Neuroblastoma- Genetics

Neuroblastoma (NB) is a malignant tumor of the sympathetic system that develops from the neural crests: sympathetic ganglion cells and adrenal glands. NB can behave seemingly benign, undergo spontaneous regression, mature into a benign ganglioneuroma or progress to kill its host. The most characteristic genetic abnormality of NB is deletion of the short arm of chromosome 1 (1p) occurring in 70% of primary diploid tumors. Loss or inactivation of a tumor suppressor gene at this site is critical for progression of neuroblastoma. Loss of heterozygosity in chromosome 14 long arm (14q) has also been identified in 50% of NB cells studied with no clinical behavior identified. Gain of chromosome 17 is associated with more aggressive tumors. Another consistent chromosomal aberration identified in 25% of NB is the presence of double-minute chromosomes producing multiple copies of the oncogene N-myc. N-myc activation results in tumor formation and is strongly associated with advance stages of disease and poor outcome independent of the stage of the tumor or age of the patient. Most NB cells are diploid and many are hyperdiploid. Hyperdiploidy is a good prognostic feature of NB, while diploid tumors at any age and hyperdiploid in older patients carry a worse prognosis requiring more intensive treatment. TRK receptors (A, B and C) are detected in 90% of NB and correlates inversely with N-myc expression. High TRK-A correlates with improved survival playing a role in the propensity of NB to regress or differentiate. TRK-B is associated with more matured tumors and TRK-C with lower stage tumors. High levels of TRK expression are associated with better prognosis, earlier stage, lower patient age and lack of N-myc expression.

References

Recurrent Abdominal Pain
Recurrent abdominal pain (RAP) severe enough to seek surgical advice is a common problem in children. Most of the children with RAP are females. During evaluation multiple imaging (US, CT-Scan, MRI, HIDA-CCK, barium studies) and endoscopic diagnostic studies are done, most of which are not too helpful in arriving with a diagnosis. Symptoms wane spontaneously in almost one-third of these cases after a 4-6 week period of conservative observation. With persistent symptoms a diagnostic laparoscopy can be offered due to its superior visualization of pelvic and abdominal structures. Those with right lower quadrant pain are an important group, since adhesions, chronic appendiceal inflammation and inspissated appendicolith have been identified. With laparoscopy for RAP the yield of abdominal pathology will increase (chronic appendicitis, cysts, Meckel’s and hernias), school loss will minimize and an economic benefit will be obtained. The lap procedure has lent itself to a variety of patients because of its ease, safety, and diagnostic accuracy.

References

Muscle Biopsy

Muscle biopsy is a standard procedure to help establish a diagnosis in case of suspecting myopathy in children. Though the procedure is technically easy, complications can occur the result of not using appropriate anesthesia strategy. We encourage initial sedation with midazolin, followed by ketamine or propofol along with local anesthesia (xylocaine/marcaine 1-2% mixture) in this cases. We strongly discourage and avoid the use of halogenated gases or muscle paralysis whenever possible. Most frequent cause of cardiac arrest causing sudden death following anesthesia in a child suspected of having a muscular dystrophy (Duchenne, or any other type) with elevated CPK level is the result of rhabdomyolysis caused by halogenated gases (halothane, isoflurane, sevoflurane, etc.) or muscle-paralysis drugs (succinylcholine, suxamethonium). Rhabdomyolysis triggers severe hyperkalemia, hyperphosphatemia, hypocalcemia, massive increases in creatine kinase, aspartate aminotransferase, and alanine aminotransferase concentrations, and high ion gap metabolic acidosis. Following unexplained anesthetic deaths, pathologists should examine body fluid electrolytes and skeletal muscle for myopathy and dystrophin.

References

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