The role of the F402L allele in the NLRP12-autoinflammatory disorder

reply to:

F402L variant in NLRP12 in subjects with undiagnosed periodic fevers and in healthy controls

De Pieri et al.

Sirs,

De Pieri et al. (1) published a letter to the editor in response to our case series presenting NLRP12 gene variants associated with a NLRP12-autoinflammatory disorder (NLRP12-AD) phenotype (2). In particular, they commented on the role of the F402L variant stating that, though there was a trend towards an increased frequency of the F402L allele in subjects suffering from recurrent fevers, the clinical relevance of this variant could not be determined (1).

Although F402L mutation frequencies did not show a statistically significant difference between patients presenting with recurrent fevers and healthy controls, the proportion of subjects carrying the F402L variant was rather higher among the former than among the latter (18.6% and 11.7%, respectively) (1). In addition, since the F402L variant shows a high frequency (up to 5%) also in databases that report sequence variations from the general population, the gap with patients analysed by De Pieri et al. is even more evident.

In order to better understand the pathogenic role of the F402L variant, we have evaluated a further cohort of 31 patients presenting with NLRP12-AD-like manifestations as well as 35 patients with recurrent fevers as sole clinical manifestations. Five patients (16.12%) with NLRP12-AD phenotype and eight subjects (28.5%) with recurrent fevers were heterozygous for the missense variant p.F402L, respectively. Strikingly, there was no statistically significant difference between the groups (p=0.496), but percentage of patients carrying the F402L variant was higher among those without NLRP12-like phenotype. Among the two different nucleotide variants (rs199985574:c.1204C>T; rs34971363: c.1206C>G) reported to give the same F402L amino acid change, all our patients were carriers of the rs34971363 (c.1206C>G, p.F402L) variant.

De Pieri et al. also identified a different prevalence of the F402L mutation compared to our study involving a very similar population. Like them, we cannot explain this difference apart from the result of an unidentified bias or, less probably, a stochastic event. For these reasons, in agreement with De Pieri et al., a definite association between the F402L variant and NLRP12-AD cannot be actually confirmed.

In this regard, we wonder whether NLRP12-AD-like patients that we have previously described as carrying the F402L mutation (2) were just casual carriers. However, clinical and laboratory response to IL-1 inhibition could represent an Ariadne’s thread to disentangle functional mutations and occasional findings in such patients. Finally, De Pieri et al.’s comment on whether some cases carrying low-penetration mutations and presenting with periodic fever actually have a multifactorial rather than a monogenic cause may actually have a multifactorial rather than a monogenic cause could represent an interesting food for thought. However, we add that – looking a bit further into the future – evaluating the role of epigenetic mechanisms and alterations in such patients, as well as in those affected with other monogenic autoinflammatory disorders, may be even more intriguing (3, 4).

A. VITALE1
D. RIGANTE3
O.M. LUCHERINI1
F. CASO3
L. CANTARINI1

1Research Center of Systemic Autoimmune and Autoinflammatory Diseases, Policlinico “Le Scotte”, University of Siena, Siena, Italy;
2Institute of Paediatrics, Università Cattolica Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy;
3Rheumatology Unit, Department of Medicine DIMED, University of Padua, Padua, Italy.

Address correspondence to: Luca Cantarini, MD, PhD, Rheumatology Unit, Policlinico Le Scotte, University of Siena, Viale Bracci 1, 53100 Siena, Italy.
E-mail: cantarini.luca@hotmail.com

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References