Case Report

Identification of causative pregnancy of gestational trophoblastic neoplasia diagnosed during pregnancy by short tandem repeat analysis

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Introduction

Gestational trophoblastic neoplasias (GTNs) are tumors that arise from trophoblasts such as invasive mole, choriocarcinoma, placental site trophoblastic tumor (PSTT) and epithelioid trophoblastic tumor (Lurain, 2011). Invasive mole is a pre-malignant disease which occurs in 10–20% cases of hydatidiform mole. Choriocarcinoma and PSTT are malignant tumors which arise from the trophoblasts of any kind of pregnancy, including hydatidiform mole. It has been shown that the causative pregnancy of GTNs is not necessarily the immediately antecedent pregnancy using DNA analysis (Fisher et al., 1995).

GTNs which are detected during pregnancy are very rare and most of them are intra-placental choriocarcinomas. Although the causative pregnancy of GTNs during pregnancy may be a concurrent pregnancy or a previous pregnancy, as an extensive examination of the literature shows that there is only one study which demonstrates that the origin of intraplacental choriocarcinoma was a concurrent pregnancy (Kanehira et al., 2013). In this paper the patients presented with PSTT and intraplacental choriocarcinoma, which were diagnosed pathologically in the 11th and 38th gestational weeks, respectively. To identify the causative pregnancies, DNA analysis for 15 short tandem repeats (STRs) was performed using a commercially released kit.

Cases

Case 1 is a 37-year-old Japanese woman, gravida 8, para 6, who visited a local hospital because she found that she had become pregnant. Her last pregnancy ended in normal delivery at term and she had been having regular menstrual periods for two years. Pelvic ultrasonography detected a myoma (72 × 68 × 58 mm) and a normal sized fetus in a gestational sac. She had an ultrasound examination once or twice a month. Melena started at the 35th week which caused severe anemia. There was a 17 mm tumor in the myometrium next to the myoma macroscopically. Histological examination demonstrated that the tumor was composed of intermediate trophoblastic cells which invaded the myometrium in a sheet-like structure (Fig. 1B). The cells were positive for human placental lactogen (hPL) and weakly positive for hCG (Fig. 1C–D). Focal necrosis and extensive vascular invasion were seen in the myometrium. One mitotic figure per 10 high-power fields was observed. Diagnosis of PSTT was strongly considered. All villi and trophoblasts in anchoring villi were normal (Fig. 1A). Serum hCG and hPL levels were 101.4 mIU/ml and less than 0.07 μg/ml on the 14th postoperative day, and decreased with time after surgery. There has not been any clinical evidence of recurrence for over 18 months.

Case 2 concerns a 31-year-old Japanese woman, gravida 6, para 3, who became pregnant naturally. Her last pregnancy ended in spontaneous abortion and she had been having regular menstrual periods for a year. She had an ultrasound examination once or twice a month. Melena started at the 35th week which caused severe anemia. An emergency Cesarean section was performed at the 38th week and a tumor was found in the jejunum. Pathological examination showed that a small part of the placenta and the tumor of the jejunum consisted of malignant trophoblasts like syncytiotrophoblasts, cytrophoblasts and intermediate trophoblasts. Necrosis and hemorrhage were found more in the jejunal tumor than in the placenta (Fig. 1E–F). These cells were positive for hCG strongly and the pathological diagnosis was made as choriocarcinoma. MRI, CT scans and colonoscopy showed that choriocarcinoma had spread to the brain, the lung, the liver, the ileum and the colon, as well as the myometrium. The patient had chemotherapy with MEA
therapy (methotrexate, etoposide and actinomycin-D) and whole brain radiation. The patient achieved remission after seven cycles of chemotherapy, received four additional cycles for consolidation, and has been in remission for 18 months.

To identify the causative pregnancies of the two cases, STR analysis was performed. This study was approved by the ethics committee of Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine. Informed consent was obtained from the patients and their partners. Genomic DNA was extracted from parental oral cells and microdissected tissue of villi and GTNs from paraffin sections. DNA was amplified with 15 STR markers and a gender-determination marker. The villous and PSTT allotypes showed a complete match in all 16 loci analyzed (S1). These results suggest that PSTT arose from the concurrent pregnancy. In case 2, the results of STR analysis in 14 loci were informative (Table 1). The results of the choriocarcinoma in the placenta and the jejunum showed villous trophoblastic proliferation and atypia (H&E). ×100 magnification, scale bar = 100 μm.

Fig. 1. Histological features of PSTT during pregnancy (A–D) and intraplacental choriocarcinoma (E–F). (A) Intermediate trophoblasts invading from anchoring villi into the myometrium were of normal appearance (H&E). (B) The tumor was composed of intermediate trophoblastic cells with atypia and myometrium invasion (H&E). Cells were positive for (C) hCG and (D) human placental lactogen in immunohistochemistry. (E) Choriocarcinoma in the placenta and (F) in the jejunum showed avillous trophoblastic proliferation and atypia (H&E). ×100 magnification, scale bar = 100 μm.
The PSTT case in this study was detected in the uterus during the first trimester with a normal fetus. An extensive literature search including MEDLINE (1984–2013) demonstrated that only three cases of PSTT were reported to be diagnosed pathologically during normal pregnancy (Table 2) (Hopkins et al., 1992; Su et al., 1999; Liszka et al., 2009). All three cases had hysterecctomy or biopsy of the myometrium when Cesarean sections were performed in the third trimester. Another case of a four-month-old boy was reported who died of PSTT with metastasis to multiple organs (Monclair et al., 2002). His mother was 25% were found incidentally after uneventful pregnancies. There is this possibility may be very slight.

It is difficult to find GTNs during normal pregnancy because hCG cannot be used as a tumor marker during pregnancy. Image diagnosis, including ultrasound, CT and MRI, is not useful to diagnose GTN in the placenta. The cases in this study suggest that the possibility that GTNs arise at any time should be considered, even during pregnancy. Molecular genetic studies on the origin of GTNs can lead to a better understanding of the nature of the diseases and provide prognostic information for better management of patients.

**Conflict of interest statement**
The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

**Appendix A. Supplementary data**
Supplementary data to this article can be found online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.gynor.2014.04.001.

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**Table 1**

| Markers | Allele 1 | Allele 2 | Allele 1 | Allele 2 | Allele 1 | Allele 2 | Allele 1 | Allele 2 | Allele 1 | Allele 2 | Origin |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| D8S1179 | 10      | 14      | 13      | 14      | 10      | 14      | 10      | 13      | 10      | 13      | #      |
| D2S111 | 28      | 30      | 30      | 30      | 30      | 30      | 30      | 30      | 30      | 30      | #      |
| D21S20 | 12      | 12      | 10      | 11      | ND      | ND      | ND      | ND      | ND      | ND      | NE     |
| CSF1P9 | 10      | 12      | 11      | 12      | ND      | ND      | ND      | ND      | ND      | ND      | NE     |
| D3S1358 | 15      | 17      | 14      | 15      | 15      | 17      | 15      | 17      | 15      | 17      | #      |
| TH01   | 6       | 6       | 9       | 6       | 6       | 9       | 6       | 9       | 6       | 9       | #      |
| D1S5317 | 9      | 12      | 8       | 9       | 8       | 12      | 9       | 12      | 9       | 12      | #      |
| D165339 | 9     | 11      | 9       | 13      | 9       | 9       | 9       | 11      | 9       | 11      | #      |
| D2S1338 | 19     | 23      | 20      | 24      | 23      | 24      | 20      | 23      | 20      | 23      | #      |
| D19S433 | 13     | 14      | 13      | 15.2    | 14.2    | 15.2    | 14.2    | 15.2    | 14.2    | 15.2    | 15.2   |
| VWA    | 14     | 19      | 14      | 18      | 14      | 18      | 14      | 18      | 14      | 18      | 18     |
| TPOX   | 11     | 11      | 11      | 8       | 11      | 8       | 11      | 8       | 11      | 8       | 11     |
| D1S551 | 14     | 17      | 13      | 18      | 18      | 17      | 18      | 17      | 17      | 17      | 18     |
| AMEL   | x      | y       | x       | y       | x       | x       | x       | x       | x       | x       | #      |
| D5S818 | 10     | 10      | 10      | 13      | 10      | 13      | 10      | 13      | 10      | 13      | #      |
| FGA    | 19     | 26      | 22      | 25      | 19      | 25      | 19      | 25      | 19      | 25      | #      |

CC (P), choriocarcinoma in the placenta; CC (J), choriocarcinoma in the jejunum; ND, not detected; and NE, not estimated. DNA of choriocarcinoma has different alleles in five loci from villi (#). Choriocarcinoma DNA showed loss of heterozygosity in four loci (*).

**Table 2**

| Case | Age | G/P | Clinical presentation | Treatment | Outcome | Reference |
|------|-----|-----|-----------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| 1    | 27  | G1P2 | Vaginal bleeding and cramping at 30 wk | TAH + BSO 3 wk pp Chemotherapy | DOD at 10 wk | Hopkins et al. (1992) |
| 2    | 37  | G1P2 | Partial salpingectomy at 30 wk due to tubal bleeding | TAH + BSO + pOMT + tumor resection at CS | NED at 12 mo | Su et al. (1999) |
| 3    | 29  | G1P2 | CS at 39 wk due to twin pregnancy | Tumor resection at CS | NED at 30 mo | Liszka et al. (2009) |
| 4    | 37  | G1P2 | TAH at 11 wk due to myoma and artificial abortion | TAH | NED at 18 mo | Present case |
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