Letter regarding “Distal Limb Defects and Aplasia Cutis: Adams-Oliver Syndrome”

Laura Southgate, PhD

Author affiliations:

1Division of Genetics & Molecular Medicine, King’s College London, London, UK
2Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

Author contact information:

Address: Division of Genetics & Molecular Medicine, Faculty of Life Sciences & Medicine, King’s College London, Floor 8, Tower Wing, Guy’s Hospital, London SE1 9RT, UK
Tel: +44 7813829880; Fax: +44 2071882585; Email: laura.2.southgate@kcl.ac.uk

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To the Editor,

I read with interest the recent case report by Drs Renfree and Dell (1).

The specific limb and scalp defects observed in Adams-Oliver syndrome (AOS) cover a wide range of clinical severity such that the disorder is often not diagnosed on first presentation. Elucidating the underlying molecular mechanisms is therefore critical to our understanding of the manifestation and progression of this disorder, in turn providing an opportunity for improved patient diagnosis and clinical management.

The article stated that no gene has been identified for this disorder. On the contrary, there has been considerable progress in our understanding of the biological pathways important in this condition after the identification of six genes since 2011 (2). Of the genes reported to date, ARHGAP31 and DOCK6 are regulators of the Rho GTPases Cdc42 and Rac1, while RBPI, EOOGT, NOTCH and DLL4 are involved in the Notch signalling pathway. The mode of inheritance may be either autosomal dominant or autosomal recessive, although a number of cases have been shown to be caused by de novo mutation (3). Through assessment of specific clinical features, some genotype-phenotype correlations are starting to emerge, but these are limited by small sample size. Of note, autosomal recessive mutations in DOCK6 are associated with an increased risk of neurological and ophthalmological defects (4), and our recent findings indicate a higher proportion of cardiovascular defects in AOS patients harbouring autosomal dominant NOTCH1 mutations (5).

In conclusion, we and others have identified four autosomal dominant and two autosomal recessive genes, which highlight Rho dysregulation and aberrant Notch signalling as consistent risk factors in AOS pathogenesis. These genes account for ~50% of AOS cases, providing the option of genetic counselling and improved clinical care for a considerable proportion of patients affected with this condition, while also indicating there are likely to be a considerable number of genes yet to be found.
References


