmented beta power on movement. Specifically, while mean spontaneous beta power may be augmented, it is by no means continuous and tends to manifest as ‘bursts’ of elevated beta power at rest (Little et al., 2012; Hall et al 2014), which is possibly a consequence of the temporal fluctuations in endogenous dopamine release (Jenkinson and Brown, 2011). A causal association between elevated beta and impaired movement could be implied by an increased statistical probability of impaired movement associated with the burst period; a concept that is supported by the observed success of adaptive DBS, whereby stimulation is applied in response to elevated beta power (Little et

al., 2013). Recent studies in the STN demonstrate that beta bursts persist during movement and coincide with reduced velocity; consistent with bradykinesia and consistent with mechanistic theories of adaptive DBS (Torecillos et al 2018; Lotfredi et al 2019). This is in contrast to a positive correlation between gamma burst amplitude and velocity (Lotfredi et al 2018). Moreover, stimulation of M1 in control participants using tACS, shows that stimulation at beta frequency reduces motion amplitude during a repetitive movement paradigm (Guerra et al., 2018).

Here, we demonstrate the inhibitory nature of a functionally related neuronal network feature, peri-movement beta. This observation, consistent with the exaggerated PMBR that we have previously shown to be abnormally elevated and sustained in PD (Hall et al., 2014). PMBR, an inhibitory signature, is unavoidably generated following movement and therefore, when elevated and sustained in PD, has a greatly increased probability of impairing subsequent movements. In the present study, we demonstrate the impact of an accumulation of beta power (Figure 3C) and propose this as a critical mechanism in the inhibition of continuous movement in PD. We further demonstrate the relationship between the amplitude of individual beta-peak events and ability of patients to initiate subsequent movements. The observation of cumulative cortical beta power during sequential finger tapping is an important addition to our understanding, as healthy controls exhibit persistent beta suppression in the motor cortex during continuous movement (Muthukumaraswamy, 2010) and this is also seen in the STN of PD patients (Joundi et al., 2013).

4.2. GABAergic Improvement of Serial Movement

There is substantial evidence in support of the role of dopamine (DA) dysfunction underlying motor symptoms in PD (Damier et al., 1999). In particular, a decline in dopaminergic nigrostriatal projections in the basal ganglia (BG) resulting in reduction of excitatory drive to the direct pathway and inhibitory drive to the indirect pathway (Albin et al., 1989; DeLong, 1990). However, while DA undoubtedly plays a critical role in regulating the activity of cortico-BG-thalamic circuit, the predominant connections within this system are GABAergic and glutamatergic. Within the BG, GABAergic projections are the predominant connection between the striatum and globus pallidus (pars interna (GPi) and pars externa (GPe)), GPe to GPi, GPi to STN, GPi to Thalamus and GPi to Brainstem (see Brittain and Brown (2013) for a summary). In addition, activity in the M1 and primary Somatosensory cortex (S1) is GABAergically mediated (Hall et al., 2010a; 2011; Rönqvist et al., 2013; Yamawaki et al.,

2008). It is, therefore, unsurprising that administration of a specific GABA-A α -1 modulator such as zolpidem elicits a change in motor function in PD.

These findings raise several important questions on the mechanistic nature of elevated PMBR and GABA-mediated desynchronisation and improvement in PD. Previous studies have demonstrated that M1 beta power is driven by GABAergic interneuron mediated synchrony, which is contingent upon excitatory inputs (Yamawaki et al., 2008). Prevailing PD theories suggest that an increase in inhibitory GP to Thalamic drive reduces excitatory input to the cortex (Calabresi et al., 2014), which suggests that PMBR does not occur in response to Thalamo-cortical (TC) inputs. One might speculate that TC inputs to a putative M1 layer 4 (Yamawaki et al., 2014), may be temporally aligned to post-movement sensory feedback from S1. This would present a mechanism for motor efficiency, whereby sensory information elicits direct influence over motor feedback from the cortico-BG-thalamocortical loop, providing an opportunity for optimisation through plastic change. A potential consequence of such integration is the attenuation of the strength of feedback from S1 to M1, primarily in layers II/III (Geyer et al., 2000; Lindenbach and Bishop, 2013). Given the influence of S1-M1 connectivity on oscillatory power in the beta frequency range (Rönnqvist et al., 2013), this presents an appealing hypothesis for PMBR function and abnormal attenuation in PD. This suggestion is consistent with that of afferent feedback and sensorimotor recalibration following a period of change (Cassim et al., 2000).

The mechanism by which GABAergic modulation attenuates abnormally elevated PMBR, as previously reported (Hall et al., 2014) is uncertain. Previous studies observe that GABA-A modulators augment spontaneous beta power in the motor cortex, through increased drive to local interneurons in healthy control participants (Hall et al., 2010a; Jensen et al., 2005; Rönnqvist et al., 2013; Yamawaki et al., 2008). Further observations in healthy controls, that PMBR is unaffected by GABA-A modulation (Hall et al., 2011), raises the possibility that a separate sub-cortical mechanism, involving GABAergic projections in the BG are a plausible site of action for the effects observed here. An alternative cortical mechanism, specific to the low-dose administration of zolpidem has previously been described (Prokic et al., 2015), in which low-dose zolpidem selectively augments interneuron (fast spiking) specific GABA-A mediated tonic currents, resulting in reduction in beta oscillatory power. Regardless of the precise mechanism by which these changes occur, these findings reiterate the relatively untapped potential for engagement with GABAergic projections throughout the motor system,

as a target for therapeutic development in PD. The observed zolpidem-specific improvements and associated oscillatory changes in the present study, raises further questions about the potential impact of low-dose modulation in non PD participants. While the results of previous research (Hall et al 2014) shows that discrete movements and associated oscillatory changes are unchanged in healthy participants, the addition of an age-matched control group would serve to clarify the current findings further. In conclusion, these findings provide consistent evidence for the role of beta oscillations in the symptomatic presentation in PD. In particular, we demonstrate a mechanistic process whereby cumulative beta, generated during repeated movement, is disruptive to the generation of serial motor output. Moreover, we demonstrate the involvement of GABAergic units in the generation of beta hypersynchrony, which can be attenuated through modulation of GABA-A alpha-1 receptor activity.

Conflict of Interest Statement

None of the authors have potential conflicts of interest to be disclosed

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In review

Figure 1.TIF

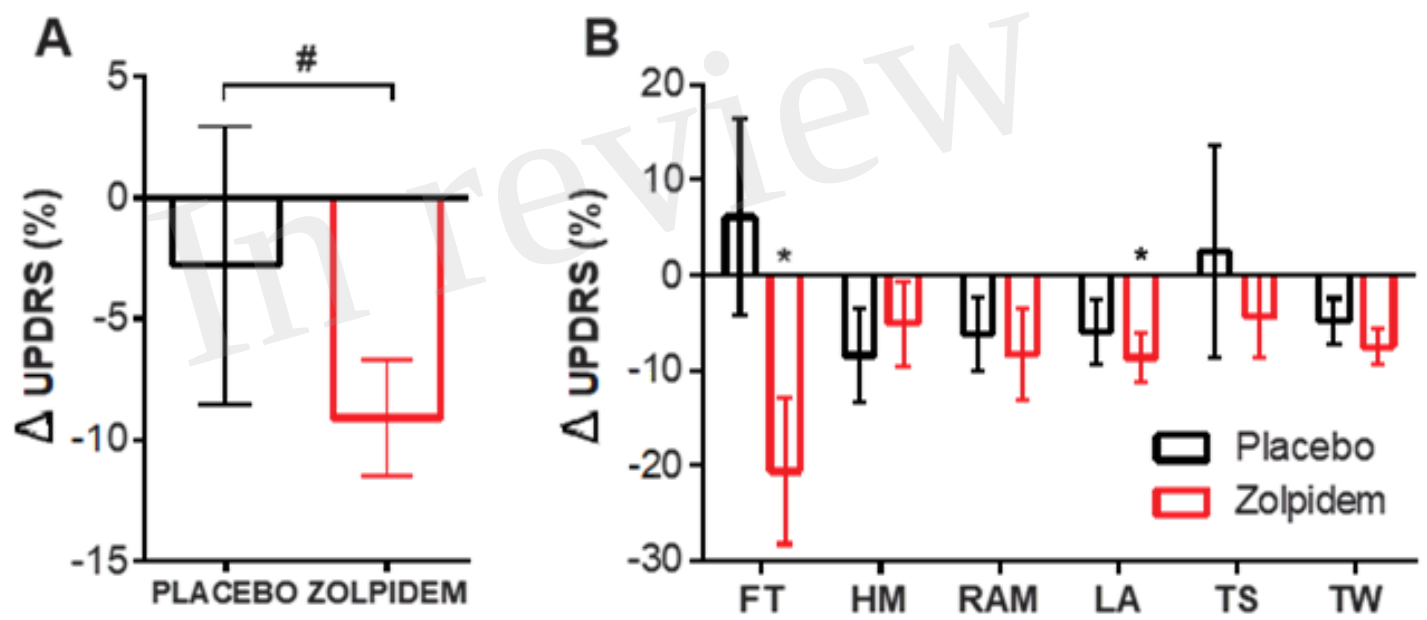


Figure 2.TIF

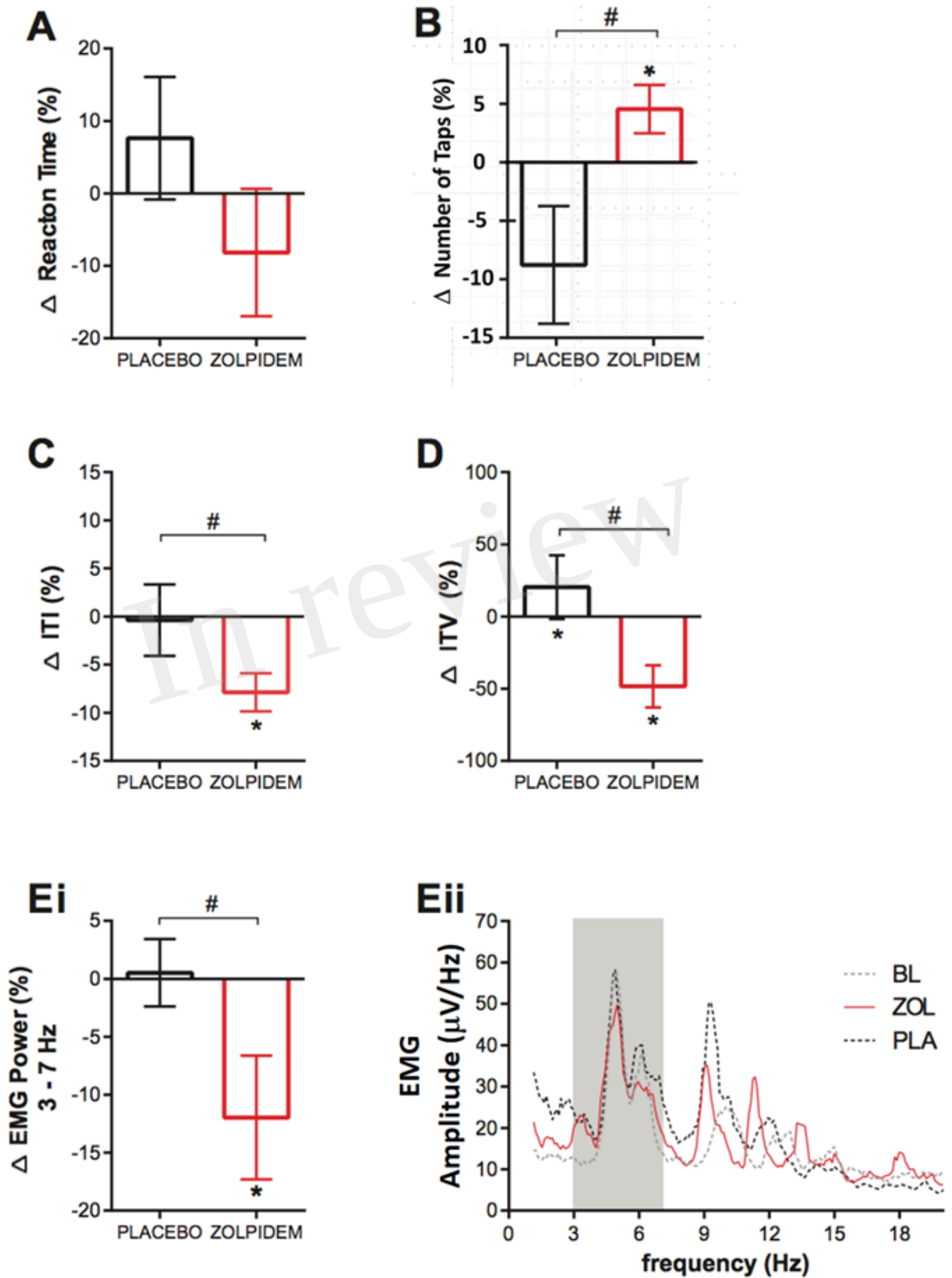


Figure 3.TIF

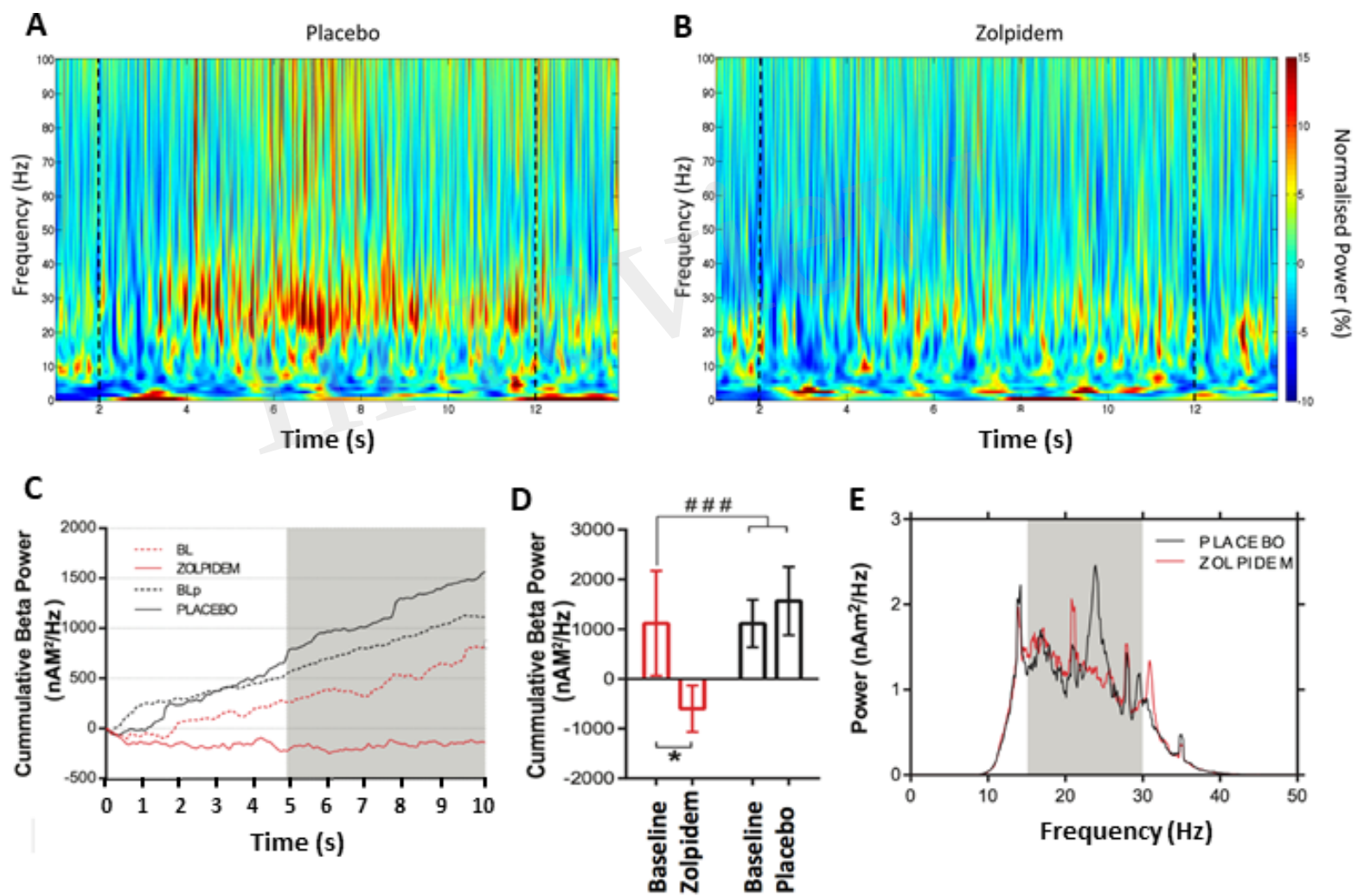


Figure 4.TIF

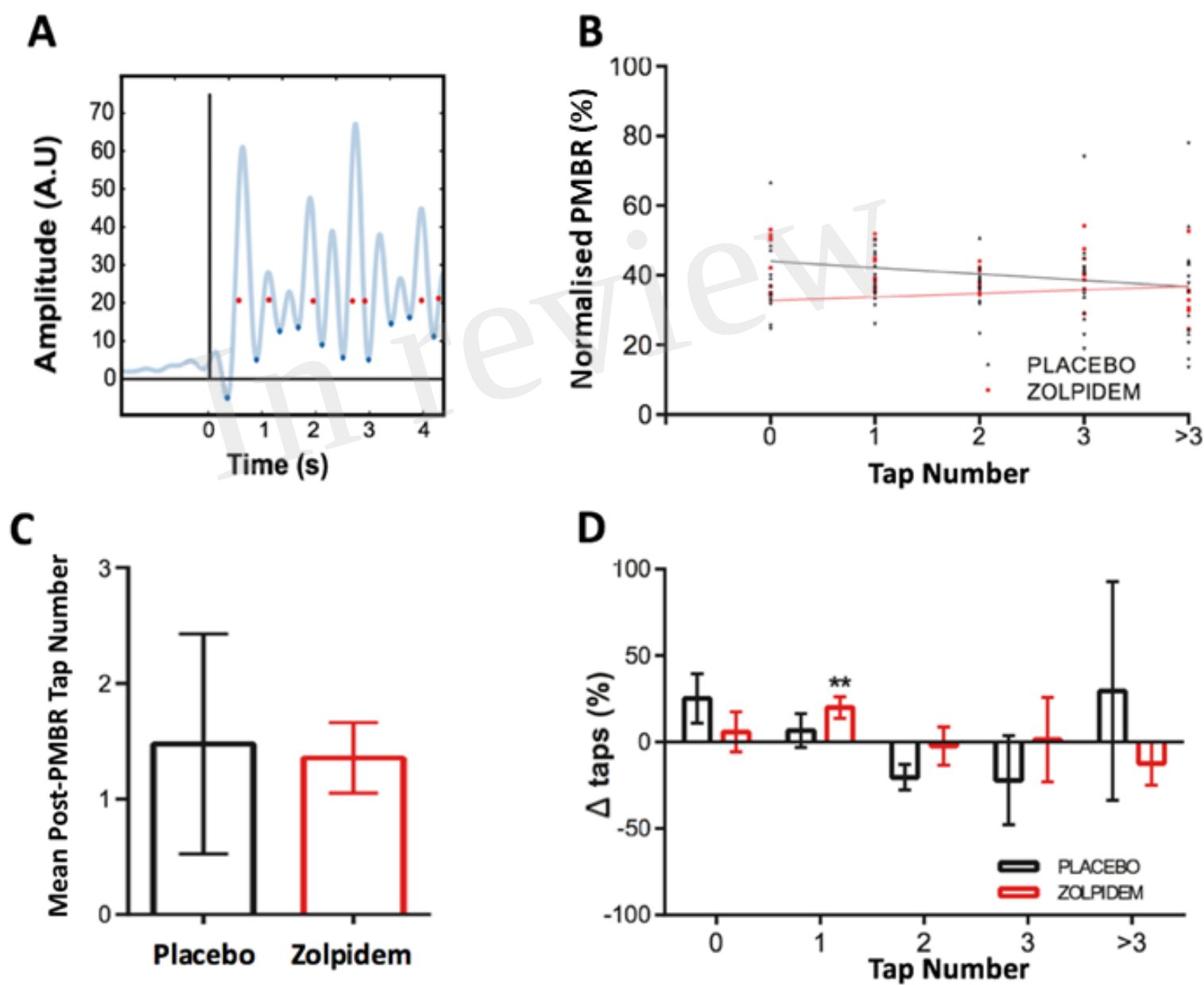


Figure 5.TIF

Patient ID	Gender	Dominant Hand	Age (Years)	Medication	Time Since Diagnosis (Years)	Impaired Side (L/R)	Δ UPDRS Zolpidem [#]	Δ UPDRS Placebo [#]
1	M	R	60	Ropinirole, Sinemet ¹	5	L	-12.80	2.07
2	F	R	67	Sinemet Plus	1	L	-1.41	-4.54
3	M	R	67	Madopar ² , Pramiprexole, Rasagiline, Sinemet ¹	*	R	-12.79	3.03
4	M	R	72	Amantadine, Ropinirole CR, Sinemet CR ¹ , Stalevo ³	*	L	-12.05	-3.39
5	F	R	60	Co-careldopa ⁴ , Rasagiline	12	L	-1.17	9.62
6	M	R	67	Madopar ² , Ropinirole, Selegiline	6	R	-7.44	4.06
7	M	R	82	-Sinemet Plus ¹ , Selegiline	5	R	-5.54	11.18
8	M	R	50	Ropinirole MR	*	L	-13.45	-5.25
9	M	R	72	Pramiprexole CR	3	R	-10.96	-12.54
10	M	R	69	Requip XL ⁵ , Stalevo ³	6	R	-14.06	-12.63
11	M	R	57	Pramiprexole, Selegiline	*	R	-2.37	-8.48
12	M	R	67	Rasagiline, Sinemet ¹	4	L	-5.75	2.23

Table 1. Participant information summary. ¹ Carbidopa/L-dopa, ² benserazide/L-dopa, ³ L-dopa/carbidopa/entacapone, ⁴ carbidopa/L-dopa, ⁵ ropinirole. MR = modified release, CR = controlled Release. [#]Mean change in time taken to complete each motor performance measurements. *Time since diagnosis longer than 5-years, exact duration data were not available.