

Many Term infants with Persistent Patency of the Ductus Arteriosus could be Trisomy 21 Mosaics

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ABSTRACT

We report findings from a term infant with persistent patency of the ductus arteriosus (PDA). His fetal tests had shown some ambiguity for trisomy 21. However, he did not show any of the frequently-seen phenotypic features associated with trisomy 21 *in utero* or after birth, and the postnatal karyotype was reported as normal. One of our team members decided to request for a repeat karyotype and he was then identified as a mosaic for this aneuploidy. These observations are potentially important because the proportion of affected cells could very well be a determinant of the phenotypic variability seen in infants with Down syndrome. Hence, mosaicism might need to be meticulously excluded in patients who are presented with only one or more phenotypic features associated with trisomy 21. In this report, we have briefly reviewed the need for evaluation in such infants; the diagnosis requires specific evaluation of *in-vitro* cultured blood lymphocytes from the patients, siblings, and parents for somatic and germinal trisomy 21 mosaicism. The mechanisms underlying the origin of trisomy 21 mosaicism are still unclear; embryonic meiotic errors such as nondisjunction and anaphase lag, and subsequent mitotic malsegregation may be responsible. Uniparental disomy needs investigation. In the absence of somatic recombination, postzygotic malsegregation in an originally unaffected, disomy 21 zygote could also be a cause. The incidence of this condition in the community might be higher than hitherto believed.

Keywords: Anaphase lag, Case report, Copy-number alteration, Fluorescence *in situ* hybridization, Germinal trisomy 21 mosaicism, High-grade mosaics, Infant, Meiotic errors, Mitotic malsegregation, Newborn, Neonate, Nondisjunction, Postzygotic malsegregation, Somatic trisomy 21 mosaicism.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Infants with trisomy 21 frequently have persistent patency of ductus arteriosus (PDA) and/or other cardiac defects.
- We present a term male infant who had a persistent PDA. He did not show the phenotypic features that are usually seen in infants with trisomy 21 and initial tests showed a normal karyotype. Repeat tests identified him as a mosaic.
- The diagnosis was confirmed using examination of *in vitro* cultured blood lymphocytes for somatic and germinal trisomy 21 mosaicism.
- This disorder might be more common in the general population than previously believed, and hence, appropriate investigations might have to be considered in more patients.

In this brief report, we present findings from a term infant with persistent PDA. He did not show the characteristic phenotypic features of trisomy 21 but turned out to have mosaicism for this karyotypic aneuploidy. The incidence of mosaicism could be higher than previously believed, and could very well be an important mechanism of the phenotypic variability seen in this condition.¹⁻⁵ Hence, mosaicism might need to be meticulously excluded in patients with a limited or an overall less-severe phenotype.^{5,6} Other than specific mutations in key genes, mosaicism could also be an important reason for the geographical variation in the cardiac manifestations of trisomy 21.⁷⁻¹³ The severity of somatic manifestations, the incidence of complications, and the overall prognosis may also be related to mosaicism.¹⁴⁻²¹

CASE DESCRIPTION

We evaluated plasma samples from a mother at 18 weeks' gestation for cell-free fetal DNA; there was a possibility of fetal aneuploidy in some samples but overall, the results were ambiguous. After

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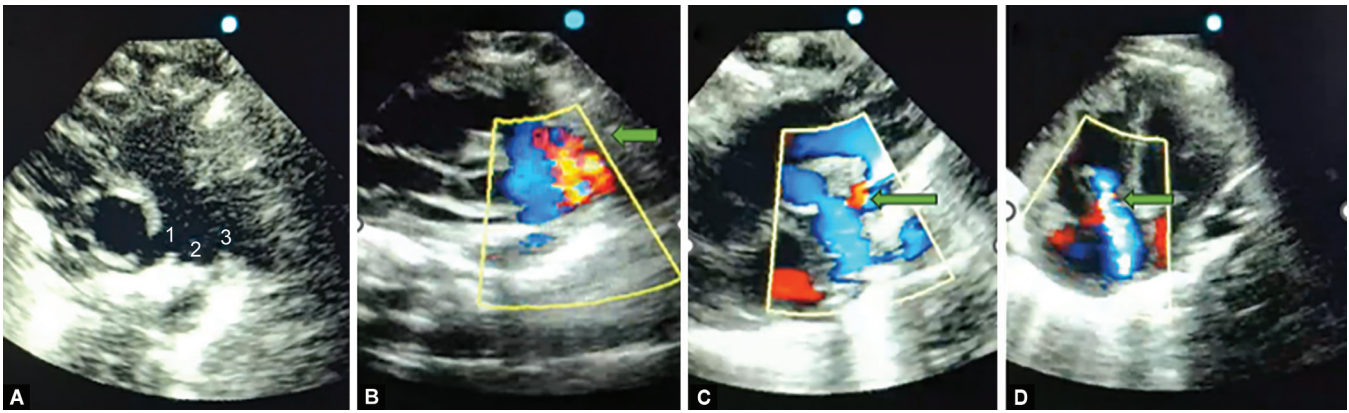
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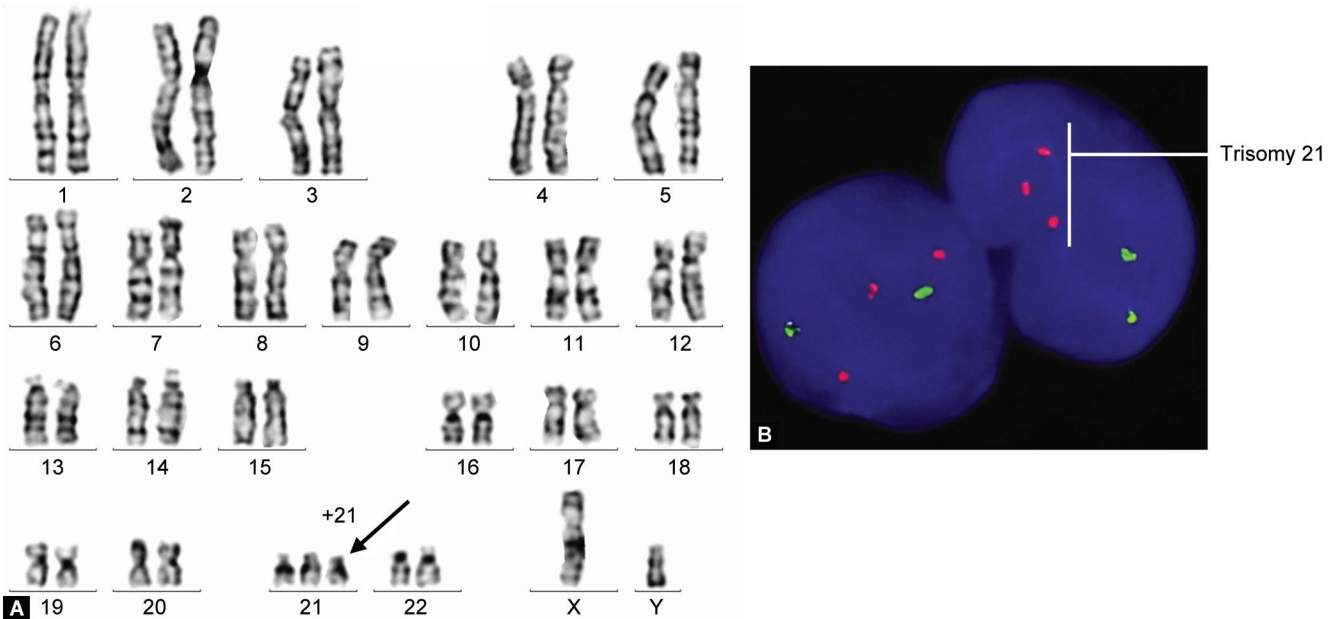
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delivery, the full-term male infant was noted to have a systolic murmur that was audible even on postnatal day 3. He did not show any of the frequently-seen phenotypic features associated with trisomy 21 on a detailed, careful physical examination performed by multiple care-providers, and the postnatal karyotype was reported



Figs 1A to D: Patent ductus arteriosus (PDA) in a full-term infant. (A) A ductal view showing the classical “three-legged stool appearance” of the PDA. The numerical labels in this photograph indicate (1) the right pulmonary artery, (2) the left pulmonary artery, and (3) the PDA; (B and C) PDA (red) at its junction with the aorta, in subcostal (B) and suprasternal (C) views; (D) A 4-chamber view showing a tricuspid regurgitation jet (blue) indicating pulmonary hypertension related to ductal patency



Figs 2A and B: (A): Noninvasive prenatal testing was performed to detect fetal aneuploidy in cell-free DNA in maternal plasma. Samples were analyzed on an Affymetrix microarray platform by parallel shotgun sequencing. Sequencing libraries were prepared from plasma DNA and sequenced to generate millions of short-sequence reads. These were mapped to the reference human genome, allowing determination of the chromosome of origin for each sequence. The number of mapped sequences originating from each chromosome was calculated and normalized. Aneuploidy was noted by comparing test samples to known normal reference samples, using a z-score approach; This figure shows a karyotype showing trisomy 21 due to nondisjunction of chromosome 21 in affected cells. This extra copy of chromosome 21 gives a total chromosome count of 47. Most mosaics show an abnormal karyotype in only 1–2 of the usual 10–15 tested cells. In India, we are also seeing a larger number of infants with Robertsonian translocation $t(14q;21q)$; not shown; (B) Fluorescence *in-situ* hybridization (FISH) can detect trisomy 21. Lymphocytes isolated from a peripheral blood (or bone marrow) sample and were cultured *ex-vivo*, and then smeared on glass slides. The slides were aged and then treated with pepsin to expose the nuclear chromatin in metaphase chromosomes. Fluorescently-labeled locus-specific DNA probes were used to target the long arm of chromosome 21 (21q22.13–q22.2 and 21q22.2–q22.3 regions). Before hybridization, the probes were heat-denatured to allow access to complementary chromosomal DNA. The denatured probes were applied to the slide and hybridization carried out at specific binding sites by overnight incubation at 37°C. Unbound probes were removed by washing and the nuclei were counterstained with DAPI. Fluorescence microscopy was used to visualize the labeled chromosomes 21. Unlike normal cells that show two homologs of chromosome 21, those with trisomy 21 show 3. A minimum of 10 metaphase spreads were examined and trisomy 21 was reported if ≥ 3 signals were seen in $\geq 10\%$ cells; This figure shows trisomy 21 in FISH analysis of interphase cells. The cells were hybridized with an orange chromosome 21-specific probe and a control green probe for chromosome 12. Cells with trisomy 21 showed 3 orange signals instead of the normal 2. Infants who are mosaics for trisomy 21 have some cells with 2 and others 3 due to postzygotic nondisjunction. Magnification: 400x

as normal. An echocardiogram on postnatal day 4 showed a patent “ductus arteriosus” with a significant left-to-right shunt (Fig. 1). Signs of congestive heart failure became evident at 4–5 weeks, and so the duct was surgically ligated at 6 weeks of postnatal age. The recovery was uneventful; the infant was discharged from the hospital 1 week later. As is evident in the above description, this clinical course was typical of an infant with a hemodynamically-significant PDA. However, in view of the prenatal ambiguity in the karyotype, one of our team members decided to request another evaluation of the karyotype at 2 weeks after birth; he was identified as a mosaic for trisomy 21 (Fig. 2).²²

BRIEF REVIEW

Current information suggests that 2–4% of all infants with trisomy 21 are karyotypic mosaics.^{7,23} We know that nearly 95% of all cases of Down syndrome result from chromosomal nondisjunction of chromosome 21 (47, XX, +21 or 47, XY, +21) at conception.^{2,24,25} The process of oogenesis is lengthy and involves meiotic arrest, which makes the ova more vulnerable to malsegregation of chromosomes than spermatogenesis.^{26,27} Increasing age of the ova can also promote the degradation of cellular proteins involved in spindle formation,^{28,29} sister chromatid cohesion,³⁰ and anaphase separation of sister chromatids in oocytes, which increases the risk of nondisjunction during meiosis.³¹ Such translocations are often familial, most frequently involving chromosomes 14 and 21.⁷ In 1% of all cases of Down syndrome, the extra chromosome 21 material originates from other rearrangements.³²

The etiopathogenesis of mosaicism is still unclear. Unlike infants with “complete” trisomy 21 who show the extra chromosome 21 in all cells, most mosaics show an abnormal karyotype in only 1–2 of the usual 10–15 tested cells (Fig. 1). In these “possibly positive” patients, the analysis is usually extended to 50 or more cells. The diagnosis of mosaicism may require examination of *in vitro* cultured blood lymphocytes from the patients, siblings, and parents for somatic and germinal trisomy 21 mosaicism.^{33,34} Currently, most mosaics who are being identified are possibly the ones with the “high-grade” condition^{35,36} but the sensitivity is likely to improve with advancement in methods of testing and as our threshold for requesting these tests improves.^{36,37}

The chromosomal abnormalities in mosaics do not appear to be unique.³⁸ Embryonic meiotic errors such as nondisjunction and anaphase lag, and subsequent mitotic malsegregation may be responsible just as in the majority of infants with Down syndrome.³⁹ Uniparental disomy needs investigation.⁴⁰ In the absence of somatic recombination, mosaicism could originate from postzygotic malsegregation in an originally unaffected, disomy 21 zygote.³⁶ Postfertilization formation of a Robertsonian translocation t(14q;21q) and an isochromosome is also now being recognized with increasing frequency.^{41–43}

Currently, the methodology of choice for detecting the number of chromosomes 21 is fluorescence *in situ* hybridization (FISH; Fig. 2).^{44–46} The sensitivity of these tests in conventional cytogenetic analysis can be enhanced by testing cultured blood lymphocytes; these tests may show trisomy 21 in 1 in 60 metaphase cells.³⁶ When combined with FISH analyses of interphase nuclei from uncultured blood cells, trisomy 21 may be seen in up to 10% cells.^{36,47} Similarly, trisomy 21 can also be identified in cells obtained in chorionic villus sampling/amniocentesis.⁴⁸

We also need efforts to identify trisomy 21 mosaics who might have alterations in systems other than the hematopoietic system.⁴⁹ Evaluation of mucosal cells obtained from buccal swabs, cultured skin fibroblasts, or even DNA from whole-skin biopsies can be helpful.⁵⁰ Copy-number alteration can be identified with sensitivity rates as high as 20% using next-generation sequencing (NGS) of whole-skin biopsy DNA.^{51–54}

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Authors AM, SS, PGS, and ASG provided data and wrote the manuscript; VS reviewed and made important and critical revisions.

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