Variation in Genes Regulating Male Reproductive Development In Relation to Anogenital Distance Measurements, Potential Markers of In Utero Androgenization

Satyanarayana S1,2, Swan, SH3, Farin FM4, Wilkerson HW4, Grady R5, Zhou C1,2, Schwartz SM6,7

1. Department of Pediatrics, University of Washington
2. Center for Child Health, Behavior, and Development, Seattle Children's Research Institute 3. Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Rochester Medical Center
4. Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, University of Washington
5. Division of Pediatric Urology, Children's Regional Hospital & Medical Center
6. Department of Epidemiology, University of Washington
7. Epidemiology Program, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

Purpose: Single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in genes regulating male reproductive tract development have been associated with male genitourinary abnormalities, but no studies have examined the relationship between SNPs and novel anogenital measurements such as anogenital distance (AGD), anoscrotal distance (ASD), and penile width (PW).

Methods: We examined whether common variation in 34 SNPs within genes regulating male genital development (AR, ESR1, ESR2, CTGF, CYR61, INSL3, RXFP2, ATF3) is associated with AGD, ASD, and PW in 106 healthy male infants (ages 2-34 months) from the multi-center Study for Future Families. DNA was extracted from buccal smears, and we used linear regression models to assess the relationship between anogenital measurements and SNP genotypes with adjustment for covariates.

Results: We found that the rs2077647 G allele, located in a coding region of ESR1, was associated with a shorter AGD (-7.3mm, 95% CI -11.6 to -3.1). In addition, the rs10475 T allele, located in the 3’ untranslated region of ATF3, was associated with a shorter ASD (-4.3mm, 95% CI -7.2, -1.4). We observed no association between PW and any SNPs examined.

Conclusions: We found that minor alleles for two SNPs within genes that are involved in estrogen mediated male genital development were associated with AGD and ASD. These results are preliminary but suggest that these measures may be intermediate phenotypes that form within the same developmental pathway as other abnormalities such as hypospadias and cryptorchidism. Future studies are needed to functionally validate that ESR1 and ATF3 are involved in the development of intermediate male phenotypes.