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Clinical and molecular investigation of 19 Japanese cases of glutaric acidemia type 1

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ABSTRACT

Glutaric acidemia type 1 (GA1) is a metabolic disease caused by a deficiency of glutaryl-CoA dehydrogenase (GCDH). Untreated patients mostly develop severe striatal degeneration. More than 200 mutations have been reported in the *GCDH* gene, and common R402W and IVS10-2A>C were found in Caucasian and Chinese/Taiwanese, respectively. However, in Japan, genetic mutations have only been reported in a few cases. Herein, we report the clinical and molecular basis of GA1 in 19 Japanese patients, including six previously reported patients. All cases showed high urinary glutaric acid excretion. Eleven patients were severely impaired (three patients died), three had mild impairment, and five showed normal development. Four of 5 patients that developed normally were detected in the presymptomatic stage by neonatal or sibling screening. Nineteen mutations in 26 alleles were identified, and eight of them (89 or 90delC, Y155C, IVS4+2T C, G244S, Q352X, G354A, K361E, and 1144-1145delGC) were novel. S305L (12.1%, 4/34 alleles) was found in several cases, suggesting that this mutation is a common mutation. In contrast, R402W was not identified and IVS10-2A>C was only found in one allele, suggesting that Japanese patients with GA1 show allelic heterogeneity and have a different genetic background to patients from other countries. One of a pair of sisters with the same mutations (M339V/S305L) lacking residual activity was severely retarded, whereas the older girl remains asymptomatic at 22 years of age, indicating that genotype does not necessarily predict GA1 phenotype. We consistently found that there was no association between genotype and phenotype. However, children with mild impairment were diagnosed and treated earlier than severely impaired cases {4.7 ± 2.5 months (range: 2–8 months) vs. 11.6 ± 12.7 months (range: 4–51 months)}. Our results suggest that early detection and treatment but not genotype are associated with better patient outcome, reinforcing the importance of neonatal screening.

1. Introduction

Glutaric aciduria type 1 (GA1, OMIN 231670) is an autosomal recessive metabolic disorder caused by deficiency of glutaryl-CoA dehydrogenase (GCDH, EC 1.3.99.7) [1,2]. GCDH is located in the mitochondrial matrix and acts in the intermediate steps of lysine, hydroxylysine, and tryptophan metabolisms [3]. The clinical manifestations of GA1 include extrapyramidal symptoms, developmental regression, and macrocephaly, appearing most often after acute encephalopathic crises, which are accompanied by bilateral marked enlargement of the sylvian fissure and degeneration of the striatum [1], and in addition, extrastriatal abnormalities [4] and abnormal hemodynamic changes [5]. Its biochemical characteristics include the accumulation of glutaric acid (GA), and 3-hydroxyglutaric acid, which can be detected by gas chromatography (GC/MS), and glutarylcarnitine, which can be identified by electrospray ionization/tandem mass spectrometry (MS/MS) [1,2]. It has been reported that GA1 can be classified into two types based on the level of excreted GA: the high excretion form (GA > 100 mmol/mol creatine) and the low excretion form (GA < 100 mmol/mol creatine) [6].

Since GA1 was first described in 1975 [3], more than 200 different mutations have been reported [7–9], and its frequency was estimated to be approximately 1 in 100,000 newborns [2]. Although almost all mutations are private, several common mutations have been identified, including A421V in the Amish Community [10], IVS 1+5G T in Canadian Oji-Cree Indians [11], and E365K in Irish travelers [8]. R402W is the most frequent mutation in the European population [6,8], and IVS10-2A C is relatively common in China [12] and Taiwan [13]. In Japan, the frequency of GA1 has been estimated to be approximately 1 in 210, 000 newborns, based on a newborn screening pilot study [14,15]. However, mutations have only been characterized in a few cases [16] since the first description of a Japanese case in 1987 [17]. Herein, we investigated the clinical and molecular aspects of 19 Japanese patients with GA1.

2. Subjects and methods

2.1. Subjects

We studied 19 Japanese patients who were diagnosed with GA1 based on their urinary organic acid profiles and/or blood acylcarnitine

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analysis. The diagnoses were confirmed by analyzing the *GCDH* gene and/or GCDH activity.

The mutations of 6 cases (cases 2–5, 12, and 19) were reported previously (cases 4, 12, and 19: [16], cases 2, 3, and 5: Japanese domestic journal). In this study, we analyzed the mutations in 13 cases (cases 1, 6–11, and 13–18). Among the 13 patients, 4 cases (case 6, 7, 10, and 11) were previously described in case reports [18,19]. No family demonstrated consanguineous marriage.

2.2. DNA sequencing

Genomic DNA was isolated from skin fibroblasts using a Qiamp DNA Microkit (QIAGEN GmbH, Hilden, Germany) and from peripheral blood lymphocytes using the DNA Quick II kit (Dainippon Pharmaceuticals, Osaka, Japan). Each exon of *GCDH* including the intron/exon boundaries was PCR-amplified for 30 cycles using the conditions shown in Supplemental Table 1. The PCR products were purified using a QIAquick PCR Purification Kit (QIAGEN GmbH, Hilden, Germany) and sequenced using the ABI PRISM 310 Genetic Analyzer (PE Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, USA) or the CEQ 8000 Genetic Analysis System (Beckman Coulter Inc., Fullerton, CA, USA). The structure of the human *GCDH* gene was obtained from the GenBank database (ENSG00000105607). Informed consent to perform DNA analysis was obtained from the parents of the patients. Our study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Shimane University Faculty of Medicine.

3. Results

3.1. Clinical characteristics

The clinical features of 19 Japanese GA1 patients (10 boys and 9 girls) are summarized in Table 1. Cases 4 and 19 and cases 15 and 18 were siblings. Fifteen of the 19 cases were symptomatic patients. Three (cases 1–3) of 19 cases were detected in a newborn screening pilot study, and one (case 4) was an asymptomatic sibling case that was detected at 2 years of age. To evaluate their outcomes, we classified them into three groups based on disability score [20] that included motor disability, cognitive function, and speech: a) the severe handicap group (disability score 7–9), b) the mild impairment group (disability score 4–6), and c) the normal developmental group (disability score 3) (Supplemental Table 2).

Eleven of the 19 cases were classified into severe handicap group (three of them died), 3 cases belonged to mild impairment group, and 5 cases showed normal development (Fig. 1). The mean age at onset of the symptomatic cases was 5.7 m (range: 4–8 m) in the severe handicap group, 2.3 m (range: 2–3 m) in the mild impairment group, and 6 m in case 4 of the normal development group who suffered from macrocephaly. The mean age at diagnosis was 11.6 m (range: 4–51 m) in the severe handicap group, 4.7 m (range: 2–8 m) in the mild impairment group, and 27 m (range: 24–30 m) in the normal development group, except for the 3 cases diagnosed by newborn screening. Macrocephaly was observed in 31.6% of patients (6/19). All 19 cases showed high urinary glutaric acid excretion. Cranial CT and/or MRI demonstrated frontotemporal atrophy and striatum signal abnormalities in all cases involving mild impairment or severe handicap. In contrast, three of five cases in the normal development group demonstrated mild changes by neuroimaging.

3.2. Clinical manifestations of patients

No cases had a past history except for cases 1, 6, 7, and 9. None of the cases showed abnormal development before the onset of GA1. Immediately after the diagnosis of GA1, all cases were treated with dietary restriction, L-carnitine administration, and prompt intravenous fluid infusions for catabolic states such as recurrent vomiting and diarrhea. In addition, a GABA analogue and vitamin B2 were given to the 14 and 8 cases, respectively.

3.2.1. Normal development group

Cases 1–3 were detected prior to displaying any specific symptoms by a newborn screening program using MS/MS. Case 1 weighed 2952 g when she was born at a gestational age of 39 weeks and 2 days. Abruptio placentae occurred during her birth and she suffered from asphyxia (Apgar score: 3/4). She recovered following hypothermia treatment for hypoxic–ischemic encephalopathy. Cases 2 [21] and 3 [21] had no remarkable delivery events. In these 3 cases, no signs of neurologic complications were evident at 4 months, 5 years, and 7 years old, respectively.

Case 4 was the nonsymptomatic older sister of case 19, who was severely handicapped [16]. She was diagnosed with GA1 by a sibling GC/MS screening in the presymptomatic stage at 2 years old.

Case 5 was hospitalized because of macrocephaly (47.6 cm, +2.5 S.D.) at 6 months. There was no sign of neurologic complications or developmental delay, but cranial CT suggested a subarachnoid cyst and a subdural hematoma. Thereafter, the subarachnoid cyst and subdural hematoma became smaller. At 2.5 years, he was referred to the pediatric department due to progressive macrocephaly (56.5 cm, +3.0 S.D.). Brain CT demonstrated widening of the Sylvian fissures, which in fact had been found by CT at 7 months.

3.2.2. Mild impairment group

Case 6 was treated for initial vomiting and idiopathic hyperbilirubinemia during the neonatal period [18]. Screening by brain echography identified dilated ventricles.

Case 7 was delivered at 27 weeks of dizygotic twin gestation [18]. His birth weight was 998 g. Macrocephaly and convulsions were noticed at 2 and 3 months, respectively. Following treatment, his development caught up.

In case 8, progressive macrocephaly was noticed at 3 months old. Her head circumference was +5.0 S.D. at 7 months old. Her regression and hypotonia, which were accompanied by seizures at 8 months old, improved gradually after treatment.

3.2.3. Severe handicap group

Cases 10, 11, and 13 died. Case 10 displayed a lack of head control at 4 months old [17,18] and irritability and sleeplessness at 5 months old. She died suddenly at 5 years old after developing a common cold. Cases 11 [19] and 13 presented encephalitis-like disease at 5 and 7 months, respectively. Case 11 died suddenly at the age of 3 years. Case 13 died of airway obstruction due to choking after developing an infection at 3 years old.

Similarly, no treatment was effective for the neurological symptoms of the severely handicapped patients that survived, all of whom are bedridden, require tube feeding, and smile spontaneously. Case 9 was born at 35 weeks with an Apgar score of 6/9 by cesarean delivery for premature membrane rupture and breech presentation. His birth weight was 2235 g. He was diagnosed with GA1 at 4 months after an episode of convulsions. He required mechanical ventilation and a tracheostomy for respiratory distress at 10 months old. Case 12 suffered from encephalitis-like symptoms including convulsions, unconsciousness, and rigidity following fever and an upper respiratory tract infection at 5 months old [16]. Case 14 was affected with Kawasaki disease at 5 months old. Intravenous immunoglobulin resulted in rapid defervescence, but his regression, involuntary movement, and irritability accompanied by fever were irreversible. Case 16 was affected by viral encephalitis with hyperpyrexia, consciousness disturbance, and hypertonia at 7 months of age. Case 17 was found to have subependymal pseudocysts and temporal lobe hypoplasia at 1 month. Transient regression was observed at 7 months after gastroenteritis. Thereafter, progressive neurological regression, hypotonia, and rigidity were observed following convulsions associated with pneumonia at 8 months. Case 19 was the younger sister of