resequencing microarray, aCGH and Sanger sequencing. The study contributed to further broadening the clinical and mutational spectra of HSP.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Short communication

Exome analysis reveals a Japanese family with spinocerebellar ataxia, autosomal recessive 1

Yaeko Ichikawa [a], Hiroyuki Ishiura [a], Jun Mitsui [a], Yuji Takahashi [a], Shunsuke Kobayashi [b], Hiroshi Takuma [c], Ichiro Kanazawa [d], Koichiro Doi [e], Jun Yoshimura [e], Shinichi Morishita [e], Jun Goto [a], Shoji Tsuji [a,*]

[a] Department of Neurology, Graduate School of Medicine, The University of Tokyo, Japan
[b] Department of Neurology, School of Medicine, Fukushima Medical University, Japan
[c] Department of Neurology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Tsukuba, Japan
[d] International University of Health and Welfare Graduate School, Japan
[e] Department of Computational Biology, Graduate School of Frontier Sciences, The University of Tokyo, Japan

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ABSTRACT

Spinocerebellar ataxia autosomal recessive 1 (SCAR1/AOA2) is clinically characterized by an early-onset progressive cerebellar ataxia with axonal neuropathy, ocular motor apraxia, and elevation of serum alpha-fetoprotein level. The disorder is caused by mutations in *senataxin* (*SETX*) gene. Here, we report a Japanese SCAR1/AOA2 family with a homozygous nonsense mutation (p.Q1441X) of *SETX* that was identified by exome sequencing. The family was previously reported as early-onset ataxia of undetermined cause. The present study emphasized the role of whole exome-sequence analysis to establish the molecular diagnosis of neurodegenerative disease presenting with diverse clinical presentations.

1. Introduction

Spinocerebellar ataxia, autosomal recessive 1 (SCAR1/AOA2) is an autosomal recessive cerebellar ataxia (ARCA) that is caused by mutations in *senataxin* (*SETX*) [1]. The disorder is characterized clinically by an early-onset progressive cerebellar ataxia, axonal neuropathy, and elevation of serum alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) level [2,3]. We previously reported the case of early-onset ataxia with motor and sensory neuropathy of undetermined cause in a Japanese family [4]. To establish the molecular diagnosis for this family, we applied whole exome-sequence analysis and identified the causative mutation of *SETX*.

2. Patients

Three affected Japanese patients (IV-3, IV-4 and IV-6; Fig. 1A) were reported having early-onset ataxia with motor and sensory neuropathy in the previous study, and they showed normal serum AFP levels [4]. Healthy consanguineous parents and three affected siblings in this family suggest autosomal recessive inheritance. The ages of onset of all the patients were in their teenage years [4].

3. Methods

3.1. Linkage analysis

Genomic DNAs were extracted from peripheral blood leukocytes of the two affected siblings and one unaffected sibling (IV-3, IV-6 and IV-1; Fig. 1A) of the previously reported family after informed consent was obtained [4]. The three members (IV-3, IV-6 and IV-1; Fig. 1A) of the family were genotyped using Genome-Wide Human SNP Array 6.0 (Affymetrix, Santa Clara, CA), and parametric linkage analysis was performed using the pipeline of SNP-HiTLink [5]. The conditions of SNP selection for the linkage analysis were the following; single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) with a p value of >0.001 in the Hardy–Weinberg test, a call rate of >0.98, a confidence score of genotyping <0.2, a minor allele frequency in the controls >0, and intermarker distances of 80 to 120 kb. Parametric multipoint linkage analysis was performed with autosomal recessive model with complete penetrance (disease gene frequency: 0.001) using Allegro version 2 [6].

* Corresponding author at: Department of Neurology, Graduate School of Medicine, The University of Tokyo, 7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-8655, Japan. Tel.: +81 3 5800 8972; fax: +81 3 5800 6548.
E-mail address: tsuji@m.u-tokyo.ac.jp (S. Tsuji).

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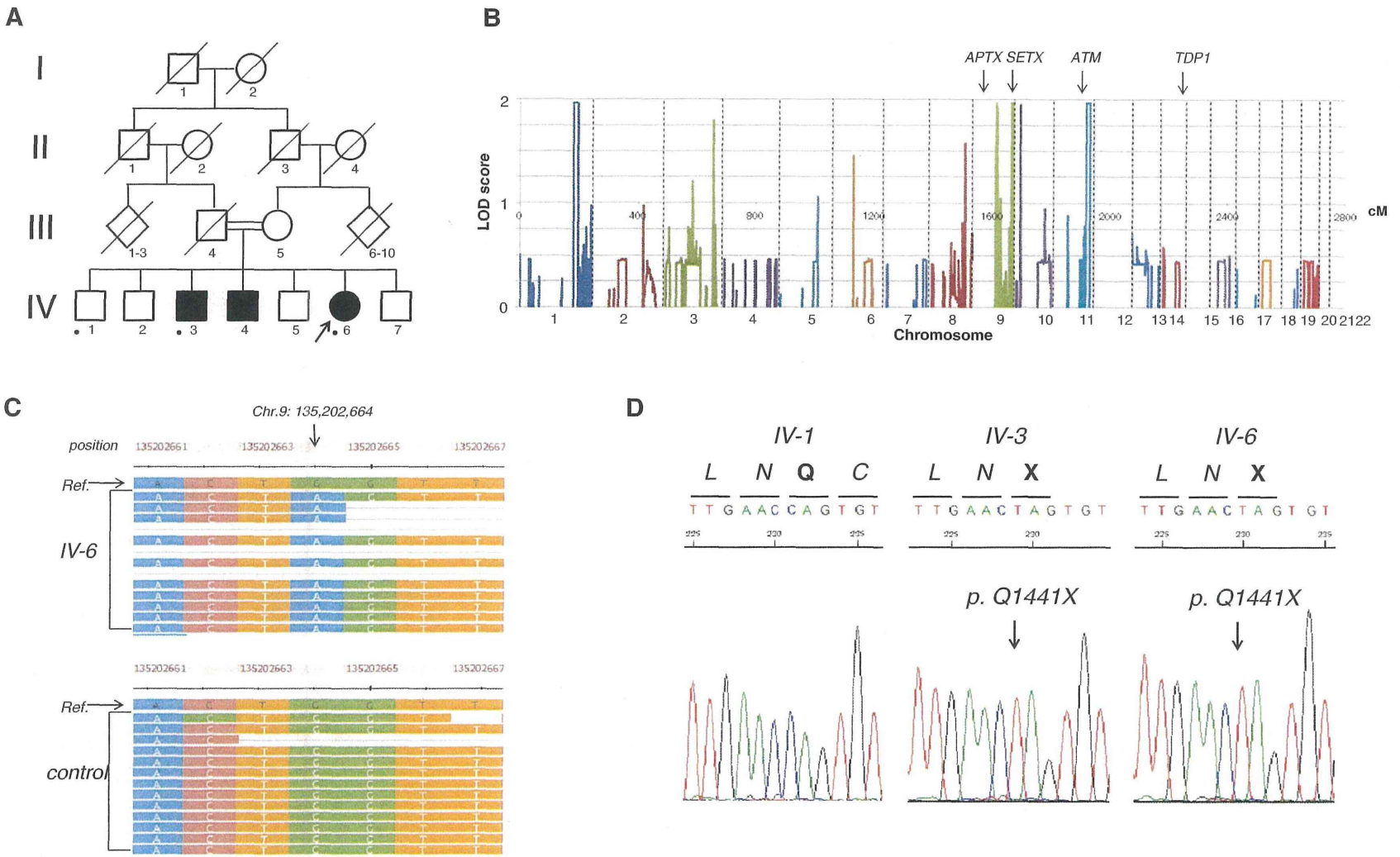

Fig. 1. A. Pedigree of the present family. This chart simplified the pedigree chart of the previous report [4]. Squares and circles indicate males and females, respectively. Diamonds represent males or females. Filled symbols represent affected individuals. A diagonal line through a symbol represents a deceased person. The state of deceased or not is based on the information of the previous report [4] because the family is untraceable now. A person with the arrow is the proband. Persons with available genomic DNAs are indicated by dots. B. Parametric multipoint linkage analysis and candidate regions. Multipoint LOD scores spanning all the chromosomes are shown. The horizontal axis is the cumulative genetic distance (centimorgan: cM) starting at the short arm of chromosome 1. The vertical axis represents LOD scores. Regions on chromosomes 1, 9, 10 and 11 give the highest multipoint LOD score of 1.93. The loci of the causative genes of ARCA with neuropathy are indicated with arrow. The loci of *APTX*, *ATM* and *TDP1* were out of the regions with a multipoint LOD score of 1.93. C. Aligned short reads by exome analysis showed homozygous mutation on position 135,202,664 on chromosome 9. Each short read is represented as a horizontal bar. Ref. means reference sequence (GRCh37/hg19). D. Cosegregated p.Q1441X mutation of *SETX* in this present family [4].

3.2. Exome analysis

The genomic DNA of the proband (IV-6) was captured using TruSeq™ Exome Enrichment Kit (Illumina, San Diego, CA). Massively parallel sequencing was accomplished using GAIIx (110 bp-long paired end read; Illumina). Short reads were aligned to the reference genome (GRCh37/hg19 assembly) with Burrows-Wheeler Alignment tool (BWA) [7], using default parameters. After removing multiple aligned reads (mapping quality of 0) and PCR duplicates, single nucleotide variants (SNVs) and short insertion/deletion variants (indels) were called with SAMtools [8]. After annotation with RefSeq (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/RefSeq/), 1000 genomes project database (http://www.1000genomes.org/) and dbSNP135 (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/projects/SNP/), all the novel nonsynonymous variant calls were subjected to direct nucleotide sequence analysis for confirmation. We confirmed the mutation in *SETX* by direct nucleotide sequence analysis using a primer pair of SETX 1F: TGAGGCCGACTTACAGAATC and SETX 1R: AGGCAGATCAGACCCAAATC.

4. Results

Multipoint parametric linkage analysis revealed the highest LOD score of 1.93 in five regions on chromosomes 1, 9, 10 and 11, spanning approximately 66 Mb in total including the locus of *SETX* (Fig. 1B). The loci of *APTX*, *ATM* and *TDP1*, the causative genes for ARCAs with neuropathy, were out of the regions with a multipoint LOD score of 1.93 (Fig. 1B).

Massively parallel sequencing analysis was performed using GAIIx, and we obtained 105,741,428 reads. Short reads were aligned to the reference genome sequence (GRCh37/hg19 assembly). Aligned to the reference genome were 87,315,716 reads (82.6%), and 71,469783 reads (67.6%) were aligned uniquely to the target region. The average coverage of the target region was 126.6.

After annotation with RefSeq (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/RefSeq/), 1000 genomes project database (http://www.1000genomes.org/) and dbSNP135 (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/projects/SNP/), 309 novel nonsynonymous variants were identified, of which six were located in the target regions. Among the six novel nonsynonymous variants, we identified a homozygous mutation of c.4321 C > T (p.Q1441X) of *SETX* cosegregating with the disease in the present family, which was further confirmed by Sanger sequencing (Fig. 1C, D).

5. Discussion

We identified the homozygous p.Q1441X mutation of *SETX* in the family which was previously reported as a family with early-onset ataxia with motor and sensory neuropathy of undetermined cause in 2007 [4]. The homozygous p.Q1441X mutation in *SETX* was previously reported in an unrelated Japanese family [1,2], thus confirming the diagnosis of SCAR1/AOA2 in our family. The finding was unexpected, because the diagnosis of SCAR1/AOA2 was previously considered unlikely on the basis of normal serum AFP levels at that time [4]. The stocked serum of the proband's affected brother (IV-3; Fig. 1A) was available and serum AFP level was measured, which revealed a moderately elevated serum AFP level (33.2 ng/ml, normal value < 9 ng/ml), further confirming the diagnosis of SCAR1/AOA2.

The clinical feature of SCAR1/AOA2 was characterized by early onset progressive ataxia with neuropathy [2]. Previous studies revealed polyneuropathy in 97.5% of SCAR1/AOA2 patients, cerebellar atrophy in 96%, occasional oculomotor apraxia (OMA) in 51%, and elevated serum AFP levels in 99%, [3]. Given the elevated serum AFP level, our patients showed rather typical clinical presentations as SCAR1/AOA2. Since the previous medical records were discarded, we could not confirm the exact values of AFP, making it difficult to interpret the serum AFP levels in our previous reports. Nonetheless, the increased serum AFP level obtained from the analysis of the stocked serum of the proband's affected brother (IV-3; Fig. 1A) further confirmed the diagnosis of SCAR1/AOA2.

ARCA is a heterogeneous group of neurodegenerative diseases that are clinically characterized by progressive ataxia in association with various neurological and/or biochemical findings and more than 15 causative genes for ARCA have been identified [9], making the prioritization of genes for molecular diagnosis difficult. Availability of exome analysis and massively parallel sequencing technology are expected to accelerate the comprehensive mutational analyses to establish the molecular diagnosis of diseases associated with numerous causative genes, as demonstrated in this report.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Mutations in *COQ2* in Familial and Sporadic Multiple-System Atrophy

The Multiple-System Atrophy Research Collaboration

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

Multiple-system atrophy is an intractable neurodegenerative disease characterized by autonomic failure in addition to various combinations of parkinsonism, cerebellar ataxia, and pyramidal dysfunction. Although multiple-system atrophy is widely considered to be a nongenetic disorder, we previously identified multiplex families with this disease, which indicates the involvement of genetic components.

METHODS

In combination with linkage analysis, we performed whole-genome sequencing of a sample obtained from a member of a multiplex family in whom multiple-system atrophy had been diagnosed on autopsy. We also performed mutational analysis of samples from members of five other multiplex families and from a Japanese series (363 patients and two sets of controls, one of 520 persons and one of 2383 persons), a European series (223 patients and 315 controls), and a North American series (172 patients and 294 controls). On the basis of these analyses, we used a yeast complementation assay and measured enzyme activity of parahydroxybenzoate-polyprenyl transferase. This enzyme is encoded by the gene *COQ2* and is essential for the biosynthesis of coenzyme Q_{10}. Levels of coenzyme Q_{10} in lymphoblastoid cells and brain tissue were measured on high-performance liquid chromatography.

RESULTS

We identified a homozygous mutation (M78V-V343A/M78V-V343A) and compound heterozygous mutations (R337X/V343A) in *COQ2* in two multiplex families. Furthermore, we found that a common variant (V343A) and multiple rare variants in *COQ2*, all of which are functionally impaired, are associated with sporadic multiple-system atrophy. The V343A variant was exclusively observed in the Japanese population.

CONCLUSIONS

Functionally impaired variants of *COQ2* were associated with an increased risk of multiple-system atrophy in multiplex families and patients with sporadic disease, providing evidence of a role of impaired COQ2 activities in the pathogenesis of this disease. (Funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and others.)

The members of the Multiple-System Atrophy Research Collaboration are listed in the Appendix. Address reprint requests to Dr. Shoji Tsuji, Department of Neurology, University of Tokyo, 7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-8655, Japan, or at tsuji@m.u-tokyo.ac.jp.

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Multiple-system atrophy is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that is clinically characterized by autonomic failure in addition to various combinations of parkinsonism, cerebellar ataxia, and pyramidal dysfunction. The term multiple-system atrophy was introduced in 1969 to encompass the disease entities of olivopontocerebellar ataxia, striatonigral degeneration, and the Shy–Drager syndrome, on the basis of neuropathological findings in these disorders.[1] Multiple-system atrophy is characterized by the development of cytoplasmic aggregates of α-synuclein, primarily in oligodendroglia.[2-7] However, the pathogenic mechanisms underlying this disease remain unknown, making it difficult to develop effective therapies.

The disorder is classified into two subtypes: subtype C, characterized predominantly by cerebellar ataxia, and subtype P, characterized predominantly by parkinsonism.[8] Among patients with multiple-system atrophy, subtype C has been reported to be more prevalent than subtype P in the Japanese population (65 to 67% vs. 33 to 35%),[9,10] whereas subtype P has been reported to be more prevalent than subtype C in Europe (63% vs. 34%)[11] and North America (60% vs. 13%, with 27% of cases unclassified).[12] Although multiple-system atrophy has been defined as a nongenetic disorder until recently, several multiplex families with the disease have been described, indicating that strong genetic factors confer susceptibility to the disease.[13-15]

METHODS

PATIENTS AND MULTIPLEX FAMILIES

Patients with multiple-system atrophy were enrolled in the study on the basis of research protocols that were approved by the institutional review board at each participating center. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

The diagnosis of multiple-system atrophy was made on the basis of the current consensus criteria for the disease.[8] Four Japanese families (Families 1 through 4, whose members have been described previously[13]) and two additional Japanese families (Family 8 and Family 12) were enrolled in this study (Fig. 1). In Family 1, the parents were first-degree cousins, which is consistent with autosomal recessive inheritance. The clinical features of these families are summarized in Table S1 in the Supplementary Appendix, available with the full text of this article at NEJM.org.

Autopsy findings for Participants II-4[13] and II-8 in Family 1 and Participant II-6 in Family 8 showed widespread and abundant cytoplasmic aggregates of α-synuclein, primarily in oligodendroglia, in association with neurodegeneration in striatonigral and olivopontocerebellar structures. These findings confirmed the diagnosis of multiple-system atrophy.

PATIENTS WITH SPORADIC DISEASE AND CONTROLS

As with the multiplex families, the diagnosis of sporadic multiple-system atrophy was made on the basis of the current consensus criteria.[8] A total of 363 patients with multiple-system atrophy and 520 controls were included in the Japanese series, 223 patients and 315 controls in the European series, and 172 patients and 294 controls in the North American series (persons of European or Hispanic descent living in North America) (Text S2 and Table S2 in the Supplementary Appendix). Ancestry was determined by self-report on a multiple-choice questionnaire. We also enrolled an independent series of 2383 Japanese controls.

ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASES

To determine the specificity of the association between variants in candidate genes and multiple-system atrophy, we enrolled 2728 Japanese patients with Alzheimer's disease, 659 with Parkinson's disease, and 634 with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Their demographic characteristics are provided in Text S2 in the Supplementary Appendix.

LINKAGE ANALYSIS AND WHOLE-GENOME SEQUENCING

We performed parametric and nonparametric linkage analyses using Affymetrix SNP 6.0 arrays and software for linkage analysis.[16,17] The genomic DNA from Participant II-4 in Family 1 was subjected to four runs in an Illumina Genome Analyzer IIx (100-bp-long paired ends). We used BWA software[18] and SAMtools sequence-alignment mapping[19] with the default settings for alignment and variation detection against the human reference genome (National Center for Biotechnology Information build 36 [also known as hg18]).

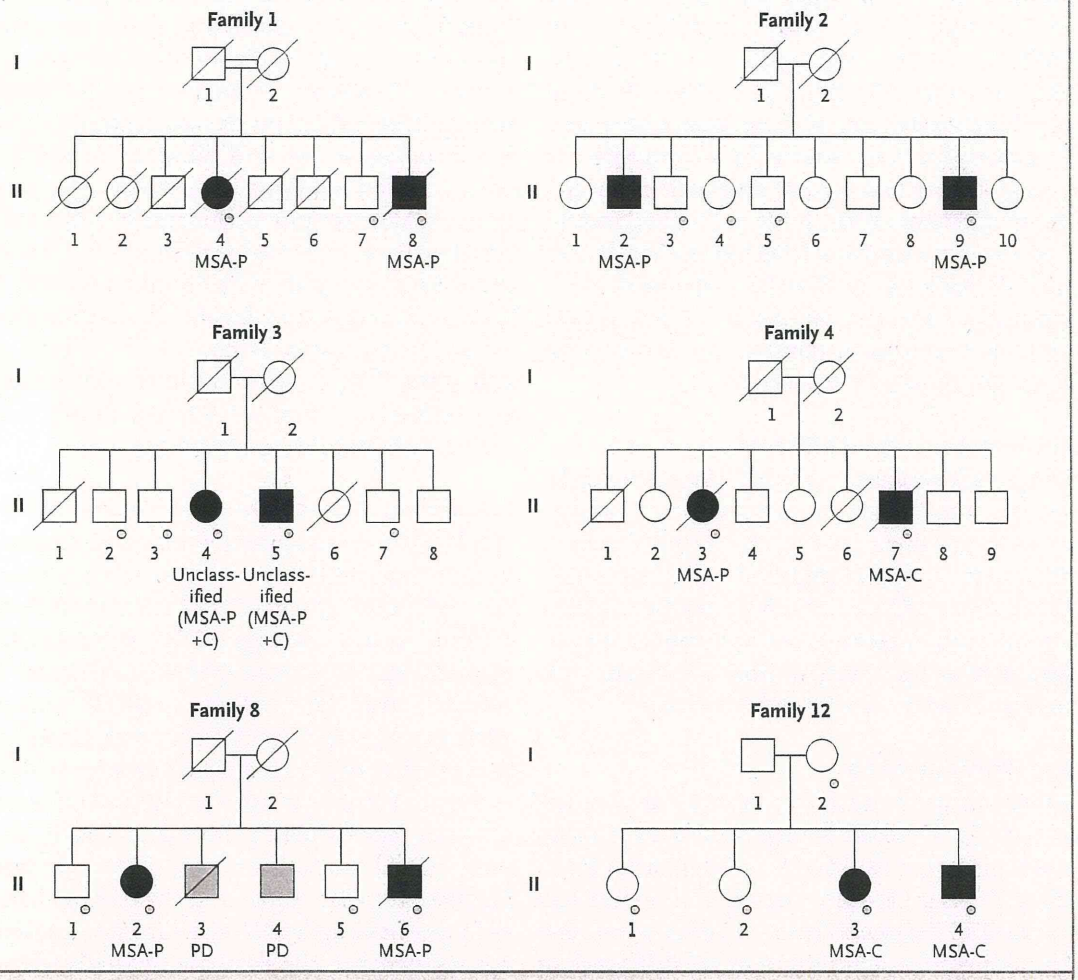

Figure 1. Pedigrees of Six Multiplex Families with Multiple-System Atrophy.

The affected siblings in Family 1 were born to consanguineous parents (first cousins).[13] In this family, the two patients with multiple-system atrophy (Participants II-4 and II-8) also had retinitis pigmentosa, which was not present in the other siblings. The diagnosis of definite multiple-system atrophy in three patients (Participants II-4 and II-8 in Family 1 and II-6 in Family 8) was confirmed at autopsy. In Family 8, two siblings (Participants II-3 and II-4) of the affected family members had Parkinson's disease (PD). In Family 1, in which homozygous M78V-V343A mutations in *COQ2* were identified, the parents (Participants I-1 and I-2), who were obligate carriers of the mutation, showed no overt signs of parkinsonism, cerebellar ataxia, or autonomic dysfunction, according to family report. In Family 12, in whom compound heterozygous R337X/V343A mutations were identified, Participants I-1 and I-2 (obligate carriers of the mutations) and the heterozygous carrier (Participant II-2) showed no overt signs of parkinsonism, cerebellar ataxia, or autonomic dysfunction on examination by a neurologist. Squares represent male family members, circles female family members, black symbols family members with multiple-system atrophy, gray symbols family members with Parkinson's disease, open symbols unaffected family members, slashes deceased family members, and small circles family members for whom genomic DNA samples were available. MSA-C denotes multiple-system atrophy of the cerebellar type, MSA-P multiple-system atrophy with predominant parkinsonism, and unclassified MSA-P+C similarly predominant parkinsonian and cerebellar signs.

ANALYSIS OF *COQ2* AND OTHER GENES ASSOCIATED WITH COENZYME Q_{10}

On the basis of linkage analysis and whole-genome sequencing, we sequenced *COQ2* and the other 11 genes involved in the biosynthetic pathway for coenzyme Q_{10} (*PDSS1*, *PDSS2*, *COQ3*, *COQ4*, *COQ5*, *COQ6*, *COQ7*, *ADCK3*, *COQ9*, *COQ10A*, and *COQ10B*), using the Sanger method (Table S3 in the Supplementary Appendix).

We prepared samples of mutant human *COQ2* complementary DNA (cDNA) by means of site-directed mutagenesis (Table S4 in the Supple-

mentary Appendix). A yeast *coq2*-null mutant, the BY4741Δ*coq2* strain, was transformed with pAUR123 (Takara Bio) containing the nonmutated or mutated human *COQ2* cDNA. We measured the growth rate in a medium with a nonfermentable carbon source by monitoring the optical density of a sample measured at a wavelength of 600 nm (OD_{600}). We used mitochondrial fractions prepared from lymphoblastoid cell lines with the QProteome Mitochondria Isolation Kit (Qiagen) as the enzyme source. COQ2 activity (Enzyme Commission number, 2.5.1.39) was assayed as described previously.[20]

COENZYME Q_{10} LEVEL IN TISSUES

Using high-performance liquid chromatography, we measured levels of coenzyme Q_{10} (ubiquinone-10 and ubiquinol-10) and free (unesterified) cholesterol in lymphoblastoid cell lines established from 152 patients with multiple-system atrophy and 76 controls and in cerebellum samples obtained on autopsy from 3 patients with multiple-system atrophy and 3 controls.[21]

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

All results are presented as means and standard deviations. We used Student's t-test to evaluate the significance of differences in the mean age at disease onset between carriers and noncarriers of the *COQ2* mutation. We used Fisher's exact test to calculate the significance of the difference in allele frequencies between carriers and noncarriers, with contingency tables and standard methods used to compute odds ratios and corresponding 95% confidence intervals. We used the Kruskal–Wallis test, followed by the Steel test, to perform an analysis of variance. All statistical tests were two-sided, and a P value of less than 0.05 was considered to indicate statistical significance.

RESULTS

LINKAGE ANALYSIS OF FAMILIAL DISEASE

Parametric linkage analysis of the six family pedigrees revealed no single locus showing a linkage compatible with autosomal recessive inheritance. However, in the parametric linkage analysis allowing for heterogeneity, we detected several loci showing positive scores for heterogeneity logarithm of the odds (HLOD), indicating that more than one locus was involved in the different multiplex families (Fig. S1B in the Supplementary Appendix). In particular, two regions on chromosome 4 showed the highest HLOD scores, exceeding 2.0. Results of nonparametric linkage analysis (Fig. S1C in the Supplementary Appendix) were consistent with those of parametric linkage analysis allowing for heterogeneity. Parametric linkage analysis of chromosome 4 in individual pedigrees revealed positive LOD scores in an overlapping region in four families (Family 1, Family 2, Family 4, and Family 12), with Family 1 having the highest LOD score of 1.93 (72.795 to 89.616 Mb) (Fig. S1A and S2A in the Supplementary Appendix). Thus, we selected Family 1 to undergo whole-genome sequencing.

SUSCEPTIBILITY GENE IN FAMILIAL DISEASE

Whole-genome sequencing of a sample obtained from Participant II-4, one of two affected members of Family 1, generated 187.5 Gb of short reads, with an average coverage of 58× and 3,492,429 single-nucleotide variants (SNVs) or insertions or deletions. We winnowed the 3,492,429 variants down to 4 by selecting SNVs that were located in the candidate regions defined on linkage analysis in Family 1 (regions with the highest LOD score spanning approximately 80 Mb in total), that were located in exons or splice sites, that were predicted to cause amino acid changes or changes in pre-messenger RNA splicing, and that were not registered in the database of single-nucleotide polymorphisms, build 130 (dbSNP130), indicating that the variants are extremely rare in the general population (Fig. S2B in the Supplementary Appendix). Each of these 4 SNVs is predicted to result in an amino acid substitution: K707R in SHROOM3 (Universal Protein Resource [UniProt] accession number, Q8TF72), M78V and V343A in COQ2 (UniProt accession number, Q96H96), and R231G in SCEL (UniProt accession number, O95171).

In the 180 Japanese control samples, we did not observe the SNV encoding the M78V variant but did observe SNVs encoding K706R in SHROOM3, V343A in COQ2, and R231G in SCEL, which were present on 3, 5, and 98 of 360 alleles, respectively. We therefore considered the SNP encoding M78V in *COQ2*, which encodes parahydroxybenzoate-polyprenyl transferase, an enzyme involved in the biosynthesis of coenzyme Q_{10}, as a candidate variant in conferring susceptibility to familial multiple-system atrophy.

Cosegregation analysis of samples from Family 1 revealed that the two affected family members, Participants II-4 and II-8, carried the homozygous M78V-V343A variant in *COQ2*, and the unaffected sibling who was tested (Participant II-7) did not carry this variant (Fig. S2C in the Supplementary Appendix). Mutational analysis of *COQ2* in Family 12 revealed heterozygous mutations consisting of nonsense (R337X) and missense (V343A) variants in both affected siblings (Participants II-3 and II-4). Their mother (Participant I-2) was heterozygous for V343A, one unaffected sibling (Participant II-1) lacked this variant, and the other unaffected sibling (Participant II-2) was heterozygous for R337X. R337X was not observed in the 180 Japanese controls.

We did not detect variants of *COQ2* in the other four families (Families 2, 3, 4, and 8). Because *COQ2* encodes an enzyme essential for the biosynthesis of coenzyme Q_{10}, we further sequenced the other 11 genes in the biosynthetic pathway for coenzyme Q_{10} (*PDSS1*, *PDSS2*, *COQ3*, *COQ4*, *COQ5*, *COQ6*, *COQ7*, *ADCK3*, *COQ9*, *COQ10A*, and *COQ10B*) in the remaining four families and in a previously described multiplex family[14] but did not observe variants that cosegregated with disease.

COQ2 VARIANTS AND SPORADIC DISEASE

To investigate the involvement of *COQ2* variants in sporadic multiple-system atrophy, we extended the mutational analysis of *COQ2* to a Japanese series consisting of 363 patients with multiple-system atrophy and 520 controls. A common *COQ2* variant (rs6818847, predicted to result in an amino acid substitution, L16V) with allele frequencies of 0.90 and 0.88 in the Japanese patients with multiple-system atrophy and controls, respectively, was not included in further analysis. Four patients with multiple-system atrophy carried two variants simultaneously (one carried an I97T and a nonmutated [NM] allele at codon 97 and V343A/NM at codon 343, one had R337Q/NM at codon 337 and V343A/NM at codon 343, and two had V343A/V343A), whereas none of the controls had two variants of *COQ2* (Table 1). Sequencing of the subcloned mutated alleles confirmed that R337Q/V343A was present in a compound heterozygous state. We were unable to determine the phase of I97T/V343A, because the distance

Table 1. *COQ2* Variants Found in Patients with Sporadic Multiple-System Atrophy in Japanese, European, and North American Series, as Compared with Controls.*

Genotype	Japanese Series		European Series		North American Series	
	Patients (N=363)	Controls (N=520)	Patients (N=223)	Controls (N=315)	Patients (N=172)	Controls (N=294)
P22L/NM	0	1	0	0	0	0
F29L/NM	0	0	1	0	0	0
P49H†/NM	0	0	0	0	1	0
S57T†/NM	0	0	1	0	0	0
R69H†/NM	0	0	0	0	0	1
I97T‡/V343A§	1	0	0	0	0	0
P107S†/NM	1	0	0	0	0	0
S113F†/NM	1	0	0	0	0	0
T267A‡/NM	0	0	1	0	0	0
S297C‡/NM	0	0	1	0	0	0
N336H/NM	0	1	0	0	0	0
R337Q†/V343A§	1	0	0	0	0	0
V343A§/NM	29	17	0	0	0	0
V343A§/V343A§	2	0	0	0	0	0

* NM denotes nonmutated.
† This variant was deemed to be severely deleterious on yeast complementation assay.
‡ This variant was deemed to be mildly deleterious on yeast complementation assay.
§ This variant had decreased COQ2 activity on enzyme assay.

Table 2. Association between the *COQ2* V343A Variant and Sporadic Multiple-System Atrophy in the Japanese Series.*

V343A Variant†	Patients with Multiple-System Atrophy						Patients with Other Neurologic Diseases		
	Patients (N=363)	Tier 1 Controls (N=520)	Comparison with Tier 1		Tier 2 Controls (N=2383)	Comparison with Tier 2	Alzheimer's Disease (N=2728)	Parkinson's Disease (N=659)	ALS (N=634)
			odds ratio (95% CI)	*P value*		*odds ratio (95% CI)*	*P value*			
Allele frequency — no./total no. (%)	35/726 (4.8)	17/1040 (1.6)	3.05 (1.65–5.85)	1.5×10^{-4}	106/4766 (2.2)	2.23 (1.46–3.32)	6.0×10^{-5}	109/5456 (2.0)	33/1318 (2.5)	31/1268 (2.4)
Heterozygous — no.	31	17			106			105	33	31
Homozygous — no.	2	0			0			2	0	0

* Odds ratios and P values are for the comparisons between patients with multiple-system atrophy and each of the two groups of controls (tier 1 and tier 2). ALS denotes amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and CI confidence interval.

† In the combined series of Japanese, European, and North American participants, functionally deleterious variants P49H, S57T, R69H, I97T, P107S, S113F, T267A, S297C, and R337Q (as determined on yeast complementation assay) were found in 8 of 1516 alleles (0.53%) in patients with multiple-system atrophy, as compared with 1 of 2258 alleles (0.05%) in controls (odds ratio, 11.97; 95% CI, 1.60 to 531.5; P=0.004).

between I97T and V343A was too large to be amplified by means of polymerase-chain-reaction (PCR) assay in a single fragment, and samples of genomic DNA from the parents were unavailable. We found that 29 patients with multiple-system atrophy and 17 controls were heterozygous for the V343A variant. In addition, we detected four novel heterozygous variants: two in patients with multiple-system atrophy (P107S and S113F) and two in controls (P22L and N336H).

Of the *COQ2* variants, the V343A variant is relatively common in the Japanese population. As shown in Table 2, we found that the V343A allele occurred in 35 of 726 alleles (4.8%) from Japanese patients with multiple-system atrophy and in 17 of 1040 alleles (1.6%) from Japanese controls (odds ratio for patients with multiple-system atrophy, 3.05; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.65 to 5.85; $P=1.5\times10^{-4}$). Genotyping in the second series of 2383 Japanese controls showed that the V343A variant had an allele frequency of 2.2% (106 of 4766 alleles; odds ratio, 2.23; 95% CI, 1.46 to 3.32; $P=6.0\times10^{-5}$). Genotyping Japanese persons with other neurodegenerative diseases revealed that the V343A allele frequencies were 2.0% (109 of 5456 alleles) among patients with Alzheimer's disease, 2.5% (33 of 1318 alleles) among those with Parkinson's disease, and 2.4% (31 of 1268 alleles) among those with ALS. These allele frequencies did not differ significantly from those in the first or second set of controls, confirming the specificity of the V343A variant in patients with multiple-system atrophy. Two patients with Alzheimer's disease who were found to carry homozygous V343A mutations did not show any signs of parkinsonism, cerebellar ataxia, or autonomic dysfunction.

We then performed genotyping in the European and North American series of patients with multiple-system atrophy. In the European series, we found four singleton *COQ2* variants (encoding amino acid substitutions F29L, S57T, T267A, and S297C) among the patients, whereas none of the controls had any variants in *COQ2*. In the North American series, we found one variant (P49H) in a patient with multiple-system atrophy and one variant (R69H) in a control (Table 1). At the time of recruitment for the study, the carrier of R69H, who was 60 years old, had no signs of parkinsonism, cerebellar ataxia, or autonomic dysfunction, but this participant was unavailable for follow-up assessment. Intriguingly, the V343A