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Short Report

Clinical reappraisal of SHORT syndrome with *PIK3R1* mutations: toward recommendation for molecular testing and management

Avila M., Dyment D.A., Sagen J.V., St-Onge J., Moog U., Chung B.H.Y., Mo S., Mansour S., Albanese A., Garcia S., Martin D.O., Lopez A.A., Claudi T., König R., White S.M., Sawyer S.L., Bernstein J.A., Slattery L., Jobling R.K., Yoon G., Curry C.J., Merrer M.L., Luyer B.L., Héron D., Mathieu-Dramard M., Bitoun P., Odent S., Amiel J., Kuentz P., Thevenon J., Laville M., Reznik Y., Fagour C., Nunes M.-L., Delesalle D., Manouvrier S., Lascols O., Huet F., Binquet C., Faivre L., Rivière J.-B., Vigouroux C., Njølstad P.R., Innes A.M., Thauvin-Robinet C. Clinical reappraisal of SHORT syndrome with *PIK3R1* mutations: toward recommendation for molecular testing and management.
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SHORT syndrome has historically been defined by its acronym: short stature (S), hyperextensibility of joints and/or inguinal hernia (H), ocular depression (O), Rieger abnormality (R) and teething delay (T). More recently several research groups have identified *PIK3R1* mutations as responsible for SHORT syndrome. Knowledge of the molecular etiology of SHORT syndrome has permitted a reassessment of the clinical phenotype. The detailed phenotypes of 32 individuals with SHORT syndrome and *PIK3R1* mutation, including eight newly ascertained individuals, were studied to fully define the syndrome and the indications for *PIK3R1* testing. The major features described in the SHORT acronym were not universally seen and only half (52%) had four or more of the classic features. The commonly observed clinical features of SHORT syndrome seen in the cohort included intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR) <10th percentile, postnatal growth restriction, lipoatrophy and the characteristic facial gestalt. Anterior chamber defects and insulin resistance or diabetes were also observed but were not as prevalent. The less specific, or minor features of SHORT syndrome include teething delay, thin wrinkled skin, speech delay, sensorineural deafness, hyperextensibility of joints and inguinal hernia. Given the high risk of diabetes mellitus, regular monitoring of glucose metabolism is warranted. An echocardiogram, ophthalmological and hearing assessments are also recommended.

Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

M. Avila[a,b*], D.A. Dyment[c*], J.V. Sagen[d,e*], J. St-Onge[a,f], U. Moog[g], B.H.Y. Chung[h], S. Mo[h], S. Mansour[i], A. Albanese[j], S. Garcia[k,l], D.O. Martin[m], A.A. Lopez[n], T. Claudi[o], R. König[p], S.M. White[q,r], S.L. Sawyer[c], J.A. Bernstein[s], L. Slattery[s], R.K. Jobling[t], G. Yoon[t], C.J. Curry[u], M.L. Merrer[v], B.L. Luyer[w], D. Héron[x], M. Mathieu-Dramard[y], P. Bitoun[z], S. Odent[aa,ab], J. Amiel[v], P. Kuentz[a], J. Thevenon[a,ac], M. Laville[ad,ae], Y. Reznik[af], C. Fagour[ag], M.-L. Nunes[ag], D. Delesalle[ah], S. Manouvrier[ai], O. Lascols[aj,ak,al,am], F. Huet[a,b], C. Binquet[an], L. Faivre[a,ac], J.-B. Rivière[a,f], C. Vigouroux[aj,ak,al,am], P.R. Njølstad[ao], A.M. Innes[ap,aq**] and C. Thauvin-Robinet[a,ac**]**

[a]EA4271 "Génétique des Anomalies du Développement" (GAD), Université de Bourgogne, Dijon, France, [b]Service de Pédiatrie 1, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Dijon, Dijon, France, [c]Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada, [d]Hormone Laboratory, Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway, [e]KJ Jebsen Center for Diabetes Research, Department of Clinical Science, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, [f]CHU Dijon, Laboratoire de Génétique Moléculaire, Dijon, France, [g]Institute of Human Genetics, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany, [h]Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, The University of Hong Kong – Shenzhen

Hospital, Shenzhen, China, [i]SW Thames Regional Genetics Service, St. George's Hospital Medical School, London, SW17 0RE, UK, [j]Paediatric Endocrine Unit, St George's Hospital, London, UK, [k]Institute of Medical and Molecular Genetics (INGEMM), La Paz University Hospital, Madrid, Spain, [l]Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Unit 753, Centro de Investigacion Biomedica en Red de Enfermedades Raras (CIBERER), Madrid, Spain, [m]Department of Ophthalmology, Hospital Central de la Cruz Roja San Jose y Santa Adela, Madrid, Spain, [n]Puerta de Hierro, University Hospital, Madrid, Spain, [o]Department of Medicine, Bodø, Norway, [p]Department of Human Genetics, University of Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany, [q]Victorian Clinical genetics Services, Murdoch Childrens Research institute, Parkville, Australia, [r]Department of Paediatrics, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia, [s]Division of Medical Genetics, Department of Pediatrics, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA, [t]Division of Clinical and Metabolic Genetics, The Hospital for Sick Children, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada, [u]Genetic Medicine/ University of California, San Francisco, CA, USA, [v]Département de Génétique, Hôpital Necker Enfants Malades, Paris, France, [w]Service de Pédiatrie, CH Le Havre, Le Havre, France, [x]Département de Génétique et Centre de Référence "Déficiences intellectuelles de causes rares", Paris, France, [y]Service de Génétique clinique, Amiens, France, [z]Service de Pédiatrie, Bondy, France, [aa]Service de Génétique clinique, Rennes, France, [ab]UMR CNRS 6290 IGDR, Universitè Rennes, Rennes, France, [ac]Centre de Génétique et Centre de Référence Anomalies du Développement et Syndromes Malformatifs de l'interrégion Est, FHU-TRANSLAD, Dijon, France, [ad]Département d'Endocrinologie, Diabétologie et Nutrition, Hospices Civils de Lyon, Centre Hospitalier Lyon-Sud, Pierre-Bénite, France, [ae]Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale Unité 1060, Centre Européen pour la nutrition et la Santé, Centre de Recherche en Nutrition Humaine Rhône-Alpes, Université Claude Bernard Lyon, Pierre-Bénite, France, [af]Service d'Endocrinologie, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Côte-de-Nacre, Caen, France, [ag]Département d'Endocrinologie, Hôpital Haut-Lévêque, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Bordeaux, Pessac, France, [ah]Service de pédiatrie, CH de Valencienne, Valencienne, France, [ai]Centre de Référence CLAD NdF – Service de génétique clinique Guy Fontaine, CHRU de Lille – Hôpital Jeanne de Flandre, Lille, France, [aj]INSERM, UMR_S938, Centre de Recherche Saint-Antoine, Paris, France, [ak]UPMC Univ Paris 06, Paris, France, [al]ICAN, Institute of Cardiometabolism And Nutrition, Groupe Hospitalier Universitaire La Pitié-Salpêtrière, Paris, France, [am]AP-HP, Hôpital Saint-Antoine, Laboratoire Commun de Biologie et Génétique Moléculaires, Paris, France, [an]Centre d'Investigation Clinique-Epidémiologique Clinique/essais cliniques du CHU de Dijon, Dijon, France, [ao]Department of Pediatrics, Haukeland, University Hospital, Bergen, Norway, [ap]Department of Medical Genetics, and [aq]Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute for Child and Maternal Health, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada

*These authors contributed equally to this work.

**These authors contributed equally to this work and are co-senior authors.

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Corresponding authors: Magali Avila, MD, Service de médecined pédiatrique, Hôpital Jean Minjoz, CHRU Besançon, Bd Alexandre Flemming, 25000 Besançon, France.
Tel: +33 (0)3 80 29 53 13;
fax: +33 (0)3 81 21 80 71;
e-mail: mavila@chu-besancon.fr
and
Christel Thauvin-Robinet, MD, PhD, Centre de Génétique, Hôpital d'Enfants, 10Bd du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny, 21034 Dijon Cedex, France.
Tel: +33 (0)3 80 29 53 13;
fax: +33 (0)3 80 29 32 66;
e-mail: christel.thauvin@chu-dijon.fr

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SHORT syndrome (MIM 269880) has been clinically defined by its acronym: Short stature, Hyperextensibility of joints or inguinal Hernia or both, Ocular depression, Rieger abnormality and Teething delay (1). Additional clinical features include intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR), facial dysmorphism (triangular face, prominent forehead, deep-set eyes, hypoplastic or thin alae nasi, mild midface hypoplasia, small chin, large low-set ears, thin vermillion, border and downturned mouth) with wrinkled and thin skin that accentuates a progeroid appearance. The identification of the gene responsible for SHORT syndrome has highlighted that lipodystrophy and insulin resistance are predominant signs of the condition (2–4). Some authors have reported similar features without the label of SHORT syndrome but in retrospect these individuals had the same condition (5, 6). The differential diagnoses for SHORT syndrome include several recognizable syndromes with growth deficiency and similar facial appearance such as Russel Silver (MIM180860) or Floating Harbor syndrome (MIM136140). In addition mutations that involve *PITX2* (MIM601542), *FOXC1* (MIM601090) or *BMP4* (MIM112262) can been seen in patients with anterior chamber defects of the eye.

Autosomal dominant inheritance has been confirmed by the identification of heterozygous mutations in *PIK3R1* (MIM171833) as the cause of SHORT syndrome (2–4). A total of seven different mutations were reported in 24 individuals with SHORT syndrome, and highlighted a recurrent substitution (p.Arg649Trp) (7, 8). *PIK3R1* codes for the regulatory subunits of the phosphatidyl inositol-3 kinase of class IA (PI3K) and is involved in activation of the AKT/mTOR pathway to ensure proper growth and cell proliferation (9, 10). Mutations are located in a region that encodes the src-homology 2 (SH2) domains of PIK3R1 protein, domains that are present in the three known isoforms of the protein (p85α, p55α and p50α; Fig. S1). The SH2 domains play a role in the regulatory activity of

the PI3K and the i-SH2 domain is known to perform a link with the ABD domain of the catalytic subunit of PI3K (p110α) allowing the formation of a dimer (9, 10). Therefore mutations reported to date are located within i-SH2 and c-SH2 domains and probably impact the regulatory activity of PIK3R1. *PIK3R1* mutations in SHORT syndrome appear to disrupt the insulin signaling pathway and thereby predispose to insulin resistance and diabetes. Downstream effects appear to be mediated by lower levels of phosphorylation of proteins in the AKT and mTOR signaling pathway (2–4).

To characterize the core clinical features of SHORT syndrome, we present eight unpublished patients in addition to the previously reported patients with confirmed *PIK3R1* mutations. We highlight the clinical features that should prompt consideration of SHORT syndrome as a potential diagnosis and that can serve as indications for further molecular testing of *PIK3R1*. We also suggest recommendations for medical management.

Patients and methods

Detailed phenotypes of eight newly ascertained individuals and the 24 previously reported SHORT syndrome patients with causal *PIK3R1* mutation (2–4, 7, 8) were collected, with particular emphasis on the features of the acronym, facial dysmorphism and lipodystrophy (Table 1). Clinical and biological metabolic data were also collected (Tables S1 and S2).

Results

Thirty-two SHORT individuals with *PIK3R1* mutations from 24 families were included in the evaluation (Table 1; Fig. 1). There were 18 males and 14 females. Mean age at last follow-up was 21 years of age. The eight newly ascertained patients included four females and four males. Two cases presented with a family history of SHORT syndrome. Six patients of the newly identified patients had the recurrent substitution, p.Arg649Trp, and two patients (father and son) had a novel mutation that was the most distal of the *PIK3R1* mutations.

The features of the SHORT syndrome acronym varied in their frequency: 11 of 21 cases (52%) presented at least four of five signs of this acronym. Short stature was described for 25 of 31 cases and 22 of 28 cases presented with height below −3 standard deviation (SD). Deep-set eyes (ocular depression; 27/27 cases) and teething delay (20/20 cases) were constant but hyperextensibility of joints or inguinal hernia (10/29 cases) and Rieger abnormality (13/30 cases) appeared less commonly. In cases without Rieger abnormality, some patients presented with other abnormalities of the anterior chamber of eye (5/16 cases). In addition, several cases presented with hyperopia, astigmatism or myopia (12/24 cases). The facial gestalt was remarkably consistent (32/32 cases) (Fig. 1; Table 1), including progeroid appearance (27/31 cases), triangular face (31/31 cases), a prominent forehead (31/32 cases), deep set eyes (27/27 cases), thin and hypoplastic alae nasi (29/30 cases), mild midface hypoplasia (25/30 cases), small chin (28/32 cases), large

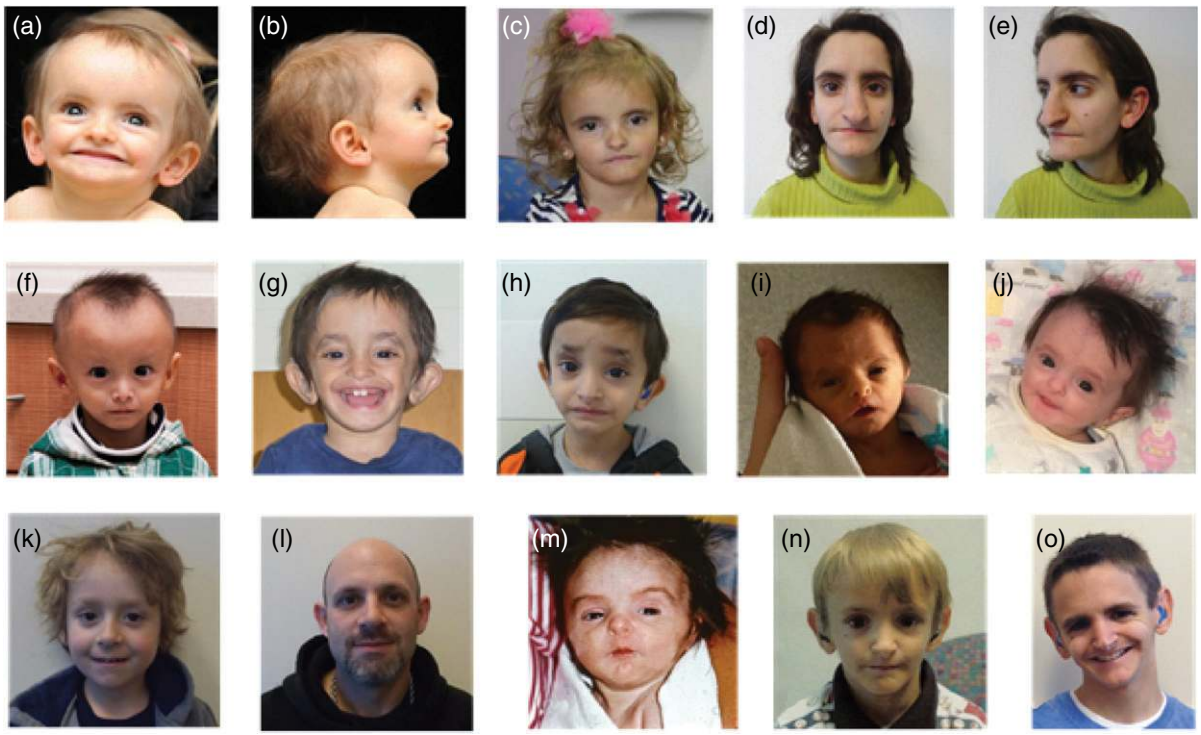

Fig. 1. Pictures of new cases of SHORT syndrome (a–c: patient 1; d–e: patient 2; f: patient 3; g–h: patient 5; i–j: patient 6; k: patient 7 with mild facial phenotype; l: patient 8, father of patient 7 also showing mild facial phenotype), and unpublished images of a SHORT patient previously reported (m–o: P4 of Dyment et al. 3) showing typical facial gestalt.

Table 1. Features of SHORT patients.

	N = 32[a]
IUGR	22/26
IUGR ≤ 3rd percentile	19/25
BMI ≤ 3rd percentile	22/29
SHORT acronym signs	
S (short stature) (< −2 SD)	25/31
Height < −3 SD	22/28
Hyperextensibility of joints/inguinal Hernia	10/29
O (ocular depression)	27/27
R (Rieger abnormality)	13/30
T (Teething delay)	20/20
Number of acronym signs ≥ 4/5	11/21
Facial dysmorphism	32/32
Triangular face	31/31
Prominent forehead	31/32
Hypoplastic or thin alea nasi	29/30
Mild midface hypoplasia	25/30
Small chin or micrognatia	28/32
Large low-set ears	27/30
Thin lip and downturned mouth	29/31
Progeroid face	27/31
Other signs	
Refractive errors	12/24
Anterior chamber of eye abnormalities (without Rieger anomaly)	5/16
Lipoatrophy	26/29
Thin, wrinkled skin and readily visible veins	19/26
Absence of hypertriglyceridemia	18/18
Insulin resistance	13/17
Diabetes (≥15 years)	9/14
Ovarian cysts	5/5
Intellectual deficiency	3/26[b]
Speech delay	14/27

BMI, body mass index; IUGR, intrauterine growth restriction; SHORT, short stature (S), hyperextensibility of joints and/or inguinal hernia (H), ocular depression (O), Rieger abnormality (R) and teething delay (T).

[a]This is comprised of 18 males and 14 females and includes 8 new SHORT patients (4 females and 4 males) from France, Spain, China, Australia, USA and Canada with the 24 previously reported.

[b]One of whom had a history of severe prematurity and cerebral hemorrhage [P1 (7); P9 (2)]. The intellectual disability reported as mild in the two others should be interpreted with caution in the absence of detailed neurocognitive testing.

Table 2. Clinical indications for *PIK3R1* molecular testing: shows the major features that are commonly seen or are specific to the syndrome as well as the minor features that are less specific and/or less frequent in SHORT syndrome

Clinical indications for *PIK3R1* molecular testing
Major features
IUGR < 10th per
Post natal growth retardation (height < −2 SD)
Lipoatrophy with normal triglyceride assay
Anterior chamber abnormality (including Rieger abnormality)
Facial gestalt
Insulin resistance or diabetes
Minor features
Teething delay
Thin wrinkled skin with readily visible veins
Speech delay
Hyperextensibility of joints
Inguinal hernia
Hyperopia

IUGR, intrauterine growth restriction; SD, standard deviation.

Table 3. Recommendations of care monitoring at diagnosis and during follow-up

At diagnosis	Follow-up
Ophthalmological examination	Fasting glucose and insulin, HBA1c every year
Screening for hearing loss	OGTT every 5 years if no diabetes occurred
Fasting glucose and insulin	In women, gynecological ultrasound to search polycystic ovary
+/−OGTT (according to age)	Screening for hearing loss
Cardiac ultrasound	Monitor growth
Abdominal ultrasound (occasional renal anomalies)	Follow developmental milestones, in particular speech and language
Lipid blood test (triglyceride)	

HBA1c, hemoglobin A1c; OGTT, oral glucose tolerance test.

low-set ears (27/30 cases), thin lip and downturned mouth (29/31 cases). In 19 of 26 cases, thin, wrinkled skin and readily visible veins were also described. The late IUGR was also frequent (22/26 cases), leading to low birth weight that was frequently less than the third percentile (19/25 cases).

Clinical lipoatrophy, generalized or partial (8/29 cases), was present in most (26/29 cases) with body mass index (BMI) commonly less than the third centile (22/29 cases). Patients frequently presented with insulin resistance (13/17 cases), with a highly variable age at diagnosis ranging from 7 to 49 years. After 15 years of age, 9 of 14 cases had insulin resistant diabetes, with high insulin requirements (>1.5 U/kg/d). In patients without diabetes, insulin resistance was frequent (4/8 cases), as assessed by increased insulinemia. Gynecological investigations revealed polycystic ovary syndrome in all tested postpubertal women (5/5 cases among the 9 postpubertal women).

Most patients had normal educational achievements (23/26 cases) but there were three cases reported as having cognitive delay: one of whom had a history of severe prematurity and cerebral hemorrhage [P1 (7); P9 (2)]. Other than this patient, intellectual disability was reported as mild in the two others, but this data should be interpreted with caution in the absence of detailed neurocognitive testing. Approximately half of the patients presented with a history of mild speech delay (14/27 cases).

The patients presented with other features: three patients had cardiac abnormalities (2/3 pulmonary stenosis and 1/3 ventricular septal defect) (3, 7, 8). Five patients also presented with sensorineural deafness [new patients 1, 2 and 7; (3)] (Table S1).

The 32 cases from 24 families presented with 9 different mutations, highlighting a mutational hotspot in 16 families and 23 cases (c.1945C>T; p.Arg649Trp). All mutations were in the two SH2 domains (Fig. S1). Otherwise, there was no obvious genotype–phenotype correlation within this group. However, it was noted that the father and son with the substitution at the most distal position of the protein p.Gly665Ser had a less striking facial appearance than others in the cohort (Fig. 1K and L) and the proband was sequenced as part of a study to identify novel genes in anterior chamber defects and a diagnosis of SHORT syndrome was not initially considered.

Discussion

This study represents a meta-analysis of the available clinical data in SHORT syndrome, in the context of the *PIK3R1* causative gene discovery. The results showed that the historically defining features of the acronym were seen in less than half of patients (i.e. hyperextensibilty of joints/inguinal hernia and Rieger anomaly), and that only 52% of patients presented with at least four of five signs of the SHORT acronym (Table 1). The reassessment also showed that three cardinal clinical features of the condition are absent from the acronym, including subcutaneous lipoatrophy, insulin resistance and the facial gestalt (not only ocular depression). The lipoatrophy is often generalized, with a BMI frequently less than the third percentile. Insulin resistance was seen in the majority of those investigated (13/17) with a wide range in age of onset with 7 years being the earliest. Facial dysmorphism appears more pronounced with age, with a progeroid aspect accentuated by a lack of facial fat and by thin and wrinkled skin (Fig. 1): a triangular appearance to the face, broad forehead, deep-set eyes, and a nose with thin nasal alae, and a low-hanging columella, thin lip and down-turned mouth. The chin can be dimpled and ears are prominent and low-set.

We also describe the natural history of the syndrome to establish recommendations for medical follow-up in individuals with SHORT syndrome (Table 3). In infancy, a cardiac assessment would be warranted given the potential of heart malformation (particularly pulmonary stenosis), as well as hearing loss screening because of possible sensorineural hearing loss in first year of life. An ophthalmological assessment would also be important given the risk of Rieger abnormality and possible glaucoma. In childhood, assessment of height and developmental milestones, in particular language development should be monitored. Because of the importance of PIK3R1 in insulin signaling and the frequent insulin resistance seen in individuals with SHORT syndrome, the occurrence of diabetes mellitus should be screened for by annual HbA1c, fasting glucose and an insulin level. When these investigations appear normal, an oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) with measurement of glucose and insulin, to screen for glucose intolerance and insulin resistance, should be considered in order to implement dietary recommendations and treatment. SHORT patients present also with short stature with an adult height in males ranging between 153.7 and 167 cm and in females between 141 and 160 cm (2–4). Indeed, the PI3K/Akt pathway affects the signaling pathway of the insulin receptor but also other receptors such as insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF1) receptor (11), explaining short stature, IUGR and deafness. Because GH treatment could aggravate pre-existing insulin resistance and accelerate the onset of diabetes mellitus, its use in patients with SHORT syndrome should be evaluated with caution.

In conclusion, the identification of mutations in *PIK3R1* as responsible for SHORT syndrome has permitted a re-evaluation of the SHORT syndrome phenotype. These results highlight the importance of the IUGR, lipoatrophy, facial gestalt and insulin resistance/diabetes as cardinal features not captured in the acronym. While we do not advocate a change in the syndrome name, in part to avoid confusion in the literature, we stress the importance of fully characterizing the clinical aspects of SHORT syndrome so that the clinician can recognize and initiate molecular testing. Given knowledge of the pathway, SHORT syndrome can be grouped with other syndromes because of aberrant insulin signaling (for example Donohue syndrome). Other mutations affecting this same pathway may lead to the delineation of additional phenotypes with overlapping clinical features to SHORT syndrome (12).

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web-site.

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