**COL4A1**

**Patient Description:**
This is a 4-year-old girl with severe failure to thrive (well below 3rd %ile for both weight and height), microcephaly, global developmental delay, bilateral congenital cataracts (s/p removal at 8 and 9 months of age), glaucoma, seizures and spasticity.

She was born at 27 weeks gestation with IUGR (Intrauterine Growth Restriction) and via emergent c-section for eclampsia. Her NICU course was 3 ½ months in length, initially intubated but eventually weaned off home O₂ at 5 ½ months of age, and experienced jaundice (s/p phototherapy) in addition to anemia of prematurity necessitating transfusions. She does not have chronic lung disease.

Currently, she is followed by 1) Ophthalmology for her glaucoma which is stable, 2) Orthopedics for foot bracing, 3) Endocrinology for her growth failure, with growth hormone implementation being discussed, 4) Neurology for her seizures which are stable, 5) Gastroenterology for her lack of weight gain and feeding issues for which gastrostomy tube placement is being contemplated. She is receiving speech therapy.

Of note, an MRI of the brain was performed in December of 2015 with the following results—periventricular leukomalacia, a small right caudate lacunar infarct, a thin corpus callosum, asymmetry, and the suggestion of several “prominent venous structures”.

**Patient Specific Genetics:**
A heterozygous mutation in COL4A1 was detected in this patient, c.2987 G>A (p.G996D), which was not present in her mother (her father remains untested). This variant has not been reported in large populations, nor has it previously been reported to be either pathogenic or benign. The non-conservative amino acid substitution caused by this mutation, based on in-silico analyses, supports the pathogenicity of this mutation (see below Protein/Mechanisms).

**Disease/Syndrome Features:**
Pathogenic mutations in COL4A1 are usually highly penetrant and manifest clinically as a spectrum of disorders which have been described in a total of less than 100 families of American, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, Italian, French, and German descent.

Despite usually being inherited in an autosomal dominant fashion, more than twenty seven percent of patients with diseases related to this gene harbor a de novo mutation with variable age of onset within and between families. Dosing defects of this gene are felt to be lethal since to date no deletions or duplications causative of COL4A1-related disorders have been found.

*Manifestations of COL4A1 mutations in individual organs:*

Brain--small-vessel brain disease (as periventricular leukomalacia, porencephaly, lacunar infarcts, microhemorrhages, dilated perivascular spaces, deep intracerebral
hemorrhages—all presenting either antenatally, neonatally, or recurrently), large-vessel disease (as cerebral aneurysms) —clinically presenting as infantile hemiparesis, seizures, single/recurrent hemorrhagic stroke, ischemic stroke, isolated migraine with aura, intellectual/developmental delay, dementia.

Eye—retinal arterial tortuosity, Axenfeld-Reiger anomaly (iris abnormalities, posterior embryotoxon, microcornea, increased ocular pressure/glaucoma), cataracts, micro/anophthalmia—can clinically present as transient visual loss due to retinal hemorrhage.

Kidney—hematuria, unilateral renal atrophy, renal cysts.

Muscle—cramps, elevated creatine kinase.

Peripheral vascular—Raynaud phenomenon.

Cardiac—supraventricular arrhythmia, mitral valve prolapse.

Erythrocytes—hemolytic anemia.

**COL4A1-related Syndromes (OMIM 120130):**

Porencephaly Type 1/Autosomal dominant familial porencephaly (OMIM 175780): Porencephaly with varying levels of periventricular leukomalacia, microbleeds, lacunar infarcts, and intracerebral calcifications. Neurologic symptoms include infantile hemiparesis, seizures, intellectual deficits, dystonia, strokes, and migraines. Frequently associated with congenital cataracts and anterior segment abnormalities, rarely with retinal artery tortuosity, occasionally with hematuria or muscle cramping.

Brain small-vessel disease with or without ocular anomalies/Autosomal dominant brain small vessel disease with hemorrhage (OMIM 607595): Diffuse periventricular leukomalacia, lacunar infarcts, microbleeds, dilated perivascular spaces, deep intracerebral hemorrhages, intracerebral calcifications. Neurologic symptoms—ranges from none to migraine with aura or infantile hemiparesis. Varibly associated with retinal artery tortuosity, congenital cataracts, anterior segment anomalies, renal atrophy, and renal cysts. Occasionally associated with hematuria, hemolytic anemia, or muscle cramping.

HANAC (hereditary angiopathy with nephropathy, aneurysms and muscle cramps)(OMIM 611733): Asymptomatic small-vessel brain disease asymptomatic with subcortical, periventricular or pontine leukoencephalopathy, dilated perivascular spaces, lacunar infarcts, microbleeds, and carotid siphon aneurysms. Gross or microhematuria, bilateral cortical or medullary renal cysts. Muscle cramps, elevated creatine kinase levels and
bilateral retinal arteriolar tortuosity in all patients. Variably associated with Raynaud’s phenomenon, supraventricular arrhythmia and liver cysts.

**Isolated retinal vessel tortuosity (OMIM 180000):** Manifests as second/third order retinal artery involvement with normal first order retinal arteries/veins. Spontaneous or stress/trauma induced retinal hemorrhage leading to transient visual

Nonsyndromic autosomal dominant congenital cataracts

Schizencephaly (OMIM 269160)

**Clinical mimics involving other genes:**

COL4A2-related diseases

Autosomal dominant Walker-Warburg syndrome/Muscle-brain-eye disease (Labelle-Dumais et al. 2011)

CARASIL/CADASIL

RVCL/HERNS/HVR

Micro/anophthalmia with coloboma spectrum

**COL4A1 Gene/Protein:**
Type IV collagen is the main component of basement membranes, the other components of which are laminins, proteoglycans and entactin/nidogen. Type IV collagen is made up of three trimers consisting of varying proportions of six variants of type IV alpha chains (alpha 1 alpha 1 alpha 2/alpha 3 alpha 4 alpha 5/ alpha 5 alpha 5 alpha6). Commonalities between the six different alpha chains are 1) the 7S amino-terminal domain and 2) the large collagenous domain formed by Gly-X-Y repeats. Interactions between non-collagenous NC1 carboxy-terminals of these chains (arresten- see below) determine the types and proportions of alpha chains ultimately undergoing assembly in the above configurations. The glycine residues are crucial for the stabilization of the triple helices that form, and the distribution of the three isoforms are tissue and developmentally specifically expressed, with the first of the three being the most ubiquitously expressed.

The gene for the alpha-1 chain of Type IV collagen is located on 13q34, is 158 kilobases long and contains 52 exons. Too few pathogenic variants in this gene to be able to discuss true genotype/phenotype relationships but certain patterns have emerged. Firstly, the most common pathogenic variants involve missense alterations to glycine residues within the collagenous domain (exons 24-51) which most closely correlate with brain disease. Similarly, the HANAC form of COL4A1 disease involves variants in exons 24 and 25 exclusively affecting glycines in a specific proximal 30-amino acid region of the protein. Only six pathogenic variants in the arresten domain have been found to date.
Putative molecular mechanisms for COL4A1-related disease:
Sudhakar et al. 2005 found that arresten binds to alpha-1/beta-1 integrins and plays a role in angiogenesis in the context of low oxygen tension environments, specifically inhibiting migration, proliferation and tube formation by endothelial cells. Could mutations in the collagenous domains of the COL4A1 allow for unmitigated arresten activity, perhaps explaining why vascular sequelae follow the malformation of Type 4 alpha 1 chains, particularly in microvascular beds during development?

Certain missense mutations in Col4a1 in animals causes focal detachment of vascular endothelium from its underlying media. Additionally, by reducing intrinsic endothelial-based nitric oxide synthase activity, hypotension and reduced red cell volume was induced in the areas fed by the Col4a1-defective vessels (Van Agtmael et al 2010).

Could the profound growth failure in our patient be explained by alterations in extracellular type IV collagen binding to Dpp, a signaling molecule that binds to and forms gradients of bone morphogenic protein in Drosophila (Wang et al. 2008)?

Databases used: Online Inheritance in Man

Publications:


Support Groups and Information:
None known.