Severe ipsilateral musculoskeletal involvement in a Cornelia de Lange patient with a novel NIPBL mutation


Abstract

Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CdLS) is a congenital autosomal dominant (NIPBL, SMC3 and RAD21) or X-linked (SMC1A and HDAC8) disorder characterized by facial dysmorphism, pre and postnatal growth retardation, developmental delay and/or intellectual disability, and multiorgan involvement. Musculoskeletal malformations are usually bilateral and affect mainly the upper limbs; the range goes from brachyclinodactyly to severe reduction defects. Instead lower extremities are usually less and mildly involved. Here, we report on a 3-year-old Senegalese boy with typical craniofacial CdLS features, pre and postnatal growth retardation, atrial septal defect, developmental delay and right ipsilateral limb malformations, consistent with oligodactyly of the 3rd and 4th fingers, tibial agenesis and fibula hypoplasia. Exome sequencing and Sanger sequencing showed a novel missense mutation in NIPBL gene (c.6647A>G; p.(Tyr2216Cys)), which affects a conserved residue located within NIPBL HEAT repeat elements. Pyrosequencing analysis of NIPBL gene, disclosed similar levels of wild-type and mutated alleles in DNA and RNA samples from all tissues analyzed (oral mucosa epithelial cells, peripheral blood leukocytes and fibroblasts). These findings indicated the absence of somatic mosaicism, despite of the segmental asymmetry of the limbs, and confirmed biallelic expression for NIPBL transcripts, respectively. Additionally, conditions like Split-hand/foot malformation with long-bone deficiency secondary to duplication of BHLHA9 gene have been ruled out by the array-CGH and MLPA analysis. To our knowledge, this is the first CdLS patient described with major ipsilateral malformations of both the upper and lower extremities, that even though this finding could be due to a random event, expands the spectrum of limb reduction defects in CdLS.

1. Introduction

Mutations in components of the cohesin complex (SMC1A, SMC3 and RAD21) and its regulatory proteins (NIPBL and HDAC8) are responsible for Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CdLS). Indeed, heterozygous mutations in NIPBL gene, which codifies the human
ortholog of the Drosophila Nipped-B and yeast Scc2 proteins, were the first demonstrated cause of CdLS (CDLS1, OMIM 122470) and account for ~70% of cases with classical phenotype [Deardorff et al., 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Krantz et al., 2004; Musio et al., 2006; Selicorni et al., 2007; Tonkin et al., 2004]. NIPBL facilitates cohesin loading on chromatin, while the cohesin complex mediates the sister chromatid cohesion, DNA repair, gene regulation and maintenance of genome stability, among other functions [Liu and Krantz, 2009].

CdLS is a congenital developmental disorder characterized by a broad spectrum of clinical findings, like typical facial features, pre and postnatal growth retardation, developmental delay and/or intellectual disability, and a wide range of limb abnormalities [Kline et al., 2007]. In the upper limbs the malformations can vary from small hands with 5th finger clinodactyly, to oligodactyly, ulnar deficiency and absent forearm [Kline et al., 2007]. The lower extremities usually are less involved, generally with mild anomalies such as clubbed foot deformity and/or partial 2nd and 3rd toes syndactyly [Kline et al., 2007; Roposch et al., 2004].

Here, we describe the clinical and molecular characteristics of the first reported case with a novel missense NIPBL mutation (c.6647A>G, p.(Tyr2216Cys)), which results in a classic CdLS phenotype. The clinical finding of a severe ipsilateral involvement of the right upper and lower extremities, suggests the coexistence of CdLS with the Tibial Aplasia-Ectrodactyly Syndrome or perhaps other congenital limb malformation. The possibility of the presence of both conditions as well as the possibility of somatic mosaicism has been ruled out by exome sequencing, Sanger sequencing, aCGH, MLPA and pyrosequencing DNA samples from different tissues. Additionally the mutated allele expression has been confirmed. Further bioinformatic analysis of structural position and conservation of mutated residue within the HEAT repeat domain of NIPBL has also been performed.

2. Clinical report

The patient is the second child of consanguineous Senegalese parents aged 44 and 29 years at the time of conception. During the first trimester of gestation, a possible congenital heart malformation was detected in the prenatal ultrasound (US). He was born at 39 weeks by vaginal delivery. Apgar score was 9 in the first minute and 10 at 5 min. Birth weight was 2230 gr, length 44.5 cm and head circumference (HC) 31 cm (~3rd centile for gestational age). In the newborn period, the craniofacial features included synophrys with arched eyebrows, long eyelashes, depressed nasal bridge with anteverted nostrils, low set ears, long and prominent philtrum, thin lips with down-turned corners, high arched palate, micrognathia, low anterior and posterior hairline, generalized hirsutism and cutis marmorata (Fig. 1a). He had oligodactyly of the 3rd and 4th fingers (Fig. 1 d-e and f-g). In the right limb he had distal hypoplasia that caused foot deformity (Fig. 1 b). Roentgenographic studies of that leg showed tibial agenesis and fibular hypoplasia (Fig. 1 c). The left limbs were apparently normal (Fig. 1 b and c). The echocardiogram showed an atrial septal defect (which spontaneously resolved at 2 years of age). During the first months of life, he had a feeding and swallowing disorder. Barium contrast radiography did not show spontaneous gastroesophageal reflux. At the age of 1 year, he was surgically intervened for the amputation of the right leg.

At the last examination, at the age of 4 years, his weight was 13.6 Kg (7th centile), his height was 90.7 cm and his HC was 47 cm (both ~3rd centile). Developmental milestones were delayed. He was able to sit unsupported at the age of 6 months and to walk with lower limb prosthesis, at 3 years old. He only says 3-4 words.

3. Methods

3.1. Genomic DNA and RNA extraction

We collected DNA and RNA samples from tissues with different and/or similar embryological origin (ectoderm (oral mucosa epithelial cells) and/or mesoderm (peripheral blood leukocytes and fibroblasts)). Genomic DNA was extracted from peripheral blood leukocytes and cultured skin fibroblasts by standard procedures. By contrast, RNA was extracted from blood leukocytes by the PAXgene...
Blood RNA Kit (PreAnalytiX) according to the manufacturer’s instruction, as well as RNA from the cultured fibroblasts, it was isolated using the RNeasy Protect Mini Kit (QIAGEN). The Oragene DNA Self-Collection kit (DNAgenotek\textsuperscript{8}) was used to collect and extract DNA from saliva.

3.2. Exome sequencing

Briefly, 1 μg of genomic DNA in 100 μL volume was sheared into fragments of approximately 300 base pairs using Covaris instrument. Genomic DNA samples were constructed into Illumina Pair-End pre-capture libraries according to the manufacturer’s protocol. Pre-capture library (1 μg) was hybridized in solution to the Sure-Select Human All Exon V5 -UTRs exome capture platform (Agilent) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. This exome kit version targets coding regions plus UTRs. Library templates were prepared for sequencing using Illumina’s cBot cluster generation system with the corresponding TrueSeq PE Cluster Kits for the HiSeq 2000. An average per-base coverage >75× was achieved. Exome data was analyzed using standard procedures: Alignment with BWA, refinement with picard and samtools, variant calling with GATK, annotation of relevant information with ANNOVAR and own scripts.

3.3. Molecular testing by Sanger sequencing

Screening for mutations was performed on DNA from blood leukocytes by PCR amplification of the exons 2–47 of the NIPBL gene and its intron—exon boundaries, and by bidirectional direct sequencing. Reference sequence used for NIPBL was NM_133433.3. The nucleotide position of variants reflects cDNA numbering with +1 corresponding to the A of the ATG translation initiation codon.

3.4. Array comparative genomic hybridization (aCGH)

Microarray analysis was performed using a commercially available CGH microarray from Agilent Technologies (Santa Clara, CA). The slide contains nearly 1 million oligonucleotide probes scattered throughout the genome, with a 3 Kb overall median probe spacing, according to the manufacturer. After hybridization and washings, slide was scanned and analyzed for relative gain or loss of fluorescent signals from hybridization of the proband vs reference DNAs. The detection of copy number variations was performed on the Genomic Workbench software (v 5.0), using ADM-2 algorithm, with a minimum of 6 consecutive oligonucleotides probes exceeding an absolute log2 ratio threshold of 0.25 (thus with a practical resolution of 18 kb). Genomic positions were referred to NCBI’s human sequence build 36.1 (hg18).

3.5. Multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification (MLPA)

A total of 150 ng of genomic DNA from the patient’s sample and 14 controls was subject to MLPA using specific synthetic probes designed to target the BHHLAH\textsuperscript{9} gene and its regulatory region. The MLPA reactions were performed as described previously and products were analyzed on an ABI PRISM 3100 Genetic Analyzed according to manufacturer’s instructions. For quantitative analysis, trace data were retrieved using the accompanying software (GeneScan, Applied Biosystems). Each MLPA signal was normalized and compared with the corresponding mean peak height obtained from fifteen control DNA samples.

3.6. Quantitative mutational analysis by pyrosequencing

To explore the possibility of a somatic mosaic mutation, we tested the presence of the c.6674A>G mutation in DNA from tissues with different and/or similar embryological origins by pyrosequencing quantitative assay. Biotinylated and normal primers targeting exon 39 of the NIPBL gene were used for amplification. Subsequent to capture of PCR products on Streptavidin Sepharose HP (GE Healthcare), single-stranded DNA separation and hybridization of sequencing primer, pyrosequencing was carried out on a PSQ\textsuperscript{\textregistered} 96 MA system (Qiagen). The resulting data were analyzed and quantified with the PSQ\textsuperscript{\textregistered} 96 MA 2.1 software (Qiagen) and validated by Sanger sequencing.

3.7. RT-PCR and allele-specific expression analyses

Subsequently, we quantified allele specific expression for NIPBL transcripts in different mesoderm’s tissues using pyrosequencing. First, RT-PCR reactions were performed using the First Strand Synthesis Kit (Fermentas) with random hexamers, according to the manufacturer’s protocol. Pyrosequencing reaction was performed as previously described.

3.8. Bioinformatic analysis

The pathological significance of the variants was initially tested with PolyPhen-2 (http://genetics.bwh.harvard.edu/pph2/) and SIFT (http://sift.jcvi.org/) online software. In order to analyze in detail the putative structural implication of the mutation, a three-dimensional structural model for the HEAT-repeat region of human NIPBL (residues 1760-2349) was generated using homology modeling procedures and automated methods developed by Biomol-Informatics SL (Supporting information online).

4. Results

Exome sequencing and Sanger sequencing analyses of the patient’s DNA only demonstrated heterozygosity for A>G change at position 6647 of the NIPBL gene (Fig. 2a_v–vii) (Supplementary Tables 1–4). However, an additional list of all variants identified in this patient’s exome that might be relevant to check under different hypothesis of inheritance models (Supplementary Tables 1–4) is provided. Besides, pyrosequencing results confirmed this genotype and showed that the mutation was present in a similar wild-type allele percentage in the total sequence tested, with a mean of 51.6% ± 1.1%, 52.5% ± 0.5% and 47.4% ± 1.0% in oral mucosa epithelial cells, peripheral blood leukocytes and fibroblast respectively (Fig. 2a_v–vii). Analysis of the available parental samples revealed only the normal allele (Fig. 2a_i–iv), suggesting a de novo event.

We confirmed biallelic expression, as well as quantified allele-specific expression for NIPBL, in different tissues using pyrosequencing too (Fig. 2a_viii–ix). We determined that, in patient peripheral blood cells, the mutant allele contributed only to 38.6% ± 1.1%, while in fibroblast, was present in 45.2% ± 1.1%. These results were also validated by traditional sequencing as previously described (Fig. 2a_viii–ix).

The c.6647A>G mutation leads to amino acid substitution of one residue highly conserved during evolution, p.(Tyr2216Cys), as the protein alignment from different species predicts (Fig. 3b). Its effect on NIPBL protein was predicted as damaging according to online programs. In the obtained structural model (Fig. 3a, top), position of Tyrosine 2216 was predicted to be located in an alpha-helix, participating in the structural stability of the local sub-domain. Substitution of Tyr 2216 by Cys in the NIPBL protein (Fig. 3a_i, bottom left), participating in the protein folding which could result in its inactivation.
Fig. 2. (a) Pedigree of the proband, partial electropherograms of the exon 39 of NIPBL and pyrosequencing results. The traditional sequencing analysis performed on genomic DNA from the patient oral mucosa epithelial cells, peripheral blood leukocytes and fibroblasts (v–viii), as well as cDNA from blood leukocytes and fibroblasts (viii–ix) shows the peaks of

(b)
The presence of copy number alterations in the BHLHA9 locus was ruled out by MLPA and chromosomal microarray-based analysis. In addition, aCGH also allowed to discard the presence of any other relevant pathogenic copy number variant in this patient. Finally, no relevant variants were found in the exons of the causal genes of other musculoskeletal malformations analyzed by exome sequencing (Supplementary Table 2).

5. Discussion

Here, we described a CdLS proband, who has ipsilateral oligodactyly, tibial agenesis with fibular hypoplasia and carries a novel missense mutation in exon 39 of the NIPBL gene, c.6647A>G, detected by Exome sequencing (Supplementary Tables 1–4) and Sanger sequencing approaches.
The association between CdLS and musculoskeletal malformations is well known [Kline et al., 2007]. The upper extremities are typically involved with a variety of anomalies ranging from small hands, shortening of the first metacarpal with proximally placed thumbs, brachydactyly, 5th finger clinodactyly and single palmar crease to hypoplasia of the proximal radial head, ulnar deficiency, oligodactyly/ectrodactyly and absent arm [Kline et al., 2007]. Anomalies of lower limbs are uncommon and milder, and include being small feet, 2nd – 3rd toes syndactyly, bilateral hallux valgus, short 3rd and 4th metatarsal bones and bilateral equinovarus feet [Bhuiyan et al., 2006; Kline et al., 2007]. Nevertheless, lower limb reduction defects have been occasionally described in CdLS individuals [Kline et al., 2007]. In addition, the simultaneous association of severe reduction defects of upper and lower extremities has not been reported so far in CdLS, and, as far as we know, our proband is the first reported case this striking involvement.

Lower musculoskeletal involvement is a common clinical finding in other cedehinopathies like Roberts- SC Phocomelia syndrome, in which hypomelia, tetraphocomelia, absence or reduction in length of the upper and/or lower extremities can be seen [Ahmed et al., 2009]. However, in CdLS severe reduction defects of the lower extremities are infrequent, and the reported cases included bilateral hypoplasia or aplasia of the tibia and/or the fibula and more rarely bifurcated femur [Kline et al., 2007; Pfeifer and Correll, 1993]. Interestingly, segmental body asymmetry or ipsilateral association of oligodactyly with tibial agenesis and fibula hypoplasia have not been disclosed in CdLS.

Among conditions, which showed this type of unusual congenital limb malformations, the Tibial Aplasia-Ectrodactyly syndrome must be highlight. In order to rule out the coexistence of both syndromes, the assessment of the roentgenograms of the left limbs and the analysis of copy number variations in the BHLHAA9 locus by MLPA and aCGH have been performed, since only genomic duplications encompassing this gene have been reported [Petit et al., 2013]. Furthermore, taking into account the familial background of consanguinity, an exome sequencing approach was carried out. Despite of a careful analysis of the reported causative genes of congenital musculoskeletal malformations, no relevant variants were found (Supplementary Tables 1–4). Considering these data all together, we suggest that the mutation in NIPBL may be the cause of the ipsilateral musculoskeletal involvement in this subject, but always keeping in mind that these finding might be due to a random event. The recent report of two cases of CdLS with bilateral split foot along with our case, clearly expands the spectrum of the lower limb malformations in CdLS [Barboni et al., 2012; Dogan et al., 2010].

Most often, extremities reduction defects indicate the presence of a severe clinical involvement and a worse prognosis [Gillis et al., 2007]. The missense mutation p.(Tyr2216Cys) affects to the evolutionary conserved residue Tyr 2216, which was located in an internal site of the HEAT repeat domain of NIPBL. Local disorganization caused by the mutation of Tyr 2216 by Cys would lead to changes in protein function and in the putative interaction of NIPBL to its accompanying macromolecules [Pié et al., 2010]. Classically, NIPBL missense mutations have been associated with a milder phenotype without any major limb malformations, contrary to nonsense or frameshift mutations, which are usually found in patients with major limb reduction defects [Oliveira et al., 2010]. However, among more than 250 mutations previously reported in the NIPBL gene, there are some exceptional cases of missense mutations mapped to the HEAT repeat elements, associated with severe limb reduction defects (reviewed in Pié et al., 2010; Pié et al., 2010; along with our case [Pié et al., 2010; Schoumans et al., 2007; Tonkin et al., 2004].

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first patient with CdLS who has severe unilateral upper and lower reduction defects. This case expands the spectrum of the limb anomalies related to CdLS, although this finding could be due to a random event. Finally, this case underscores the importance of assessment of multiple body tissue samples in patients with the clinical diagnosis of CdLS in order to rule out the possibility of somatic mosaicism.

Consent

The manuscript was written with the approval of Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Aragón, Spain. Written informed consent was obtained from the patient’s parents for publication of this case report and any accompanying images.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jemg.2014.05.006.

References


