World J Clin Cases 2022 June 26; 10(18): 5934-6340





Contents

Thrice Monthly Volume 10 Number 18 June 26, 2022

MINIREVIEWS

5934 Development of clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats/CRISPR-associated technology for potential clinical applications

Huang YY, Zhang XY, Zhu P, Ji L

5946 Strategies and challenges in treatment of varicose veins and venous insufficiency

Gao RD, Qian SY, Wang HH, Liu YS, Ren SY

5957 Diabetes mellitus susceptibility with varied diseased phenotypes and its comparison with phenome interactome networks

Rout M, Kour B, Vuree S, Lulu SS, Medicherla KM, Suravajhala P

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Clinical and Translational Research

5965 Identification of potential key molecules and signaling pathways for psoriasis based on weighted gene coexpression network analysis

Shu X, Chen XX, Kang XD, Ran M, Wang YL, Zhao ZK, Li CX

5984 Construction and validation of a novel prediction system for detection of overall survival in lung cancer patients

Zhong C, Liang Y, Wang Q, Tan HW, Liang Y

Case Control Study

6001 Effectiveness and postoperative rehabilitation of one-stage combined anterior-posterior surgery for severe thoracolumbar fractures with spinal cord injury

Zhang B, Wang JC, Jiang YZ, Song QP, An Y

Retrospective Study

6009 Prostate sclerosing adenopathy: A clinicopathological and immunohistochemical study of twelve patients

Feng RL, Tao YP, Tan ZY, Fu S, Wang HF

6021 Value of magnetic resonance diffusion combined with perfusion imaging techniques for diagnosing potentially malignant breast lesions

Zhang H, Zhang XY, Wang Y

6032 Scar-centered dilation in the treatment of large keloids

Wu M, Gu JY, Duan R, Wei BX, Xie F

6039 Application of a novel computer-assisted surgery system in percutaneous nephrolithotomy: A controlled study

Qin F, Sun YF, Wang XN, Li B, Zhang ZL, Zhang MX, Xie F, Liu SH, Wang ZJ, Cao YC, Jiao W

Contents

Thrice Monthly Volume 10 Number 18 June 26, 2022

6050 Influences of etiology and endoscopic appearance on the long-term outcomes of gastric antral vascular

Kwon HJ, Lee SH, Cho JH

Randomized Controlled Trial

6060 Evaluation of the clinical efficacy and safety of TST33 mega hemorrhoidectomy for severe prolapsed hemorrhoids

Tao L, Wei J, Ding XF, Ji LJ

Sequential chemotherapy and icotinib as first-line treatment for advanced epidermal growth factor 6069 receptor-mutated non-small cell lung cancer

Sun SJ, Han JD, Liu W, Wu ZY, Zhao X, Yan X, Jiao SC, Fang J

Randomized Clinical Trial

6082 Impact of preoperative carbohydrate loading on gastric volume in patients with type 2 diabetes

Lin XQ, Chen YR, Chen X, Cai YP, Lin JX, Xu DM, Zheng XC

META-ANALYSIS

6091 Efficacy and safety of adalimumab in comparison to infliximab for Crohn's disease: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Yang HH, Huang Y, Zhou XC, Wang RN

CASE REPORT

6105 Successful treatment of acute relapse of chronic eosinophilic pneumonia with benralizumab and without corticosteroids: A case report

Izhakian S, Pertzov B, Rosengarten D, Kramer MR

6110 Pembrolizumab-induced Stevens-Johnson syndrome in advanced squamous cell carcinoma of the lung: A case report and review of literature

Wu JY, Kang K, Yi J, Yang B

6119 Hepatic epithelioid hemangioendothelioma after thirteen years' follow-up: A case report and review of literature

Mo WF, Tong YL

6128 Effectiveness and safety of ultrasound-guided intramuscular lauromacrogol injection combined with hysteroscopy in cervical pregnancy treatment: A case report

Ye JP, Gao Y, Lu LW, Ye YJ

6136 Carcinoma located in a right-sided sigmoid colon: A case report

Lyu LJ, Yao WW

6141 Subcutaneous infection caused by Mycobacterium abscessus following cosmetic injections of botulinum toxin: A case report

Π

Deng L, Luo YZ, Liu F, Yu XH

Contents

Thrice Monthly Volume 10 Number 18 June 26, 2022

6148 Overlapping syndrome of recurrent anti-N-methyl-D-aspartate receptor encephalitis and anti-myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein demyelinating diseases: A case report

Yin XJ, Zhang LF, Bao LH, Feng ZC, Chen JH, Li BX, Zhang J

6156 Liver transplantation for late-onset ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency: A case report

Fu XH, Hu YH, Liao JX, Chen L, Hu ZQ, Wen JL, Chen SL

6163 Disseminated strongyloidiasis in a patient with rheumatoid arthritis: A case report

Zheng JH, Xue LY

6168 CYP27A1 mutation in a case of cerebrotendinous xanthomatosis: A case report

Li ZR, Zhou YL, Jin Q, Xie YY, Meng HM

6175 Postoperative multiple metastasis of clear cell sarcoma-like tumor of the gastrointestinal tract in adolescent: A case report

Huang WP, Li LM, Gao JB

6184 Toripalimab combined with targeted therapy and chemotherapy achieves pathologic complete response in gastric carcinoma: A case report

Liu R, Wang X, Ji Z, Deng T, Li HL, Zhang YH, Yang YC, Ge SH, Zhang L, Bai M, Ning T, Ba Y

6192 Presentation of Boerhaave's syndrome as an upper-esophageal perforation associated with a right-sided pleural effusion: A case report

Tan N, Luo YH, Li GC, Chen YL, Tan W, Xiang YH, Ge L, Yao D, Zhang MH

6198 Camrelizumab-induced anaphylactic shock in an esophageal squamous cell carcinoma patient: A case report and review of literature

Liu K, Bao JF, Wang T, Yang H, Xu BP

6205 Nontraumatic convexal subarachnoid hemorrhage: A case report

Chen HL, Li B, Chen C, Fan XX, Ma WB

6211 Growth hormone ameliorates hepatopulmonary syndrome and nonalcoholic steatohepatitis secondary to hypopituitarism in a child: A case report

Zhang XY, Yuan K, Fang YL, Wang CL

6218 Vancomycin dosing in an obese patient with acute renal failure: A case report and review of literature

Xu KY, Li D, Hu ZJ, Zhao CC, Bai J, Du WL

6227 Insulinoma after sleeve gastrectomy: A case report

Lobaton-Ginsberg M, Sotelo-González P, Ramirez-Renteria C, Juárez-Aguilar FG, Ferreira-Hermosillo A

6234 Primary intestinal lymphangiectasia presenting as limb convulsions: A case report

Cao Y, Feng XH, Ni HX

6241 Esophagogastric junctional neuroendocrine tumor with adenocarcinoma: A case report

Kong ZZ, Zhang L

III

Contents

Thrice Monthly Volume 10 Number 18 June 26, 2022

6247 Foreign body granuloma in the tongue differentiated from tongue cancer: A case report Jiang ZH, Xv R, Xia L

6254 Modified endoscopic ultrasound-guided selective N-butyl-2-cyanoacrylate injections for gastric variceal hemorrhage in left-sided portal hypertension: A case report

Yang J, Zeng Y, Zhang JW

6261 Management of type IIIb dens invaginatus using a combination of root canal treatment, intentional replantation, and surgical therapy: A case report

Zhang J, Li N, Li WL, Zheng XY, Li S

Clivus-involved immunoglobulin G4 related hypertrophic pachymeningitis mimicking meningioma: A 6269 case report

Yu Y, Lv L, Yin SL, Chen C, Jiang S, Zhou PZ

6277 De novo brain arteriovenous malformation formation and development: A case report

Huang H, Wang X, Guo AN, Li W, Duan RH, Fang JH, Yin B, Li DD

6283 Coinfection of Streptococcus suis and Nocardia asiatica in the human central nervous system: A case report

Chen YY Xue XH

6289 Dilated left ventricle with multiple outpouchings – a severe congenital ventricular diverticulum or leftdominant arrhythmogenic cardiomyopathy: A case report

Zhang X, Ye RY, Chen XP

6298 Spontaneous healing of complicated crown-root fractures in children: Two case reports

Zhou ZL, Gao L, Sun SK, Li HS, Zhang CD, Kou WW, Xu Z, Wu LA

6307 Thyroid follicular renal cell carcinoma excluding thyroid metastases: A case report

Wu SC, Li XY, Liao BJ, Xie K, Chen WM

6314 Appendiceal bleeding: A case report

Zhou SY, Guo MD, Ye XH

6319 Spontaneous healing after conservative treatment of isolated grade IV pancreatic duct disruption caused by trauma: A case report

Mei MZ, Ren YF, Mou YP, Wang YY, Jin WW, Lu C, Zhu QC

6325 Pneumonia and seizures due to hypereosinophilic syndrome - organ damage and eosinophilia without synchronisation: A case report

Ishida T, Murayama T, Kobayashi S

6333 Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease presenting with bilateral hearing loss: A case report

Na S, Lee SA, Lee JD, Lee ES, Lee TK

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

6338 Stem cells as an option for the treatment of COVID-19

Cuevas-González MV, Cuevas-González JC

ΙX

Contents

Thrice Monthly Volume 10 Number 18 June 26, 2022

ABOUT COVER

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CASE REPORT

De novo brain arteriovenous malformation formation and development: A case report

Huan Huang, Xue Wang, An-Na Guo, Wei Li, Ren-Hua Duan, Jun-Hao Fang, Bo Yin, Dan-Dong Li

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Abstract

BACKGROUND

Brain arteriovenous malformation (AVM), an aberrant vascular development during the intrauterine period, is traditionally considered a congenital disease. Sporadic reports of cases of de novo AVM formation in children and adults have challenged the traditional view of its congenital origin.

CASE SUMMARY

In this report, we have presented the case of a child with a *de novo* brain AVM. Magnetic resonance imaging and magnetic resonance angiography of the brain showed no AVM at the age of 5 years and 2 mo. Brain AVM was first detected in this child at the age of 7 years and 4 mo. The brain AVM was significantly advanced, and hemorrhage was seen for the first time at the age of 12 years and 8 mo. There was further progression in the AVM, and hemorrhage occurred again at the age of 13 years and 5 mo. Genetic analysis of this patient revealed a mutation in the NOTCH2 (p.Asp473Val) gene.

CONCLUSION

In short, our case has once again confirmed the view that brain AVM is an acquired disease and is the result of the interaction of genes, environment, and molecules.

Key Words: De novo arteriovenous malformation; Angiogenesis; Hemorrhage; NOTCH2; Case report

6277

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Core Tip: Brain arteriovenous malformation (AVM) is one of the main causes of spontaneous cerebral hemorrhage in children. At present, the mechanism of the occurrence and development of AVM is not clear, and there have been very few case reports that have documented the progression of a de novo brain AVM. In this report, we present the case of a child with a de novo brain AVM. Brain AVM was first detected in this child at the age of 7 years and 4 mo and was significantly advanced and hemorrhaging at the age of 12 years and 8 mo. Genetic analysis of this patient revealed a mutation in the NOTCH2 (p.Asp473Val) gene.

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INTRODUCTION

Brain arteriovenous malformation (AVM) is one of the main causes of spontaneous cerebral hemorrhage in children[1] and accounts for 30%-50% of spontaneous cerebral hemorrhage in children[1,2]. It is generally believed that AVM is a kind of congenital vascular disease[3]. The abnormality is formed in the third to fourth week of embryonic development, when the length is about 40-80 mm, during the process of cerebrovascular development and manifests as abnormal coiled and interlaced vascular clusters[4]. Arteries and veins are directly connected by malformed vascular clusters. At present, the mechanism of the occurrence and development of AVM is not clear, and there have been very few case reports that have documented the progression of a de novo brain AVM[5-7]. Here, we have documented for the first time a case of a child with a de novo brain AVM that progressed and ruptured twice within 6 years. We have also reported for the first time the potential role of heterozygous mutations in the *NOTCH2* gene in the pathogenesis of AVM.

CASE PRESENTATION

Chief complaints

A 15-year-old boy was admitted to the hospital in November 2019 with complaints of an acute headache for 3 h.

History of present illness

The child presented with a sudden severe headache for 3 h with no inducing factors. He was conscious and had no history of nausea, dizziness, or fever.

History of past illness

The boy had normal growth and development and no history of other special diseases. In August 2011, the child presented at another hospital with complaints of a headache for more than 1 wk. At that time, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), magnetic resonance angiography (MRA), and magnetic resonance venography (MRV) were performed. The scans revealed that there was no vascular abnormality, abnormal signal intensity, or any other findings suggestive of an AVM (Figure 1A-C). At that time, the doctor did not administer any treatment, and the headache was ameliorated by itself. In October 2013, the child again presented at another hospital with headache and nausea for 2 d. His MRA scan revealed a small right temporal AVM, the size of which was 6.2 mm × 1.9 mm (Figure 1C). Digital subtraction angiography revealed the presence of a suspicious lesion in the right temporal lobe (Figure 1D). The boy was treated for headaches and was not examined further. In February 2019, the boy presented at our hospital complaining of a sudden headache and vomiting for 2 h. He was conscious when he came to our hospital. His Glasgow coma scale score was 14, and National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale score was 1. Computed tomography of the head demonstrated acute intracerebral hemorrhage in the right temporal lobe. The MRA revealed a small AVM in the right temporal lobe (Figure 1E). Symptomatic treatment was given to the child during hospitalization, and gamma knife radiosurgery was suggested. Unfortunately, the child's parents rejected radiotherapy.

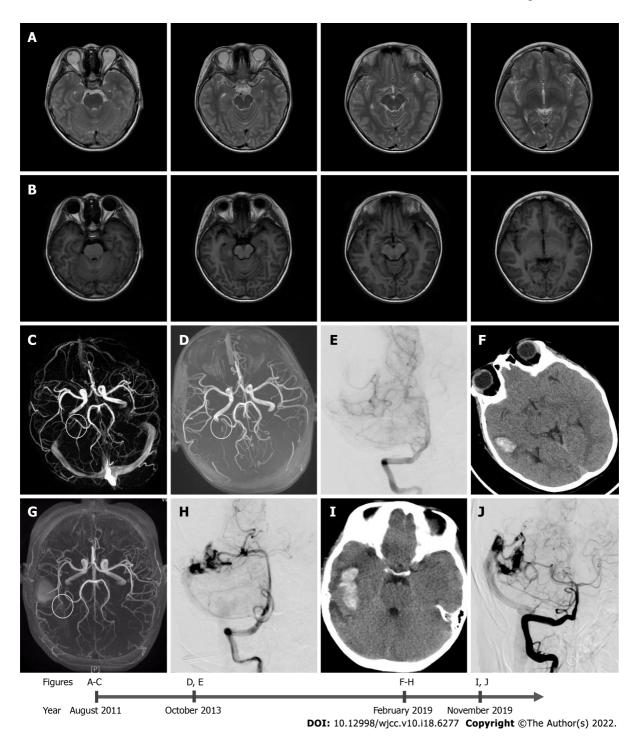


Figure 1 Diagnostic images from August 2011 to November 2019. A-C: T1 (A) and T2 (B) weighted images of magnetic resonance imaging, and (C) magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) done in August 2011, at the age of 5 years and 2 mo. There is no evidence of vascular lesion; D and E: The results of (D) MRA and (E) the first anteroposterior digital subtraction angiography (DSA) performed in October 2013, indicating de novo arteriovenous malformation; F-H: The results of (F) the head computed tomography (CT) scan, (G) MRA, and (H) the second DSA, which were performed in February 2019; I and J: Results from (I) the post-hemorrhage non-contrast head CT scan depicting blood in the right temporal lobe and (J) the third DSA, which were performed in November 2019.

6279

Personal and family history

The patient did not have any personal or family history of brain AVM.

Physical examination

The patient was conscious when examined at our hospital in November 2019. His Glasgow coma scale score was 15 and his National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale score was 1.

Laboratory examinations

Laboratory examinations showed no significant abnormality.

Imaging examinations

A small AVM within the right temporal lobe was visualized in the MRA (Figure 1G), and cerebral angiogram revealed the presence of a 21.6 mm × 21.2 mm right temporal AVM, which was supplied by the inferior temporal branches of the right posterior cerebral artery. Venous drainage occurred through superficial cerebellar veins into the right sigmoid sinus. It was classified as Spetzler-Martin grade 1 (Figure 1H).

In November 2019, computed tomography of the head demonstrated the presence of an acute intracerebral hemorrhage in the right temporal lobe (Figure 11). Digital subtraction angiography displayed abnormal vascular clusters, which were slightly larger than those seen 10 mo ago. The size of these clusters was 24.3 mm × 22.8 mm. The AVM was classified as a Spetzler-Martin grade 1 (Figure 1).

Further diagnostic work-up

After receiving consent from the child's parents, we conducted genetic analysis for the child and his parents. We discovered a mutation that might be related to the incidence of AVM, NOTCH2 heterozygous mutation [NM_024408.3; c.1418A>T; p.Asp473Val]. The mutation was only found in the child.

FINAL DIAGNOSIS

Brain AVM, Spetzler-Martin grade 1.

TREATMENT

The parents refused to conduct further interventional treatment. Supportive treatment was administered during the hospitalization period, and the boy was discharged after 10 d in good clinical condition.

OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP

The clinical condition of the child was good during the final follow-up, which was performed on January 2021. The child was in good general condition at the time. After January 2021, he was lost to follow-up.

DISCUSSION

The patient underwent MRI, MRA, and MRV scans in August 2011, at the age of 5 years and 2 mo for nonspecific headaches. No abnormal vascular lesions or secondary signs of brain AVM were observed. A brain AVM was first identified in October 2013. Bleeding occurred for the first time in February 2019 and occurred again in November 2019. The malformed vascular clusters progressed significantly during this period. No risk factors were associated with AVM in this case. Literature review revealed that most of the reported AVM cases had underlying pathology, and only a few of them had no cause of de novo AVM[5,8]. Our case report is the first to define the progression and eventual rupture within 6 years following its primary discovery. We also report for the first time that heterozygous mutations in the NOTCH2 gene might be playing a role in the pathogenesis of AVM.

Currently, the pathogenesis of brain AVM is not clearly understood. The imbalance of some signal molecules during embryonic development is believed to be the most likely reason for no capillary formation between the arteries and veins[9]. This balance is dependent on the strict regulation of various angiogenic factors, and any interference for these automatic regulation factors may lead to the formation of AVM[10,11]. There was no high-risk factor for AVM in this case, and the only high-risk factor that may have a relation in the development of AVM was the heterozygous mutation of the NOTCH2 gene. The NOTCH2 protein is the receptor of the Notch signaling pathway, and its activity can directly affect Notch signaling[12]. However, the Notch signaling pathway has complex and contextdependent effects on angiogenesis[13,14]. Studies have demonstrated that abnormal activation of Notch signaling in human brain AVM was associated with AVM bleeding [15]. The inhibition and activation of Notch signaling were both associated with AVM formation. The mutation in this case (p.Asp473Val) was first described by Gilbert et al[16]. The mutation is located in exon 8, and exon 8 encodes the epidermal growth factor-12 domain of NOTCH2[16,17]. Unfortunately, there has been no research on the effect of this mutation on the function of the NOTCH2 protein.

6280

CONCLUSION

We report for the first time a case of *de novo* AVM formation in a child, which progressed and eventually ruptured within 6 years. Our case contests the traditional view that brain AVM is congenital, and our case once again confirms the view that brain AVM is an acquired disease that is the result of an interaction of genes, environment, and molecules.

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FOOTNOTES

Author contributions: Li DD was in charge of case review and preparation of the manuscript; Huang H, Wang X, Guo AN, and Li W collected clinical opinions regarding this case and drafted the manuscript; Duan RH, Fang JH, and Yin B participated in the coordinating the manuscript; Huang H and Li DD revised the manuscript; All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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