## Contents

**REVIEW**

10746  Management of acute kidney injury in gastrointestinal tumor: An overview  
*Su YQ, Yu YY, Shen B, Yang F, Nie YX*

10765  Application of vascular endothelial cells in stem cell medicine  
*Liang QQ, Liu L*

### MINIREVIEWS

10781  Application of traditional Chinese medicine in treatment of *Helicobacter pylori* infection  
*Li RJ, Dai YY, Qin C, Huang GR, Qin YC, Huang YY, Huang ZS, Luo XK, Huang YQ*

### ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**Case Control Study**

10792  Impact of cytomegalovirus infection on biliary disease after liver transplantation - maybe an essential factor  
*Liu JY, Zhang JR, Sun LY, Zhu ZJ, Wei L, Qu W, Zeng ZG, Liu Y, Zhao XY*

10805  Blood tests for prediction of deep endometriosis: A case-control study  
*Chen ZY, Zhang LF, Zhang YQ, Zhou Y, Li XY, Huang XF*

**Retrospective Cohort Study**

10816  Association between neutrophil-to-lymphocyte ratio and major postoperative complications after carotid endarterectomy: A retrospective cohort study  
*Yu Y, Cui WH, Cheng C, Lu Y, Zhang Q, Han RQ*

10828  Application of MACnetic resonance imaging compilation in acute ischemic stroke  
*Wang Q, Wang G, Sun Q, Sun DH*

**Retrospective Study**

10838  Ninety-four thousand-case retrospective study on antibacterial drug resistance of *Helicobacter pylori*  
*Zhang Y, Meng F, Jin J, Wang J, Gu BB, Peng JB, Ye LP*

10850  Adjacent segment disease following Dynesys stabilization for lumbar disorders: A case series of mid- and long-term follow-ups  
*Chen KJ, Lai CY, Chiu LT, Huang WS, Hsiao PH, Chang CC, Lin CJ, Lo YS, Chen YJ, Chen HT*

10861  Identification of independent risk factors for intraoperative gastroesophageal reflux in adult patients undergoing general anesthesia  
*Zhao X, Li ST, Chen LH, Liu K, Lian M, Wang HJ, Fang YJ*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10871</td>
<td>Value of the controlling nutritional status score and psoas muscle thickness per height in predicting prognosis in liver transplantation</td>
<td>Dai X, Gao B, Zhang XX, Li J, Jiang WT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10899</td>
<td>Serum magnesium level as a predictor of acute kidney injury in patients with acute pancreatitis</td>
<td>Yu XQ, Dong HB, Liu Y, Qu C, Duan ZH, Tong ZH, Liu YX, Li WQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10909</td>
<td>Pedicle complex tissue flap transfer for reconstruction of duplicated thumbs with unequal size</td>
<td>Wang DH, Zhang GP, Wang ZT, Wang M, Han QY, Liu FX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10919</td>
<td>Minimally invasive surgery vs laparotomy in patients with colon cancer residing in high-altitude areas</td>
<td>Suo Lang DJ, Ci Ren YZ, Bian Ba ZX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10927</td>
<td>Surgery for chronic pancreatitis in Finland is rare but seems to produce good long-term results</td>
<td>Parhiila M, Sand J, Laukkarinen J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10937</td>
<td>Association of overtime work and obesity with needle stick and sharp injuries in medical practice</td>
<td>Chen YH, Yeh CJ, Jong GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10948</td>
<td>Serum gastrin-17 concentration for prediction of upper gastrointestinal tract bleeding risk among peptic ulcer patients</td>
<td>Wang JX, Cao YP, Su P, He W, Li XP, Zhu YM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10956</td>
<td>Predictive risk scales for development of pressure ulcers in pediatric patients admitted to general ward and intensive care unit</td>
<td>Luo WJ, Zhou XZ, Lei JY, Xu Y, Huang RH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10969</td>
<td>Clinical significance of signet ring cells in surgical esophageal and esophagogastric junction adenocarcinoma: A systematic review and meta-analysis</td>
<td>Wang YF, Xu SY, Wang Y, Che GW, Ma HT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10979</td>
<td>Percutaneous biliary stent combined with brachytherapy using $^{125}$I seeds for treatment of unresectable malignant obstructive jaundice: A meta-analysis</td>
<td>Chen WY, Kong CL, Meng MM, Chen WQ, Zheng LY, Mao JT, Fang SJ, Chen L, Shu GF, Yang Y, Weng QY, Chen MJ, Xu M, Ji JS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10994</td>
<td>Prenatal ultrasonographic findings in Klippel-Trenaunay syndrome: A case report</td>
<td>Pang HQ, Gao QQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10999</td>
<td>Immunoglobulin G4-related lymph node disease with an orbital mass mimicking Castleman disease: A case report</td>
<td>Hao FY, Yang FX, Bian HY, Zhao X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11007</td>
<td>Treatment for subtrochanteric fracture and subsequent nonunion in an adult patient with osteopetrosis: A case report and review of the literature</td>
<td>Yang H, Shao GX, Du ZW, Li ZW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11016</td>
<td>Early surgical intervention in culture-negative endocarditis of the aortic valve complicated by abscess in an infant: A case report</td>
<td>Yang YF, Si FF, Chen TT, Fan LX, Lu YH, Jin M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11029</td>
<td>Pulmonary Langerhans cell histiocytosis and multiple system involvement: A case report</td>
<td>Luo L, Li YX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11036</td>
<td>Complete androgen insensitivity syndrome caused by the c.2678C&gt;T mutation in the androgen receptor gene: A case report</td>
<td>Wang KN, Chen QQ, Zhu YL, Wang CL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11043</td>
<td>Ultrasound guiding the rapid diagnosis and treatment of perioperative pneumothorax: A case report</td>
<td>Zhang G, Huang XY, Zhang L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11050</td>
<td>Chronic colchicine poisoning with neuromyopathy, gastric ulcers and myelosuppression in a gout patient: A case report</td>
<td>Li MM, Teng J, Wang Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11056</td>
<td>Treatment of a giant low-grade appendiceal mucinous neoplasm: A case report</td>
<td>Xu R, Yang ZL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11071</td>
<td>Signet ring cell carcinoma hidden beneath large pedunculated colorectal polyp: A case report</td>
<td>Yan JN, Shao YF, Ye GL, Ding Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11078</td>
<td>Double-mutant invasive mucinous adenocarcinoma of the lung in a 32-year-old male patient: A case report</td>
<td>Wang T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11085</td>
<td>Acute myocarditis presenting as accelerated junctional rhythm in Graves’ disease: A case report</td>
<td>Li MM, Liu WS, Shan RC, Teng J, Wang Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

Ventricular fibrillation and sudden cardiac arrest in apical hypertrophic cardiomyopathy: Two case reports
Park YM, Jang AY, Chung WI, Han SH, Semsarian C, Choi IS

Rhizopus microsporus lung infection in an immunocompetent patient successfully treated with amphotericin B: A case report
Chen L, Su Y, Xiong XZ

Spermatocytic tumor: A rare case report
Hao ML, Li CH
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Prenatal ultrasonographic findings in Klippel-Trenaunay syndrome: A case report

Hou-Qing Pang, Qian-Qian Gao

Abstract

BACKGROUND
Klippel-Trenaunay syndrome (KTS) is a rare congenital disorder. A detailed prenatal ultrasound examination plays an important role in the diagnosis of KTS and the subsequent counseling and follow-up of the patient.

CASE SUMMARY
A 25-year-old woman attended our department for a regular examination. The whole of the right lower extremity and right buttock were observed to be markedly thicker compared to the left one at 18 wk of gestation. However, the lengths of the right femur, tibia and fibula were in the normal range. No marked edema and fluid/cystic spaces were detected in the lower limbs. There were no other organ abnormalities. The vasculature in the right limb was visibly dilated, with much higher intensive blood flow signals. No congenital embryonic veins were visible in both limbs. The right lower limb exhibited much more hypertrophy compared to the left limb two weeks later. Amniocentesis and genetic tests showed normal results with 46 XX. Despite the normal karyotype, the family opted to terminate the pregnancy. The post-mortem examination confirmed asymmetric hypertrophy of the right limb in the fetus and revealed a large area of marked dark-purple superficial capillary malformations occupying the skin of the right lower extremity. The enlargement of veins and soft tissue hypertrophy were also seen on postnatal X-ray and Magnetic Resonance Imaging. Autopsy revealed severe congestion in the right lower limb. A final diagnosis of KTS was made.

CONCLUSION
KTS may be diagnosed prenatally based on the typical features observed during ultrasound examination.
Pang HQ et al. The ultrasonographic findings of a case of KTS in utero

Key Words: Klippel-Trenaunay syndrome; Prenatal diagnosis; Ultrasonography; Case report

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Core Tip: Klippel–Trenaunay syndrome (KTS) is a rare congenital disorder. The prenatal ultrasound features include hypertrophy of one extremity, a difference between the length of the bones of the extremities, multiple cystic lesions of the extremities or internal organs, increasing blood flow signals and dilated veins or persistence of the embryonic veins. KTS may be diagnosed based on these typical characteristics in utero.

INTRODUCTION

Klippel–Trenaunay syndrome (KTS) is a rare congenital disorder characterized by a classical triad of port-wine stains, varicosities, bone and soft tissue hypertrophy, and other complications such as lymphedema and lymphangiomas, which may involve any region of the body[1]. The etiology of this disease remains unclear. Most cases can be diagnosed through a complete history and clinical examination after birth[2]. The detailed prenatal images and follow-up are crucial for the diagnosis of KTS and the subsequent counseling and management of the patient. Ultrasonographic detection is an essential method for the diagnosis of KTS in utero[3]. The present study documents the prenatal ultrasound findings of a case of KTS.

CASE PRESENTATION

Chief complaints
A 25-year-old woman attended our department for a regular examination.

History of present illness
The patient was 18 wk of gestation, with regular menstrual period and was gravida 1 parity 0. There was no history of other diseases during pregnancy.

History of past illness
The patient had no significant medical history.

Personal and family history
The personal and family history did not reveal any problems, including a history of vascular disorders.

Physical examination
On admission, her temperature was 36.7°C, respiratory rate was 23 breaths/min, and blood pressure was 120/80 mmHg. The obstetric examination revealed that the fundal height and abdominal circumference of the patient were consistent with her gestational age.

Laboratory examinations
Her mucus translucency measurement and triple test results were normal.

Imaging examinations
The whole of the right lower extremity and right buttock were observed to be
markedly thicker compared to the left one at 18 wk of gestation. However, the lengths of the right femur, tibia, and fibula were in the normal range. No marked edema and fluid/cystic spaces were detected in the lower limbs (Figure 1A and B). There were no other organ abnormalities. On the basis of these characteristics on ultrasound images, a diagnosis of KTS was suspected. Therefore, a detailed examination of the lower-limb vascular system was performed. The external iliac veins, great saphenous veins, femoral/popliteal veins, and the lateral thigh area in both lower limbs were carefully examined. The vasculature in the right limb was visibly dilated, with much higher intensive blood flow signals. No congenital embryonic veins were visible in both limbs (Figure 1C and D). Examination of the vascular system also supported the diagnosis of KTS. In the examination conducted two weeks later, the right lower limb exhibited much more hypertrophy compared to the left limb. Amniocentesis and genetic tests showed normal results with 46 XX. The post-mortem examination confirmed asymmetric hypertrophy of the right limb and revealed a large area of marked dark-purple superficial capillary malformations occupying the skin of the right lower extremity (Figure 1E). Enlargement of the veins and soft tissue hypertrophy were also observed in the postnatal X-ray and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), although embryonic veins were absent (Figure 1F and G). Autopsy revealed severe congestion in the right lower limb (Figure 1H).

**FINAL DIAGNOSIS**

Following consultation with the geneticists and the professor of a vascular malformation clinic, a final diagnosis of KTS was made.

**TREATMENT**

Despite the normal karyotype, the family opted to terminate the pregnancy after a counseling session with the obstetric/pediatric team, considering a range of possible outcomes, including significant disability.

**OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP**

The patient underwent termination of the pregnancy. Two years later, the patient became pregnant and delivered a healthy female infant.

**DISCUSSION**

KTS is a rare and sporadic congenital disorder, which presents at birth, early infancy or childhood. The proposed pathogenesis of the disease mainly includes deep vein atresia, chronic venous hypertension, persistence of the embryological vascular system and mesodermal anomaly[1].

The etiology of KTS remains unknown. Most reported cases have not been associated with chromosome abnormalities. Whelan et al[4] reported a case of KTS associated with a single gene defect at 5q or 11p, thus, demonstrating that this genetic defect may result in increased angiogenesis leading to KTS[5]. In addition, a case with a terminal 2q37.3 deletion[6] and a case of loss of heterozygosity for 1q21.2 q44[7] were also reported.

Most of the reported cases had no genetic characteristics except a case with unproven autosomal dominant inheritance[8]. Most KTS cases were unilateral and affected the lower extremities. Both upper and lower limbs might be involved in 10% of patients. According to published reports, hemangioma lesions can also involve other organs and body parts, such as the liver, lung, spinal cord, cranial area, skull, intestinal tract, urinary tract, testis, adrenal glands, and peritoneal and retroperitoneal cavity[7,9-11].

Most patients have skin vascular nevi or wine stains to some extent and hypertrophy of the skeleton and soft tissue; thus, they were diagnosed according to these typical signs at birth[1]. A deep tissue cavernous hemangioma may gradually appear and aggravate in later childhood. The prenatal ultrasound features in utero...
The ultrasonographic findings of a case of KTS in utero

Pang HQ et al. The ultrasonographic findings of a case of KTS in utero

Figure 1 Prenatal sonograms at 18 wk of gestation and images after induced-abortion. A and B: Marked thickening of the right thigh, no marked edema and fluid/cystic spaces in the lower limbs (A, sagittal section and B, transverse section); C and D: Enlarged vasculature and higher intensive blood flow signals in the right limb; E: The purple stains predominantly affecting the right lower limb and asymmetry of the lower limbs; F: X-ray image showing the right lower limb hypertrophy; G: Magnetic resonance imaging image showing enlargement of the vasculature and hypertrophy of soft tissue; H: Severe congestion in the right lower limb. R: Right lower limb; L: Left lower limb.

have been described in many studies[8,12-14]. They include marked asymmetrical hypertrophy of limbs, thickening of the subcutaneous soft tissue, multiple cystic lesions, increasing blood flow signals, dilated veins or persistence of embryonic veins. It is difficult to detect skin capillary malformations, we speculate that the fetoscope may be a useful tool to observe fetal skin vascular nevi or wine stains in utero.

One of the main features of KTS is anomaly of the limb vein system, which appears as the persistence of embryonic veins, and varicose enlargement hypoplasia of the limb venous system. Assimakopoulos et al[9] revealed a case associated with a hypertrophied great saphenous vein. We also found more blood flow signals and the dilation of deep veins, which was confirmed by MRI and autopsy after induced abortion in our case. These findings indicated that it is feasible to carry out a thorough prenatal ultrasound examination of the venous system in the lower extremities to obtain more information in order to diagnose KTS.

The clinical presentation varies from minimally symptomatic disease to life-threatening bleeding and embolism. The prognosis is correlated with the size of the masses and their growth. There were large and extensive anechoic areas or the involvement of internal organs in reviewed cases with poor prognosis[3]. Therefore, the ultrasound scan should be repeated and the area and progress of the cystic lesions monitored, which may increase the risk of intrauterine heart failure and bleeding in the postnatal stage.

It is worth noting that there are many more reported cases after birth than in utero. This indicates that many cases of fetal KTS are not diagnosed prenatally as the lesions are minimal or complex, and it is difficult to make an accurate diagnosis. KTS should be suspected when there is hypertrophy of one of the extremities, discrepancy in the bone length, surface masses on the limbs and/or trunk, and unexplained cystic lesions of the internal organs or limbs. Therefore, necessary examinations should be performed to determine the location and severity of the lesions and to provide a reliable basis for the selection of appropriate treatment methods. MRI is another useful method, which can offer more detail on the soft tissue and vasculature.

CONCLUSION

KTS may be diagnosed prenatally based on the typical features on ultrasound examination. Timely prenatal diagnosis and follow-up are important for subsequent prenatal counseling and adjustment of medical care and choices according to each
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REFERENCES


