Association of tetra-amelia, ectodermal dysplasia, hypoplastic lacrimal ducts and sacs opening towards the exterior, peculiar face, and developmental retardation

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SUMMARY A male child with tetra-amelia, hypotrichosis, upward slanting palpebral fissures, lack of lacrimal openings, hypoplastic lacrimal ducts and sacs opening towards the exterior, prominent and bulbous nose, large downturned mouth, high narrow palate, bilateral preauricular pits, sacral dimple, bilateral undescended testes, and developmental retardation is reported. The parents were second cousins. His karyotype on cultured blood lymphocytes was normal. Since the next fetus conceived by the mother was found on prenatal ultrasonography to have no limbs, abortion was induced. The face of the abortus closely resembled that of the proband. It is postulated that this malformation syndrome was due to the homozygous state of a rare autosomal recessive mutation.

Tetra-amelia is a very rare congenital anomaly[1] often found with associated abnormalities[2-4]. However, we were unable to find reports of patients with constellations of features similar to those present in the patients described in this paper.

Case reports

Case 1

The proband was born on 3.2.85, the second child of healthy parents. The father was 35 years old and the mother 26. They were second cousins. The mother had had one induced abortion. The older sister was healthy. There was no family history of limb deficiencies.

Pregnancy was unremarkable and delivery at 39 weeks was spontaneous. At birth, the presentation was breech. The Apgar score was 9. Birth weight was 1864 g, height (crown to rump) 27-0 cm, and head circumference 35-0 cm. Since major malformations were present, he was referred to our outpatient clinic on the day of birth. On physical examination, the left upper limb was recognizable (fig 1). Hair on the head and eyebrows were completely absent and eyelashes were sparse. Palpebral fissures were upward slanting. There were no lacrimal openings and lacrimal ducts and sacs were hypoplastic, opening towards the exterior. The nose was prominent and bulbous, the mouth was big and downturned, and a high, narrow palate was present (fig 2). There were preauricular pits on both sides, and an umbilical hernia and sacral dimple. There was no heart murmur. The external genitalia were that of a normal male with bilateral undescended testes.

X rays showed the right humerus to be about 3 cm long, but the bones of the left upper limb and both lower limbs were completely absent. The right clavicle was hypoplastic (fig 3). ECG was normal. No sweating abnormalities were manifested. Chromosome analysis revealed a normal male karyotype and there was no centromeric abnormality of the chromosomes. Laboratory tests, including electrolytes, immunoglobulin, T3 and T4 levels, and urine analysis, were normal.

During the first year, he had frequent middle grade fevers, without any findings of infection. At one year his height (crown to rump) was 44-0 cm, weight 6170 g, and head circumference 46-5 cm.
Discussion

Cases involving limb deficiencies are not rare. The frequency of limb reduction defects estimated in Finland by Aro was 5.0 per 10,000 births. However, tetra-amelia is extremely rare. Since the frequency of stillbirth or early death during the newborn period is high in these cases, it is probable that not all cases with tetra-amelia have been reported.

In many cases limb deficiencies are associated with other malformations and limb deficiencies are sometimes recognised as a part of various other malformation syndromes. The characteristics of the two cases reported here are as follows: (1) complete or almost complete tetra-amelia, (2) hypotrichosis, (3) peculiar face, (4) ocular abnormalities, and (5) developmental retardation.

Roberts syndrome has an association of hypomelia, microcephaly, cleft lip with or without cleft palate, hypotrichosis, facial haemangioma, and severe growth deficiency. The cases reported by Freire-Maia in 1970 had tetramelic deficiencies, ectodermal dysplasia, mental retardation, hypop-
Tetra-amelia, ectodermal dysplasia, facial abnormalities, and retardation

In cases of Roberts syndrome and the cases reported by Freire-Maia, however, the degree of limb deficiency was milder than that in our cases and without the accompanying peculiar face. Moreover, a centromeric abnormality of the chromosomes, namely, puffing and splitting, was absent in our cases.

The aetiology of most limb deficiencies in man is unknown, but a few of these conditions are due to autosomal dominant or recessive mutation. The Brazilian type of acheiropodia is known to be an autosomal recessively inherited disease. Generally speaking, however, a significant family history in cases with limb deficiency is rare and parental consanguinity is infrequent. Only a few cases are caused by a predominantly exogenous mechanism (thalidomide, Tigan, maternal diabetes, etc). Recognised syndromes, such as Cornelia de Lange syndrome, or chromosomal aberrations sometimes also include limb deficiency.

Since the parents of the cases reported in this paper were second cousins, the malformation syndrome reported here may be caused by the homozygous state of a rare autosomal recessive mutation.

References

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