

# Functional Characterization of Vasopressin Receptor 2 Mutations Causing Partial and Complete Congenital Nephrogenic Diabetes Insipidus in Thai Families

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## Key Words

Mutation analysis · AVPR2 · G-protein · Polyuria

## Abstract

**Background:** AVPR2 mutations cause nephrogenic diabetes insipidus (NDI); 211 AVPR2 mutations have been described, but only 7 are described causing partial NDI. **Methods:** Two unrelated Thai boys had polyuria and polydipsia in infancy but had normal electrolytes and serum osmolality at 2 years of age. Patient 1 could not concentrate his urine in response to water deprivation or 1-desamino-8-D-arginine vasopressin (DDAVP); patient 2 could concentrate to ~600 mosm/l. The patients' AVPR2 genes were sequenced and the identified mutations were re-created in AVPR2 cDNA expression vectors. AVPR2 activities were measured by stimulating transfected HEK293T cells with arginine vasopressin (AVP) or DDAVP, and assessing the resulting cAMP production by the activation of a luciferase reporter. **Results:** Patient 1 carried the previously described missense mutation R181C; patient 2 carried the novel missense mutation M311V. When transiently transfected into HEK293T cells,  $6.8 \times 10^{-12}$  M AVP induced the half-maximal response (EC<sub>50</sub>) of the wild-type, whereas the EC<sub>50</sub> value for R181C was  $5.9 \times 10^{-9}$  M and for

M311V was  $2.6 \times 10^{-10}$  M. Responses to DDAVP were qualitatively similar but required 10-fold higher concentrations. **Conclusion:** The novel AVPR2 mutation M311V retains partial activity and results in a milder form of NDI.

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Nephrogenic diabetes insipidus (NDI), wherein renal collecting ducts cannot concentrate urine in response to arginine vasopressin (AVP), can be inherited or acquired. NDI is characterized by vomiting, anorexia, failure to thrive, fever and constipation, usually within the first year of life [1]. About 90% of NDI is X-linked (XNDI) (OMIM 304800) [2], caused by loss-of-function mutations in the AVPR2 gene on chromosome Xq28 [3]. About 10% of NDI patients have autosomal-recessive mutations in the gene for aquaporin 2 (AQP2) [4] (OMIM 125800); a very rare autosomal-dominant form has also been reported [5]. AVPR2 encodes the G protein-coupled, seven-transmembrane arginine vasopressin receptor 2 (AVPR2) consisting of 371 amino acids. Vasopressin binds to AVPR2 on the basolateral membrane of principal cells in renal collecting ducts, which then stimulates adenylyl cyclase to produce cAMP and activate protein kinase A.

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The resulting protein phosphorylation translocates AQP2 water channels from an intracellular reservoir to the apical membrane. This mechanism is essential for reabsorption of water from the collecting ducts to concentrate the urine [5].

At least 211 different mutations in *AVPR2* causing NDI have been described [6]. Of these, only 7 mutations causing partial NDI have been previously reported [7–13]. Most *AVPR2* mutations are missense mutations that disrupt receptor function at various levels, such as intracellular receptor retention, defects in ligand binding or defects in G protein coupling and activation [14]. Rare gain-of-function mutations in *AVPR2* cause the nephrogenic syndrome of inappropriate antidiuresis (OMIM 300539) [15].

## Case Reports

### Patient 1

A 2-year-old Thai boy was referred for polydipsia, polyuria, frequent vomiting and recurrent fever since infancy. Prenatal history was unremarkable; birth weight was 3,455 g. He was the only child of healthy, nonconsanguineous parents. His 70-year-old maternal grandfather had a history of polydipsia and polyuria since infancy, but had not sought medical attention. His mother had no polydipsia and polyuria. Physical examination was unremarkable; height was 91 cm (75th percentile) and weight was 12 kg (25th–50th percentile). Initial laboratory evaluation included serum Na 143 mmol/l, K 3.7 mmol/l, Ca 2.5 mmol/l, blood urea nitrogen of 2.5 mmol/l, and creatinine of 35.4  $\mu$ mol/l. Serum and urine osmolalities were 300 and 54 mosm/l, respectively. After 4 h of water deprivation, urine volume did not decrease significantly, and serum osmolality (306 mosm/l) and Na (148 mmol/l) rose despite a low urinary osmolality (59 mosm/l), hence the test was stopped. Urine osmolality did not increase after administration of nasal 1-desamino-8-D-arginine vasopressin (DDAVP) at the end of water deprivation (table 1). Urinary tract ultrasonography was normal. Treatment with hydrochlorothiazide (2 mg/kg/day) improved his polyuria from 3.1–5.5 to 2.7–3.5 liters/m<sup>2</sup>/day, although nocturnal enuresis persisted. No clinical dehydration was observed during a 1-year follow-up. His serum creatinine and electrolytes remained normal, and neurodevelopmental status remained appropriate for age.

### Patient 2

A 2.5-year-old Thai boy was referred for polydipsia and polyuria since infancy. None of his family members had polydipsia and polyuria. Physical examination was unremarkable; height was 88.5 cm (25th percentile) and weight was 12.9 kg (50th percentile). Initial investigation included Na 140 mmol/l, K 4 mmol/l, Ca 2.45 mmol/l, blood urea nitrogen 2.86 mmol/l, and creatinine 44.2  $\mu$ mol/l. Serum and urine osmolalities were 287 and 75 mosm/l, respectively. Water deprivation for 8 h showed elevated serum osmolality (299 mosm/l), submaximally concentrated urine (634 mosm/l) and no increase in urine osmolality after administration of DDAVP (table 1). Urinary tract ultraso-

**Table 1.** Results of water deprivation tests

	Patient 1	Patient 2
<i>AVPR2</i> mutation	R181C	M311V
Baseline		
Serum sodium, mmol/l	136	140
Serum osmolality, mosm/l	294	287
Urine osmolality, mosm/l	54	75
After water deprivation		
Serum sodium, mmol/l	148	143
Serum osmolality, mosm/l	306	299
Urine osmolality, mosm/l	59	634
After DDAVP, 0.025 $\mu$ g/kg, subcutaneous		
Urine osmolality, mosm/l	70	593

Fluids were withheld after 8 a.m.; body weight and serum and urine sodium and osmolality were measured hourly. DDAVP was given when weight fell by 5% or serum osmolality exceeded 300 mosm/l.

nography was normal. Treatment with hydrochlorothiazide (2 mg/kg/day) decreased 24-hour urine volumes from 3.9–6.3 to 2.9–3.0 liters/m<sup>2</sup>/day. At follow-up, the patient had appropriate growth and developmental milestones with normal serum electrolytes.

## Materials and Methods

### DNA Sequencing

With informed consent, leukocyte genomic DNA was extracted and the three exons of the *AVPR2* gene were amplified by polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Exon 1 was amplified with forward primer 5'-TCTATAAGGGCTCCAGTCCA-3' and reverse primer 5'-CTCATGCAGTCCAGAAGGAA-3' at 56 C; and exons 2 and 3 were amplified with forward primer 5'-TGGGGTGTGT-ATCCCTCATA-3' and reverse primer 5'-TACAGCTGGGGAT-GTGGAGA-3' at 63 C. We used 100 ng of genomic DNA, PCR buffer (Promega, Madison, Wisc., USA), 1.5 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub>, 0.2 mM dNTPs, 0.2  $\mu$ M of each primer and 0.5 U Taq DNA polymerase (Promega) in a volume of 20  $\mu$ l. The sizes of the PCR products were confirmed by electrophoresis in 1.5% agarose gel. The PCR products were treated with exonuclease I and shrimp alkaline phosphatase (ExoSAP-IT, USP Corporation, Cleveland, Ohio, USA), and sequenced commercially (Macrogen Inc., Seoul, Korea). Sequence data were analyzed using Sequencher (version 4.2; Gene Codes Corporation, Ann Arbor, Mich., USA).

### Construction of *AVPR2* Expression Vectors

The R181C mutant was recreated in the human *AVPR2* cDNA bearing a *myc* tag at its NH<sub>2</sub> end and cloned in pcDNA3.1 (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, Calif., USA) [16] by PCR-based, site-directed mutagenesis using the primers 5'-CATCTTCGCCAGTGC-AACGTGGAAGG-3' and 5'-CCTTCCACGTTGCACTGGGC-

GAAGATG-3'. The M311V mutant was created similarly using 5'-CCTTTGTGCTACTCGTGTGCTGGCCAGC-3' and 5'-GCTGGCCAGCAACACGAGTAGCACAAAGG-3'. The methylated parental wild-type cDNA was digested with 10U *DpnI* at 37°C for 180 min, and the remaining unmethylated mutagenized cDNA plasmid was used to transform *Escherichia coli* DH5 $\alpha$  cells. The mutagenized *AVPR2* cDNAs were verified by sequencing.

#### Cell Culture and Transient Transfection

HEK293T cells were grown in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DMEM) supplemented with 10% fetal calf serum and antibiotics at 37°C in a humidified 5% CO<sub>2</sub> incubator. Cells were divided into 6-well plates (Falcon 3046, BD Biosciences, Lincoln Park, N.J., USA) 24 h before transfection at ~50% confluence using Effectene (Qiagen, Valencia, Calif., USA). Each well received 400 ng of plasmid DNA and 50 ng of a cAMP-responsive luciferase reporter plasmid (pCREluc) containing 16 copies of the consensus cAMP response element [17]. To control for transfection efficiency, cells were cotransfected with 5 ng of *Renilla* luciferase reporter plasmid (pRL-CMV) (Promega) per well.

#### AVP and DDAVP Stimulation and Dual Luciferase Assay

Cells were split 24 h after transfection into 96-well plates and incubated overnight. After washing in DMEM with 0.1 mg/ml bovine serum albumin, cells were incubated in the fresh medium containing 0.25 mM isobutylmethylxanthine, 0–10<sup>-5</sup> M AVP (Sigma, St. Louis, Mo., USA), 0–10<sup>-7</sup> M DDAVP (Sigma) or 1 mM 8Br-cAMP for 6 h at 37°C in 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. Cells were lysed and assayed using the Dual Luciferase Reporter Assay System (Promega). Luciferase activity was normalized to *Renilla* luciferase activity and the results were expressed as relative luciferase activity. The sigmoid concentration-response curve and the calculation of its 50% effective concentration (EC<sub>50</sub>) were analyzed using PRISM 3.02 (GraphPad Software, Inc., San Diego, Calif., USA). Statistical significance was determined by an unpaired t test.

## Results

### Mutation Analysis

Both patients were seen at 2 years of age with polydipsia and polyuria. At the end of their water deprivation tests, both had serum hyperosmolality with dilute urine and did not respond to DDAVP, suggesting nephrogenic diabetes insipidus. Sequencing of *AVPR2* showed that patient 1 had the mutation 1132C>T (NCBI reference sequence NC\_000023), changing arginine 181 to cysteine (R181C) (fig. 1a). Patient 2 had the mutation 1628A>G changing methionine 311 to valine (M311V) (fig. 1b). This novel missense alteration was not detected in 100 unaffected control Thai chromosomes (data not shown).

### Activities of the *AVPR2* Mutants

Binding of AVP or DDAVP to *AVPR2* elicits production of intracellular cAMP. To evaluate the activities of

the *AVPR2* mutants, we expressed the wild-type and mutant *AVPR2* in HEK293T cells and assessed production of cAMP in response to AVP by measuring the activity of a cAMP-dependent luciferase reporter fused to 16 copies of the consensus cAMP response element. In response to varying concentrations of AVP, the half-maximal response (EC<sub>50</sub>) of the wild-type *AVPR2* was 6.8 × 10<sup>-12</sup> M; by contrast the R181C mutant required an 860-fold higher concentration of AVP (5.9 × 10<sup>-9</sup> M) (p < 0.001), and of the M311V mutant required a 40-fold higher concentration of AVP (2.6 × 10<sup>-10</sup> M) (p < 0.03) (fig. 1c).

Although neither of our patients responded to DDAVP after water deprivation, some patients with partial NDI have been treated with high doses of DDAVP [13], and some *AVPR2* mutants respond differently to DDAVP than they do to AVP [18–20]. Therefore, we also characterized the responses of the *AVPR2* mutants to DDAVP (fig. 1d). The EC<sub>50</sub> of the wild-type *AVPR2* was 6 × 10<sup>-11</sup> M DDAVP, a concentration about 9-fold higher than the EC<sub>50</sub> for AVP. This is consistent with other studies showing about a 10-fold difference in the potency of these two agents [21, 22]. The EC<sub>50</sub> of R181C and M311V could not be calculated for DDAVP as a maximum response could not be obtained. Nevertheless, AVP and DDAVP yielded qualitatively similar dose-response curves, showing about a 10-fold higher potency for AVP with all three forms of *AVPR2*.

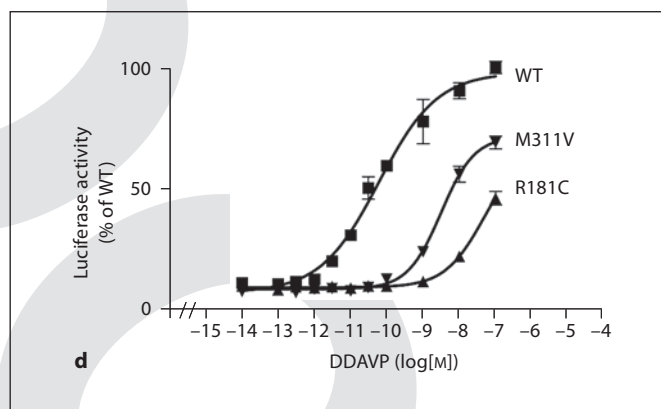
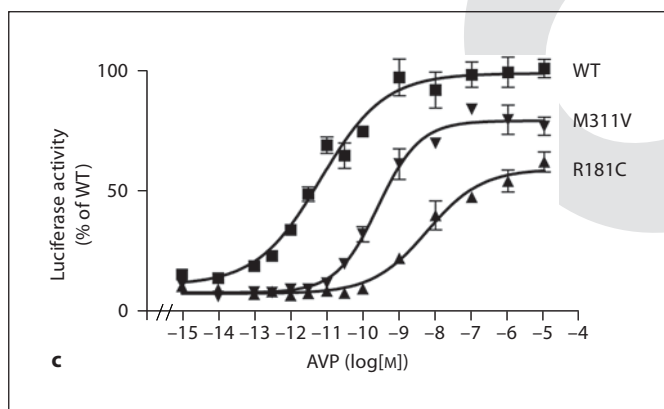
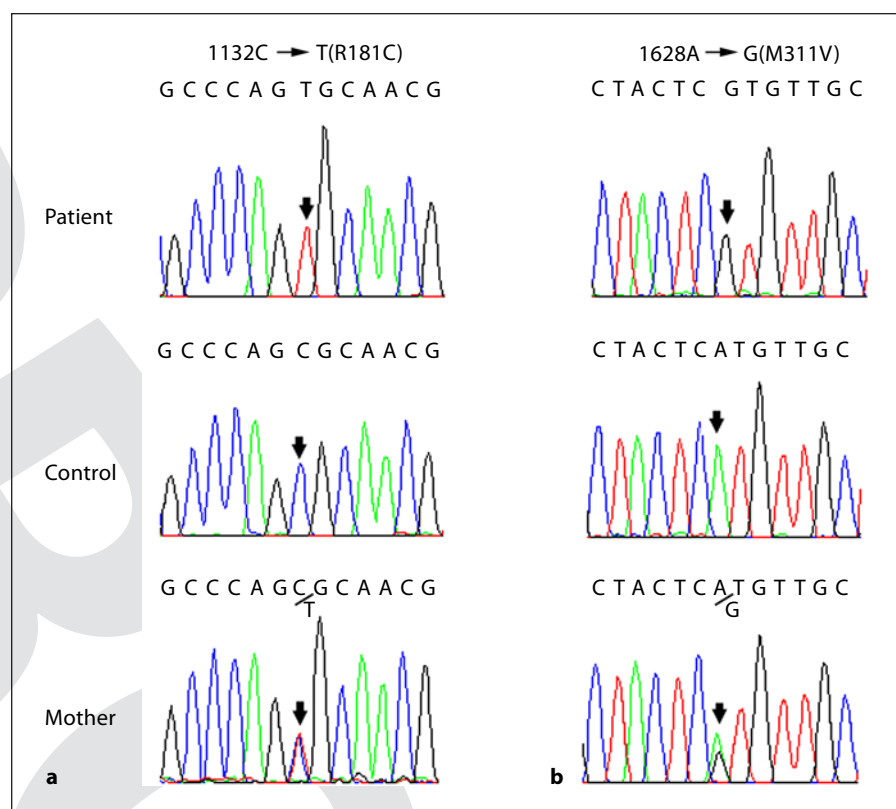
## Discussion

Two unrelated Thai boys had XNDI caused by hemizygous missense mutations in the *AVPR2* gene; these mutations reduced AVP-induced cAMP production in transiently transfected HEK293T cells. This assay is highly sensitive for assessing the effects of *AVPR2* mutations; Western blotting, indirect immunofluorescence, and saturation experiments are less reliable [23].

Previous work showed that R181C is properly targeted to the plasma membrane, but had dramatically reduced vasopressin-binding capacity, elicited reduced amounts of cAMP and resulted in a 1,000-fold increased EC<sub>50</sub> for AVP [24]. Consistent with this, our data showed an 860-fold increase in the EC<sub>50</sub> for this mutation, and the patient harboring R181C could concentrate his urine to only 70 mosm/l. R181 is located in extracellular loop II, near the membrane. Most GPCRs, including *AVPR2*, contain a conserved pair of extracellular cysteine residues linking the first and second extracellular loops via a disulfide bond; substitutions of cysteine for various residues in

## Fig. 1a, 1b Color illustration online only!

**Fig. 1.** Mutation analysis. **a** Patient 1 carrying R181C. **b** Patient 2 carrying M311V. The upper, middle and lower panels show the patient, control and patient's mother; each mutation is indicated by an arrow. **c** Concentration-response curve to AVP. **d** Concentration-response curve to DDAVP. Normalized luciferase activity is expressed as percentage of maximum WT V2R activity, plotted versus the concentration of AVP or DDAVP. Data are the mean  $\pm$  SEM of three independent experiments, each performed in triplicate.



these loops (R181C, G185C, R202C, R203C, Y205C) cause loss-of-function mutations and XNDI [25]. The presence of an additional cysteine in these loops may cause incorrect disulfide bond formation resulting in receptor dysfunction by interfering with ligand binding [26].

The novel M311V mutant retained partial activity in vitro: its  $EC_{50}$  for AVP was only 40-fold higher than wild type, suggesting that M311V could bind AVP partially. Consistent with this, patient 2 had a partial response to his endogenous AVP when he was somewhat dehydrated,

concentrating his urine to 634 mosm/l during water deprivation, but without further concentration in response to DDAVP. It is possible that if the patient were tested while normally hydrated, the urine osmolality might increase after DDAVP. Thus, our assays of receptor activity in vitro correlated with the urine-concentrating ability and the clinical phenotype. The M311V mutation is located in the seventh transmembrane domain; substitution of Val for Met typically elicits minor effects on protein folding. The homologous residue M297 in the sev-



enth transmembrane segment of the NK2 tachykinin receptor participates in binding peptide agonists [27], suggesting that AVPR2 residue M311 may play a similar role. Nevertheless, because M311V retains partial activity, it appears that it must reach the plasma membrane, but may bind ligands less avidly, although this has not been tested. Some other AVPR2 mutants that retain partial activity have reduced ligand-binding affinity and adenylyl cyclase activation [7, 8, 11] or decreased cell surface expression [7, 10].

Although treatment of partial NDI with large doses of DDAVP has been reported [13], DDAVP is not formulated in sufficiently high concentrations, and its safety in such doses has not been established. The long-term management of patients with congenital NDI remains sodium restriction, thiazide or amiloride diuretics and prostaglandin synthetase inhibitors, but they usually do not reduce urine output completely to normal. Therefore, increased water intake is generally still needed, especially

in hot climates. Other therapeutic modalities may be possible. Inhibitors of cGMP phosphodiesterase, which activates a cGMP-mediated signal transduction pathway, can induce AQP2 phosphorylation and membrane insertion independently of the V2R signaling pathway [28]. Also, pharmacologic chaperones may facilitate the cell surface insertion and functional activity of some misfolded mutant V2R that would otherwise remain trapped in the endoplasmic reticulum [16, 29, 30]. Therefore, understanding the mechanism of specific mutations may facilitate the therapy of individual patients.

### Acknowledgements

We thank Drs. Sayali Ranadive and Christian Vaisse (University of California, San Francisco, Calif., USA) for the myc-tagged AVPR2 expression vector. This study was supported by the Thailand Research Fund, and by funds from the UCSF Division of Pediatric Endocrinology.

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