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VI. 研究成果の刊行物・別刷

この病気知って いますか?

高グリシン血症

日本で確立された 先天代謝異常症

呉 繁夫

概念

- 高グリシン血症(別名,グリシン脳症,以下本症)は,体液中のグリシン の蓄積と重篤な中枢神経障害を特徴とする、先天性アミノ酸代謝異常症の 一つである.
- ●本症の責任酵素がグリシン開裂酵素系 (GCS) であることは、1969 年に東 北大学の Tada らにより明らかにされた。最も特徴的な所見は髄液中グリ シンの蓄積であり、正常の100倍にも及ぶ。
- 中枢神経系においてグリシンは神経伝達物質として働くため、蓄積したグ リシンはさまざまな神経障害を引き起こすものと考えられる.
- ●プロピオン酸血症やメチルマロン酸血症などの有機酸代謝異常症には高グ リシン血症を伴うが、髄液中のグリシン濃度の上昇は軽度である.

病型と臨床像

●新生児型,遅発型,新生児一過性の3つの病型がある.

新生児型

- ●症例の大部分を占める病型で、GCS 残存酵素活性をほとんど認めない予後 不良な型である.
- ●生後数時間~数日以内に、けいれん、意識障害、呼吸障害など重篤な中枢 神経症状で発症する. この症状のため, 通常 NICU に搬送され診断される. 呼吸管理やけいれん重積の対処などの集中治療により救命される例が多く なっている.
- ●診断の際, 髄液/血清グリシン濃度比が特徴的で, 新生児型ではこの比が 0.09 以上(正常 0.02 以下)となる.
- ●救命しえた患児は、生後2~3週間で自発呼吸が安定し、抜管や経口哺乳 が可能となる.
- 多くの症例で、定頸やお座りなどの精神発達は認められず、重度の障害を 残す.一部の患児で非常に緩徐ながら発達を認める症例があり、自立歩行 が可能となった例もある.

遅発型

- ●GCS の残存酵素活性がある程度存在し、新生児型よりも発症が遅く、新生 児型と比べ生命予後が良い.
- ●乳児期発症例では、呼吸障害や意識障害などは認められず、精神発達遅延 やてんかん発作などが主症状となる.
- ●成人例も存在しこの場合には、軽度の精神発達遅延、多動、性格の変容な ど精神障害が主な症状となる*1. 髄液/血清グリシン濃度比は 0.04 程度の :: ゚ーされていた症例も存在する

GCS glycine cleavage system

注意欠陥/多動性障害でフォロ

De le company de la constant

症例が多い.

新生児一過性

- 発症は新生児型とまったく同じで区別がつかないが、生後2週間程度で髄液グリシン濃度が正常化し、中枢神経症状が消失するもの。
- 新生児期の症状は意識障害、筋緊張低下、呼吸障害、けいれん重積などで、 新生児脳症と診断される。
- ●病初期の髄液/血清グリシン濃度比は 0.09 以上となり、新生児型の基準を満たす.症状が消失してからの GCS 酵素活性は正常であり、病初期の髄液グリシン濃度が測定されていないと診断は難しい。
- 病因はいまだ不明であるが、本症の責任遺伝子のヘテロ接合体変異を認めた症例が存在する。

発症頻度

- 発症頻度は、米国では25万出生に1例、カナダのブリティッシュコロン ビアでは6万出生に1例との記載がある。フィンランド北部では際立って その発症頻度が高く、1万出生に1例と報告されている。
- 過去 10 年間に診断された患児数に基づくと、わが国における NKH の発症 頻度は $30\sim50$ 万出生に 1 例と推定される.

病因遺伝子と変異

- •GCS は肝臓、脳、腎臓などのミトコンドリアに存在する複合酵素で、P,T,H,Lタンパク質とよばれる4つの構成酵素から構成されている.
- •最も頻度の高い障害酵素は、GLDC 遺伝子にコードされる P タンパク質であり、全体の約 $60 \sim 70\%$ を占め、次いで AMT 遺伝子にコードされる T タンパク質欠損によるものが多い。
- いずれの構成タンパク質の欠損であっても症状や血清グリシン濃度に違い は認められず、臨床的に区別はできない。
- GCSH 遺伝子変異は一過性高グリシン血症の1症例で認められている. 現在のところ、GCSL 遺伝子変異による本症患者の報告はない.

GLDC 遺伝子変異

- NKH の発症頻度の高いフィンランドでは2種類の高頻度変異(S564I, G761R)が存在しており、この2つで約8割の変異アレルが説明できる。またカナダでは、R515S変異が変異アレルの約5%を占めていると報告されている。
- 人種を越えて認められる遺伝子変異は種々の大きさの欠失であり、単一のエクソンから25個すべてのエクソンにわたる欠失が確認されている。欠失は、変異アレル全体の約25%を占める。
- GLDC 遺伝子内には、繰り返し配列である Alu 配列が高頻度に存在するため、Alu 配列を介した相同組み換えが欠失の原因と考えられている。 そのほかの高頻度変異は同定されていないが、遺伝子変異の位置には偏りがみられ、エクソン 18 および 19 に多くの遺伝子変異がみられる傾向がある.

NKH: nonketotic hyperglycinemia (非ケトン性高グリシン血 症)

GLDC: glycine decarboxylase (GCSP: glycine cleavage system P protein)

AMT: aminomethyltransferase (GCST: glycine cleavage system T protein)

AMT 遺伝子変異

- ●GLDC遺伝子の場合と異なり、遺伝子変異のホット・スポットがなく、全 領域にかなり均等に分布している。カナダでは、R320H変異が変異アレル の約5%を占めている.
- ●その他の遺伝子変異は当該家系にしか見出されない,いわゆる private mutation である.

自然歴と予後

- 新生児型の患児は意識障害・呼吸障害を示すため、放置すればほとんど死 の機転をとる. 最近、NICU における治療が進歩し、救命できる患児が多 くなってきた.
- ●精神発達に関する予後はきわめて不良である.遅発型の生命予後は悪くな いが精神発達遅延はさまざまの程度で認められる.
- 成人例は診断例が少なく自然予後は不明な点が多いが、精神疾患として治 療されている可能性もある.
- 新生児一過性は、まったく正常な発育をした症例と精神発達遅延を残した 症例の両方の報告がある.

治療、療育

- 呼吸障害に対する人工換気などの対症療法が救命のために重要である。
- ●原因治療は確立していないが、いくつかの試みが報告されている. ① グリ シンの排泄を増加させる目的で安息香酸ナトリウムの投与, ② 抑制性グリ シン受容体の拮抗薬としてストリキニーネの投与,③ NMDA 型グルタミ ン酸受容体の過興奮を抑制する目的でデキストロメトルファンの投与、な どが試みられている。
- ●①により血清グリシン濃度の低下が期待できる.②に関しては有効例と無 効例どちらの報告もあり、有効性は確立していない. ③ に関しては、脳波 所見や哺乳力改善などの効果は認められる症例が多いが、長期予後の改善 に関するエビデンスはない. 最近, 遅発型の患児でイミプラミンが有効で あったとの報告もある.

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NMDA N-methyl-D-aspartate (N-メチル-D-アスパラギン酸)

<診断へのアプローチ ―疾患別診断>

アミノ酸・有機酸代謝異常症を見逃し ていませんか?

吳 繁夫*

はじめに

先天代謝異常症を見逃さないためには、「疑う」 ことが第一歩になる。先天代謝異常症の疑いをも ち、検査を実施しようとした場合、検査法の概略 とその適応を理解しておく必要がある。先天代謝 異常症の検査として, 代謝産物の濃度を測定する 「化学診断」、責任酵素の活性を測定する「酵素診 断」、遺伝子変異の存在を証明する「遺伝子診断」 の3種類がある。アミノ酸代謝異常症や有機酸代 謝異常症の診断において最も効率が良く、広く行 われている診断法は、化学診断である。化学診断 は,分析の手間や経費が少ない,重症度の推定, 治療効果の判定が可能、などの特徴があり、先天 代謝異常症の診断にはきわめて有効な診断法であ る。ここでは、アミノ酸代謝異常症や有機酸代謝 異常症の化学診断を主に解説する。しかしながら, 疾患によっては化学診断よりも遺伝子診断や酵素 診断のほうが診断効率の良い疾患も存在すること も念頭におき診断を進める必要がある。

I アミノ酸と有機酸

アミノ酸からアミノ基が外れた(脱アミノされた)化合物を有機酸とよぶ(図 1)。有機酸はカル

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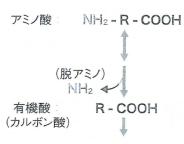


図 1 アミノ酸と有機酸

ボキシル基をもつので、カルボン酸ともよぶ。ア ミノ酸代謝異常症は、アミノ酸を直接の基質とす る、ないしはそのすぐ下流の酵素の遺伝的欠損に より特定のアミノ酸濃度の上昇をひき起こす。一 方, 有機酸代謝異常はさらに下流の酵素の欠損に より生じるため、アミノ酸濃度の変化を伴うもの と伴わないものが存在する。有機酸の種類は、ア ミノ酸とは比べものにならないほど多様であるた め、個々の化合物の分離・同定がアミノ酸に比べ て難しくなる。またアミノ酸には、特異的な発色 剤であるニンヒドリンが存在し、検出の面でも有 機酸に比べて容易であった。このため、1970年に はすでに多くのアミノ酸代謝異常症が発見されて いたのに対し,多くの有機酸代謝異常症の発見は, ガスクロマトグラフの開発・普及を待たなければ ならなかった。最近では、タンデム・マススペク トロメトリー (MS/MS) を用いた新生児スクリー ニングも実施されるようになった。ここでは、ア ミノ酸と有機酸の代表的な分析法である, アミノ 酸分析機, ガスクロマトグラフ・質量分析機 (GC/ MS), MS/MS による分析を紹介する。

Ⅲ アミノ酸と有機酸の定量

1. アミノ酸分析機

古くは,体液中のアミノ酸濃度の測定には,ペー パークロマトグラフなどでアミノ酸を分離し,ニ ンヒドリン反応で検出・定量が行われていた。 1934年に発見されたフェニルケトン尿症は、尿を 用いたこの分析手法が基本となっていた。その後、 アミノ酸を効率よく分離する液体クロマトグラフ (LC) が開発され、分離された各分画のニンヒド リン反応を自動で行うアミノ酸分析機が開発され た。これが現在のアミノ酸分析機の基本になって いる (図2)。血清中のアミノ酸は比較的高濃度に 存在するため、ニンヒドリン反応による定量で十 分測定可能であるが、濃度の低い髄液中アミノ酸 濃度の測定の目的などでは、その検出感度に問題 があった。アミノ酸をあらかじめ蛍光標識し、そ の後分離。定量を行う方法により微量アミノ酸を 分析する方法も開発されている。

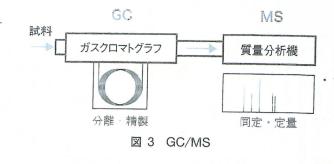


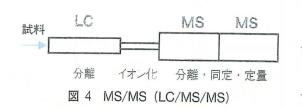
図 2 アミノ酸分析計

ガスクロマトグラフ・質量分析機 (GC/MS)

ガスクロマトグラフは、気化させた試料を細長いカラムを通すことにより分離させる技術で、カラム壁(シリカ)と相互作用しやすい有機酸はカラムから出てくる時間が遅くなる性質を利用して分離している。ガスクロマトグラフの分離精度はきわめて高いが、分離された有機酸の同定・定量に難があった。この問題を解決したのが、質量分析装置(MS)との合体であり、通常 GC/MS とよばれる(図 3)。有機酸内の分子を安定同位体で置換した内部標識物質を使用することで、正確な同定・定量が可能になった。

有機酸分析は主に尿を検体として用いて行う。 有機酸分画をあらかじめ抽出し、GC/MS で分析





する方法と抽出を行わずに分析する方法とがある。抽出過程で回収率の悪い有機酸が診断に重要である疾患の場合,後者が有用となる。抽出を行わない場合,尿中に大量に存在する尿素の影響をなくすため,尿をウレアーゼにより処理後,GC/MSにて分析を行う。抽出を行わないと検体中にアミノ酸,糖,核酸など分析対象の種類が非常に多様になるため,より高度の分離能・同定能をもつ GC/MS が必要になる半面,多くの物質濃度の情報を得ることが可能になる。

3. タンデム・マススペクロトメトリー (MS/MS)

MS/MS 分析では、検体を LC で分離後、高電圧下で荷電液滴を作成し、溶媒を蒸発させた後に、質量分析機に導入している(図 4)。したがって、LC/MS/MS とよぶこともある。新生児スクリーニングで利用さている MS/MS の主な分析対象はアミノ酸とアシルカルニチンである。アシルカルニ

- 遊離カルニチン (CH₃)₃N+-CH₂-CH-CH₂-COOH

2) アシルカルニチン

(CH₃)₃N⁺-CH₂-CH-CH₂-COOH 0-<u>CO-(CH₂)_{n-2}-CH₃</u> アシル基

図 5 遊離カルニチンとアシルカルニチン

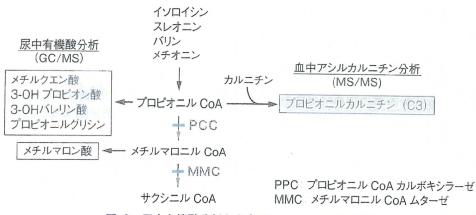


図 6 尿中有機酸分析と血中アシルカルニチン分析

チンはアシル CoA とカルニチンの結合したもので(図 5), これを分析することで, 脂肪酸代謝や有機酸代謝で生じた異常代謝産物のスクリーニングが可能になる。アシルカルニチン分析の場合, アシル基の鎖長や水酸基の有無などの情報しか得られないので, 複数の疾患をまとめて診断することになる。

Ⅲ 血中アミノ酸分析

各自治体で行われている新生児マススクリーニ ングでは、フェニルアラニン、メチオニン、ロイ シン、などの血中濃度を従来のガスリー法、高速 液体クロマトグラフなどで測定されている。高 フェニルアラニン血症の場合、フェニルケトン尿 症などのフェニルアラニン水酸化酵素欠損症のほ か、テトラヒドロビオプテリン代謝異常症が含ま れる。高メチオニン血症の場合、ホモシスチン尿 症のほか、肝炎、胆道閉鎖症、門脈短絡などの疾 患との鑑別が必要になる。問題となるのが、シト リン欠損症などのアミノ酸キャリア欠損による疾 患である。シトリン欠損症の場合,約 40%の症例 は新生児スクリーニングで、メチオニン、フェニ ルアラニン、ガラクトースなどの高値を指摘され る。多くは、フェニルアラニンとガラクトースな ど複数の項目で異常が見出される。残りの症例 は、新生児肝炎や胆道閉鎖症の疑いで発見される。 異常は一過性のことが多く、検査時期を逸すると アミノ酸やガラクトースの異常は検出できなくな る。シトリン欠損症には、アミノ酸分析などの化

学診断のみで診断を確定することは困難で、 SLC25A13 遺伝子の変異検索により診断を確定す る必要がある。

₩ 尿有機酸分析

代表的な有機酸代謝異常症であるメチルマロン酸血症やプロピオン酸血症に罹患している患児が MS/MS による新生児スクリーニングを受けた場合を考えてみる。両疾患の代謝マップを図6に示す。プロピオン血症で蓄積するプロピオニルCoA やメチルマロン酸血症で蓄積するメチルマロニル CoA はいずれもカルニチンと結合すると、C3(プロピオニルカルニチン)となる。したがって、スクリーニングの結果報告では、両疾患とも

Key Points

- ① アミノ酸・有機酸代謝異常症が疑われる場合、まず血清アミノ酸分析と尿有機酸分析を行う。とくに症状があるときの検体採取は重要である。
- ② タンデムマス試験による新生児スクリーニングでは、頻度の高いメチルマロン酸血症とプロピオン酸血症は「C3(プロピオニルカルニチン)の高値」として検出される。
- ③ 新生児スクリーニングでフェニルアラニン やメチオニンなど複数のアミノ酸濃度の異 常が検出される場合は、シトリン欠損症を 考慮する。

にC3 高値として報告される。精査・鑑別のためには尿を用いたGC/MS分析が必要になる。プロピオン酸血症の場合、プロピオニルCoAの代謝産物である、メチルクエン酸や3-OH-プロピオン酸が尿中に検出される。一方、メチルマロン酸血症の場合、メチルマロニルCoAの代謝産物であるメチルマロン酸が尿中排泄される。このように、MS/MSによるアシルカルニチン分析は、有機酸

血症の確定診断には向かないが, スクリーニング 検査として有用性が高い。

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◎ 9. 代謝

アミノ酸代謝異常症 (フェニルケトン尿症, 楓糖尿症など)

inborn error of amino acid metabolism

東北大学大学院医学系研究科小児病態学分野 吳 繁夫

新生児マス・スクリーニング (NBS) で発見されるアミノ酸代謝異常症であるフェニルケトン尿症, 楓糖尿症, ホモシスチン尿症の3疾患について, 診断のポイント, 基本病態, 食事療法や薬物療法について述べる.

─○ 診断のポイントと基本病態

- 1. フェニルケトン尿症(phenylketonuria: PKU) 新生児マス・スクリーニング (newborn screening: NBS) で、血中フェニルアラニン (Phe) 値が 2~4 mg/dL 以上を異常として見出される. 便宜上、血中Phe 濃度が 16.5 mg/dL 以上を PKU, それ未満を高フェニルアラニン血症と分類している. Phe をチロシンに転換する Phe 水酸化酵素の遺伝的欠損により発症する、常染色体劣性遺伝病である. 無治療の場合、精神発達遅滞・色素異常などの症状を呈する.
- 2. 楓糖尿症(メープルシロップ尿症) NBSで,血中ロイシン濃度の高値として発見される. 分岐鎖アミノ酸(branched-chain amino acid:BACC)であるロイシン,イソロイシン,バリンの異化経路である,BACC 脱水素酵素複合体を構成する酵素の遺伝的欠損により発症する常染色体劣性遺伝病である. 無治療の場合,嘔吐,意識障害,呼吸障害などの急性発作を呈し,精神発達遅滞を高率に伴う.
- 3. ホモシスチン尿症 NBS で、血中メチオニン (Met) 濃度の高値として発見される. ほとんどが、シスタチオニン β 合成酵素 (cystathionine betasynthase: CBS) の遺伝的欠損により発症する常染色体劣性遺伝病である. 出生時にはほとんどが無症状で、無治療の場合、1 歳過ぎから精神発達遅滞、3 歳頃から骨格異常による高身長、四肢指伸長、水晶

体脱臼,血栓症・塞栓症による脳梗塞や心筋梗塞が 高率に発症する.

─○ 治療の実際

前述3疾患の食事療法の基本は、低蛋白食に各治療乳を組み合せ、指標となるアミノ酸の血中濃度を目標範囲に維持することにある。

- 1. フェニルケトン尿症 Phe を含まない PKU 治 療乳を与え,許容範囲のPhe を食品中の蛋白から摂 取することで、血中 Phe 濃度を目標範囲に維持する ことが治療の基本となる1). 初期治療は入院で行う. 母乳ないしは一般粉乳と治療乳(商品名:雪印新フェ ニルアラニン除去ミルク®,雪印新ペプチドロフェ® など)とを組み合せ、週2~3回血中アミノ酸濃度 を測定し, 血中 Phe 濃度を 2~4 mg/dL になるよう 両者の摂取量を決定する. 初期治療ミルクの投与量 が決まったら、外来フォローとする. 乳児期は月2 回, それ以後は最低月1回, 血中アミノ酸分析や生 化学検査を行う. 随時, 成長や知能の評価を行う. Phe 濃度の年齢別目標範囲は、乳児〜幼児期前半は 2~4 mg/dL, 乳児期後半~小学校低学年は 3~6 mg/ dL, 小学校高学年は 3~8 mg/dL, 中学生は 3~10 mg/ dL, それ以降は 3~15 mg/dL とする. 1 日の摂取熱 量は、同年齢の小児に合せる、蛋白摂取が低下する と体蛋白質の異化が進み、かえって Phe 濃度が上昇 するため、1日の総蛋白摂取量は、乳児期で2g/kg、 幼児期で 1.5~1.8 g/kg, 学童期以降は 1.0~1.2 g/kg 以上となるようにする、食事療法は、生涯継続する 必要がある. 成人後も、食事療法を中止すると統合 失調症やうつ病に似た精神障害を高率に発症するこ とが知られている。
- 2. 楓糖尿症 NBS で血中ロイシン濃度の高値が指摘されたらただちに入院させ、自然蛋白質摂取を中止し、治療乳(商品名:雪印新ロイシン・イソロイシン・バリン除去ミルク®)とカロリー補給を行う、これにより体蛋白質の異化を抑え、同化へと導き、血中 BACC 濃度の低下を図るのが治療原則である²)。BACC のうち、中間代謝産物の毒性が強いロイシンの血中濃度を指標とし、目標範囲に維持する。急性期の治療は、BACC 除去ミルクと十分なカロリーを経管的に注入する。嘔吐・下痢などの消化管症状が強く経管栄養が実施できないときには高カロリー輸

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代謝

液を実施し、脂肪製剤やブドウ糖液を投与する.以上の治療を開始しても神経症状の改善がみられないときには、血液透析を行う.急性期の治療中は血中アミノ酸分析を随時行い、ロイシン濃度をモニターするとともに、イソロイシンやバリンの欠乏が生じると蛋白同化速度が鈍り、ロイシン濃度の低下速度も鈍る.神経症状が消失し、血中ロイシン濃度が10mg/dL以下に低下した後は、慢性期の治療を開始する.離乳前は母乳やミルクをBACC供給源とし、離乳後は低蛋白食をBACC供給源とし治療乳を併用することで、血中ロイシン濃度を2~5mg/dLに維持する.蛋白制限に加え、同年齢の小児と同等のカロリー補給が必要である.

3. ホモシスチン尿症 治療の基本は, 低 Met, 高 シスチン食事を与え、血中 Met 濃度を 1 mg/dL 以下 に保つことにある3). 許容量の Met を含む低蛋白食 と治療乳(商品名:雪印新低メチオニンミルク®、 明治メチオニン除去フォーミュラ®)を用いる.こ れらの治療乳はいずれも、シスチンが強化されてい る. 大部分は、ビタミン B6に反応しないタイプであ るが, 反応する症例も存在するため, 生後6カ月時 に反応性を確認する. 治療乳を一般粉乳に変え, ピ リドキシンの大量投与(250 mg/日)を 10 日間行い, 前後の血中 Met 濃度、ホモシステイン濃度の低下の 有無を調べる. 反応性がある場合にはビタミン Be投 与量を漸減し、最小有効投与量を決める. ビタミン B₆反応性の症例は、わが国ではまれである. ビタミ ン B₆大量投与で呼吸不全や肝障害を呈する症例があ るので、ビタミン B₆負荷試験は入院のうえ十分な観 察下で行う.学童期に入ると,食事療法のみでは血 中 Met を 1 mg/dL 以下に維持できない症例が多くな る. その際は、ベタイン (200~250 mg/kg/日 分 3)

私の治療方針

PKU を含む Phe 水酸化酵素欠損症のなかで、同酵素の補酵素であるテトラヒドロビオプテリン (BH4) に反応する症例が存在することを、1999 年に筆者らが報告した。その後、BH4治療の有効性は広く認められ、保険適用となった、現在、わが国で約30名がこの治療を受け、Phe制限食を緩和ないし中止することに成功している。本症の診断や治療の詳細は日本先天代謝異常学会の設置した「BH4委員会」に照会のこと(連絡先:熊本大学小児科内 BH4委員会事務局、E-mail:JSIMD@kumamoto-u.ac.jp)

を併用する。ベタイン併用時には、Met でなく血中ホモシステイン濃度が指標となる。血中ホモシステイン濃度を $20\sim50\,\mu\mathrm{M}$ 以下に保ち、血中 Met は 15 mg/dL を超えないようにベタイン投与量を調整する。

──○ 最新ガイドライン/エビデンス

特殊ミルク共同安全開発委員会が編集した「改訂 2008 食事療法ハンドブックーアミノ酸代謝異常症・ 有機酸代謝異常症のために」(非売品)が、恩賜財 団母子愛育会より入手可能である。

• • • 林 文 • • • •

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Nonketotic Hyperglycinemia: Proposal of a Diagnostic and Treatment Strategy

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Early myoclonic encephalopathy presents neonatally with fragmented myoclonus and a suppression-burst electroencephalography pattern. We describe a newborn boy with early myoclonic encephalopathy caused by nonketotic hyperglycinemia. He presented with severe hypotonia, progressive apneic episodes, and erratic myoclonus. Screening of deletions in *GLDC*, using the multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification method, and a ¹³C breath test confirmed the diagnosis of nonketotic hyperglycinemia. Treatment with the *N*-methyl-p-aspartate receptor antagonist ketamine exerted dramatic suppressive effects on his seizures, and ameliorated his clinical status. © 2010 by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Suzuki Y, Kure S, Oota M, Hino H, Fukuda M. Nonketotic hyperglycinemia: Proposal of a diagnostic and treatment strategy. Pediatr Neurol 2010;43:221-224.

Introduction

Nonketotic hyperglycinemia, also known as glycine encephalopathy (Mendelian Inheritance in Man 605899), is an inborn metabolic disorder caused by a glycine cleavage system deficiency. The glycine cleavage system is a mitochondrial enzymatic complex consisting of four distinctive

proteins (P, H, T, and L). The majority of confirmed mutations were discovered in genes encoding the P and T proteins. The typical neonatal form of nonketotic hyperglycinemia is characterized by lethargy, apnea, and myoclonic jerks in the early neonatal period. Some patients die during the newborn period, and survivors exhibit severe mental retardation and intractable seizures.

In patients with nonketotic hyperglycinemia, the dysfunction in the glycine cleavage system leads to glycine accumulation in all body compartments. Glycine acts as an inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brainstem and spinal cord, and as an excitatory neurotransmitter via the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor in the cerebral cortex. The neurologic damage associated with nonketotic hyperglycinemia is mostly attributed to N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor overstimulation. The standard treatment strategies for nonketotic hyperglycinemia include a reduction of glycine by sodium benzoate [1], and a blockade of the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor by the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor antagonists dextromethorphan and ketamine [2,3]. However, no treatments have been proven to prevent neurologic sequelae. Here, we describe the clinical and electroencephalographic features of a patient with nonketotic hyperglycinemia whose seizures demonstrated dramatic responses to treatment with N-methyl-p-aspartate receptor antagonists. He was genetically confirmed to be a compound heterozygote diagnosed by the method of multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification.

Case Report

A 3-day-old Japanese boy was transferred to our neonatal intensive care unit because of repetitive seizure-like movements and frequent appea. Three days before admission, the boy was born at full term after a normal pregnancy and delivery. His birth weight was 2885 g, and his Apgar scores were 9 at 1 minute and 10 at 5 minutes. Immediately after birth, he appeared well, and manifested no signs of distress. Over the next several hours, poor sucking and apneic episodes became apparent, and assisted ventilation was initiated on the next day. On admission, he was markedly hypotonic, without spontaneous breathing or movements. Deep tendon reflexes were not elicited, but repetitive myoclonic responses were induced. Magnetic resonance imaging revealed hypoplasia of the corpus callosum and cerebellar vermis. Over the next week, he remained unresponsive and flaccid, without any sedative medications. His erratic myoclonus progressively worsened, and tonic posturing often appeared in quick succession after myoclonus. An electroencephalographic study demonstrated a suppression-burst pattern. At times, the paroxysmal bursts were roughly synchronous with myoclonus, whereas at other times, fragmented myoclonus appeared without electroencephalographic associations. The electroencephalographic and clinical features were consistent with a diagnosis of

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early myoclonic encephalopathy [4]. Analyses of blood and cerebrospinal fluid amino acids performed on day 21 revealed elevated glycine levels and ratios of cerebrospinal fluid to plasma glycine (Table 1). We rendered a clinical diagnosis of nonketotic hyperglycinemia, and treatment with sodium benzoate (150 mg/kg) orally and ketamine (0.8 mg/kg) intramuscularly was initiated at 30 days of age. His muscle tone gradually improved, and he was successfully extubated at age 45 days. Subsequently, a [1-13C]glycine breath test performed at age 30 days indicated a decreased $^{13}\mathrm{CO}_2$ excretion of 7.9% (normal range, 24.1% \pm 4.0%) during 5 hours, which implied reduced glycine cleavage system activity [5]. Mutation analyses of GLDC collected on day 34 demonstrated compound heterozygosity, with a missense mutation of c.1382G>A, which resulted in an amino acid change of p.R461Q, and a large deletion involving all GLDC exons 1-25 (Fig 1). Based on these findings, we made a definitive diagnosis of nonketotic hyperglycinemia. Ketamine was then replaced with dextromethorphan (9 mg/kg). He manifested almost no seizures (including myoclonus and tonic seizures). His electroencephalogram indicated a continuous pattern consisting of medium-voltage θ and δ range activities, without clear epileptiform discharges.

At age 3 months, the patient was able to respond to sounds and follow objects horizontally with his eyes, and he was discharged from the hospital. At age 4.5 months, he began to manifest frequent seizures, and appeared to lose interest in feeding. At age 5 months, his erratic myoclonic seizures became nearly continuous, and repetitive truncal myoclonus was often followed by tonic seizures. His electroencephalogram revealed an alternating pattern without complete suppression periods. Based on high levels of glycine in his blood and cerebrospinal fluid (Table 1), ketamine was reintroduced. On the next day, the frequencies of his seizures were greatly reduced and he became more alert. Although his consciousness did not return to baseline level, he became relatively alert and could respond to external stimulations. He is now 10 months old, with developmental milestones appropriate to 5-6 months of age, and his seizures have been relatively well controlled with an increased dose of dextromethorphan.

Discussion

Early myoclonic encephalopathy is characterized by a very early onset of erratic myoclonus in the neonatal period. The main ictal phenomena include partial or fragmentary massive myoclonus, partial motor seizures, and the frequent late occurrence of repetitive tonic spasms. Early myoclonic encephalopathy is typically associated with underlying metabolic disorders, such as nonketotic hyperglycinemia, but most early myoclonic encephalopathy cases are cryptogenic [4]. Although both early myoclonic encephalopathy and nonketotic hyperglycinemia cases were previously reported, particular treatment strategies, depending on the underlying disorders, are not yet fully understood.

The clinical signs and seizures of our patient were dramatically ameliorated by ketamine, an *N*-methyl-D-aspartate receptor antagonist, during the newborn period and at

5 months of age. All his seizures (including complex partial seizures, tonic seizures, and myoclonus) were controlled with ketamine, independent of cerebrospinal fluid glycine levels. Therapy with the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor antagonist was reported to exert beneficial effects on glycine inhibitory signs such as hypotonia and apnea [2,3]. However, little attention has been paid to the therapeutic benefits of administering the N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor antagonist for glycine excitatory signs such as seizures [6]. Ketamine is a noncompetitive N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor antagonist, whereas dextromethorphan is a competitive N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor antagonist. Changing the treatment from dextromethorphan to high dose ketamine successfully suppressed all of the patient's seizures, including partial as well as myoclonic and tonic seizures. The N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor plays an important role in the pathophysiology of seizures in various neurologic disorders. The inhibition of N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor overstimulation can constitute an efficient treatment for other types of intractable seizures [7]. The mechanism by which glutamatergic N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor hyperexcitability contributes to the pathophysiology of early myoclonic encephalopathy remains to be elucidated.

Previously, the clinical diagnoses of nonketotic hyperglycinemia in a limited number of patients were confirmed by genetic testing [8]. With the exception of a Finnish population, no common mutations were evident, and the full sequencing of the 25 exons of the GLDC gene is laborious. A nonconsanguineous patient is likely to constitute a compound heterozygote because the mutation spectrum of nonketotic hyperglycinemia is highly heterogeneous. The reported GLDC mutations include not only many base substitutions, but also various lengths of deletions involving multiple exons. These conditions complicate the genotyping of GLDC. Recently, a screening system for genomic deletions within GLDC was established, using the multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification method [9]. With this screening method, the deletion of all 25 GLDC exons was detected in our patient. A missense mutation, p.R461O, was also revealed by sequencing the other allele. The patient was revealed to be a heterozygote for the deletion of all 25 GLDC exons and a missense mutation.

Our patient manifested initial clinical signs within a few days of birth, which is consistent with findings in the classic neonatal form of nonketotic hyperglycinemia. Although we confirmed the elevation of his glycine cerebrospinal fluid/ plasma ratio at age 22 days, increased glycine levels are

Table 1. Concentration of glycine in CSF and plasma

	Day 22	Day 38	Day 74	Day 168	Day 220
CSF glycine concentration (reference range: 2.9-10.4) μ M	150.9	76.2	58.7	69.8	150.4
Plasma glycine concentration (reference range: 56-308) µM	1274	310	411.5	581.8	911.9
CSF/serum glycine ratio (reference range: <0.04) μ M	0.11	0.24	0.14	0.12	0.16
Abbreviation:					
CSF = Cerebrospinal fluid					

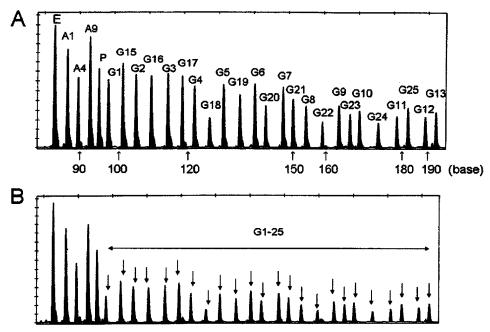


Figure 1. Multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification analysis. (A) Multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification analysis of a control subject. Each peak represents fluorescence signal of exons of GLDC, AMT, GLDCP, and EXT2 with chromatogram (E, EXT2; A1, A4, and A9, exons 1, 4, and 9, respectively, of AMT, P, GLDCP; G1-G25, exons 1-25 of GLDC). Abscissa represent amplified fragment length polymorphism. (B) Multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification analysis of this patient. The G1-G25 peaks reach approximately half the ordinate values of those of a control subject, indicating heterozygotic deletion of all 25 GLDC exons.

evident in other pathologic conditions. The confirmation of a deficiency in glycine cleavage system activity is therefore required for a definitive diagnosis of nonketotic hyperglycinemia, and calls for a relatively large amount of liver tissue obtained through a biopsy. Such invasive procedures can be difficult to perform for patients in poor general condition. Furthermore, the glycine cleavage system enzymatic activity assay can only be performed in a few laboratories worldwide. The metabolism of glycine by the glycine cleavage system leads to CO2 production, and CO2 production can therefore reflect glycine cleavage system activity [5]. Consequently, we used the novel ¹³C-glycine breath test to evaluate glycine cleavage system activity, and this procedure required only 14 days for analysis. Subsequently, we could proceed confidently with targeted treatments after confirming the clinical diagnosis of nonketotic hyperglycinemia via this rapid, noninvasive ¹³C-glycine breath test. A ¹³CO₂ analyzer, involving infrared spectrophotometry, has been widely distributed for the diagnosis of Helicobacter pylori infection. Therefore, this ¹³C-glycine breath test can be readily performed in many hospitals [5]. When nonketotic hyperglycinemia is suspected, we suggest that this novel ¹³C-glycine breath test should be performed for confirmation, after the analysis of glycine levels in the blood and cerebrospinal fluid.

To date, no reliable genotype-phenotype correlations have been published in cases of nonketotic hyperglycemia [10]. However, a lack of genotype-phenotype correlations was derived from a limited number of genetically diagnosed cases. More patients can be genetically diagnosed using the multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification analysis

[8,9]. Our patient was a compound heterozygote of a missense mutation, p.R451Q, with the deletion of the entire GLDC gene. These findings suggest that he may manifest either null or very low residual glycine cleavage system activity, which is in agreement with his low cumulative recovery rate of 7.9% in the novel ¹³C-glycine breath test. Definitive genetic and enzymatic diagnoses using these novel methods can be important in genetic counseling. Therefore, we encourage performing multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification analysis for genetic confirmation after clinical and enzymatic diagnosis. To provide a longer term and more accurate prospect of lifelong prognosis, we need to accumulate further information for genotype-phenotype correlations, using fast and reliable testing.

We acknowledge and greatly appreciate the genetic study performed by Junnko Kanno, MD.

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Case report

Paradoxical increase in seizure frequency with valproate in nonketotic hyperglycinemia

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Abstract

Nonketotic hyperglycinemia (NKH), or glycine encephalopathy, is an autosomal recessive disorder caused by a defect in the glycine cleavage enzyme system. In neonatal-onset NKH, patients manifest lethargy, hypotonia, apnea, and intractable epileptic seizures that are not specific to this disease. We experienced a 6-year-old girl with spastic quadriplegia, intractable epilepsy, and mental retardation, all initially regarded as sequelae of neonatal meningitis. The seizure frequency was transiently increased when valproate was started. Head MRI revealed progressive brain atrophy and white matter loss with high intensity signals on T2-weighted and diffusion-weighted images, which prompted us to conduct further metabolic workups. High glycine levels led us to suspect NKH, and we confirmed this diagnosis by the non-invasive, ¹³C-glycine breath test. DNA sequencing revealed novel Leu885Pro/Trp897Cys mutations in the glycine decarboxylase gene that were transmitted from both parents. Sodium benzoate and dextromethorphan dramatically decreased her hypertonicity. Our case shows that paradoxical increases in seizure frequency following valproate can be a clue for a diagnosis of NKH, and that a correct diagnosis of NKH can greatly alter the quality of life in such patients. © 2011 Published by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of The Japanese Society of Child Neurology.

Keywords: Nonketotic hyperglycinemia; Glycine decarboxylase; Glycine encephalopathy; Glycine cleavage system

1. Introduction

Nonketotic hyperglycinemia (NKH), or glycine encephalopathy (MIM #605899), is an autosomal recessive disorder of glycine metabolism caused by a defect in the glycine cleavage enzyme system (GCS), a multienzyme complex located in the inner mitochondrial membrane of the liver, kidney, brain, and placenta. It consists of four individual protein components: P (a pyr-

idoxal phosphate-dependent glycine decarboxylase encoded by the GLDC gene), H (a lipoic acid-containing hydrogen carrier protein encoded by the GCSH gene), T (a tetrahydrofolate-dependent protein encoded by the AMT gene), and L (a lipoamide dehydrogenase encoded by the DLD gene). NKH results from defects only in the P, H, and T components of GCS that lead to high glycine concentrations in urine, plasma, and especially cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) [1,2]. In neonatal-onset NKH, patients manifest lethargy, hypotonia, apnea, and intractable epileptic seizures resulting in profound psychomotor disability [3]. We report the case of a 6-year-old girl with NKH, who was initially diagnosed with cerebral palsy due to neonatal meningitis, and who showed increased seizures following valproic acid (VPA) treatment.

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2. Patient and methods

2.1. Case history

The patient, now a 6-year-old girl, was born to a healthy mother at 37 weeks of gestation with a birth weight of 3020 g. There is no family history of metabolic disease. The patient was not "doing-well" and showed hypotonia and difficulty in sucking after birth. During the neonatal period, she exhibited frequent seizures resulting in shock and disseminated intravascular coagulation that required mechanical ventilation. As leukocytes counts in the CSF were elevated and serum PCR was positive for type 4 echo-virus-related viruses, she was diagnosed with aseptic meningitis. A brain CT scan at the age of 14 days revealed no abnormalities, including in white matter, or brain destruction. She exhibited repeated generalized seizures and her EEG showed hypsarrhythmia at 1 month. Neither phenobarbital nor Vitamin B6 was effective and she was referred to our hospital for the control of seizures at 5 months. Her head circumference was 42.8 cm (1.57 SD above the mean) and CT revealed enlarged ventricles that were slightly reduced by a ventriculoperitoneal shunt. She was treated with VPA (30 mg/kg, for 2 weeks), after which she experienced fever, rush, and increased frequency of seizures. VPA was discontinued due to what we considered hypersensitivity although the drug lymphocyte stimulation test was negative. Her seizures were not controlled by zonisamide, carbamazepine, or topiramate. When VPA was restarted, the frequency of seizures again increased and the treatment was discontinued. From the age of four, her severe spasticity worsened and diazepam, eperisone, dantrolene, and baclofen were all ineffective; she was re-admitted for the control of hypertonicity and seizures. She could not smile, roll over, or control her head. Her posture was opisthotonic and she could not lie in a supine position. She had severe rigidity and spasticity of the extremities, brisk deep tendon reflexes, a positive Babinski sign, and ankle clonus.

In search of the cause of her apparent regression, we re-evaluated her brain CT/MRI. CT revealed severely dilated ventricles and diffuse brain atrophy with dominantly affected white matter and relatively spared basal nuclei (Fig. 1A). This finding was compatible with post-meningitis hydrocephalus and brain atrophy. Brain MRI revealed progressive brain atrophy and white matter loss with a T2 prolongation of white matter (Fig. 1B). Surprisingly, on the diffusion-weighted image, there was a high intensity signal in the white matter (Fig. 1C).

2.2. Enzymatic analysis

GCS activity was investigated by the ¹³C-glycine breath test as described previously [4]. Briefly, 10 mg/kg of ¹³C-glycine was administered through a gastric tube. Breath samples were collected using a face mask equipped with a one-way air valve, and then transferred to a sampling bag. The ¹³CO₂ concentrations of the breath samples were measured as described [4].

2.3. RNA, genomic DNA extraction, RT-PCR, and sequencing

Total RNA was extracted from leukocytes using Trizol reagent and subjected to reverse transcription with Prime-Script reverse transcriptase (Invitorogen, Carlsbad, CA) using oligo(dT) primers. RT-PCR was performed using primers that covered the translated region of *GLDC* mRNA (Table 1) and the Ex Taq PCR version 1.0 kit (Takara, Shiga, Japan) according to the manufacturer's instructions (Table 1). Genomic DNA was prepared from white blood cells using the Wizard Genomic DNA purification kit (Promega, Madison, WI). PCR of exons 1, 22, and 23 of the GLDC gene were performed with specific

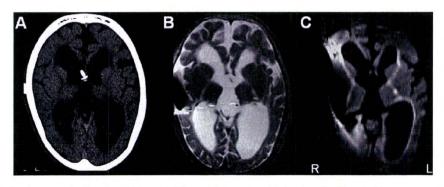


Fig. 1. (A) Brain CT showing severely dilated ventricles and diffuse brain atrophy with dominantly affected white matter and relatively spared basal nuclei, compatible with post-meningitis hydrocephalus and brain atrophy. A ventriculoperitoneal shunt tube was placed in the left lateral ventricle. (B) T2-weighted MRI also showing diffuse brain atrophy with dominantly affected white matter. The T2 prolongation and volume loss of white matter suggested white matter injury. (C) MRI diffusion-weighted image showing a high intensity signal in white matter, suggesting white matter degeneration. Please note that the ventriculoperitoneal shunt valve causes the defects and flaring of images.

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Table 1 Primers and conditions for PCR.

Name	Primer	Position	Sequence	Size of PCR product (bp)	Annealing temperature (°C)
GLDC 1F	Sense	Exon1	5'-AAAGACCAGAGAGAGATGCT-3'	719	65⇒60*
GLDC 1R	Antisense	Exon7	5'-ATGTCTACCCCAAATTCTCCA-3'		
GLDC 2F	Sense	Exon6	5'-GAAAAGATGTCAGTGGAGTGT-3'	720	65⇒60*
GLDC 2R	Antisense	Exon11/12	5'-GTTCTGCAGATGACTCACAAC-3'		
GLDC 3F	Sense	Exon10	5'-GCATCAACTCCAGCATGACC-3'	682	60
GLDC 3R	Antisense	Exon17	5'-GGTCCCATGTGCTGATTTCG-3'		
GLDC 4F	Sense	Exon15	5'-AGGATATCAGCAGCTTTTCC-3'	718	60
GLDC 4R	Antisense	Exon21	5'-TTGTTTAAGACCCTTGCCTC-3'		
GLDC 5F	Sense	Exon19/20	5'-TCGGAGTGAAGAAACATCTC-3'	743	60
GLDC 5R	Antisense	Exon25	5'-CCTCTTTTGTTCAGAAAATGGAG-3'		
GLDC 6F	Sense	Exon23	5'-TGATCAGCATTCGGCAGGAAA-3'	622	60
GLDC 6R	Antisense	Exon25	5'-TCTCCAGGATAGCCTCTATGACA T-3'		
GLDCex22F	Sense	Intron21	5'-ACATAAAAAGCTGATGCACT-3'	345	60
GLDCex22R	Antisense	Intron22	5'-CTATTATTTTGGAGGTTGCC-3'		
GLDCex23F	Sense	Intron22	5'-TTCTATGAACAGCACTGAGA-3'	434	60
GLDCex23R	Antisense	Intron23	5'-GTATCATCCTCAGTTGAGAG-3'		

primers using Ex Taq PCR version 1.0 kit (Takara, Shiga, Japan) according to the manufacturer's instructions (Table 1). The PCR fragments were sequenced using the Big Dye Terminators v1.1 Cycle Sequencing kit (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA).

3. Results

From the MRI findings, we suspected a metabolic disorder causing white matter degeneration. Leukocyte lysosomal enzyme activities, including arylsulfatase A, were normal. Bone marrow revealed normocellularity without foam cells. Amino acid analysis of plasma revealed a substantially high level of glycine (1671.1 nmol/ml, normal range: 127–341) with high CSF/plasma glycine levels (266.8/2074.5 nmol/ml, normal range: 4.8–8.4/127–341). The elevated glycine and characteristic white matter tract abnormalities revealed by diffusion-weighted (DWI) in patients with NKH [5], led us to conduct the ¹³C-glycine breath test. This showed a significantly decreased ¹³C-cumulative recovery of only 13.1% (<–2SD), strongly suggesting NKH [4]. RT-PCR and subsequent sequencing revealed Leu885Pro/Trp897Cys missense mutations in *GLDC* that were transmitted from both parents

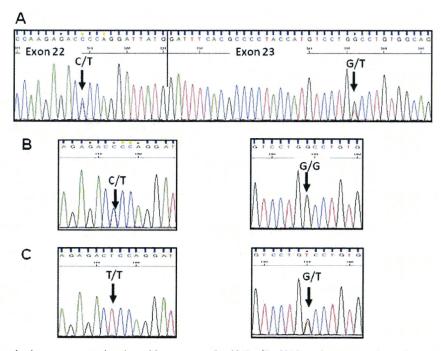


Fig. 2. (A) RT-PCR and subsequent sequencing showed heterozygous Leu885Pro/Trp897Cys missense mutations of the GLDC gene. Sequencing genomic DNA from her parents revealed that these mutations were transmitted from her mother (B), and father (C).

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Fig. 3. Patient's GLDC amino acid sequence compared with that of several other animals reveals that both substituted residues Leu885 and Trp897 are highly conserved among species.

(Fig. 2). These mutations should not be polymorphisms, because both residues are highly conserved among species (Fig. 3) and we did not detect them in more than 100 control alleles. After we diagnosed the patient with NKH, we started sodium benzoate (250 mg/kg) and dextromethorphan (20 mg/kg). She showed dramatically decreased hypertonicity and now goes to a special elementary school.

4. Discussion

NKH is often erroneously diagnosed as sepsis or hypoxic ischemic injury, particularly in the severe neonatal cases [3,6]. In the present case, septic meningitis with echo-related virus made the correct diagnosis of NKH difficult. Seizure frequencies were increased following both occasions of VPA therapy. VPA reduces GCS activity and inhibits glycine uptake to mitochondria and increases the level of glycine in serum and CSF in NKH patients [7,8]. Excessive stimulation by glycine of the excitatory N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA)-type glutamate receptor causes the seizures and possible excitotoxicity characteristic of NKH [9]. That raised the possibilities that the VPA therapy elevated the level of glycine and exaggerated the neurological presentation in this patient. A somewhat similar case report describes a patient with nonketotic hyperglycinemia following her presentation with acute encephalopathy and chorea shortly after initiation of valproate therapy [10]. As far as we know, increases in seizure frequencies after administration of VPA have not been reported in the English literature. This patient again teaches us to consider a differential diagnosis of NKH in patients showing paradoxical worsening of neurological status such as seizure frequency following VPA.

Benzoate decreases glycine levels by conjugation and excretion as hippurate glycine. Dextromethorphan, converted to its active metabolite, dextrorphan, acts as a noncompetitive inhibitor of the NMDA receptor [9]. Sodium benzoate and dextromethorphan dramatically decreased the patient's hypertonicity and seizure frequency. Although NKH is an incurable disease, a correct diagnosis altered the patient's life completely,

enabling her to leave hospital, return home, and to attend school, thus emphasizing the importance of a correct diagnosis of NKH.

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Review article

Two novel laboratory tests facilitating diagnosis of glycine encephalopathy (nonketotic hyperglycinemia)

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Abstract

Glycine encephalopathy (GE), also known as non-ketotic hyperglycinemia, is a life-threatening metabolic disease caused by inherited deficiency of the glycine cleavage system (GCS). GE is characterized by accumulation of a large amount of glycine in serum and cerebrospinal fluids. In typical cases with GE, coma, profound hypotonia, and intractable seizures develop within several days of life. Patients with atypical symptoms may have delayed or missed diagnosis because of non-specific symptoms. It is sometimes problematic to confirm the diagnosis of GE since it requires either invasive liver biopsy for measurement of GCS activity or exhaustive mutational screening of three GCS genes, *GLDC*, *AMT*, and *GCSH*. We herein describe two novel laboratory tests for diagnosis of GE, [1-¹³C]glycine breath test and the multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification (MLPA) for detection of large deletions in *GLDC*. The [1-¹³C]glycine breath test has been developed for noninvasive enzymatic diagnosis of GE. Because the GCS generates CO₂ by degradation of glycine, the GCS activity could be evaluated *in vivo* by measurement of exhaled ¹³CO₂ after administration of a stable isotope, [1-¹³C]glycine. The MLPA has been developed for improvement in mutation detection rate in GE: Deletions involving multiple *GDLC* exons are prevalent among GE patients, but cannot be detected by the exon-sequencing analysis. Two novel diagnosis methods would facilitate diagnosis of hyperglycinemic patients as having GE.

Keywords: ¹³C-glycine breath test; Decarboxylation of glycine in vivo; Detection of large deletions in GLDC; The MLPA analysis

1. Introduction

Glycine encephalopathy (GE, MIM 605899), also termed nonketotic hyperglycinemia (NKH), is an inborn error of glycine metabolism caused by deficiency of the glycine cleavage system (GCS) [1,2]. Typically, symptoms of GE start in the first days of life with progressive lethargy, hypotonia, myoclonoc jerks, hiccups, and apnea, usually leading to coma and death unless assisted ventilation and/or pharmacological treatment are provided [3]. Patients with atypical GE often lack neonatal symptoms, but present later with various neurological

symptoms including seizures, motor and/or cognitive impairments, aggressive behavior, and impaired work or school performance [4–6]. Since these patients manifest only nonspecific clinical symptoms, their diagnosis may sometimes be delayed or missed and they may not benefit from early and appropriate management and counseling [7].

The GCS is a mitochondrial multi-enzyme complex that catalyzes the breakdown of glycine to carbon dioxide, ammonia, and one-carbon units (Fig. 1) [8]. The GCS is present in various animals, plants, and bacteria. In vertebrates, the activity of GCS has been reported in brain, liver, kidney, and testis [9]. The GCS consists of four individual proteins, glycine dehydrogenase (decarboxylating), aminomethyltransferase, glycine cleavage system H-protein and dihydrolipoamide dehydrogenase, which are encoded by distinct genes, GLDC,

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