



BRAIN DERIVED NEUROTROPHIC FACTOR

Abstract

The present invention relates to nucleic acid sequences encoding brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), as well as BDNF protein produced in quantity using these nucleic acid sequences, as well as fragments and derivatives thereof. In addition, the invention relates to pharmacologic compositions and therapeutic uses of BDNF, having provided, for the first time, the means to generate sufficient quantities of substantially pure BDNF for clinical use. In a specific embodiment, BDNF may be used to promote the survival of substantia nigra dopaminergic neurons and basal forebrain cholinergic neurons, thereby providing a method for treating, respectively, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease. The invention also relates to antibodies directed toward BDNF or fragments thereof, having provided a method for generating sufficient immunogen. Further, by permitting a comparison of the nucleic acid sequences of BDNF and NGF, the present invention provides for the identification of homologous regions of nucleic acid sequence between BDNF and NGF, thereby defining a BDNF/NGF gene family; the invention provides a method for identifying and isolating additional members of this gene family.