

TABLE I. Clinical Features of 18 Reported Cases of 4p16.1-4p14 Deletion

	Reported patients with deletion [references]							
	4p16.1-p15.2, present case	4p16.1-p15.2, 5 cases [1-4]	4p16.1-p15.1, 4 cases [2]	4p16.1-p14, 1 case [2]	4p15.33-15.2, 3 cases [5,6]	4p15.32-p14, 2 cases [2,7]	4p15.32-p15.2, 1 case [8]	4p15.2-14, 1 case [5]
Long face	-	+	+	+	+	+	?	+
Upslanted fissures	-	+	+	+	+	+	?	+
Epicanthal folds	+	+	+	+	+	+	?	+
Distinctive nose	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
High or cleft palate	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Thick lower lip	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Micrognathia	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Broad, short neck	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
Broad hands and feet	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
Tall, thin habitus	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Tall but symmetric	-	+	+	+	+	+	?	+
Mental retardation	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Mild	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-
Moderate	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+
Severe	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+

1, White et al. [1995]; 2, Tonk et al. [2003]; 3, Innes et al. [1999]; 4, Davies et al. [1990]; 5, Chitayat et al. [1995]; 6, Romain et al. [1983]; 7, Fryns et al. [1989]; 8, Ishikawa et al. [1990]. ? , no available data.

deletion had a tall, thin stature, while the habitus of our patient was tall and well-proportioned, rather than thin, and began prenatally. In addition, her face was not long but her jaw was well developed. These features seem distinctive among the reported manifestations for the proximal 4p deletion syndrome, and might be attributed to possibly different extent of deletion between our and other patients with del(4)(p16.1p15.2), although our findings remain inconclusive as this is a single case and a possible role of genetic background within the family cannot be ruled out. Based on a familial transmission and reproductive fitness of the syndrome reported previously, as well as a possible reproductive capacity in our patient, we must exercise a caution when counseling patients with this condition [Tonk et al., 2003].

According to information from the Gene Predictions in the UCSC database, there are several candidate genes in the deleted segment that may explain the overgrowth in the present patient. Among them, the *SLC2A9* and *BAPX1* genes may play a role in the development and survival of chondrocytes in cartilage matrices and in skeletal development, respectively. The *FGFBP1* gene encoding fibroblast growth factor binding protein 1 may have a function similar to that of *FGFR3*, the gene for fibroblast growth factor receptor 3, which regulates endochondral ossification [Deng et al., 1996]. Moreover, the *PPARGCIA* gene (chr4: 23,402,742-23,500,798) that is located near the proximal breakpoint of the 18-Mb deleted region in our patient may involve in regulating cellular cholesterol homeostasis and development of obesity.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Lack of *C20orf133* and *FLRT3* mutations in 43 patients with Kabuki syndrome in Japan

Kabuki syndrome (KS, OMIM 147920), also known as Niikawa-Kuroki syndrome, is a multiple congenital anomalies/mental retardation (MCA/MR) syndrome characterised by a peculiar facial appearance, skeletal abnormalities, joint hypermobility, dermatoglyphic abnormalities, postnatal growth retardation, recurrent otitis media and occasional visceral anomalies. Although some studies have ruled out several loci from the candidacy for KS, any putative disease gene loci or candidate genes remain unidentified.

In a recent issue of the journal, Maas *et al*¹ reported that exon 5 of the *C20orf133* gene at 20p12.1 was disrupted by a 250 kb de novo-microdeletion in a patient with KS; they also screened for mutations in *C20orf133* and *FLRT3* (a nested gene located within intron 3 of *C20orf133*) in 19 additional patients with KS, but failed to detect such mutations or deletions in any of them. It remains unclear whether the two genes are responsible for the pathogenesis of KS, and if so, how frequently the deletion at the locus is found in KS patients. Herein we describe the results of a deletion assay for the exon 5 in *C20orf133* and a mutation analysis of *C20orf133* and *FLRT3* among 43 patients with KS in Japan. In addition, we also show the results of a copy number analysis at 20p12.1 by Human Mapping 250K Nsp Array among 18 patients with KS in Japan.

Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the Committee for the Ethical Issues on Human Genome and Gene Analysis in Nagasaki University. The subjects studied consisted of 43 patients (20 girls and 23 boys) with KS from Japan for mutation analysis and a deletion assay, and of 18 patients (nine girls and nine boys) with KS for copy number analysis. Genomic DNA was isolated by the standard method. Genomic sequences were retrieved from the UCSC genome browser. GenBank accession numbers of NCBI of *C20orf133* and *FLRT3* are NM_080676 and NM_198391, respectively.

C20orf133 and *FLRT3* were directly sequenced. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) primers used for the two genes were those described by Maas *et al*,¹ but as some primers did not work in our laboratory, we newly designed the primers. Direct sequencing of *C20orf133* and *FLRT3* did not show any pathogenic nucleotide changes in the 43 patients. Observed five nucleotide changes in the patients were all found in normal Japanese individuals as well—that is, a first substitution, c.173C>T (p.T58I) in *C20orf133*, already registered in the database of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs)

as rs2990505, was identified in 14 patients (12 heterozygous and two homozygous status). A second substitution, c.1069T>C (p.S357P) in *C20orf133*, not registered in the database, was observed in 10 patients (heterozygous status) and in 35 of 159 normal Japanese individuals (29 heterozygous and six homozygous status). A third substitution, g.14257801T>C in exon 2 (5'UTR exon) of *FLRT3*, found in nine patients (heterozygous status), was registered as rs761998. A fourth substitution, c.765A>G (p.Q255Q) in *FLRT3*, not registered in the database, was found in one patient (heterozygous status) and in three of 137 normal Japanese individuals (heterozygous status). The last nucleotide change, heterozygous deletions of three nucleotides, g.14257964_14257966delCAG in exon 2 (5'UTR exon) of *FLRT3*, not registered in dbSNP, was found in nine patients, and in four of 81 normal Japanese individuals.

Deletion assay involving exon 5 of *C20orf133* was performed by quantitative

real-time PCR on an ABI PRISM 7900HT Sequence Detection System (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, California, USA). *ALB* gene was chosen as a reference gene,² which had no copy number polymorphism (CNP) in the Database of Genomic Variants (DGV, <http://projects.tcag.ca/variation/>). Primers and fluorogenic probes were designed with the assistance of Primer Express v1.5 (Applied Biosystems). Primer sequences are available on request. The quantitative PCR indicated that none of the 43 patients had any copy number changes involving *C20orf133* exon 5. The average quotient (SD) of the target/reference genes in patients was 1.090 (0.124) with a range (SD) of 0.934–1.291 (0.025–0.426), and the control persons as well (data not shown).

According to the DGV (last updated 29 Nov 29 2007), a ~368 kb deletion (chromosome 20, nucleotide numbers (nt) 14,606,364–14,974,100 bp), involving exon 5 of *C20orf133* (nt 14,613,489–14,613,605), has been reported in one of 506 unrelated healthy Northern German and 270 HapMap individuals (registered as Variation 9315, a normal loss).³ Thus, it is possible that the 250 kb deletion at 20p12.1 in a KS patient reported by Maas *et al*¹ was a rare copy number variation. However, some CNPs may possibly play more important roles in human phenotypic variations than SNPs.^{4,5} For example, Balikova *et al* reported a unique novel syndrome caused by the amplification of large genomic regions, ~750-kb at cytoband 4p16, known to be copy number variation.⁶ Therefore, we must be careful to check copy number changes for an MCA/MR syndrome.

To search particular microdeletion/duplication at cytoband 20p12.1, we performed copy number analysis among 18 patients with KS by DNA oligomicroarray hybridisation using the GeneChip Human Mapping 250 K Nsp Array (Affymetrix, Santa Clara, California, USA). Data at the target region were analysed using GTYPE (GeneChip Genotyping Analysis Software), CNAT (GeneChip Chromosome Copy Number Analysis Tool) and Partek Genomic Suite v6.3 (Partek Inc, St Louis, Missouri, USA). Two copy number changes were found among 18 patients. Neither of them was registered in the DGV, but they were less likely to be pathogenic because both of them were within intronic sequences—that is, a ~100 kb deletion within intron 5 of *C20orf133* was detected in one patient (patient 3 in fig 1). Its physical positions and log₂ ratios were: chromosome 20, nt 15,000,514 bp (log₂ -0.4136), 15,014,439 (-0.4586), 15,034,442 (-0.4831), 15,066,513 (-0.4519), and 15,102,706 (-0.4330). In another patient (patient 14 in fig 1), a ~30 kb region was suggested as duplication and the region was located within intron 4 of the *C20orf133*. The physical positions and log₂ ratios were: chromosome

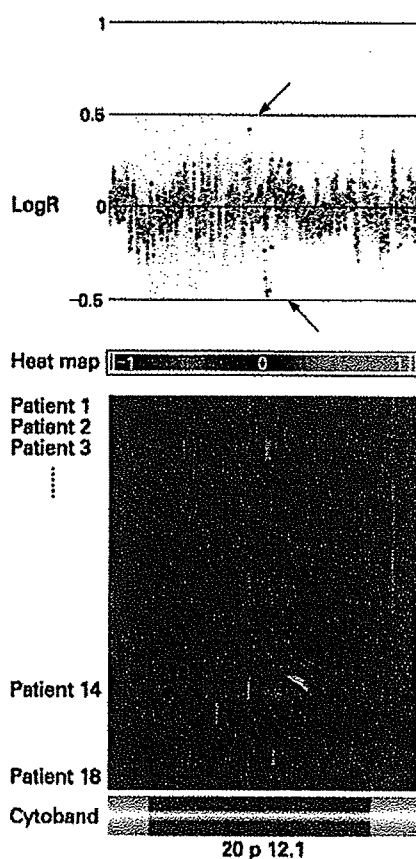


Figure 1 Copy number analysis at 20p12.1 among 18 patients with Kabuki syndrome. Each patient in log₂ ratio plot is shown by a different colour. A bar of Heat Map representing gain for red and loss for green is divided in each patient. Deletion at intron 5 of *C20orf133* is indicated in patient 3. Duplication at intron 4 of *C20orf133* is suggested in patient 14 (arrows in log₂ plot; deep green or deep red in HeatMap).

PostScript

20, nt 14,527,943 bp (LogR 0.4113), 14,553,038 (0.4443), 14,557,957 (0.4204) and 14,563,924 (0.3878). The other 16 patients with KS did not show significant copy number changes at the region. Thus, particular copy number changes at the region were not detected in these patients with KS.

In summary, we performed a mutation analysis for *C20orf133* and *FLRT3*, a deletion assay for exon 5 of *C20orf133* in 43 patients with KS and a copy number analysis by DNA oligomicroarray among the 18 patients with KS in Japan. These studies did not reveal pathogenic alterations in the patients. Therefore, our findings unfortunately could not support the working hypothesis that the *C20orf133* and/or *FLRT3* were the causative gene in most Japanese KS patients.

H Kuniba,^{1,2,13} M Tsuda,^{1,13} M Nakashima,^{1,13} S Miura,^{1,13} N Miyake,^{2,13} T Kondoh,² T Matsumoto,² H Morifuchi,² H Dhashi,^{3,13} K Kurosawa,⁴ H Tonoki,⁵ T Nagai,^{6,13} N Okamoto,⁷ M Kato,⁸ Y Fukushima,^{9,13} K Naritomi,^{10,13} N Matsumoto,^{11,13} A Kinoshita,^{1,13} K-i Yoshiura,^{1,13} N Niikawa^{1,12,13}

¹Departments of Human Genetics, Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Nagasaki, Japan; ²Departments of Pediatrics, Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Nagasaki, Japan; ³Division of Medical Genetics, Saitama Children's Medical Center, Iwatsuki, Japan; ⁴Division of Medical Genetics, Kanagawa Children's Medical Center, Yokohama, Japan; ⁵Department of Pediatrics, Tenshi Hospital, Sapporo, Japan; ⁶Department of Pediatrics, Dokkyo University School of Medicine Koshigaya Hospital, Koshigaya, Japan; ⁷Department of

Planning and Research, Osaka Medical Center and Research Institute for Maternal and Child health, Osaka, Japan; ⁸Department of Pediatrics, Yamagata University School of Medicine, Yamagata, Japan; ⁹Department of Medical Genetics, Shinshu University School of Medicine, Matsumoto, Japan; ¹⁰Department of Medical Genetics, University of the Ryukyus, Nishihara, Japan; ¹¹Department of Human Genetics, Yokohama City University Graduate School of Medicine, Yokohama, Japan; ¹²Research Institute of Personalized Health Sciences, Health Sciences University of Hokkaido, Tobetsu, Japan; ¹³Solution Oriented Research for Science and Technology (SORST), Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST), Tokyo, Japan

Correspondence to: Dr K-i Yoshiura, Department of Human Genetics, Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Sakamoto 1-12-4, Nagasaki 852-8523, Japan; kyoshi@nagasaki-u.ac.jp

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Research Letter

No Mutation in RAS-MAPK Pathway Genes in 30 Patients With Kabuki Syndrome

Hideo Kuniba,^{1,2,12} Daisuke Sato,^{1,3,12} Koh-ichiro Yoshiura,^{1,12*} Hirofumi Ohashi,⁴
Kenji Kurosawa,⁵ Noriko Miyake,^{1,2,12} Tasturo Kondoh,² Tadashi Matsumoto,² Toshiro Nagai,^{6,12}
Nobuhiko Okamoto,⁷ Yoshimitsu Fukushima,^{8,12} Kenji Naritomi,^{9,12}
Naomichi Matsumoto,^{10,12} and Norio Niikawa^{1,11,12}

¹Departments of Human Genetics, Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Nagasaki, Japan

²Departments of Pediatrics, Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Nagasaki, Japan

³Department of Pediatrics, Hokkaido University Graduate School of Medicine, Sapporo, Japan

⁴Division of Medical Genetics, Saitama Children's Medical Center, Iwatsuki, Japan

⁵Division of Medical Genetics, Kanagawa Children's Medical Center, Yokohama, Japan

⁶Department of Pediatrics, Dokkyo University School of Medicine Koshigaya Hospital, Koshigaya, Japan

⁷Department of Planning and Research, Osaka Medical Center and Research Institute for Maternal and Child health, Osaka, Japan

⁸Department of Medical Genetics, Shinshu University School of Medicine, Matsumoto, Japan

⁹Department of Medical Genetics, University of the Ryukyus, Nishihara, Japan

¹⁰Department of Human Genetics, Yokohama City University Graduate School of Medicine, Yokohama, Japan

¹¹Research Institute of Personalized Health Sciences, Health Sciences University of Hokkaido, Tobetsu, Japan

¹²Solution Oriented Research for Science and Technology (SORST), Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST), Tokyo, Japan

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To the Editor:

Kabuki syndrome (KS, OMIM 147920) also known as Niikawa–Kuroki syndrome, is a multiple congenital anomaly/mental retardation (MCA/MR) syndrome characterized by a distinctive facial appearance resembling the Kabuki actor's make-up, skeletal abnormalities, joint hypermobility, dermatoglyphic abnormalities, postnatal growth retardation, occasional visceral anomalies and immune abnormalities. The cause of KS remains unknown, even though a large number of patients from a variety of ethnic groups have been reported since 1981 [Wessels et al., 2002]. The prevalence was estimated to be 1/32,000 in Japan [Niikawa et al., 1988] and 1/86,000 in Australia and New Zealand [White et al., 2004]. Although most cases were sporadic, at least 14 familial cases have been reported. The equal male-to-female ratio of patients, and parent-child transmissions in some familial cases suggest an autosomal dominant of inheritance [Niikawa et al., 1988; Matsumoto and Niikawa, 2003]. At least six autosomal structural abnormalities have been reported in patients with KS or KS-like features [Matsumoto and Niikawa, 2003], but no concordant specific cytogenetic lesion have been found.

It is less likely that a large-scale genomic rearrangement is the common cause of KS, because array-based comparative genome hybridization (array-CGH) did not detect any abnormality in previously reported 8p22–p23.1, and in whole genome with 1.2/1.5 megabase resolution [Hoffman et al., 2005; Schoumans et al., 2005; Miyake et al., 2006]. Although it was reported that a patient with KS had a de novo 250 kilobase microdeletion of the exon 5 region in *C20orf133* gene, 19 additional patients with KS did not have any mutations or copy number changes of the gene [Maas et al., 2007].

Recently, germline mutations in some genes involving the RAS-mitogen-activated protein kinase (RAS-MAPK) signal transduction pathway have been shown to be causes of multiple congenital anomaly

This article contains supplementary material, which may be viewed at the American Journal of Medical Genetics website at <http://www.interscience.wiley.com/jpages/1552-4825/suppmat/index.html>.

*Correspondence to: Dr. Koh-ichiro Yoshiura, Department of Human Genetics, Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Sakamoto 1-12-4, Nagasaki 852-8523, Japan.

E-mail: kyoshi@nagasaki-u.ac.jp

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syndromes; i.e. Noonan syndrome due to *PTPN11* [Tartaglia et al., 2001], *KRAS* [Schubbert et al., 2006], *SOS1* [Roberts et al., 2007; Tartaglia et al., 2007] and *RAF1* [Pandit et al., 2007; Razzaque et al., 2007]; Costello syndrome due to *HRAS* [Aoki et al., 2005]; cardio-facio-cutaneous (CFC) syndrome due to *KRAS* and *BRAF* [Niihori et al., 2006], and *BRAF*, *MEK1* and *MEK2* [Rodriguez-Viciano et al., 2006]. These achievements encouraged us that a disturbance of certain transcriptional factors or oncogenes related to the pathway may cause KS as an MCA syndrome due to their variety functions. To test the hypothesis, we screened in 30 patients with KS (14 females and 16 males) for mutations in 16 genes involving the RAS-MAPK pathway.

Experimental procedures were approved by the Committee for the Ethical Issues on Human Genome and Gene Analysis in Nagasaki University. Genomic DNA was extracted from their peripheral blood leukocytes or from EBV-transformed lymphoblastoid cells established after obtaining informed consent from all subjects and/or their parents. The selected genes for mutation analysis were following: *PTPN11*, *SOS1*, *GRB2*, *HRAS*, *KRAS*, *ERAS*, *NRAS*, *ARAF*, *BRAF*, *RAF1* (*CRAF*), *MEK1*, *MEK2*, *RASA1*, *RASA2*, *RASA3* and *RASA4*. These accession numbers are respectively NM_002834, NM_005633, NM_203506, NM_005343 and NM_176795 (*HRAS1* and H-RAS), NM_033360 and NM_004985 (*KRAS*

isoform a and b), NM_181532, NM_002524, NM_001654, NM_004333, NM_002880, NM_002755, NM_030662, NM_002890 and NM_022650 (*RASA1* isoform 1 and 2), NM_006506, NM_007368, and NM_006989. Genomic sequences were retrieved from the UCSC genome browser (assembly: March 2006; <http://genome.ucsc.edu/>). The entire coding exons and splice junctions of the genes were directly sequenced using BigDye sequencing kit ver.3.1 (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA) and an automated sequencer Model 3100 (Applied Biosystems). PCR conditions and primer sequences are available in the online supplement (see the online supplementary file at <http://www.interscience.wiley.com/jpages/1552-4825/suppmat/index.html>).

In 227 coding exons of the 16 genes analyzed among 30 patients with KS, we found 27 base substitutions (Table I). Nine base substitutions lead to nonsynonymous amino acid changes. Two missense mutations in *RASA1* gene in two patients with KS were detected, which were not found in 86 phenotypically normal Japanese controls, but each mutation was detected in only one patient. Unfortunately DNA samples from their parents were not available. TaqMan real-time quantitative PCR assay for the *RASA1* gene in 30 patients did not show any copy number changes (data not shown). Mutations in *RASA1*, most of them results in premature termination codon, are known as a cause

TABLE I. Nucleotide Changes Found in Genes Analyzed in the RAS-MAPK Pathway in 30 Patients With Kabuki Syndrome

	Gene	Change of		Number of patient(s)	SNP ID	AF		
		Nucleotide	Amino acid					
Non-synonymous	<i>RASA1</i>	c.73G>A	A25T	1	NR	0.000		
		c.473C>G	S158C	1	NR	0.000		
	<i>RASA4</i>	c.379T>C	W127R	7	NR	0.800		
		c.381G>C	W127R	9	NR	0.900		
		c.401G>A	R134Q	12	NR	0.806		
		c.674T>C	V225A	6	NR	0.051		
			c.728G>A	R243Q	7	NR	0.063	
			c.1054A>G	M352V	8	rs746316		
				c.1103T>C	L368P	4	rs886343	
				c.195A>C	R65R	1	NR	0.045
Synonymous	<i>SOS1</i>	c.1230G>A	Q410Q	1	NR	0.000		
	<i>BRAF</i>	c.1689C>G	G563G	1	NR	0.000		
	<i>RASA4</i>	c.330C>T	V110V	22	NR	0.847		
		c.336C>T	P112P	25	NR	0.847		
	<i>KRAS</i>	c.519T>C	D173D	10	rs1137282			
	<i>HRAS</i>	c.81T>C	H27H	9	rs2227994			
	<i>BRAF</i>	c.1929A>G	G643G	4	rs1042179			
	<i>RAF1</i>	c.1629A>G	T543T	1	rs5746244			
	<i>MEK2</i>	c.453C>T	D151D	5	rs17851657			
		c.660C>A	I220I	20	rs11539507			
	<i>RASA1</i>	c.3067T>C	L1023L	3	rs3747704			
	<i>RASA2</i>	c.2028T>C	N672N	16	rs295322			
		c.2172G>A	L720L	18	rs295323			
	<i>RASA3</i>	c.1326T>C	T442T	12	rs2274717			
	<i>RASA4</i>	c.339T>C	D113D	4	rs11547191			
		c.1512C>T	A504A	3	rs739735			
c.2253C>T		G751G	7	rs3099742				

AF, allele frequency among 82–89 phenotypically normal Japanese controls; NR, not registered in NCBI database.

of capillary malformation-arteriovenous malformation (CM-AVM) [Boon et al., 2005], but the manifestations of CM-AVM are so different from that of KS that it is less likely responsible for KS. Seven base substitutions of the nonsynonymous amino acid changes were confirmed as single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) listed in the database of SNP or found in 82–89 normal Japanese controls. Synonymous changes were found as 18 base substitutions including 13 SNPs registered, 3 base changes found in the controls, and 2 base changes not found in the controls. Consequently, no pathogenic mutations were detected in any of the genes analyzed in RAS-MAPK pathway and in any of the patients with KS examined. Although our results do not totally rule out the role of RAS-MAPK pathway in KS, it is less likely that the genes in this pathway are associated with KS.

Since there has been no clue to identify the putative gene causative for KS, candidate gene approaches would be valuable in a view of “inborn errors of development”. In this connection, transforming growth factor β receptors (*TGFBR1* and *TGFBR2*, relating *IRF6* gene which is causative for van der Woude syndrome (VWS), was added to candidate genes because of specific lower lip pits with VWS and with KS in common, but the two genes did not show any mutations and copy number changes among 14 patients with KS [Bottani et al., 2006]. We may need to perform an intensive PCR-based mutation screening in the genes involving the TGF- β intracellular signaling pathways.

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Increased level of cell-free placental mRNA in a subgroup of placenta previa that needs hysterectomy

Kiyonori Miura^{1*}, Shoko Miura¹, Kentaro Yamasaki¹, Atsushi Yoshida¹, Koh-ichiro Yoshiura², Daisuke Nakayama¹, Norio Niikawa³ and Hideaki Masuzaki¹

¹Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Nagasaki, Japan

²Department of Human Genetics, Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Nagasaki, Japan

³Research Institute of Personalized Health Sciences, Health Sciences University of Hokkaido, Hokkaido, Japan

Objective The purpose of this study was to investigate whether cell-free placental mRNA levels have the potential to predict a placenta previa resulting in hysterectomy.

Methods Twenty-eight singleton pregnant women with placenta previa were classified into the following four groups: 16 women with placenta located at a posterior part of the uterine wall (Group A); 4 each with placenta located at the anterior wall without (Group B) or with (Group C) previous cesarean section; and the other 4 with a history of previous cesarean section and who had the placenta located at an anterior part of uterine wall and underwent a cesarean hysterectomy (Group D). The maternal plasma concentrations of the cell-free placental lactogen (PL) mRNA measured by real-time reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (PCR) were converted into multiples of the median (MoM).

Results The MoM (range) values of cell-free PL mRNA in the control group and Groups A to D were 1.00 (0.39–2.35), 2.04 (0.91–3.93), 2.58 (1.90–3.90), 3.50 (1.20–4.30), and 6.28 (5.24–7.63), respectively. The concentration of cell-free PL mRNA was significantly higher in Group D than in Group A, B, or C (Mann–Whitney's *U*-test, *P* < 0.05).

Conclusion The cell-free PL mRNA concentration in maternal plasma has the potential to predict a subgroup of placenta accreta resulting in hysterectomy. Copyright © 2008 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

KEY WORDS: cell-free placental mRNA; ultrasonography; placenta previa; placenta accreta; cesarean hysterectomy

INTRODUCTION

Placenta accreta is defined as an abnormal adherence of the placenta to the uterine wall with partial or complete absence of the deciduas basalis. The conditions in which the trophoblastic tissue invades within the myometrium, and through the serosal surface of the uterus, are called placenta increta and placenta percreta, respectively.

Placenta previa, when located at the anterior uterine wall and having history of a cesarean section, has a high risk of placenta accreta (Finberg and Williams, 1992). However, placenta accreta is usually found at the time of delivery and its final diagnosis is confirmed by pathological examination after the surgery. Therefore, the obstetrician's main concern is whether such a complication can be predicted prenatally, because prenatal diagnosis allows a planned approach under a more controlled condition with possible treatment. Ultrasonography and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) play roles in predicting the invasiveness of placenta previa (Comstock, 2005), and an elevated level of α -fetoprotein in maternal serum has been suggested to be a biological

marker of placenta accreta (Zelop *et al.*, 1992; Kupfermanc *et al.*, 1993). Nevertheless, diagnostic accuracy of these predictive tests is still unsatisfactory.

Circulating cell-free placental mRNA can stably be isolated and quantified in maternal plasma (Ng *et al.*, 2003; Tjoa *et al.*, 2006; Lo and Chiu, 2007; Maron and Bianchi, 2007). As recent advances in molecular studies have shown that the main source of circulating fetal RNA was from the placenta (Ng *et al.*, 2003), potential clinical applications of several markers for prenatal monitoring have been proposed. The quantitative aberrations of selected placental mRNA species have been reported in various pregnancy-associated disorders. They included corticotropin releasing hormone (CRH), placenta specific-1 (PLAC1), selectin-P mRNA in preeclampsia (Ng *et al.*, 2003), β -hCG (CGB) mRNA in gestational trophoblastic disease (Masuzaki *et al.*, 2005a), and placental lactogen (PL) in twin–twin transfusion syndrome (Miura *et al.*, 2007). Our previous study has demonstrated that the levels of circulating cell-free placental mRNA for PL and CGB can monitor the effect of methotrexate (MTX) treatment in a woman with placenta percreta with a residual placental mass at the internal os, for which she was subsequently treated with MTX (Masuzaki *et al.*, 2005b). Thus, cell-free placental mRNA in the maternal plasma has become a molecular marker for noninvasive evaluations of placental invasion (Mazouni *et al.*, 2007). Here we report

*Correspondence to: Kiyonori Miura, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, 1-7-1 Sakamoto, Nagasaki 852-8501, Japan. E-mail: kiyonori@nagasaki-u.ac.jp

that the maternal plasma concentration of such placental mRNA has the potential as a predictive marker of placenta previa-associated placenta accreta, which will result in hysterectomy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Between April 2002 and October 2007, we had 61 singleton pregnant women who had low-lying placentae at 20 weeks as study participants who visited Nagasaki University Hospital for management of their placenta previa. An inclusion criterion in this study was pregnant women who had a placenta previa at 29–32 weeks of gestation, without any other complications, that may influence the levels of cell-free placental mRNA in maternal plasma, e.g. preeclampsia, preterm labor, or intrauterine growth restriction. Patients who had a tocolytic agent or uterine bleeding before or at blood sampling were also excluded from this study, because these factors might also affect the concentration of cell-free mRNA in the maternal plasma. Two out of 33 cases that met the above exclusion criteria underwent cesarean hysterectomy. One case had a tocolytic agent to suppress uterine contraction and uterine bleeding during blood sampling, and the other case had preeclampsia and a tocolytic agent to suppress uterine contraction. Both cases, in which the placenta was located at the anterior of uterine wall with a previous cesarean section, were diagnosed as placenta previa-increta by pathological examination of placenta/uterus. Twenty-eight out of 61 pregnant women with placenta previa were included finally in this study. All participants gave written informed consent, and the study protocol was approved by IRB for Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues of Nagasaki University. They were classified into four groups (Groups A–D), according to their ultrasonographic findings, history of delivery, and the presence or absence of hysterectomy (Table 1); 16 women whose placenta was located at the posterior part of the uterine wall had no history of previous cesarean section, and their uterus were conserved because a separation of their placenta and control of uterine bleeding were possible (Group A); 4 women each had the placenta located at an anterior part of the wall without (Group B) and with (Group C) previous cesarean sections, and

their uterus were conserved because a separation of their placenta and control of uterine bleeding were possible; and the last 4 had a history of previous cesarean section, and had the placenta located at an anterior part of uterine wall and received a cesarean hysterectomy because of placenta previa-increta or -percreta and uncontrolled uterine bleeding (Group D). The prenatal prediction of placenta accreta in Groups B, C, and D was estimated by ultrasonographic findings, which were suggestive of placenta accreta, including (1) irregularly shaped placental lacunae within the placenta, (2) thinning of the myometrium overlying the placenta, (3) loss of retroplacental clear space, and (4) increased vascularity of the uterine serosa/bladder interface. As ultrasonographic assessment for the placenta located at the posterior wall of the uterus was not adequate (Comstock, 2005), the cases in Group A were excluded from the ultrasonographic examination. The same surgeon decided to perform a cesarean hysterectomy when bladder invasion of placenta was visible or separation of placenta was impossible and massive uterine bleeding was not controlled during the cesarean section. Pathological examination of placenta/uterus was performed in cases of Group D, but not in cases of Groups A–C.

To get the samples from the cases of placenta previa that did not move away from the cervix by the placental migration, blood samples (8 mL) were collected with EDTA from the women when they visited our hospital to undergo maternal/fetal health check up at 29–32 weeks of gestation. The plasma samples were frozen at -80°C for an average of 3 months (ranging from 1 to 12 months). For performing quantitative analysis, 1.6 mL of each plasma sample was centrifuged at 11 500 g for 10 min to remove any residual cells, and cell-free mRNAs were extracted from 1.2 mL of the supernatant of their plasma as described previously (Ng *et al.*, 2003). None of them had any complications such as preterm labor and uterine bleeding at the time of blood sampling. Sixty healthy singleton pregnant women without any obstetric complications were included as the control group, and EDTA blood sampling and cell-free mRNA extraction were performed at 29–32 weeks of gestation. Among the control group, and Groups A, B, C and D, there were no significant differences in maternal age, nulliparous number, and gestational age at the time of sampling (data not shown).

Table 1—The classification of Groups A–D

Group (cases)	Diagnosis	Location of placenta	Previous cesarean section	Separation of placenta	Bleeding during a cesarean section	Cesarean hysterectomy
Group A ($n = 16$)	Placenta previa*	Posterior of uterine wall	–	Possible	Controlled	–
Group B ($n = 4$)	Placenta previa*	Anterior of uterine wall	–	Possible	Controlled	–
Group C ($n = 4$)	Placenta previa*	Anterior of uterine wall	+	Possible	Controlled	–
Group D ($n = 4$)	Placenta previa-increta or -percreta	Anterior of uterine wall	+	Impossible	Uncontrolled	+

The minus symbol indicates a subgroup with the background, while the plus symbol a subgroup without the background. The asterisk indicates that although a pathological examination of placenta/uterus was impossible in the cases that did not have a cesarean hysterectomy, some cases in Groups A–C might have a possibility of placenta previa-accreta.

One-step quantitative real-time reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) assay was performed using an ABI 7900T Sequence Detector (Perkin-Elmer, Foster City, CA) as described previously (Ng *et al.*, 2003a). PL was selected as placental cell-free mRNA in maternal plasma, and glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) mRNA was taken as the total cell-free mRNA in the maternal plasma. Primer sets and TaqMan probes for PL and GAPDH, and single-strand and synthetic oligonucleotides for calibration curve were used as described previously (Ng *et al.*, 2003b). Calibration curves for PL mRNA ranged from 1×10^7 to 1×10^1 copies/mL, and the curve for GAPDH mRNA from 1×10^{10} to 1×10^4 copies/mL. Each sample was analyzed in triplicate with thermal cycling. The interassay coefficient of variations (the ratio between the standard deviation and the mean of repeated measurements) for PL mRNA and GAPDH mRNA concentrations in copies/mL, which were calculated from 18 consecutive runs over the study period, were 12.1% and 4.9% for low titer samples (1×10^2 copies/mL of PL mRNA and 1×10^5 copies/mL of GAPDH mRNA) and 4.3% and 1.8% for high titer samples (1×10^6 copies/mL of PL mRNA and 1×10^9 copies/mL of GAPDH mRNA), respectively. As the cell-free mRNA levels in maternal circulation could be affected by the gestational age at the time of blood drawing, plasma concentrations of cell-free PL mRNA in placental mRNA and of cell-free GAPDH mRNA in total mRNA were measured, and data were converted into multiples of the median (MoM) of 60 control pregnant women adjusted for gestational age as described previously (Purwosunu *et al.*, 2007). Differences among the four groups were evaluated with Mann-Whitney's *U*-test. Significant difference was defined as a *P*-value of 0.05 or less. As the results of quantitative real-time RT-PCR assay were not given to the surgeon, the decision to perform hysterectomy for each of the patients in Group D was never based on the plasma concentrations of cell-free PL mRNA and of cell-free GAPDH mRNA.

RESULTS

Each ultrasonographic finding we investigated was suggestive of placenta accreta, which was detected in Groups B, C, and D (Table 1). One case in Group B, two cases in Group C, and all four cases in Group D had all four ultrasonographic findings examined. Pathological examination confirmed that all four cases in Group D were diagnosed as placenta accreta including three cases of placenta increta and one case of placenta percreta (Figure 1). There was no finding of placental infarction in the cases of cesarean hysterectomy.

The median (minimum to maximum range) MoM values of cell-free PL mRNA in the control group and Groups A to D were 1.00 (0.39–2.35), 2.04 (0.91–3.93), 2.58 (1.90–3.90), 3.50 (1.20–4.30), and 6.28 (5.24–7.63), respectively (Table 2). The concentration of cell-free PL mRNA was significantly higher in Group A–D than in the control group (Mann-Whitney's *U*-test, $P = 0.0001, 0.0019, 0.0051, \text{ and } 0.0009$ respectively) (Figure 2(a)). The concentration of cell-free PL mRNA was significantly higher in Group D than in Group A, B, or C (Mann-Whitney's *U*-test, $P = 0.0025, 0.0209, \text{ and } 0.0209$, respectively), while there was no significant difference between Group A, B, or C ($P > 0.05$) (Figure 2(a)). The MoM (range) values of cell-free GAPDH mRNA in the control group and Groups A to D were 1.00 (0.58–1.96), 1.10 (0.59–1.47), 1.09 (0.97–1.54), 1.16 (0.96–1.22), and 1.20 (1.11–1.35), respectively (Figure 2(b)). There was no significant difference of cell-free GAPDH mRNA levels in the maternal plasma among the five groups ($P > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The concentration of the cell-free PL mRNA (placental RNA) in maternal plasma was significantly higher in women with placenta previa who had hysterectomy (Group D) than those with placenta previa of other groups. However, the plasma concentration of cell-free GAPDH mRNA (total RNA including maternal and fetal molecules) showed no significant difference

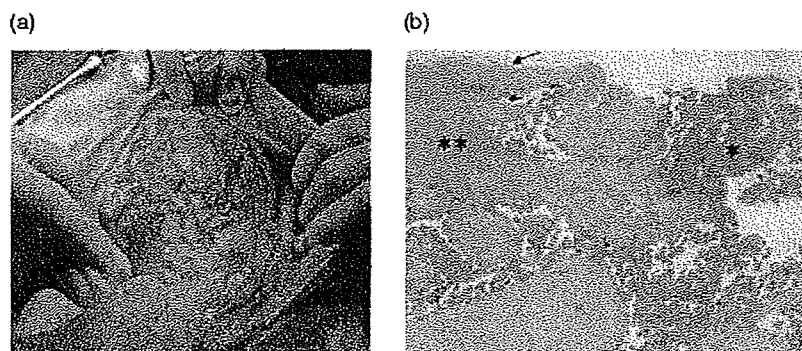


Figure 1—Placenta percreta in a woman of Group D. (a) The bladder wall was involved and a cesarean supravaginal hysterectomy was performed. (b) Pathological finding (hematoxylin-eosin stain, $\times 40$ magnification). Placenta (*) penetrated through the myometrium (**) to the serosa (black arrow)

Table 2—Ultrasonographic features, histological findings, and cell-free mRNA levels in Groups B, C, and D

Group	Ultrasonographic features					Cell-free mRNA levels	
	Irregularly shaped placental lacunae	Thinning of the myometrium overlying the placenta	Loss of the retroplacental clear space	Increased vascularity of the uterine serosa/bladder interface	Histological findings of placenta/uterus	Cell-free PL mRNA (MoM)	Cell-free GAPDH mRNA (MoM)
B-1	O	O	O	X	Not examined*	2.89	1.06
B-2	X	X	O	X	Not examined*	2.27	1.54
B-3	X	O	X	X	Not examined*	1.90	0.97
B-4	O	O	O	O	Not examined*	3.93	1.12
C-1	O	O	O	X	Not examined*	3.29	1.22
C-2	O	O	X	O	Not examined*	4.30	0.96
C-3	O	O	O	O	Not examined*	1.20	1.19
C-4	O	O	O	O	Not examined*	3.70	1.13
D-1	O	O	O	O	Placenta previa/increta	5.49	1.11
D-2	O	O	O	O	Placenta previa-percreta	7.63	1.35
D-3	O	O	O	O	Placenta previa/increta	7.06	1.28
D-4	O	O	O	O	Placenta previa/increta	5.24	1.12

'O' indicates a case with the feature, while 'X' is a case without the feature.

The asterisk indicates that histological examination of placenta/uterus was not performed in the subgroups without a cesarean hysterectomy.

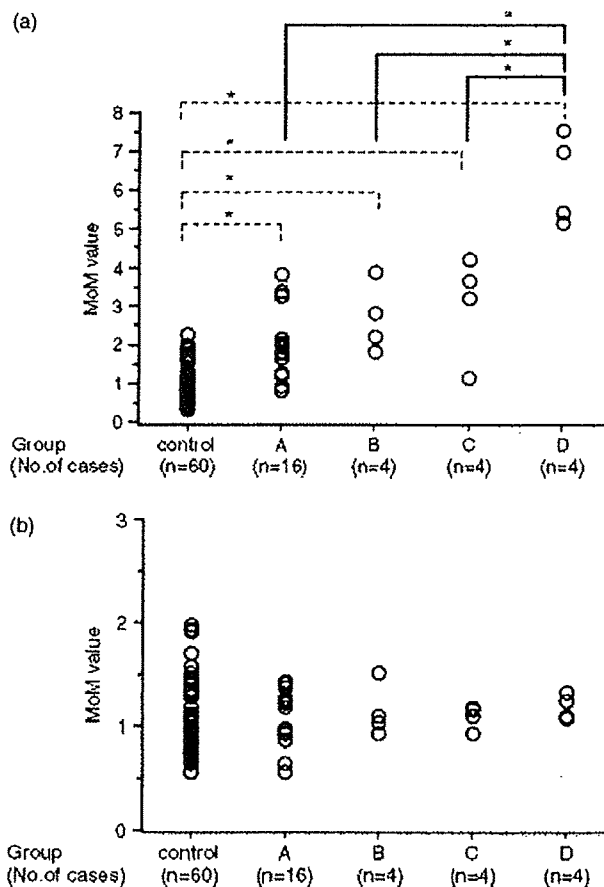


Figure 2—Scatter plots of the cell-free mRNA concentrations in maternal plasma in 28 women with placenta previa and 60 healthy control pregnant women. (a) Scatter plots of the cell-free PL mRNA concentrations in women of control group and Groups A, B, C, and D (open circle). A single asterisk shows significant differences ($P < 0.01$). (b) Scatter plots of the cell-free GAPDH mRNA concentrations in women of the control group and Groups A, B, C, and D (open circle). There was no significant difference among the five groups ($P > 0.005$)

between the groups. Both fetal hematopoietic cells and the placenta can contribute to the pool of cell-free fetal/placental mRNA detected in the maternal circulation (Maron and Bianchi, 2007). Although the usual explanation of the source of circulating DNA is apoptosis, necrosis and apoptosis that were caused by laser ablation of placenta in twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome did not affect circulating mRNA levels post procedure (Tjoa *et al.*, 2006). There was no finding of placenta infarction in the placentas of Group D, which also suggests that necrosis and apoptosis did not affect cell-free placental mRNA levels in maternal plasma. The higher incidence in women in Group D, having either placenta increta or placenta percreta, might be explained by a possible direct connection between the placenta and maternal circulation, because invasion of trophoblasts into the uterine muscle in cases of Group D led to increased concentrations of cell-free placental mRNA in maternal plasma. The concentration of circulating cell-free PL mRNA in the maternal plasma of Groups A–C was about 2–3 times the control level of placenta mRNA, suggesting that the presence of thin and dysfunctional decidua at the lower segment of the uterus might be related to this increase (Sekizawa *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, the difference in concentration between placental mRNA and total mRNA in maternal plasma may be affected by direct uteroplacental transfer of cell-free placental mRNA molecules. The results suggest that cell-free PL mRNA concentration in maternal plasma has the potential to be used as a marker for a group of placenta previa who have hysterectomy, though the sample size was too small to give sufficient strength to the analysis.

Women of Group D whose placenta was located at the anterior wall of the uterus with a history of cesarean sections were diagnosed as placenta previa-increta or -percreta. At the time of attempting placental removal, they had massive hemorrhage, the most common indication for emergent, intra- or postpartum hysterectomy,

with the risk of disseminated intravascular coagulopathy and high mortality. Meanwhile, conservative approaches to placenta previa-percreta or -increta by leaving the affected placenta also bring a significant risk of serious complications, such as unpredictable uterine bleeding and maternal mortality. To reduce these complications, a multidisciplinary team approach and accurate prediction of placenta accreta are desired (Oyelese and Smulian, 2006). The prediction of placenta previa-increta or -percreta prenatally is usually made by ultrasonography, which is readily available in most centers (Finberg and Williams, 1992; Comstock *et al.*, 2004; Comstock, 2005). In this study, the case that had all four ultrasonographic features we examined was a high risk of placenta previa-increta or -percreta that resulted in a hysterectomy. However, as only four out of seven cases that had all four ultrasonographic features belonged to Group D, the diagnostic accuracy of ultrasonography for the placenta previa-increta or -percreta resulting in a hysterectomy was still unsatisfactory. Therefore, molecular analysis of cell-free PL mRNA levels, combined with the imaging results, is expected to give a more accurate prediction of placenta previa-increta or -percreta that results in a hysterectomy, and surgeons can take precautions, e.g., by preparing balloon catheter occlusion, transfusion of blood, and other surgical specialties such as urology and gynecological oncology. Among the groups A, B, and C, there was the possibility that some cases had a placenta accreta or abnormally adherent placenta that was managed without hysterectomy, though their final diagnosis was unknown because pathological examination was impossible. Advent of a noninvasive prenatal diagnostic procedure will undoubtedly be a great advance for the practice. Further studies of cell-free placental mRNA may enable an obstetrician to identify women who are ideal candidates for conservative management. For the prediction of the possibility of cesarean hysterectomy in the cases of posterior placenta previa, the measurement of cell-free PL mRNA concentration in maternal plasma may be superior to ultrasonography.

In conclusion, measurement of the cell-free PL mRNA concentration in maternal plasma has the potential to detect abnormal placentations, such as placenta accretae, that need hysterectomy. As this pilot study was limited by its small sample size, further large-scale studies are necessary to verify our hypothesis. Plasma concentration of cell-free PL mRNA combined with an imaging examination can be used as a noninvasive obstetrical examination for prenatal prediction of placental invasion in pregnant women with placenta previa (Mazouni *et al.*, 2007). This may help reducing perinatal maternal mortality from not only placenta previa but also other placental abnormalities.

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Melissa R. Snyder¹
Raynell Clark¹
Sandra C. Bryant²
Jerry A. Katzmann^{1,3*}

¹ Division of Clinical Biochemistry and Immunology
Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine

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Rochester, MN

² Division of Biostatistics

Department of Health Sciences Research

Mayo Clinic College of Medicine

Rochester, MN

³ Division of Hematology

Department of Internal Medicine

Mayo Clinic College of Medicine

Rochester, MN

* Address reprint requests to this author

at:

Mayo Clinic

200 First St SW

Rochester, MN 55905

Fax 507-266-4088

E-mail Katzmann.Jerry@mayo.edu.

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Precision of High-Throughput Single-Nucleotide Polymorphism Genotyping with Fingernail DNA: Comparison with Blood DNA

To the Editor:

Recently, high-throughput single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) genotyping arrays have been used for genome-wide association study. Blood samples are commonly used for such analyses because they provide genomic DNA of high molecular weight and in high quantities. Blood sampling is often difficult, however, when patients are located a great distance from the laboratory and the sample requires careful handling for transportation. Instead, buccal swabs or urinary epithelial cells have been used as noninvasive sources of DNA (1). Fingernail clippings are also obtained noninvasively and more easily. Such samples need no special attention for transportation and can be preserved dry at room temperature for long periods; however, because fingernail clippings yield fragmented DNA that may be contaminated with certain

PCR inhibitors (2), this sample type has seemed unsuitable for analyses requiring high-quality genomic DNA. In this study, we compared the precision of Affymetrix GeneChip™ array-based SNP genotyping with fingernail DNA vs blood DNA and demonstrated the usefulness of fingernail DNA in genotyping and genome copy-number analysis.

The study protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee on Human Genome and Gene Analysis, Nagasaki University, and written informed consent was obtained from every volunteer. Ten milliliters of peripheral blood and 10 fingernail clippings were obtained from 5 healthy volunteers. Blood DNA was extracted with the standard phenol-chloroform method. Clipped fingernails were frozen in liquid nitrogen and crushed into fine powder with Multibeads Shocker™ (Yasui Kikai). The nail powder was dissolved in a urea-containing lysis solution (2 mol/L urea, 5 g/L SDS, 10 mmol/L Tris-HCl, pH 7.5, 50 mmol/L EDTA) containing 1 g/L proteinase K and 40 mmol/L dithiothreitol and was incubated overnight at 55 °C. Nail DNA was extracted by the phenol-chloroform method and suspended in 30 µL 1× Tris-EDTA buffer (10 mmol/L Tris-HCl, 1 mmol/L EDTA, pH 8.0). Genome-wide SNP genotyping was performed with the GeneChip™ Human Mapping 250K Nsp Array according to the manufacturer's assay manual (Affymetrix). SNP data were analyzed with GTYPE software (Affymetrix). This analysis is based on the dynamic modeling algorithm that is included in GTYPE. Genome copy-number analysis was performed with CNAG software (<http://www.genome.umin.jp/>) (3,4).

The human nail plate includes soft and hard types of keratin. Hard keratin constitutes >80% of nail keratin (5) and contains large numbers of cysteine moieties linked by

Table 1. SNP call rates and concordance rates on Affymetrix 250K Nsp arrays.

Sample no.	DNA source	Total call rate, %	Concordance rate, %	
			Homozygous	Heterozygous
1	Blood	96.46		
	Nail	92.43	99.79	98.15
2	Blood	96.79		
	Nail	95.90	99.85	99.29
3	Blood	96.28		
	Nail	96.99	99.82	99.56
4	Blood	95.57		
	Nail	95.28	99.75	99.02
5	Blood	96.20		
	Nail	93.21	99.83	97.88
Mean	Blood	96.26		
	Nail	94.76	99.81	98.78

multiple disulfide bonds that make the nail insoluble in lysis buffer. We froze fingernail clippings in liquid nitrogen, mechanically crushed them into as fine a powder as possible, and then treated them with 2 mol/L urea. With this procedure, we were able to lyse the nail proteins almost completely without denaturing the DNA. Consequently, 10 mg (2 pieces) of fingernail clippings yielded approximately 1 µg DNA, an amount ample for the GeneChip system.

We assumed in this study that all SNP calls for the blood samples were correct, and these calls were used as baseline values for comparison with the calls for nail DNA. The mean total call rate for the blood samples was 96.26%, and that of the nail samples was 94.76%. The mean concordance rates for homozygous and heterozygous SNPs were 99.81% and 98.78%, respectively (Table 1). The concordance rates for heterozygous SNPs in nail samples decreased as the total call rates decreased. Therefore, the discrepancy in the call rates between the 2 different sources of DNA is most likely due to some incorrect calls

for heterozygous SNPs in the nail DNA. In other words, many cases of lower call rates in nail samples reflect erroneous calls as homozygous SNPs instead of as heterozygous SNPs; however, the call rates and concordance values for nail DNA were sufficient for genome-wide association studies. Moreover, we performed SNP genotyping with DNA from old fingernail clippings that had been preserved for >5 years at room temperature. The total call rate for old nail DNA was 95% or higher, showing that results for nail clippings preserved for a long time were equivalent to those obtained with fresh clippings.

We also used copy-number variation analysis to compare signal homogeneity for blood and nail DNA on the GeneChip. In this study, volunteer no. 5 had a duplication polymorphism in chromosome 8 that was clearly demonstrated in both sources of DNA (data not shown). The results of the present copy-number variation analysis showed that the results obtained with nail samples were equivalent to those for blood DNA with respect to the accuracy of detecting such variation.

In conclusion, our study comparing blood and fingernail DNA with respect to SNP-genotyping accuracy on the 250K Affymetrix GeneChip systems revealed that nail DNA was as useful as blood DNA for both genome-wide association studies and genome copy-number analysis. Our results reinforce the merits of using nail samples, because nails can be stored at room temperature for a long period and need not be processed immediately for DNA extraction.

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Mitsuko Nakashima^{1,2,6}

Masayoshi Tsuda^{1,2}

Akira Kinoshita^{1,6}

Tatsuya Kishino^{3,6}

Shinji Kondo^{3,6}

Osamu Shimokawa^{1,4,6}

Norio Niikawa^{5,6}

Koh-ichiro Yoshiura^{1,6*}

Departments of ¹ Human Genetics and ² Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, and

³ Division of Functional Genomics

Center for Frontier Life Sciences

Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Nagasaki, Japan

⁴ Kyushu Medical Science

Nagasaki, Japan

⁵ Research Institute of Personalized

Health Sciences

Health Sciences University of Hokkaido

Ishikari-Tobetsu, Japan

⁶ Solution Oriented Research for Science and

Technology (SORST)

Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST)

Tokyo, Japan

* Address correspondence to this author at:

Department of Human Genetics

Nagasaki University Graduate School of

Biomedical Sciences

Sakamoto 1-12-4

Nagasaki 852-8523, Japan

Fax +81-95-849-7121

E-mail kyoshi@nagasaki-u.ac.jp

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Genome-wide linkage analysis and mutation analysis of hereditary congenital blepharoptosis in a Japanese family

Mitsuko Nakashima · Motoi Nakano · Akiyoshi Hirano ·
Tatsuya Kishino · Shinji Kondoh · Nobutomo Miwa ·
Norio Niikawa · Koh-ichiro Yoshiura

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Abstract Hereditary congenital ptosis (PTOS) is defined as drooping of the upper eyelid without any other accompanying symptoms and distinguished from syndromic blepharoptosis. Two previous linkage analyses assigned a PTOS locus (PTOS1) to 1p32-p34.1 and another (PTOS2) to Xq24-q27.1. In addition, in a sporadic case with a balanced chromosomal translocation t(1;8) (p34.3;q21.12), the *ZFHX4* (zinc finger homeodomain 4) gene was found to be disrupted at the 8q21.12 breakpoint, but there was no gene at the 1p34.3 breakpoint, suggesting the existence of the third PTOS locus (PTOS1) at 8q21.12. We carried out a genome-wide linkage analysis in a Japanese PTOS family

and calculated two-point and multipoint log of odds (LOD) scores with reduced penetrance. Haplotype analysis gave three candidate disease-responsible regions, i.e., 8q21.11-q22.1, 12q24.32-q24.33, and 14q21.1-q23.2. Although the family size is too small to define one of them, 8q21.11-q22.1 is a likely candidate region, because it contains the previously reported translocation breakpoint above. We thus performed mutation, Southern-blot and methylation analyses of *ZFHX4* but could not find any disease-specific change in the family. Nevertheless, our data may support the localization of PTOS1.

Keywords Hereditary · Congenital ptosis · *ZFHX4*

M. Nakashima · N. Miwa · K.-i. Yoshiura (✉)
Department of Human Genetics,
Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences,
Sakamoto 1-12-4, Nagasaki 852-8523, Japan
e-mail: kyoshi@nagasaki-u.ac.jp

M. Nakashima · M. Nakano · A. Hirano
Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery,
Nagasaki University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences,
Nagasaki, Japan

T. Kishino · S. Kondoh
Division of Functional Genomics,
Center for Frontier Life Sciences,
Nagasaki University, Nagasaki, Japan

N. Niikawa
The Research Institute of Personalized Health Sciences,
Health Sciences University of Hokkaido, Hokkaido, Japan

T. Kishino · S. Kondoh · N. Miwa · N. Niikawa ·
K.-i. Yoshiura
Solution Oriented Research for Science and Technology
(SORST), Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST),
Tokyo, Japan

Introduction

Blepharoptosis is pathological drooping of the upper eyelid. It is classified into myogenic, neurogenic, aponeurotic, and mechanical ptosis according to the primarily affected lesion. Hereditary congenital ptosis (PTOS) distinguished from other syndromic blepharoptosis involves only the upper eyelid. PTOS is genetically heterogeneous, and two modes of inheritance are known: autosomal dominant PTOS1 (MIM #178300) and X-linked PTOS2 (MIM #300245). Autosomal PTOS may be further divided into at least two types. Engle et al. (1997) mapped PTOS1 by linkage analysis to 1p32-p34.1, whereas McMullan et al. (2002) found, by the analysis of a sporadic case of PTOS who had a de novo balanced chromosomal translocation t(1;8)(p34.3;q21.12), that the *ZFHX4* gene at 8q21.12 was disrupted by the translocation but there was no gene at the 1p34.3 breakpoint, suggesting the third locus at 8q21.12. McMullan et al. (2000) mapped PTOS2 by linkage analysis to Xq24-q27.1.

We recently encountered a Japanese family with PTOS in which there are nine affected members in five successive generations. Here we report on a linkage analysis and mutation analysis of a candidate gene, *ZFHX4*.

Materials and methods

Family and patients

A Japanese family consisted of at least nine members affected with PTOS in five generations (Fig. 1). The disease in the family was found in both genders and transmitted (male to male transmissions twice) directly through successive generations, indicating that it is autosomal dominant PTOS. A total of 18 members including five affected and 12 nonaffected members and one of their

spouses participated. The proposita (V-5, Figs. 1, 2) suffered from congenital ptosis on her right eye and visited Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Nagasaki University Hospital, at age 15 years. She had severe ptosis (drooping >4 mm, levator function = 5 mm) without any other ophthalmic disorders and appeared to have overaction of the frontalis muscle. She had undergone a levator muscle shortening surgery for her ptosis. Three patients (III-13, IV-2, and IV-12) suffered from unilateral congenital ptosis, and all had undergone a repair surgery. The other patient (III-5) with bilateral ptosis has received no surgical treatment. None of the five patients had any associated ophthalmic disorders. All were examined by one or two well-trained plastic surgeons. The study protocol was approved by the Committee for the Ethical Issues on Human Genome and Gene Analysis in Nagasaki University.

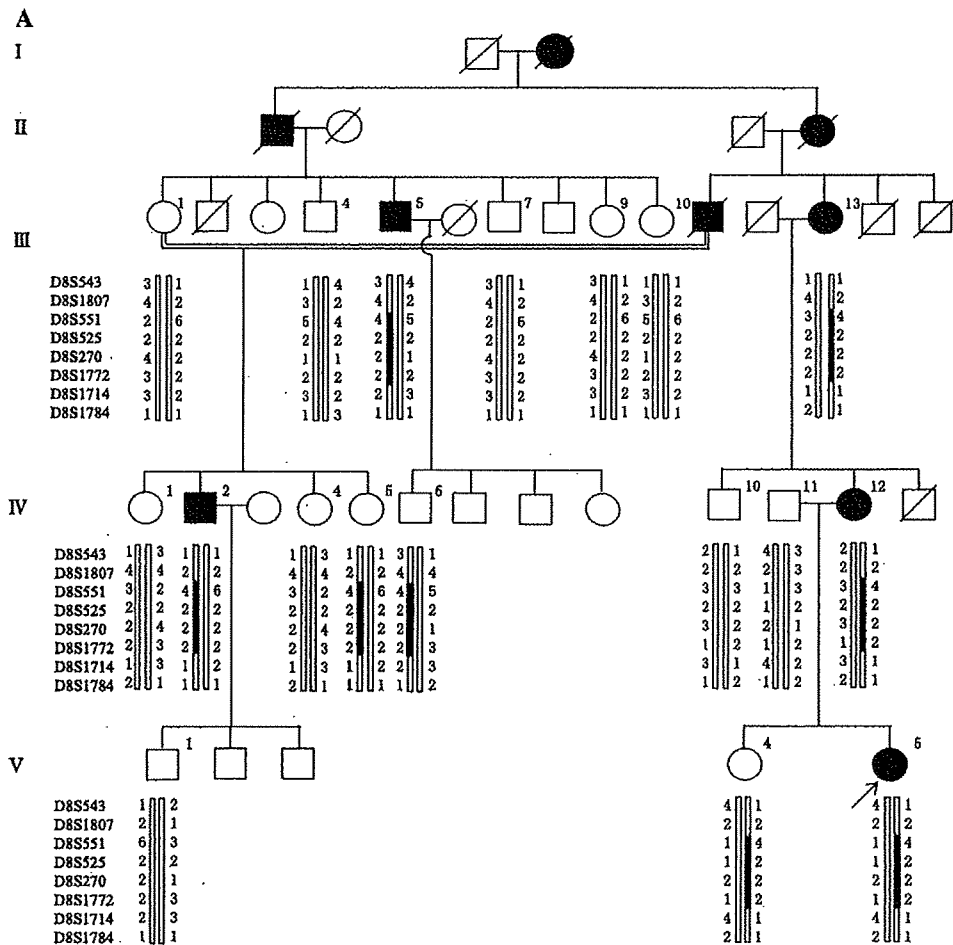


Fig. 1 Family tree with haplotypes at a 8q21.11-q22.2, b 12q24.32-pter, and c 14q21.1-q23.2 regions. Closed, open and slash symbols indicate affected, unaffected, and deceased individuals, respectively.

Double horizontal line depicts consanguineous marriage, and short bar above individual symbols indicates individuals examined clinically. Thick columns depict disease-associated haplotypes

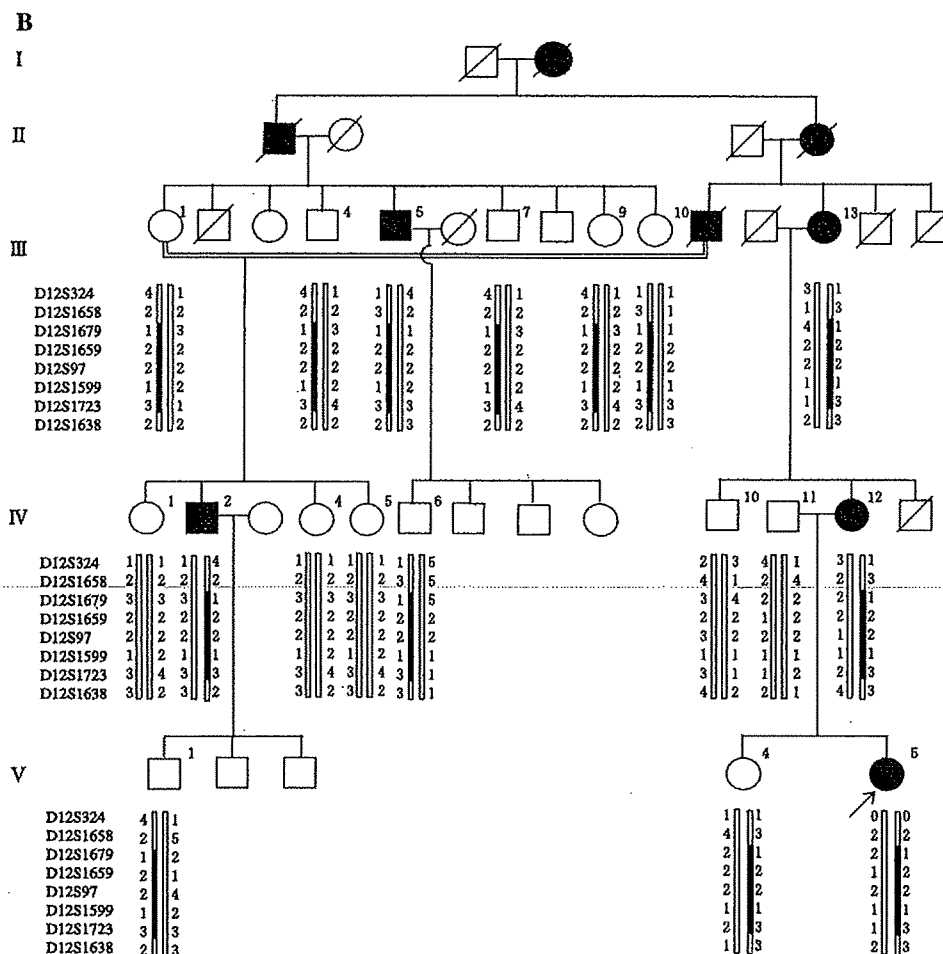


Fig. 1 continued

Linkage and haplotype analyses

After obtaining written informed consent from each participant, DNA was extracted by conventional method from their whole blood, or using ISOHAIR™ (Nippon Gene, Tokyo, Japan) from their fingernail clippings, concentrated, and then purified by phenol–chloroform method (Matsuzawa et al. 2006) For whole-genome scanning, we used the ABI Prism Linkage Mapping Set-MD10 (AppliedBiosystems, Foster City, CA, USA) that consists of 386 microsatellite markers from whole chromosomes with average distance of about 10 cM. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) was performed in a 10- μ l mixture containing 5 ng genomic DNA/0.25 U ExTaq DNA polymerase HS-version (TAKARA Bio Inc., Kyoto, Japan)/200 μ M dNTP/0.3 μ M primer/1 \times PCR buffer on the Dual 384-well GeneAmp PCR System 9700 Thermal Cycler (AppliedBiosystems). The PCR condition was composed of initial denaturation at 94°C for 3 min, followed by 37 (blood samples) or 44 (nail samples) cycles

of amplification at 94°C, 30 s/55°C, 30 s/72°C, 30 s, and final extension at 72°C for 7 min. PCR products were analyzed on an Autosequencer Model 3100. Genotyping was carried out using GeneScan and Genotyper software (AppliedBiosystems).

Two-point log of odds (LOD) score was calculated using MLINK program (included in FASTLINK software version 4.0P) (Lathrop et al. 1984), and multipoint LOD score and nonparametric LOD score were calculated using Genehunter software (Kruglyal et al. 1996). To pick up all possibly linked loci, calculation was based on an assumption that the ptosis in the family is an autosomal dominant trait with 90% penetrance ($P = 0.9$) and on the allele frequency of $1/N$, where the number of alleles is N . Haplotypes around loci with positive LOD scores were constructed with four or five microsatellite markers that were set up at intervals of 2–3 cM. Information of these microsatellite markers was referred to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) database (Map Viewer: Marshfield and/or decode map).

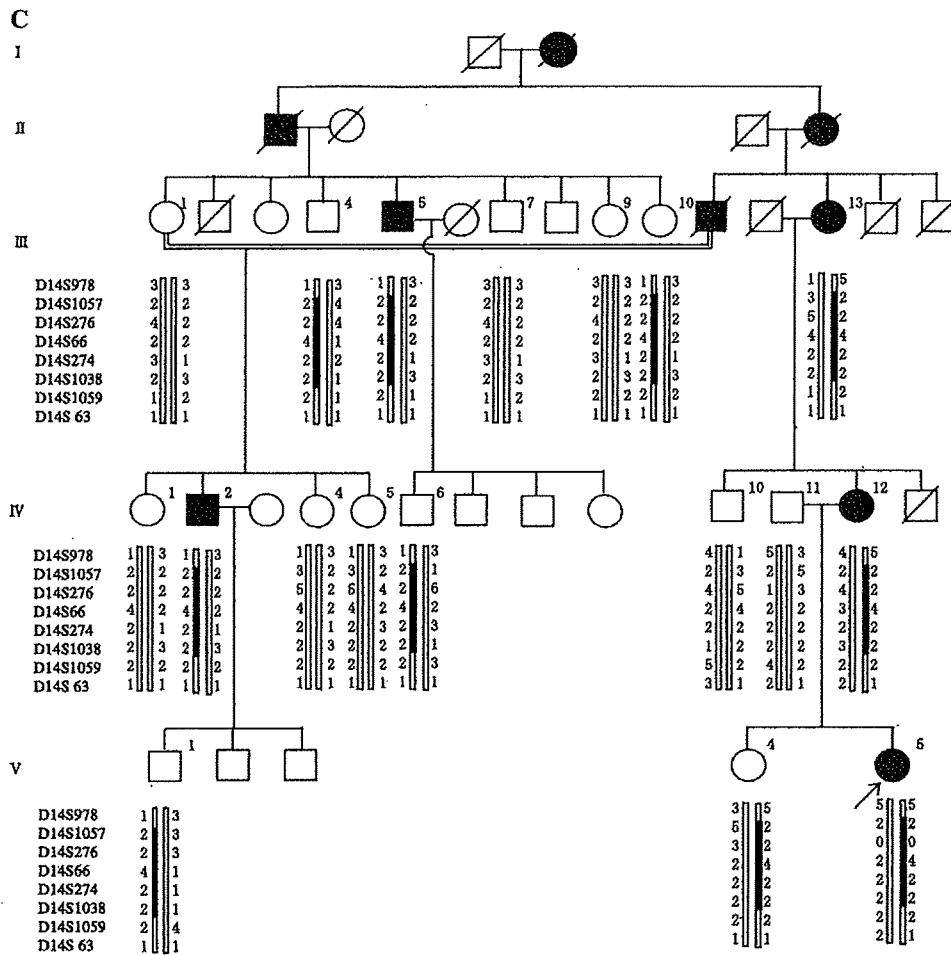


Fig. 1 continued

Mutation analysis

ZFHX4, reported to have been disrupted by a translocation in a patient with PTOS (McMullan et al. 2002), is located at 8q21.1. As its chromosomal localization is one of candidate regions we identified in the study reported here, we performed direct sequencing of all exons of *ZFHX4* using DNA from one affected member (III-5) and one unaffected member (IV-1) in the family. The genomic sequence of *ZFHX4* was retrieved from the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) Genome Browser Home (<http://genome.ucsc.edu/>) and from the Ensemble Genome Browser (<http://ensembl.org/index.html>). Primers were designed from sequences of each exon and those around the respective intron. PCR was performed in a 15- μ l reaction mixture containing 5 ng DNA/0.4 U ExTaq DNA polymerase/200 μ M dNTP/0.67 μ M each primer/1 \times PCR buffer on DNA Thermal Cycler Model 9700 (Applied-Biosystems) with a condition of initial denaturation at 94°C

for 3 min, amplification for 37 cycles at 94°C, 30 s/60°C, 30 s/72°C, 30–60 s, and final extension at 72°C for 7 min. PCR products were subjected to cleaning up using Exonuclease I (Epicentre, WI, USA) and shrimp alkaline phosphatase (AmershamBioscience, NJ, USA) for direct sequence reaction. Direct sequencing was carried out using BigDye-terminator sequencing reagent version-3.1 (AppliedBiosystems) on an Autosequencer Model 3100, and sequences were aligned with ATGC software (GENETYX Corp., Tokyo, Japan).

Southern-blot analysis

Genomic DNA from a patient (III-5) as a representative from the family was digested with three different enzymes (*Bam*HI, *Eco*RI, *Hind*III) and electrophoresed on 0.8% agarose gel in 0.5 \times TBE buffer containing 0.25 μ g/ml ethidium bromide at 35–40 V for 6–10 h. DNA was then