imems from patients with ankylosing spondylitis. Inflammatory changes of the muscles in patients with ankylosing spondylitis have rarely been described. The muscle changes described here, however, together with two previous reports, suggest that inflammatory changes may occur in the skeletal muscles of patients with ankylosing spondylitis.

MASA AKI WARAGAI
HITO SHI HINO TON Department of Neurology, School of Medicine, Chiba University, Chiba, Japan

Correspondence to: Dr Waragai, Department of Neurology, Kofu Municipal Hospital 14-6 Sawai-cho, Kofu-shi, Yamanashi 400, Japan.


Incorrect diagnosis of myotonic dystrophy and potential consequences revealed by subsequent direct genetic analysis

Myotonic dystrophy (MyD) is a multisystem disorder with prominent features in skeletal and cardiac muscle. It shows genetic anticipation with a tendency for members of successive generations to be affected more severely by the disease and at a younger age. At its most severe it may cause a characteristic foetal and neonatal syndrome, which can be fatal. For genetic reasons and also to identify patients at risk from cardiac complications, screening of patients at risk for MyD is now recognised as important. Classically, a combination of clinical examination, needle EMG, and slit-lamp examination of the eyes has been used to identify patients who carry the disease but only about 92% of obligate carriers are detected. The sensitivity could be increased by genetic linkage studies, but clearly this requires that the correct parent be identified as a carrier in cases where both are asymptomatic. The recent introduction of a direct DNA test to demonstrate an increase in the number of CTG repeats at the 3' end of the myotonic dystrophy 1 (DMP1) trinucleotide repeat has now improved diagnostic accuracy and removed the need for linkage analysis. We report here two cases in which an incorrect assignment of carrier status on clinical and EMG criteria was revealed by the direct genetic test.

Case 1
A 60-year-old woman and her 70-year-old husband were seen in 1990 for screening for myotonic dystrophy after the diagnosis had been made in their 31-year-old daughter. Clinical examination showed no evidence of myotonia or percussion myotonia but a consultant neurologist considered that percussion myotonia of the tongue was present. Needle EMG showed localized myotonic discharges and there were minor non-specific changes on slit-lamp examination. Based on these findings the mother was assumed to be a carrier of MyD. A clinically unaffected daughter sought genetic advice and was assigned a low risk on the basis of negative EMG and slit-lamp examination and by linkage analysis. When the direct genetic test became available in 1992 the samples were retested and the mother found not to carry the expansion associated with MyD. Her husband carried a mildly expanded allele (EO) and thus was a carrier of the disease. Fortunately the unaffected daughter, who had been given a low risk based on the incorrect linkage result, was found to carry no expansion and therefore not to carry the disease.

Case 2
A 51-year-old woman was screened for MyD after the diagnosis was made in three of her siblings. No abnormalities were found on neurological examination or needle EMG. She had bilateral posterior subcapsular cataracts and low intraocular pressure. The cataracts were not of the stellate form usually seen in MyD, but there was also low intraocular pressure (which is associated with MyD) she was assigned carrier status. Linkage analysis for her asymptomatic daughter was complicated by the fact that the biological father was no longer in contact with the family so that no linkage diagnosis could be offered. For this reason the entire family was restated with the direct DNA test and the woman in question was found not to be a carrier of the disease.

In both of these cases, asymptomatic patients were diagnosed as being minimally affected by MyD based on limited clinical features, and in the first case an assessment of genetic risk was made for a third party (the patient's younger daughter) on the basis of incorrect linkage assignments. It was fortunate that the incorrect result did not lead to a misdiagnosis and the birth of a congenitally affected child. There was, however, considerable psychological trauma to the first patient both at the time of her misdiagnosis and when the diagnosis was revised. The importance of applying a correct clinical diagnosis before applying linkage analysis is again brought home by these cases.

The direct demonstration of the mutation in MyD, either by restriction enzyme analysis or by the polymerase chain reaction, detects at least 99% of cases of MyD. Also, cases where myotonia has coexisted with features not considered typical of MyD have been shown to have the MyD mutation and the test has proved useful in detecting cases of congenital MyD in which the mother has not previously been known to have MyD. We feel that there is now a demonstrable need to review critically all minimally affected persons who have been diagnosed on the basis of clinical (including EMG and slit-lamp examination) or linkage analysis criteria. Linkage analysis in this condition should now be considered outdated. Finally, we advise that whereas clinical examination, EMG, and slit-lamp examination are still relevant in trying to understand the relation between genetic abnormality and clinical features, the gold standard for diagnosis and screening must be direct DNA analysis.

PHILIP R J BARNES
DAVID HILTON-JONES
Oxford Muscle and Nerve Centre, University Department of Clinical Neurology, Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford OX2 6HE, UK

GAIL NORMBY
Oxford Medical Genetics Laboratories, Churchill Hospital, Oxford OX3 7JF, UK

SUSAN M HUSON
Oxford Regional Genetics Service, Churchill Hospital, Oxford OX3 7JF, UK


MATTERS ARISING

Lactate responses to exercise in chronic fatigue syndrome

We were interested to read the recent account of exercise characteristics in patients with chronic fatigue syndrome by Gibson et al., which concluded that there was no abnormality of neuromuscular function in this condition. Patients reached the limits of exercise tolerance with heart rates similar to controls during incremental exercise to exhaustion but their peak work rates and duration of exercise did not differ significantly from the control group, although the total work done (the product of these variables) would appear to have been less; the authors had previously reported that patients with this condition showed a reduction in maximal work rate achieved in such tests. Despite this, plasma lactate levels at the end of exercise were as high in the patients as the controls.

In an earlier study using incremental exercise on a treadmill, Riley et al. had found higher heart rates and increased lactate levels compared with normal controls at submaximal work rates but similarly noted no differences at peak exercise.

We have found that a proportion of patients with chronic fatigue syndrome exhibit abnormally raised lactate levels following steady state exercise at work rates below the anaerobic threshold, corresponding to roughly half the peak work rates achieved in the incremental test paradigm. It is thus possible that lactate levels in some patients increase more rapidly than normal at lower work rates.

The cause of this apparent 'left shift' of the anaerobic threshold is unclear. Neither we nor Gibson et al. found evidence of...
PET assessment of brain metabolic recovery in aphasia

The paper by Cappa et al.1 deals with the important issue of the mechanisms of recovery from aphasia. The authors longitudinally assessed two patients both neuropsychologically and by FDG-PET metabolic evaluations of the local cerebral metabolic rate of glucose (LCMRG1). Each patient was studied twice with a three-month interval. The LCMRG1 values (19 brain regions on each side and assessed for significant abnormalities at each study by comparison with values from a group of seven healthy subjects, while changes in LCMRG1 from first to second PET study were assessed in each patient individually by an analysis of variance with one-between-factor (acute and chronic stage) and one-within-factor (left and right hemisphere). The authors conclude that (1) significant reductions in the LCMRG1 of many brain regions were present in both patients at initial evaluation, and in one patient at second evaluation only, and (2) there was a significant increase in LCMRG1 from first to second evaluation in each of the two patients.

We wonder whether the statistical procedures used were appropriate. Firstly, regarding the comparison with the control group, Cappa et al used two standard deviations below control mean as the cut-off for p < 0.05; however, since the control group consisted of seven subjects, the two-tailed t value for six degrees of freedom, or 2.474, should have been used instead. This value is substantially larger than 2.0, it is likely that several of the LCMRG1 values listed in tables 1 and 2 as statistically significantly reduced were, in fact, not. In addition, the authors do not acknowledge the fact that there is a multiple testing problem as they are simultaneously assessing the pathologies of two subjects.

Secondly, the analysis of variance procedure used to assess changes in LCMRG1 from one study to the next in each subject is of serious concern. Apparently, it was run on the two subjects (regions for each side of brain, two determinations), and yielded inordinately low probability levels (down to < 0.0001) for single subject studies. Their way of using the analysis of variance in this adequate for the interpretation of the trend data, there exists a global scaling factor (the mean brain CMRG1), itself influenced by both physiological and methodological factors, that affects all regional values of a given subject. Thus, in the comparison of the two sets of LCMRG1 data obtained in a single subject at two sequential studies, any change in this global factor will be detected. Between all the regions analysed, the larger the degrees of freedom and, in turn, the more statistically significant the findings. One way of turning around this problem would have been to report the change in this global factor by, for example, an analysis of covariance.

When studying the changes in brain metabolism in a longitudinal fashion, more appropriate ways of assessing whether a significant change in LCMRG1 has occurred from one investigation to the next would be to assess each brain area either across a sufficient large group of patients or, in single subjects, by separating the numerical changes observed against confidence limits established for the same region in a set of control subjects studied twice at similar time intervals (that is, confidence limits for reproducibility). The results presented by Cappa et al regarding recovery of LCMRG1 must therefore be taken as descriptive only, pending confirmation from a better designed investigation.

J C BARRON
INSERM U220,
Blud H Beauchamp, BP 5027,
14021 Caen Cedex, France

Cappa et al reply:

Drs Baron and Ford express their concern about the appropriateness of the statistical methods used to support the two major findings of our paper, namely that (1) a significant increase in the cerebral metabolic rate for glucose was present in several regions, not only of the right, but also of the left hemisphere in two patients with crossed aphasia in the acute stage; and (2) a significant increase of metabolism occurred between the first and the second examination, three months after onset, in the same two patients. Baron and Ford consider a cut off value equal to the mean minus two standard deviations of LCMRG1 of normal controls as inadequate, and suggest the use of the two-tailed t value for six degrees of freedom (2-474 SD). We think that the choice of a two-tailed value is questionable, as pathologi- .cal values can a priori be expected to lie at the lower tail of the distribution (in the latter case, the cut off can be calculated as 1-043 SD—which is, approximately the value used in our paper). Nevertheless, we have reanalysed our data using this ultra-conservative approach. Even adopting this criterion, the main finding of bihemispheric metabolic recovery would be that the regional results were only marginally different (case 1—examination I: no change; examination II: right 04 and 05 and left T3, T8, and T9 above the cut off; case 2—examination I: right and left T3, T4, T8, and T9 above the cut off). On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the latter values also fall below the fifth centile of the distribution of normal values from a larger sample of normal controls, which has been collected in our laboratory after the completion of this study.

Baron and Ford suggest that region should have been included as a within-subject factor in the analysis of variance. This design would, of course, be the most informative in the study of the regional correlates of functional aspects of our sample, however (two cases, with a very low probability to increase sample size within a reasonable time span), we had to forsake the important issue of regional effects and limit ourselves to the assessment of changes in hemispheric metabolism between the baseline evaluation and the follow-up study in a 2 x 2 factorial design. We think that the design we have adopted was reasonable for two "global" effects on the hemispheric values in this context would be questionable, given that the mean global cerebral metabolic rate is necessarily affected by intrahemispheric and transhemispheric dissociation, namely, by the phenomenon under scrutiny.

Having said that, we appreciate that the extent of two single cases is, by definition, "descriptive". Given the limited current understanding of crossed aphasia, the use of other instances of atypical cerebral dominance, to ascribe further explanatory power to our observations would be far fetched. The methodological suggestions by Baron and Ford, however, are rather impractical. To collect a "sufficiently large number of patients", given the incidence of crossed aphasia, would require a dedicated multicenter study. For radioprotection reasons, in some countries it would be difficult to perform two repeated studies with F-FDG in normal subjects within three months.

We have proposed that patients with crossed aphasia may be particularly liable to distant effects, due to their bilateral language representation. Larger studies of the clinical correlations of distant effects and of their relationships with lesion characteristics, as well as with patient related variables (such as age, gender, handedness) are warranted to prove or disprove this specific hypothesis.

S Cappa
S Bressi
F Fazio
Department of Nuclear Medicine,
University of Milan,
Scientific Institute H San Raffaele,
Via Olgettina, 63,
20132 Milan, Italy

Correspondence to: Professor Fazio
Lactate responses to exercise in chronic fatigue syndrome.

R J Lane, D Woodrow and L C Archard

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