Cytogenetic analysis in young people with Epilepsy disorder- A preliminary investigation

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ABSTRACT

Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological diseases worldwide. The present study was carried out to determine the chromosomal aberrations in peripheral blood samples of 20 patients with epileptic seizures as confirmed by their Electroencephalogram (EEG) reports. Subjects included for the study included 10 patients below the age group of 20 and 10 patients above the age group of 20. The majority of aberrations were mostly observed in patients with age group of ≥20 yrs old.

Key words: Epilepsy, Neurological disorder, Chromosome aberrations

INTRODUCTION

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that affects people all over the world. It is characterized by a tendency to recurrent seizures and is defined by two or more unprovoked seizures. Research on epilepsy conducted worldwide estimated that it has a mean prevalence of approximately 8.2 per 1000 of the total population (Brodie and Schacther, 2001). Globally 50 million people suffer from epilepsy which is the most common neurological disorder affecting children in the developing world (Pal et al.,1998). Studies in developed countries suggest that the incidence of epilepsy is around 50 per 100,000 of the general population, where as in developing countries it is around 100 per 100,000 (WHO, 2001). The occurrence of epilepsy has been assessed in several populations worldwide (Annegers, 2004; Forsgren et al.,1996; Haerer et al.,1986; Hart et al., 1990; Hauser et al.,1991, 1993,1998; Juul-Jensen and Ipsen,1975; Sidenvall et al.,1996; Wallace et al.,1998). The rate of incidence of epilepsy tends to be high in early child hood (200 per 100,000 person-years), low (25- 40 per 100,000 person-years) between 20 and 50 years of age, and high after 50 years of age (Annegers, 2004; Forsgren et al.,1996; Hauser et al.,1993; Wallace et al.,1998). The overall prevalence proportion of epilepsy has been estimated to be 0.5 - 0.9% (Annegers, 2004; Forsgren et al.,1996; Haerer
et al., 1986; Hart et al., 1990; Hauser et al., 1991, 1998; Juul-Jensen and Ipsen, 1975; Sidenvall et al., 1996). About 6% of patients suffering from epilepsy with mental retardation carry chromosome aberrations (Singh et al., 2002).

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A total of 20 young patients with epilepsy were selected for this study using electroencephalogram (EEG) reports. The objectives of this study were explained to patients and their informed consent was obtained before including them for this study. The EEG is the depiction of the electrical activity occurring at the surface of the brain. This activity appears on the screen of the EEG machine as waveforms of varying frequency and amplitude measured in voltage (specifically microvoltage). The intravenous blood was collected aseptically using heparin from 20 patients suspected for seizure disorder. The patients were classified into two groups based on their age (Group I < 20 yrs old and Group II ≥ 20 yrs old) to check for manifestation of any age-related changes in such patients. Age is a variable which is an important determinant for epilepsy risk. Age, as a surrogate of brain maturation, is a determinant of the specific characteristics of the seizure disorder in those with epilepsy, and age-related changes in these manifestations can be identified (Hauser, 1992). Each group thus consisted of 10 patients.

Chromosomal aberration analysis was carried out by following standard procedure (Hoyos et al., 1996). Briefly, 0.5 ml of whole blood was added to 5.0 ml RPMI 1640 medium (Hyclone, USA), supplemented with 20% fetal bovine serum (PAA Laboratories, Austria), 2mM L-glutamine (Himedia, India), 1% streptomycin-penicillin antibiotic (Himedia, India) and 0.2 ml of Gibco™ phytohemagglutinin (ThermoFischer Scientific, India). The mixture was incubated at 37°C for 72 hours. After 71 hours, the cells were treated with 0.01% Colchicine (Himedia, India) to arrest cells in mitosis. Lymphocytes were harvested upon the completion of 72 hours by centrifuging the cells at 1800 rpm for 7 minutes. About 6mL of pre-warmed (37°C) hypotonic solution (KCL 0.075 M) was added and left aside for 20 minutes at room temperature. After removing the hypotonic solution by centrifugation, the cells were fixed in Carnoy's fixative.Slides were prepared and stained in 2% Giemsa stain. For the chromosomal aberration analysis, 100 well spread metaphase plates were examined per subject under a microscope (100X) to identify numerical and structural chromosomal aberrations (Hoyos et al., 1996).

**RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the physical characteristics and chromosomal aberrations observed in the patients of the present study. Patients of both age groups showed both structural and numerical aberrations in different chromosomes. But the frequency was higher in Group II patients. Structural aberrations included deletions in long and short arms of chromosomes (5p, 7p, 14q, 15q) and satellite structures in 13, 15 and 22rd chromosomes. Numerical aberrations such as trisomies observed for chromosomes 13 and 21.

In the present study almost all the patients exhibited tonic-clonic type of seizures. During the clonic phase of the seizures, the EEG derived from subdural electrodes overlying the motor strip always shows a polyspike wave pattern.

**DISCUSSION**

Epilepsy is the most common and challenging neurological disorder. This chronic disorder affects a patients’ life by limiting his / her social, physical and emotional functions resulting in a poor quality of life. Improving an epileptic’s Heath Related Quality of Life (HRQoL) is recognized as an essential component of the management of patients with epilepsy (Jacoby and Faker, 2008, Privitera and Ficker, 2004). In the present study almost all the patients exhibited tonic-clonic type of seizures. When seizures occur during the childhood or in the third decade of life, generalized tonic-clonic are the most common together with partial simple or partial complex seizures, but myoclonic, atonic and absence with tonic seizures have been reported (Singh et al., 2002).

An important application of EEGs is for the study of epileptic patients, in which deviations from the “normal” patterns help to classify epilepsies and eventually to localize the epileptic focus. Focal clonic seizures have been defined as series of myoclonic contractions occurring at regular intervals, typically in the range of 0.5± 5 Hz (Hamer et al., 1999).
Table 1: Patients' health status and chromosome aberrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case. No</th>
<th>Gender/age</th>
<th>Type of Seizure</th>
<th>Complaints</th>
<th>Life style factors</th>
<th>Chromosome aberrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N001</td>
<td>15/F</td>
<td>Tonic-Clonic</td>
<td>Persistent cough</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Headache and tiredness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N002</td>
<td>30/M</td>
<td>Tonic-Clonic</td>
<td>Wheezing trouble, Joint pain and severe headache</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XY(5p−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N003</td>
<td>28/F</td>
<td>Tonic-Clonic</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46,XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N004</td>
<td>22/M</td>
<td>Tonic</td>
<td>Headache and tiredness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N005</td>
<td>17/F</td>
<td>Tonic-Clonic</td>
<td>Speech problem, Severing, Numbness, Fearing and sleeping disturbance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46,XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N006</td>
<td>14/M</td>
<td>Tonic</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46,XY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N007</td>
<td>29/M</td>
<td>Tonic-Clonic</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46,XY(7p−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N008</td>
<td>16/F</td>
<td>Tonic-clonic</td>
<td>High Blood pressure, persistent cough and Joint pain</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N009</td>
<td>27/F</td>
<td>Tonic-clonic</td>
<td>Wheezing trouble, persistent cough</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N010</td>
<td>17/F</td>
<td>Tonic-clonic</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N011</td>
<td>14/M</td>
<td>Tonic-clonic</td>
<td>Spinal cord pain and Joint pain</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XY(7p−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N012</td>
<td>13/F</td>
<td>Tonic-clonic</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N013</td>
<td>20/M</td>
<td>Tonic-clonic</td>
<td>Unconsciousness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47, XY (5p−, 13S+ and 22S+), trisomy 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N014</td>
<td>25/M</td>
<td>Tonic-clonic</td>
<td>Unconsciousness', Headache, Joint pain and weight loss</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N015</td>
<td>13/F</td>
<td>Tonic-clonic</td>
<td>Joint pain and Headache</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N016</td>
<td>22/M</td>
<td>Tonic-clinic</td>
<td>Headache, unconsciousness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47, XY(14q−) trisomy 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N017</td>
<td>24/F</td>
<td>Tonic clonic</td>
<td>Headache, unconsciousness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XX (14q−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N018</td>
<td>15/M</td>
<td>Tonic clonic</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XY (15q−)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N019</td>
<td>22/M</td>
<td>Tonic clonic</td>
<td>Headache and unconsciousness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46, XY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N020</td>
<td>18/M</td>
<td>Tonic clonic</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47, XY (15S+, 22S+) trisomy 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focal clonic seizures are always associated with a Polyspike wave pattern in the EEG of the primary motor area (frequency range 1.6±3.4 Hz). The clonic phase started at a frequency between 1.9 – 3.4 Hz in the present study of patients. The muscular contractions of the clonic phase are a response to brain activity that can only be established when brain oscillations are slow enough to be followed by the muscles. In the present study both structural and numerical chromosomal aberrations were observed in patients. Structural chromosome aberrations present included deletions in chromosomes 5, 7, 14, 15, and satellite
structures in chromosomes 13, 15, and 22. Seizures onset ranging from neonatal period to 7 years are reported in patients affected with deletion of the long arm of chromosome 7. Febrile, generalized, myoclonic and combination of afebrile and febrile seizures are described in these cases. The only anomaly of chromosome 14 with a striking association with epilepsy is the ring 14. Numerous cases are reported, some of which are familial (Singh et al., 2002). Recently reported is a syndrome due to 15q13.3 microdeletion associated with mental retardation, developmental delay and seizures. In these patients, seizures were of various types: myoclonic seizures, absence seizures, tonic-clonic seizures, intractable epilepsy (Sharp et al., 2008). Epilepsy has been an uncommon manifestation associated with 22q11 deletion. It is present in less than 5% of the patients (Roubertie et al., 2001)

In the present study numerical chromosome aberrations recorded included trisomy in 13 and 21st chromosomes in a mosaic manner along with structural chromosome aberrations in both groups of patients. In trisomy 13 or Patau syndrome, seizures are reported rarely even if a variety of developmental abnormalities of the brain are present: holoprosencephaly (60-80% of cases), cerebellar dysplastic changes, olfactory aplasia, hippocampal hypoplasia and callosal agenesis. Epilepsy occurs in 8% of individuals with Down syndrome (DS). Age of seizure onset is bimodal: 40% occurs before 1 year of age and 40% occur in the third decade of life (Roizen and Patterson, 2003). The increased seizure susceptibility has been attributed to inherent structural anomalies of the brain such as fewer inhibitory interneurons, decreased neuronal density, abnormal neuronal lamination, persistence of dendrites with foetal morphology or primitive synaptic profiles (Stafstrom et al., 1991).

In conclusion, this preliminary study provides valuable information on different types of aberrant karyotypes in epileptic patients of different young age groups in the population studied. Further studies with a large sample size and better classification are needed to delineate the clinical features of epileptic seizures and to understand the mechanisms of epilepsy associated with chromosomal abnormalities.

Acknowledgement
We wish to thank all the faculties of the Coimbatore Medical College Hospital, Coimbatore, TN, India.

Conflict of Interests
No funds were received for this study. Authors do not have any conflicting interests.

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childhood epilepsy in West Bengal, India. *Int J Epidemiol*, 27: 672–6.


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