Condition Description

Childhood ataxia with central nervous system hypomyelination/vanishing white matter disease (CACH/VWM) is characterized by ataxia, spasticity, and variable optic atrophy. The phenotypes range from a prenatal/congenital form to a subacute infantile form (onset age <1 year), an early childhood-onset form (onset age 1-5 years), and an adult-onset form. The prenatal/congenital form is characterized by severe encephalopathy. In the later-onset forms, initial motor and mental development is normal or mildly delayed followed by neurologic deterioration with a chronic progressive or subacute course. Chronic progressive decline can be exacerbated by rapid deterioration during febrile illnesses or following head trauma or major surgical procedures, or by acute psychosocial stresses such as extreme fright.

The diagnosis of CACH/VWM can be made with confidence in individuals with typical clinical findings, characteristic abnormalities on cranial MRI (cerebral hemispheric white matter that is symmetrically and diffusely abnormal with a signal intensity close to the same as cerebrospinal fluid), and identifiable mutations in one of five causative genes (EIF2B1, EIF2B2, EIF2B3, EIF2B4, and EIF2B5) encoding the five subunits of the eukaryotic translation initiation factor, eIF2B. Mutations have been found in approximately 90% of individuals with CACH/VWM using sequence analysis or mutation scanning. Affected individuals are homozygotes or compound heterozygotes for mutations within the same gene. The percentage of mutations found in each gene is as follows: EIF2B1 4%, EIF2B2 15%, EIF2B3 7%, EIF2B4 17%, and EIF2B5 57%. Intrafamilial variability exists. Heterozygotes (carriers) are asymptomatic. No clinical or MRI abnormalities have been found in carriers for mutations in EIF2B1-5.

The prevalence of CACH/VWM is not known; it is considered one of the most common leukodystrophies. In a study of unclassified leukodystrophies in childhood, CACH/VWM was the most common. "Cree leukoencephalopathy," described in the native North American Cree and Chipewayan indigenous population, is now recognized to be the same as the infantile form of CACH/VWM.

Testing is available for each gene individually or as a panel.

Click here for the GeneTests summary on this condition.

Genes

EIF2B5

Indications

This test is indicated for:

- Confirmation of a clinical/biochemical diagnosis of CACH/VWM in individuals who have tested negative for sequence analysis
- Carrier testing in adults with a family history of CACH/VWM who have tested negative for sequence analysis

Methodology

DNA isolated from peripheral blood is hybridized to a CGH array to detect deletions and duplications. The targeted CGH array has overlapping probes which cover the entire genomic region.

Detection

Detection is limited to duplications and deletions. The CGH array will not detect point or intronic mutations. Results of molecular analysis must be interpreted in the context of the patient's clinical and/or biochemical phenotype.

Specimen Requirements

Submit only 1 of the following specimen types

Type: DNA, Isolated

Specimen Requirements:
Microtainer
3µg
Isolation using the Perkin Elmer™ Chemagen™ Automated Extraction method or Qiagen™ Puregene kit for DNA extraction is recommended.

Specimen Collection and Shipping:
Refrigerate until time of shipment in 100 ng/µL in TE buffer. Ship sample at room temperature with overnight delivery.

Type: Whole Blood (EDTA)

Specimen Requirements:
EDTA (Purple Top)
Infants and Young Children (2 years of age to 10 years old): 3-5 ml
Older Children & Adults: 5-10 ml

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Autopsy: 2-3 ml unclotted cord or cardiac blood

**Specimen Collection and Shipping:**
Ship sample at room temperature for receipt at EGL within 72 hours of collection. Do not freeze.

**Special Instructions**
Submit copies of diagnostic biochemical test results with the sample, if appropriate. Contact the laboratory if further information is needed.

Sequence analysis is required before deletion/duplication analysis by targeted CGH array. If sequencing is performed outside of EGL Genetics, please submit a copy of the sequencing report with the test requisition.

**Related Tests**

- Sequence analysis of the EIF2B5 gene is available and is required before deletion/duplication analysis (WT).
- Sequence and deletion/duplication analysis of each of the EIF2B1-5 genes is available individually for carrier testing in those individuals with a partner who is a known carrier.
- Prenatal testing is available to couples who are confirmed carriers of mutations. Please contact the laboratory genetic counselor to discuss appropriate testing prior to collecting a prenatal specimen.