122 Paraneoplastic Neurologic Syndromes and Autoimmune Encephalitis

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Paraneoplastic neurologic disorders (PNDs) are cancer-related syndromes that can affect any part of the nervous system (Table 122-1). They are caused by mechanisms other than metastasis or by any of the complications of cancer such as coagulopathy, stroke, metabolic and nutritional conditions, infections, and side effects of cancer therapy. In 60% of patients, the neurologic symptoms precede the cancer diagnosis. Clinically disabling PNDs occur in 0.5–1% of all cancer patients, but they affect 2–3% of patients with neuroblastoma or small-cell lung cancer (SCLC) and 30–50% of patients with thymoma or sclerotic myeloma.

PATHOGENESIS

Most PNDs are mediated by immune responses triggered by neuronal proteins (onconeuronal antigens) expressed by tumors. In PNDs of the central nervous system (CNS), many antibody-associated immune responses have been identified (Table 122-2). These antibodies react with the patient's tumor, and their detection in serum or cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) usually predicts the presence of cancer. When the antigens are intracellular, most syndromes are associated with extensive infiltrates of CD4+ and CD8+ T cells, microglial activation, gliosis, and variable neuronal loss. The infiltrating T cells are often in close contact with neurons undergoing degeneration, suggesting a primary pathogenic role. T cell–mediated cytotoxicity may contribute directly to cell death in these PNDs. Thus both humoral and cellular immune mechanisms participate in the pathogenesis of many PNDs. This complex immunopathogenesis may underlie the resistance of many of these conditions to therapy.

In contrast to the disorders associated with immune responses against intracellular antigens, those associated with antibodies to antigens expressed on the neuronal cell surface of the CNS or at the neuromuscular junction are more responsive to immunotherapy (Table 122-3, Fig. 122-1). These disorders occur with and without a cancer association and may affect children and young adults, and there is increasing evidence that they are mediated by the antibodies.

Other PNDs are likely immune-mediated, although their antigens are unknown. These include several syndromes of inflammatory neuropathies and myopathies. In addition, many patients with typical PND syndromes are antibody-negative.

TABLE 122-1 PARANEOPLASTIC SYNDROMES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Classic Syndromes: Usually Occur with Cancer Association	Nonclassic Syndromes: May Occur with and Without Cancer Association
Encephalomyelitis	Brainstem encephalitis
Limbic encephalitis	Stiff-person syndrome
Cerebellar degeneration (adults)	Necrotizing myelopathy
Opsoclonus-myoclonus	Motor neuron disease
Subacute sensory neuronopathy	Guillain-Barré syndrome
Gastrointestinal paresis or pseudo-obstruction	Subacute and chronic mixed sensory-motor neuropathies
Dermatomyositis (adults)	Neuropathy associated with plasma cell dyscrasias and lymphoma
Lambert-Eaton myasthenic syndrome	Vasculitis of nerve
Cancer- or melanoma-associated retinopathy	Pure autonomic neuropathy
	Acute necrotizing myopathy
	Polymyositis
	Vasculitis of muscle
	Optic neuropathy
	BDUMP

Abbreviation: BDUMP, bilateral diffuse uveal melanocytic proliferation.

TABLE 122-2 ANTIBODIES TO INTRACELLULAR ANTIGENS, SYNDROMES, AND ASSOCIATED CANCERS

Antibody	Associated Neurologic Syndrome(s)	Tumors
Anti-Hu (ANNA1)	Encephalomyelitis, subacute sensory neuronopathy	SCLC
Anti-Yo (PCA1)	Cerebellar degeneration	Ovary, breast
Anti-Ri (ANNA2)	Cerebellar degeneration, opsoclonus, brainstem encephalitis	Breast, gynecologic, SCLC
Anti-Tr	Cerebellar degeneration	Hodgkin's lymphoma
Anti-CRMP5 (CV2)	Encephalomyelitis, chorea, optic neuritis, uveitis, peripheral neuropathy	SCLC, thymoma, other
Anti-Ma proteins	Limbic, hypothalamic, brainstem encephalitis	Testicular (Ma2), other (Ma)
Anti-amphiphysin	Stiff-person syndrome, encephalomyelitis	Breast, SCLC
Recoverin, bipolar cell antibodies, others[a]	Cancer-associated retinopathy (CAR) Melanoma-associated retinopathy (MAR)	SCLC (CAR), melanoma (MAR)
Anti-GAD	Stiff-person, cerebellar syndromes, limbic encephalitis	Infrequent tumor association (thymoma)

[a]A variety of target antigens have been identified.

Abbreviations: CRMP, collapsing response-mediator protein; SCLC, small-cell lung cancer.

TABLE 122-3 ANTIBODIES TO CELL SURFACE OR SYNAPTIC ANTIGENS, SYNDROMES, AND ASSOCIATED TUMORS

Antibody	Neurologic Syndrome	Tumor Type When Associated
Anti-AChR (muscle)[a]	Myasthenia gravis	Thymoma
Anti-AChR (neuronal)[a]	Autonomic ganglionopathy	SCLC
Anti-VGCC[b]	LEMS, cerebellar degeneration	SCLC
Anti-NMDAR[a]	Anti-NMDAR encephalitis	Teratoma in young women (children and men rarely have tumors)
Anti-LGI1[c]	Limbic encephalitis, hyponatremia, faciobrachial tonic or dystonic seizures	Rarely thymoma
Anti-Caspr2[c]	Morvan's syndrome, neuromyotonia	Thymoma, prostate cancer
Anti-$GABA_BR$[d]	Limbic encephalitis, seizures	SCLC, neuroendocrine
Anti-$GABA_AR$[d]	Encephalitis with prominent seizures and status epilepticus; less often opsoclonus and stiff-person syndrome	Rarely thymoma
Anti-AMPAR[d]	Limbic encephalitis with relapses	SCLC, thymoma, breast
Glycine receptor[d]	Encephalomyelitis with rigidity, stiff-person syndrome	Rarely, thymoma, lung cancer
Anti-DPPX[d]	Agitation, myoclonus, tremor, seizures, hyperekplexia, encephalomyelitis with rigidity	No cancer, but frequent diarrhea or cachexia suggesting paraneoplasia

[a]A direct pathogenic role of these antibodies has been demonstrated. [b]Anti-VGCC antibodies are pathogenic for LEMS. [c]Previously named voltage-gated potassium channel antibodies (VGKC); currently included under the term VGKC-complex proteins. Of note, the significance of antibodies to VGKC-complex proteins other than LGI1 and Caspr2 is uncertain (the antigens are unknown, and the response to immunotherapy is variable) [d]These antibodies are strongly suspected to be pathogenic.

Abbreviations: AChR, acetylcholine receptor; AMPAR, α-amino-3-hydroxy-5-methylisoxazole-4-propionic acid receptor; Caspr2, contactin-associated protein-like 2; DPPX, dipeptidyl-peptidase-like protein-6; $GABA_BR$, γ-aminobutyric acid B receptor; GAD, glutamic acid decarboxylase; LEMS, Lambert-Eaton myasthenic syndrome; LGI1, leucine-rich glioma-inactivated 1; NMDAR, *N*-methyl-D-aspartate receptor; SCLC, small-cell lung cancer; VGCC, voltage-gated calcium channel.