Pediatric Neurology Part I: Chapter 40. Incontinentia pigmenti and hypomelanosis of Ito (Handbook of Clinical Neurology)

Christine Bodemer

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Incontinentia pigmenti (IP) is a rare X-linked dominant neurocutaneous disorder affecting ectodermal tissue: skin, eyes, central nervous system, hair, nails, and teeth. It is usually lethal for males in utero. The involved gene is NEMO, an essential component of the nuclear factor-kappa B (NF-κB) signaling pathway. Skin lesions are highly diagnostic, occurring in neonates, with a particular distribution on Blaschko lines. The severity of the disease is related to ocular and neurological impairment. The hallmark of ocular IP is retinal vasculopathy including peripheral retinal vascular nonperfusion, macular infarction and neovascularization, and preretinal neovascularization. CNS involvement consists of seizures, mental retardation, hemiparesis, spasticity, microcephaly, cerebellar ataxia, and coma. It often occurs in neonates. Some patients have persistent pharmacoresistant seizures throughout life. MRI findings consist essentially in: white-matter lesions; scattered cortical neuronal necrosis; multiple cerebral infarctions; cerebral atrophy, hypoplasia of the corpus callosum, encephalomalacia and neuronal heterotopia. A predominant role of vascular occlusive phenomena in small vessels is highly suspected. In fact several intricate mechanisms could be discussed: vascular, inflammatory, developmental mechanisms. Their role and predictive factors of IP CNS involvement in neonatal IP need to be better understood to identify effective innovative therapies. Hypomelanosis of Ito can occur in the neonate, infancy, or childhood, be isolated or diffuse, often following the Blaschko lines, and can fade in childhood or adulthood. It is due to reduced melanin in the epidermis. Eye, central nervous (mental retardation, epilepsy, language disabilities, motor system dysfunction, psychiatric symptoms including autism – with frequent cortical malformations including hemimegalencephaly and white matter involvement), and musculoskeletal systems can also be affected. Mosaicism with various chromosomal rearrangements has been reported.

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