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W J C C World Journal of Clinical Cases

Contents

Thrice Monthly Volume 9 Number 33 November 26, 2021

REVIEW

10052 Effects of alcohol consumption on viral hepatitis B and C

Xu HQ, Wang CG, Zhou Q, Gao YH

MINIREVIEWS

10064 Effects of anti-diabetic drugs on sarcopenia: Best treatment options for elderly patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus and sarcopenia

Ma XY, Chen FQ

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Retrospective Cohort Study

10075 Utility of cooling patches to prevent hand-foot syndrome caused by pegylated liposomal doxorubicin in breast cancer patients

Zheng YF, Fu X, Wang XX, Sun XJ, He XD

Retrospective Study

10088 Clinicopathological features of small T1 colorectal cancers

> Takashina Y, Kudo SE, Ichimasa K, Kouyama Y, Mochizuki K, Akimoto Y, Maeda Y, Mori Y, Misawa M, Ogata N, Kudo T, Hisayuki T, Hayashi T, Wakamura K, Sawada N, Baba T, Ishida F, Yokoyama K, Daita M, Nemoto T, Miyachi H

10098 Comparison of dental pulp periodontal therapy and conventional simple periodontal therapy as treatment modalities for severe periodontitis

Li L, Chen HJ, Lian Y, Wang T

10106 Tripartite intensive intervention for prevention of rebleeding in elderly patients with hypertensive cerebral hemorrhage

Li CX, Li L, Zhang JF, Zhang QH, Jin XH, Cai GJ

10116 Clinical and electroencephalogram characteristics and treatment outcomes in children with benign epilepsy and centrotemporal spikes

Chen RH, Li BF, Wen JH, Zhong CL, Ji MM

10126 Endoscopic ultrasonography diagnosis of gastric glomus tumors Bai B, Mao CS, Li Z, Kuang SL

- 10134 Learning curves of robot-assisted pedicle screw fixations based on the cumulative sum test Yu J, Zhang Q, Fan MX, Han XG, Liu B, Tian W
- 10143 Value of GRACE and SYNTAX scores for predicting the prognosis of patients with non-ST elevation acute coronary syndrome

Wang XF, Zhao M, Liu F, Sun GR



World Journal of Clinical World Sournal of Clinical	
	Thrice Monthly Volume 9 Number 33 November 26, 2021
10151	Effectiveness of enhanced recovery after surgery in the perioperative management of patients with bone surgery in China
	Zhao LY, Liu XT, Zhao ZL, Gu R, Ni XM, Deng R, Li XY, Gao MJ, Zhu WN
	Clinical Trials Study
10161	Association between plasma dipeptidyl peptidase-4 levels and cognitive function in perinatal pregnant women with gestational diabetes mellitus
	Sana SRGL, Li EY, Deng XJ, Guo L
10172	Paricalcitol in hemodialysis patients with secondary hyperparathyroidism and its potential benefits
	Chen X, Zhao F, Pan WJ, Di JM, Xie WN, Yuan L, Liu Z
	Observational Study
10180	Did the severe acute respiratory syndrome-coronavirus 2 pandemic cause an endemic <i>Clostridium difficile</i> infection?
	Cojocariu C, Girleanu I, Trifan A, Olteanu A, Muzica CM, Huiban L, Chiriac S, Singeap AM, Cuciureanu T, Sfarti C, Stanciu C
10189	Effect of nursing intervention based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs in patients with coronary heart disease interventional surgery
	Xu JX, Wu LX, Jiang W, Fan GH
10198	Impacts of statin and metformin on neuropathy in patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus: Korean Health Insurance data
	Min HK, Kim SH, Choi JH, Choi K, Kim HR, Lee SH
10200	META-ANALYSIS
10208	Is endoscopic retrograde appendicitis therapy a better modality for acute uncomplicated appendicitis? A systematic review and meta-analysis
	Wang Y, Sun CY, Liu J, Chen Y, Bhan C, Tuason JPW, Misra S, Huang YT, Ma SD, Cheng XY, Zhou Q, Gu WC, Wu DD, Chen X
10222	Prognostic value of ground glass opacity on computed tomography in pathological stage I pulmonary adenocarcinoma: A meta-analysis
	Pan XL, Liao ZL, Yao H, Yan WJ, Wen DY, Wang Y, Li ZL
10222	CASE REPORT
10233	Atrial fibrillation and concomitant left subclavian, axillary and brachial artery embolism after fiberoptic bronchoscopy: A case report
	Yang CL, Zhou R, Jin ZX, Chen M, Zi BL, Li P, Zhou KH
10238	Streptococcal toxic shock syndrome after hemorrhoidectomy: A case report
	Lee CY, Lee YJ, Chen CC, Kuo LJ

10244 Subsequent placenta accreta after previous mifepristone-induced abortion: A case report Zhao P, Zhao Y, He J, Bai XX, Chen J



World Journal of Clinical Cases		
Contents Thrice Monthly Volume 9 Number 33 November 26, 202		
10249	Autosomal dominant tubulointerstitial kidney disease with a novel heterozygous missense mutation in the uromodulin gene: A case report	
	Zhang LL, Lin JR, Zhu TT, Liu Q, Zhang DM, Gan LW, Li Y, Ou ST	
10257	Novel KDM6A mutation in a Chinese infant with Kabuki syndrome: A case report	
	Guo HX, Li BW, Hu M, Si SY, Feng K	
10265	Pancreatic cancer with synchronous liver and colon metastases: A case report	
	Dong YM, Sun HN, Sun DC, Deng MH, Peng YG, Zhu YY	
10273	Veno-venous-extracorporeal membrane oxygenation treatment for severe capillary leakage syndrome: A case report	
	Nong WX, Lv QJ, Lu YS	
10279	Anticoagulant treatment for pulmonary embolism in patient with cerebral hemorrhage secondary to mechanical thrombectomy: A case report	
	Chen XT, Zhang Q, Zhou CQ, Han YF, Cao QQ	
10286	Complete restoration of congenital conductive hearing loss by staged surgery: A case report	
	Yoo JS, Lee CM, Yang YN, Lee EJ	
10293	Blastic plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasm with skin and bone marrow involvement: Report of three cases	
	Guo JH, Zhang HW, Wang L, Bai W, Wang JF	
10300	Extracranial multiorgan metastasis from primary glioblastoma: A case report	
	Luan XZ, Wang HR, Xiang W, Li SJ, He H, Chen LG, Wang JM, Zhou J	
10308	Transverse myelitis after infection with varicella zoster virus in patient with normal immunity: A case report	
	Yun D, Cho SY, Ju W, Seo EH	
10315	Duodenal ulcer caused by coil wiggle after digital subtraction angiography-guided embolization: A case report	
	Xu S, Yang SX, Xue ZX, Xu CL, Cai ZZ, Xu CZ	
10323	Crab lice infestation in unilateral eyelashes and adjacent eyelids: A case report	
	Tang W, Li QQ	
10328	Local random flaps for cervical circumferential defect or tracheoesophageal fistula reconstruction after failed gastric pull-up: Two case reports	
	Zhang Y, Liu Y, Sun Y, Xu M, Wang XL	
10337	Incurable and refractory spinal cystic echinococcosis: A case report	
	Zhang T, Ma LH, Liu H, Li SK	
10345	Individualized treatment of breast cancer with chronic renal failure: A case report and review of literature	
	Cai JH, Zheng JH, Lin XQ, Lin WX, Zou J, Chen YK, Li ZY, Chen YX	



Conter	World Journal of Clinical Cases Thrice Monthly Volume 9 Number 33 November 26, 2021
10255	•
10355	Persistent fibrinogen deficiency after snake bite: A case report
	Xu MH, Li J, Han L, Chen C
10362	Successful prolonged cardiopulmonary resuscitation after intraoperative cardiac arrest due to povidone- iodine allergy: A case report
	Xiang BB, Yao YT, Jiao SL
10369	Clinical algorithm for preventing missed diagnoses of occult cervical spine instability after acute trauma: A case report
	Zhu C, Yang HL, Im GH, Liu LM, Zhou CG, Song YM
10374	Carbon ion radiotherapy for synchronous choroidal melanoma and lung cancer: A case report
	Zhang YS, Hu TC, Ye YC, Han JH, Li XJ, Zhang YH, Chen WZ, Chai HY, Pan X, Wang X, Yang YL
10382	Heart failure as an adverse effect of infliximab for Crohn's disease: A case report and review of the literature
	Grillo TG, Almeida LR, Beraldo RF, Marcondes MB, Queiróz DAR, da Silva DL, Quera R, Baima JP, Saad-Hossne R, Sassaki LY



Contents

Thrice Monthly Volume 9 Number 33 November 26, 2021

ABOUT COVER

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WJCC mainly publishes articles reporting research results and findings obtained in the field of clinical medicine and covering a wide range of topics, including case control studies, retrospective cohort studies, retrospective studies, clinical trials studies, observational studies, prospective studies, randomized controlled trials, randomized clinical trials, systematic reviews, meta-analysis, and case reports.

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CASE REPORT

Autosomal dominant tubulointerstitial kidney disease with a novel heterozygous missense mutation in the uromodulin gene: A case report

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Author contributions: Zhang LL, Lin JR, Zhu TT and Zhang DM contributed to the study design; Zhang LL, Liu Q, Gan LW and Li Y collected data during the study; Li Y and Ou ST developed the first draft of the manuscript, which was then reviewed and intensively revised by the other authors; all authors read and approved the manuscript.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND

Autosomal dominant tubulointerstitial kidney disease (ADTKD) is a progressive chronic disease that is inherited in an autosomal dominant fashion. Symptoms include hyperuricemia, gout, interstitial nephritis, renal cysts, and progressive renal damage that can lead to end-stage renal disease. Mutations in the uromodulin gene (UMOD) characterize the ADTKD-UMOD clinical subtype of this disease. To date, > 100 UMOD mutations have been identified. Early diagnosis of ADTKD-UMOD is important to treat the disease, slow down disease progression, and facilitate the identification of potentially affected family members.

CASE SUMMARY

We report a 40-year-old man harboring a novel heterozygous missense mutation in UMOD (c.554G>T; p. Arg185Leu). The patient had hyperuricemia, gout, and chronic kidney disease. The same mutation was detected in his daughter, aunt and cousin.

CONCLUSION

A single nucleotide substitution in exon 3 of UMOD was responsible for the heterozygous missense mutation (c.554G>T, p.Arg185Leu).

Key Words: Autosomal dominant tubulointerstitial kidney disease; Hyperuricemia; Uromodulin gene; Mutation; Case report

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Core Tip: Autosomal dominant tubulointerstitial kidney disease (ADTKD) is a progressive chronic disease that is inherited in an autosomal dominant fashion. It can cause multiple organ damage and even end-stage renal disease. Mutations in the uromodulin gene (UMOD) characterize the ADTKD-UMOD clinical subtype of this disease. We report a novel heterozygous missense mutation in UMOD (c.554G>T; p. Arg185Leu). This mutation has not been previously reported, and it can help facilitate the presymptomatic diagnosis of this rare condition, in addition to helping guide genetic counseling and family planning for relatives of affected individuals.

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INTRODUCTION

Autosomal dominant tubulointerstitial kidney disease (ADTKD) is a set of heritable renal disorders that are characterized by autosomal dominant inheritance and clinical findings of tubulointerstitial disease in affected individuals. Most patients present with hyperuricemia, gout, arthritis, interstitial nephritis, and progressive renal damage, whereas some patients develop end-stage renal disease (ESRD) within 10-20 years[1]. Renal biopsy of patients with ADTKD often indicates interstitial fibrosis, tubular atrophy, and renal cysts^[2]. Pathogenic mutations associated with ADTKD are present in the uromodulin gene (UMOD) in 40% of cases, whereas mutations in either renin or hepatocyte nuclear factor-1 β genes are detected in 2.5% of cases[3,4]. UMOD mutations are considered under the clinical ADTKD-UMOD disease subtype, and most *UMOD* mutations are localized to exons 3–5 of this gene in the chromosome 16p11-p13 region[5-8].

Uromodulin is the most abundant protein in urine and is released from epithelial cells *via* proteolytic cleavage within the loop of Henle[9,10]. Missense mutations in this gene lead to misfolding of the protein and its accumulation within the endoplasmic reticulum of affected cells, thereby impairing urinary excretion[11]. These mutations also lead to disrupted trafficking of Na⁺-K⁺-2Cl⁻ cotransporters in the luminal membrane of affected cells[12]. This ultimately leads to impaired urine concentration, increased rates of proximal tubular sodium and urate reabsorption, hyperuricemia, and gout, which are the clinical characteristics of ADTKD.

Owing to changes in diets and other factors, the rates of hyperuricemia are increasing annually and the age of ADTKD onset is decreasing continuously, similar to ADTKD-UMOD. However, the risk factors, pathogenesis and prognosis of these two disease isoforms differ considerably. Early diagnosis of ADTKD-UMOD is important to treat the disease, slow down disease progression, and facilitate the identification of potentially affected family members. Identification of potentially affected family members can facilitate decision-making about donors and family planning. In the present study, we report the case of a 40-year-old Chinese man harboring a novel heterozygous missense mutation in UMOD, which was also detected in his seven family members.

CASE PRESENTATION

Chief complaints

The patient was a 40-year-old man who was admitted to hospital because of increased pain in the metatarsal joints and renal impairment.

History of present illness

Around 15 years previously, the patient was diagnosed with gout.



History of past illness

The patient had a free previous medical history.

Personal and family history

The proband had a family history of hyperuricemia as his grandmother, father, two of his aunts, and two of his female cousins were diagnosed with hyperuricemia and gout. The grandmother, father, one aunt, and one female cousin had been undergoing hemodialysis and died between the ages of 30 and 50 years. In addition, the patient's 9-year-old daughter had also been diagnosed with hyperuricemia based on her 5.6 mg/dL serum uric acid level (normal range for children aged 1–10 years: < 5.3 mg/dL) [13] (Figure 1).

Physical examination

The patient's temperature was 36.7 °C, heart rate 88 bpm, respiratory rate 14 breaths/min, blood pressure 132/78 mmHg, and oxygen saturation in room air 100%. Physical examination indicated the presence of a mildly painful nodule behind the auricle, slight pain and swelling of the knee joints, serious pain and deformity of the interphalangeal joints, and gout stones on the 1 s metatarsal joints in the feet of the patient (Figure 2).

Laboratory examinations

The patient had respective blood urea nitrogen and serum creatinine levels of 50.5 mg/dL and 6.2 mg/dL (normal ranges: 7.30–21.06 mg/dL and 0.46–0.82 mg/dL, respectively). The patient had a serum uric acid level of 13.2 mg/dL (normal range: 2.6–6.0 mg/dL), whereas fractional uric acid excretion was reduced by 3.43%. Other laboratory test results were within normal ranges.

Imaging examinations

Renal ultrasonography showed that the patient's kidneys were relatively atrophic (longitudinal image; 8.1 and 8.7 cm in the major axis of right and left kidneys), indicating the presence of cysts and suggestive of ESRD (Figure 3). Analysis of the knee joints by computed tomography showed high bone density, the presence of high-density shadows, narrowing of the joint space, and soft tissue swelling, which were consistent with the patient's gout/arthritic symptoms (Figure 4).

Further diagnostic work-up

Considering the family history of kidney disease, juvenile-onset of hyperuricemia, symptoms of gout/arthritis, and progressive renal impairment beginning at an early age, ADTKD-UMOD was considered highly probable. After receiving written informed consent from the four affected living members of the patient's family, DNA analyses, clinical data collection, and image publication were performed for these individuals. The peripheral blood was sent to CIPHER gene to perform the whole exome sequencing by Illumina HiSeq (the specific method can be consulted in the Supplementary Material). Genetic analyses revealed the presence of a novel heterozygous missense mutation in UMOD exon 3 of the patient, his daughter, aunt, and younger female cousin (Figure 5). The conclusion of the genetic test was variants of unknown clinical significance. According to the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics genetic variation classification standards and guidelines, the variation site was heterozygous, and the zygote type could explain the patient's disease. Furthermore, this missense mutation was the result of nucleotide exchange at position c.554 (c.554G>T), in which leucine was replaced by arginine at position 185 in the final protein (p.Arg185Leu). This resulted in abnormal folding of uromodulin protein, leading to its accumulation within the endoplasmic reticulum and impaired trafficking through the cell.

FINAL DIAGNOSIS

The final diagnosis of the present case was ADTKD with a mutation in UMOD.

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Zhang LL et al. Novel heterozygous mutation in the UMOD

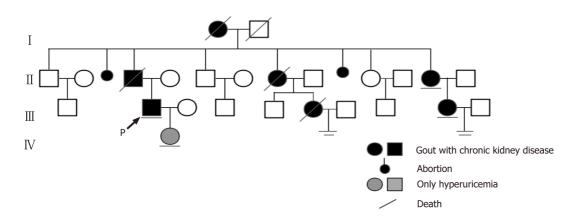


Figure 1 Pedigree for the family of the patient, indicating individuals affected by familial hyperuricemia and chronic kidney diseases. (1) Black and gray symbols corresponding to the affected individuals, with the patient described in this case report marked with an arrow; and (2) Lines under individuals indicate people who provided DNA samples, while the two underlines denote couples with no children.



Figure 2 Swelling, gout stones, and deformity of the interphalangeal joints, with two large gout stones affecting the 1s metatarsal joints of the feet in the patient.

TREATMENT

Medication aimed at controlling uric acid levels was administered to the patient but was not efficacious in controlling the gradually increasing serum creatinine and uric acid levels. Recently, the glomerular filtration rate for this patient decreased to 6.3 mL/min/1.73 m². Hence, we recommended arteriovenous fistula surgery for hemodialysis preparation. Moreover, his affected family members do not currently require dialysis but should maintain a healthy lifestyle and preventatively take uric acid medication to control the onset of hyperuricemia.

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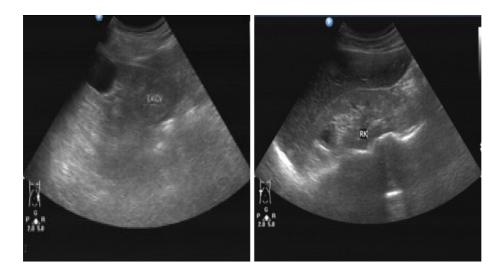


Figure 3 Renal ultrasound findings of the patient, revealing relatively atrophic kidneys with multiple secondary cysts.

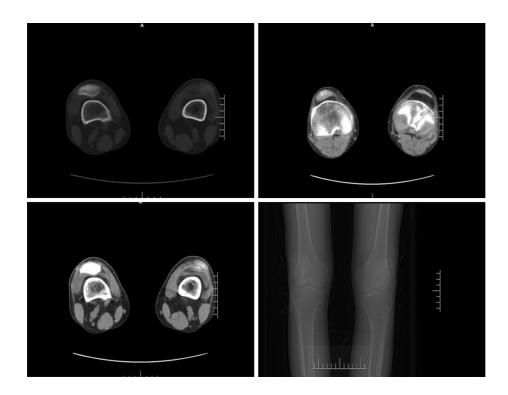


Figure 4 Computed tomography scans demonstrating joint space narrowing, soft tissue swelling, and high density urate crystal deposition in the patient.

OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP

The patient received regular blood dialysis and medications, and gout was controlled.

DISCUSSION

ADTKD is a condition also referred to as medullary cystic kidney disease, familial juvenile hyperuricemic nephropathy, and UMOD-associated kidney disease. Recently, ADTKD has been proposed as a collective term to refer to the aforementioned progressive kidney diseases[3]. Most cases of ADTKD present with mutations in the UMOD, REN, MUC1, TCF2, or SEC51A1 genes[14,15]. ADTKD-UMOD disease subtype is the most common, and the clinical features of all disease subtypes differ based on the mutated gene.



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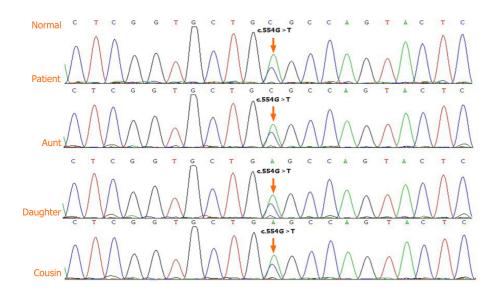


Figure 5 Genomic DNA sequence electropherograms for the proband, affected family members, and normal DNA. The arrow corresponds to a G>T transversion at position 554 of the uromodulin in chr16 (GenBank accession number NM_003361.3). This mutation was heterozygous in the proband, his daughter, his aunt, and his younger female cousin, respectively.

Uromodulin is the most abundant protein in urine and is the primary component of urinary casts that are encoded by chromosome 16p11-p13[7]. Mutations in UMOD gene can result in defective sodium transport in the thick ascending limb, leading to natriuresis that results in secondary proximal tubular sodium and urate uptake. This abnormal sodium and urate uptake further leads to hyperuricemia and gout. In addition, misfolded uromodulin deposits accumulate in the endoplasmic reticulum of affected epithelial cells[11]. Owing to these molecular mechanisms, UMOD mutations can result in conditions such as progressive distal tubular dysfunction, hyperuricemia [11,16], hyperuricemic nephropathy[17], urinary tract stone formation[18], saltsensitive hypertension, and kidney damage[19]. However, uromodulin excretion is reduced even in ADTKD patients without UMOD mutations^[20], and UMODknockout mice do not have hyperuricemia[21]. Other recent studies have suggested that mutated uromodulin in the kidneys may elicit an immune response that is specific to this protein, ultimately leading to the observed tubular injury and interstitial fibrosis[22]. Hence, further work is needed to elucidate the underlying mechanisms of ADTKD-UMOD in detail.

ADTKD-UMOD can be diagnosed based on UMOD sequence analyses or immunostaining for misfolded uromodulin protein. However, misfolded uromodulin staining is not routinely performed in pathology laboratories, and only a limited number of institutions can perform this specialized test. In addition, many patients are not eligible for a kidney biopsy at the time of diagnosis, similar to the case reported here.

Currently, whether treatment of this condition with allopurinol or febuxostat can effectively reduce blood uric acid levels, relieve gout symptoms, and slow down progressive kidney impairment is unclear. The patient in the present report did not achieve disease remission after receiving medication aimed at controlling uric acid level, and eventually developed ESRD at an early age. However, whether dialysis or renal transplantation can help patients achieve long-term remission requires further study.

CONCLUSION

When a young adult individual presents with hyperuricemia and has a family history of hyperuricemia, ADTKD-UMOD should be considered and *UMOD* DNA analyses are necessary. Identification of the pathogenic mutations governing this condition can help facilitate the presymptomatic diagnosis of this rare condition, in addition to genetic counseling and family planning for relatives of affected individuals.

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