Marinesco Sjogren Syndrome NEWS

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About the Newsletter

In this edition of the MSS newsletter, we highlight our families, including an introduction to Jake and his family from Philadelphia. Kimberly shares her pictures from summer vacation to Europe, including visits with two families from our MSS support group.

Feel free to distribute the newsletter by email or to print copies for interested individuals. Email us if you wish to be added to or removed from the newsletter mailing list. Current and back issues of the newsletter are available at the website on the publications page. http://www.marinesco-sjogren.org/pubs.html

Welcoming the Miller Family

Please join us in welcoming Helen and Craig Miller and their son, Jake, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Like many of our families, the Millers began to have concerns about Jake's motor development when he was about six months old. Over the next couple of years, he was found to have low muscle tone, ataxia, cataracts, strabismus, an abnormal MRI (cerebellar hypoplasia) and atypical muscle biopsies, resulting in a diagnosis of MSS at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). His size is typical for his age.

Jake Miller, 5 years old

Jake with Mom (Helen)

Jake is now five and just started kindergarten. He attends physical, occupational, and speech therapy. He is working on walking using a Kaye Walker, and his speech is improving slowly. Jake had one cataract surgery over a year ago and the second in February of this year. He is also scheduled for another muscle eye surgery in October. Jake enjoys therapeutic horseback riding and has a great sense of humor. As you can see from the pictures, he is also very cute! Welcome Jake and parents to our MSS family.

Questions for the Geneticist

Thank you to Dr. William Wilcox, MD, PhD, (William.Wilcox@cshs.org) for answering the following questions from our group.

Q: Are there any differences between MSS patients that have or do not have Sil1 mutations?

A: No, there do not appear to be any significant differences, but we are still analyzing the data. About 50% of all cases of classical MSS have Sil1 mutations. There have been patients diagnosed with MSS, however, who do not exhibit classical MSS symptoms, and these cases do not have Sil1 mutations. There is a family with milder problems that has a Sil1 mutation.

Q: If patients have MSS symptoms but do not have a Sil1 mutation, should they be tested for CCFDN (Congenital Cataracts Facial Dysmorphism Neuropathy) Syndrome?

A: Only if they have neuropathy or have Roma Gypsy ancestry.

Q: Given that MSS is associated with progressive muscular weakness, is there any reason to believe that MSS patients should limit their amount of exercise?

A: No, exercise and physical therapy are recommended. Even in muscular dystrophy, exercise is beneficial.

Q: In a previous newsletter, you suggested that if treatment for MSS were eventually developed, it may improve muscle strength, cognitive function, and growth, but not ataxia. Why not ataxia?

A: The cerebellum (the part of the brain that controls balance and coordination) is small (or at least not functional) in MSS patients. Treatment would not be able to change this.

Q: You and others have suggested that the existing “woozy mutant mouse” (see Summer 2006 newsletter) may be a good mouse model for testing potential MSS therapies. The only MSS-like symptom that the woozy mouse has is ataxia. Since ataxia would not likely be improved by treatment, how could you tell that treatment is effective?

A: We could look for reductions in protein accumulations that are seen in both the woozy mouse and human MSS patients.

ASHG Partnership Program

Colleen Yinger represented the MSS Support Group at the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) annual meeting, October 10-13, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Colleen Yinger participated in the Genetic Alliance advocates program, which provides an opportunity for support group leaders to attend the conference and interact with geneticists, researchers, and other advocacy leaders. (http://www.ashg.org/genetics/ashg/menu-annmeet.shtml)

The ASHG meeting was a great combination of technical sessions, poster papers, and exhibits. Additional highlights included a talk by the director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a presentation by the National Geographic's Spencer Wells on the Genographic Project to map humanity's genetic journey through the ages (https://www3.nationalgeographic.com/genographic/), and an inspirational photographic presentation entitled "Positive Exposure" by Rick Guidotti celebrating human differences and redefining beauty using several genetic conditions. (http://www.rickguidotti.com/)

The technical sessions at the conference included presentations on treating genetic diseases, genetic testing, ethical issues in genetics, sorting out clinical and genetic heterogeneity, stem cells, and more. One interesting, recurring theme was the use of drugs developed for one condition that are proving effective for other conditions as well. This is exciting, particularly for very rare disorders, because of the extremely high cost and amount of time needed to develop new drugs and demonstrate their safety and effectiveness.

Colleen also participated in the advocates program at the American College of Medical Genetics (ACMG) meeting in March 2006 in San Diego, CA. As part of these programs, participants write two reports summarizing presentations they attend. All advocate reports from the ACMG meeting are available at the Genetic Alliance Website: http://www.geneticalliance.org/ksc_assets/programs/acmg_advocate_reports_2006.pdf

Yinger Family Visits European MSS Families

This summer our family, Steve, Colleen, and Kimberly (now 14 years old), enjoyed a wonderful three-week vacation to Europe. We saw many exciting places in England and France: Big Ben, the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Stonehenge, the Louvre, Eiffel Tower, ancient Roman sites in southern France, and much more. But one of our favorite parts of the trip was the opportunity to meet families that we have come to know through the MSS support group.

In England, just outside of London, we visited the Conway family – Keiko, Phil, Shaun, and the latest addition to the family - Adam, an energetic, two-year old. We first met the Conways four years ago when they visited us in the Los Angeles area. Shaun is now eight years old, enjoys school, toys, his little brother, and riding in mama's car.

Shaun (center), brother Adam (left), and Kimberly (right) near London

Near Marseille, France, we enjoyed our time with the Negre family, including Marie-Line, Patrick, and Sylvain (20). We have been corresponding with the Negre family for over seven years and finally had the opportunity to meet them in person. We spent hours talking, took a delightful cruise on the Mediterranean, and enjoyed watching one of the World Cup games with them and some of their friends.

Sylvain (left) and Kimberly (right) enjoy a boat trip off the coast of Marseille

We continue to be amazed by the wonderful MSS families we have come to know through the internet. As we visited, I kept thinking how exciting it would be to have an international family conference where many families could gather at the same time. Some day we will make it happen! Thanks to the families we visited for your wonderful hospitality and for allowing me to share these experiences and pictures.

Technical Publications on MSS

Annesi, Grazia, et.al., "SIL1 and SARA2 mutations in a family with Marinesco-Sjogren and Chylomicron Retention Diseases", ASHG 2006 Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana. http://www.ashg.org/genetics/abstracts/abs06/f1773.htm

Kalaydjieva, Luba, "Congenital Cataracts, Facial Dysmorphism, Neuropathy (CCFDN)", 29 August 2006. Free, on-line publication. (Editor's note: See the table at the end for a good comparison of CCFDN and MSS.) http://www.ojrd.com/content/pdf/1750-1172-1-32.pdf.

Schroder, JM, Senderek, J, et. al., "Marinesco Sjogren syndrome: correlation of nuclear changes to mutations in BAP/SIL1", 51st Annual Meeting of the German Society of Neuropathology and Neuroanatomy, September 20-24, 2006, Mannheim, Germany, http://www.dgnn.de/_download/Abstracts%20Mannheim.pdf, P999.

Weitzmann A, Volkmer J, Zimmermann R, "The nucleotide exchange factor activity of Grp170 may explain the non-lethal phenotype of loss of Sil1 function in man and mouse", FEBS Lett, 2006 Sept 5. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=pubmed&cmd=Retrieve&dopt=AbstractPlus&list_uids=16962589&query_hl=4&itool=pubmed_docsum

Karim M, Parsian A, et. al., "A novel mutation in BAP/SIL1 gene causes Marinesco-Sjogren syndrome in an extended pedigree", Clinical Genetics, November 2006.

Join the MSS Listserv

The MSS listserv now has twelve participants. To join us, send us an email requesting to be added to the listserv, or register directly by going to http://www.galists.org/read/all_forums/subscribe?name=mss and providing the requested information (email address, optional name, and password). After you register, you can submit email to the listserv by posting email to: mss@listserv.galists.org.

After you register, you can access the archives (read all previous postings) by going to http://www.galists.org/read/?forum=mss and logging in with email address and password.

MSS Supports Genetic Alliance 20th Anniversary

The MSS Support Group was listed among supporters in the Genetic Alliance "20 Years of Excellence in Advocacy" Gala Celebration Program. The celebration was held at the National Geographic Society in Washington, DC on September 27 to celebrate two decades of leadership and power of collaboration. The Genetic Alliance represents more than 1000 genetic conditions affecting over 25 million individuals. http://www.geneticalliance.org/

On the Bookshelf

"The Cure: How a Father Raised $100 Million--And Bucked the Medical Establishment--In a Quest to Save His Children" by Geeta Anand. The book eloquently describes the difficulties and commitment of families struggling with Pompe disease, a very rare and potentially fatal inherited disorder, and the challenges of the drug development process for orphan diseases.

"Breakthrough Parenting for Children with Special Needs: Raising the Bar of Expectations" by Judy Winter (Not reviewed, but highly recommended by almost all Amazon.com reviewers)

"The Language of God" by Francis Collins. An interesting book for those interested in reading how Francis Collins (leader of the NIH human genome project) reconciles science and faith.