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# **Molecular characterization of 1q44 microdeletion in eleven patients reveals three**  1 **candidate genes for intellectual disability and seizures** 2

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15Key Words: 1q44, deletion, chromosome, HNRNPU, FAM36A, ncRNA, intellectual 16disability, corpus callosum, seizure

#### 1ABSTRACT

#### 2

3Patients with a submicroscopic deletion at 1q43q44 present with intellectual disability (ID), microcephaly, craniofacial anomalies, seizures, limb anomalies and corpus callosum 4 5abnormalities. However, the precise relationship between most of deleted genes and the belinical features in these patients still remains unclear. We studied 11 unrelated patients with 1q44 microdeletion. We showed that the deletions occurred de novo in all patients for whom 7 both parents' DNA was available (10/11). All patients presented with moderate to severe ID, 8 9seizures and non-specific craniofacial anomalies. By oligoarray-based comparative genomic 10hybridization (aCGH) covering the  $1q44$  region at a high resolution, we obtained a critical 11 deleted region containing two coding genes - *HNRNPU* and *FAM36A* - and one non-coding 12gene - *NCRNA00201*. All three genes were expressed in different normal human tissues, 13 including in human brain, with highest expression levels in the cerebellum. Mutational 14 screening of the *HNRNPU* and *FAM36A* genes in 191 patients with unexplained isolated ID 15 did not reveal any deleterious mutations while the *NCRNA00201* non-coding gene was not 16**analyzed**. Nine of the 11 patients did not present with microcephaly or corpus callosum 17abnormalities and carried a small deletion containing *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A* and *NCRNA00201* 18but not *AKT3* and *ZNF238*, two centromeric genes. These results suggest that *HNRNPU*, 19FAM36A and *NCRNA00201* are not major genes for microcephaly and corpus callosum 20abnormalities but are good candidates for ID and seizures.

#### 1

## **INTRODUCTION** 2

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Intellectual disability (ID) represents the most frequent cause of severe handicap in 5 children and one of the main reasons for referral in clinical genetic practices. Causes of ID are extremely heterogeneous and can result from chromosomal rearrangements, monogenic 6 7 disorders, and/or environmental factors. Despite clinical examination and extensive 8complementary investigations, no etiology is identified in up to 50 of the patients with moderate to severe ID [Chelly et al., 2006], hampering accurate genetic counseling and 9 10 clinical follow-up. During these last years, the advent of high-resolution microarray 11techniques allowed for the detection of increasingly smaller rearrangements in patients with 12ID. The method has greatly facilitated deciphering chromosomal disorders, enabling better 13 genotype – phenotype correlations and thus the identification of new genes responsible for ID. 4

A number of chromosomal regions scattered through the human genome are deleted in 15 patients with ID, among them the 1q43q44 region. This deletion syndrome was first described 16by De Vries et al. [2001]. Patients present with ID, microcephaly, craniofacial anomalies, 17 seizures, limb anomalies and corpus callosum abnormalities. However, the precise 18 relationship between most of deleted genes and the clinical features in these patients still 19 remains unclear. Three studies have each proposed a different smallest region of overlap 20(SRP) for corpus callosum abnormalities. A first critical deleted region described by Boland 21et al. [2007] was 1.25 Mb in size and contained two candidate genes: *AKT3* and *ZNF238*. 22 Next, van Bon et al. [2008] identified a second distinct critical region of 0.36 Mb in size, 23 more telomeric than the first one, and containing four different candidate genes: *Clorf100*, *ADSS*, *Clorf101* and *PNAS-4*. Caliebe et al. [2010] proposed a third interval of 0.44 Mb, 24 25 which is more telomeric than the other two, and which contained the *HNRNPU* gene. **Finally**, 14

1<sup>the</sup> combined data from two recent studies, a first one performed on 22 patients [Ballif et al., 2<sup>2</sup> 2011] and a second one based on 7 patients [Nagamani et al., 2012] sharing 1q43q44 microdeletion, proposed three distinct SRO with different sizes implicated in corpus callosum 3 4abnormalities (75 kb in size, **including ZNF238**), microcephaly (133 kb in size, *including AKT3*) or seizures (100 kb in size, including *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A* and *NCRNA00201*  5 6**previously referred as** *CIORF199*). We focused our study on 11 unrelated patients with ID 7 and seizures carrying a 1q44 interstitial microdeletion. We refined the SRO for ID and seizures to three genes and explored each of these three genes to highlight their potential role 8 played in the phenotype. 9

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#### **PATIENTS AND METHODS** 11

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#### **Patients** 13

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We studied 11 unrelated patients (eight females and three males) with a 1q44 16 microdeletion. The non-specific craniofacial anomalies are presented in Figure 1 and clinical 17 features are summarized in Table I. The patients originated from Europe (France, Sweden, 18 Finland, Monaco, The Netherlands and Germany) and Senegal. No consanguinity or familial 19 genetic history was noted in the families. The pregnancies were uneventful. 15

All patients presented with moderate to severe ID, predominantly on verbal learning 21 disabilities. Milestones were delayed in all patients: sitting unsupported ranged from 6 months 22to 3 years of age, walking unsupported from 2 to 5 years of age, and severe speech delay  $(6 \nvert$ 23 patients aged from 4 years and 6 months to 17 years had no expressive speech and one patient 24had severe speech delay and phonetic disorders). Neurological examination revealed axial 25 hypotonia in four cases. Five patients presented with stereotyped movements of the hands 20

lwith voluntary use of their hands conserved and were suspected for Rett syndrome. Two 2 patients had sleep disturbances, of which one was treated with Melatonin with good results. Four patients had autistic features and/or attention deficit disorder. 3

Seizures were observed in all patients. The age of the first seizure ranged from 6 months to 2.5 years of age. Different types of seizures were observed: absences, generalized, 5 tonic-clonic seizures and Lennox-Gastaut syndrome. Epilepsy required treatment in most 6 patients, no pharmaco-resistant epilepsy was noted except for patient 3. Two patients 7 8developed status epilepticus history. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) revealed agenesis of 9 corpus callosum in patient 2. The corpus callosum was normal in all other patients. MRI 10 revealed other brain abnormalities: delayed myelinisation, generalized or subcortical atrophy, 11 micropolygyria, moderate ventricular dilatation and moderate cerebellar hypoplasia. Only two 12 patients (#1 and  $# 2$ ) among the eleven presented with microcephaly. Both patients carried the 13 larger deletions including the *AKT3* gene. This finding is consistent with other recent reports 14 suggesting that *AKT3* is a strong candidate gene for microcephaly [Ballif et al., 2011; 15 Nagamani et al., 2012]. 4

Six patients developed general obesity during childhood (BMI around +4 SD, obesity 17 grade 2). Five patients had short stature (heights between -2.5 and -3 SD). Six patients had 18 small hands and broad, short and/or small feet with small toes. Craniofacial anomalies were 19 present in all patients, but did not lead to a characteristic facial dysmorphism. Hypertelorism  $20(4/10)$ , strabismus  $(4/9)$ , bulbous nose  $(3/10)$ , long and flat philtrum  $(5/10)$  and abnormal ears  $21(4/10)$  were frequently observed. 16

Occasionally, some malformations were observed: unilateral renal agenesis, congenital 23 heart defects (atrial septal defect and pulmonary stenosis), and some skeletal anomalies (a 24butterfly vertebrae, a scoliosis). 22

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#### **Cytogenetic and aCGH studies** 1

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Informed consent for genetic analyses was obtained from parents of the patients 4according to local ethical guidelines. Karyotyping based on R or G banding was performed 5 using standard methods on metaphase spreads from peripheral blood of the patients. Genomic DNA was extracted from peripheral blood using standard protocols. Molecular karyotyping of 6 7the 11 patients was initially conducted using different array platforms according to manufacturers' instructions. Subsequently, we used a custom targeted 60K Agilent array to 8 9fine map the breakpoints of the deletions with a median resolution of 240 bp. Custom arrays 10<sup>c</sup>comprising 25,021 probes covered a 6 Mb in the 1q44 region including the *HNRNPU*, 11**FAM36A** and *NCRNA00201* genes. Arrays were analyzed with a Agilent scanner and the 12Feature Extraction software (v. 10.5.1.1). Graphical overview was obtained using the 13 Genomic Workbench software  $(v.5.0)$ . Deletion breakpoints were mapped to the UCSC 14genome browser, hg19. A second independent method (fluorescence in situ hybridization 15(FISH) with different probes, qPCR or MLPA) was used to confirm the deletions and for 16 parental inheritance in patients for whom DNA was available. Three individuals of Yoruba 17 Nigerian origin from the HapMap Project were obtained from the Coriell Institute [IHMC, 182005] and were also analyzed using the custom 60K array. 3

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#### **mRNA expression studies** 20

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We performed expression analyses for *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A* and *NCRNA00201* using 23total RNA extracted from different human tissues (primer sequences available upon request). 24RNAs were obtained from adult brain, heart, kidney, liver, cerebellum tissues and from fetal 25brain tissue (Clontech). Real time quantitative reverse transcription PCR (RT-qPCR) was 22

performed using the ∆∆Ct method [Livak et al., 2001] to assess expression level of the three 1 2target genes - *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A* and *NCRNA00201* – relative to the expression level of the  $3\beta$ -actin (ACTB) and cyclophilin E (PPIE) housekeeping genes. For a given target gene, the ∆Ct of each tissue was compared to the median of the ∆Ct of the 6 tissues analyzed. 4

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#### **Mutation screening** 6

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The coding exons and the exon-intron boundaries of the *HNRNPU* and *FAM36A* genes 9were sequenced in 9/11 patients with a 1q44 deletion using the Sanger technology and run on 10ABI 3130 (primer sequences available upon request). A series of 191 patients with 11 unexplained isolated ID were used to search for point mutations in *HNRNPU* and *FAM36A*. 12Standard karyotyping was normal in all 191 patients. In addition, molecular karyotyping 13 performed with a 44K Agilent array was normal in  $112/191$  patients while the other patients 14 were not analyzed. PCR amplifications followed by high-resolution melting method (HRM) 15were performed to screen *HNRNPU* (exons 2-14). PCR amplifications followed by Sanger 16 sequencing were performed to screen the 5' half of exon 1 of *HNRNPU* and the four exons of *FAM36A*. We failed to sequence the 3' half of exon 1 of *HNRNPU.* 17 8

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### 19RESULTS

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#### **Cytogenetic and aCGH results** 21

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Following normal standard karyotyping, a 1q44 microdeletion was identified in 11 24 patients with moderate to severe ID, craniofacial anomalies and seizures using different high-25 resolution array platforms. No other pathogenic genomic imbalances were identified in the 23

patients. All deletions were confirmed by FISH, qPCR or MLPA. Parental analyses 1 2demonstrated de novo deletions in all families when both parents' DNA was available. Using 3a custom targeted aCGH method, we showed that the sizes of the deletions were variable, 4ranging from 626 Kb to 2.57 Mb (supplementary Table I). The size of the SRO was 188 Kb 5 and encompassed four genes: *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A*, *NCRNA00201*, and *EFCAB2*. The bidentification of a normal individual with a partial deletion of the *EFCAB2* gene led us to 7 consider as unlikely causative this gene as a cause of ID, thus refining the SRO to three genes: *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A*, and *NCRNA00201* (Fig. 2). In a previous study, Matsuzaki et al. [2009] 8 9identified a deletion involving *HNRNPU* in three HAPMAP individuals of Yoruba Nigerian 10 origin. In contrast, we obtained normal results with our targeted 60K array, excluding a 11 deletion in the 1q44 region in these individuals and, thus, demonstrating that the deletions 12 identified by Matsuzaki et al. [2009] were false positive results. Therefore, no deletion 13 involving one of these three genes located in this 1q44 region has been observed within 14individuals of the general population (www.tcag.org).

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#### **mRNA expression studies** 16

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We showed that *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A* and *NCRNA00201* were expressed in 6 different 19 tissues (adult brain, heart, kidney, liver, cerebellum tissues and fetal brain tissue), with the 20strongest expression in the cerebellum (Fig. 3). The highest level of transcripts was obtained 21 for *NCRNA00201* in the cerebellum. As the strongest expression of theses three genes were 22 detected in cerebellum, we analyzed the expression of two control genes: *SULF1* and 23SLCO5A1. We obtained low expression levels in the cerebellum compared to other tissues for 24 these genes, thus excluding a potential bias in our sample of RNA extracted from the 25 cerebellum (data not shown). 18

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## **Mutation screening** 2

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Direct sequencing of *HNRNPU* and *FAM36A* did not reveal any deleterious point mutations in the remaining allele of the patients with a 1q44 deletion, rendering unlikely a 5 brecessive mode of inheritance. Neither did we detect any deleterious mutations in these two genes in our series of 191 patients with unexplained ID. Two identified exonic variants in 7 8*HNRNPU* (exon 6 c.1215G>A, synonymous; exon 14 c.2437C>G, p.Gln813Glu) and one in 9FAM36A (exon 4 c.340G>A, p.Gly114Ser) were predicted to be benign using the PolyPhen 10software. 4

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### 12DISCUSSION

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In this study, all eleven patients carrying a 1q44 microdeletion presented with 15 moderate to severe ID, seizures and non-specific craniofacial anomalies, corresponding to a 16 non-recognizable phenotype with ID. The aCGH data allowed us to fine map a SRO for 17 moderate to severe ID and seizures. However, since other reports described patients with 18 deletions in the 1q43q44 bands that did not include the SRO defined in the present study, 19there may be a number of additional genes that when haploinsufficient can cause ID in these 20<mark>patients.</mark> 14

Two recent studies, a first one performed on 22 patients [Ballif et al., 2011] and a 22second one based on 7 patients [Nagamani et al., 2012] sharing 1q43q44 microdeletion, 23 clarified the phenotype/genotype correlation and proposed three distinct SRO. The first SRO 24 encompassing *ZNF238* was associated with corpus callosum abnormalities, the second SRO 25 including *AKT3* caused microcephaly in most patients while the third SRO containing the 21

1three genes *FAM36A*, *HNRNPU* and *NCRNA00201* was associated with seizures. In our study, 2/11 patients (#1 and # 2) carried a deletion of both *ZNF238* and *AKT3*. Both patients 2 presented with microcephaly which was consistent with a role of *AKT3* in microcephaly. Only 3 4 patient 2 presented with a corpus callosum agenesis. Incomplete penetrance associated with 5 deletion of *ZNF238* could explain the lack of corpus callosum abnormality in patient 1. Finally, the third previously published SRO associated with seizures in Ballif et al. [2011] 6 7overlapped with our 188 Kb SRO associated with ID, seizures and craniofacial anomalies.

*FAM36A* encodes a hypothetical protein and, to date, its biological role is still 9unknown. 8

*HNRNPU* is a protein-coding gene comprising 14 exons, which are highly conserved 11 during evolution. The HNRNPU protein is able to bind RNAs and mediates different aspects 12of their metabolism and transport [Dreyfuss et al., 2002; Krecic and Swanson, 1999]. Mice 13 with a homozygous hypomorphic mutation in *HNRNPU* are severely retarded in both growth 14 and development indicating that this gene is essential for embryonic development [Roshon et 15al., 2005]. Although ubiquitously expressed, we detected the highest expression level for 16HNRNPU in human cerebellum, a tissue which plays an essential role in cognition. 17Interestingly, *HNRNPU* is involved in later stages of differentiation of cerebellar neurons via 18the regulation of DNA topoisomerase II $\beta$  activity [Kawano et al., 2010]. Thus, 19haploinsufficiency for *HNRNPU* may lead to ID in our patients, even in the absence of 20 clinical cerebellar anomalies. *CDH15* is such an example where a gene is strongly expressed 21 in the cerebellum and mutations for which are associated with ID with no features of 22 cerebellar dysfunction [Bhalla et al., 2008]. 10

The third gene within the SRO of our study, *NCRNA00201*, encodes a long non-24 coding RNA (lncRNA). The majority of lncRNA has very high levels of expression in the 25 central nervous system in a cell-type specific manner, of which some have already been 23

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implicated in neurological and developmental disorders [for a review Qureshi et al., 2010]. It 1 2is assumed that they regulate gene expression notably via chromatin remodeling at their 3originate locus (in cis) and/or elsewhere in the genome (in trans). This property considerably 4 increases the difficulty to identify their triggers and to understand their physiological roles. By RT-qPCR, we detected the highest expression level for *NCRNA00201* in human 5 cerebellum, making it a good candidate. Moreover, since our three deleted genes showed 6 relatively high expression in the cerebellum when compared to other tissues, we might 7 hypothesize that an epistatic effect of at least two genes from this locus could be responsible 8 for our patients' phenotype. The lack of knowledge and the difficulty to interpret the variants 9 10 identified in a non-coding gene explain why we did not sequence *NCRNA00201* in our series 11 of patients with ID. *NCRNA00201* still remains a good candidate to explain ID but functional 12 analyses are needed to clarify the implication of this gene in the phenotype.

Taken together, our aCGH, expression and sequencing data highlight a critical region 14 containing three good candidate genes for non-syndromic ID and seizures. These results will 15be important for clinicians in genetic counseling. 13

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### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST** 25

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2The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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### **LEGENDS TO FIGURES** 2

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# **Figure 1.** Facial phenotypes of six patients with interstitial 1q44 deletion showing non-4 Sspecific craniofacial anomalies.

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**Figure 2. A.** Map of the deletions in chromosomal band 1q44 identified by aCGH. Black 7 horizontal bars indicate the deletions in the 11 patients with ID and seizures. Grey horizontal 8 bar (CNP) indicates the deletion that we have identified in a healthy individual. The RefSeq 9 10 genes located in the genomic region are indicated. The vertical region shaded in red indicates 11 the smallest region of overlap (SRO) implicated in ID and seizures from our study; in yellow, 12the SRO implicated in microcephaly; in blue, the SRO implicated in corpus callosum 13abnormalities. **B.** Detailed map of the proposed critical region for ID and seizures, which 14 contains three candidate genes: *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A* and *NCRNA00201*. The *EFCAB2* gene 15 was considered as unlikely causative since we have identified it in a healthy individual. 16Horizontal red bars indicate the deletions reported in the Database of Genomic Variants 17(www.tcag.org). Three variants involving at least one of the three candidate genes (*HNRNPU*, 18FAM36A and *NCRNA00201*) are reported in the Database of Genomic Variants have been 19 identified in three HAPMAP individuals of Yoruba Nigerian origin [Matsuzaki et al., 2009]. 20 However, we obtained normal results with our targeted 60K array, excluding a deletion in the 211q44 region in these individuals and, thus, demonstrating that the deletions identified by 22Matsuzaki et al. [2009] were false positive results.

**Figure 3.** Expression patterns of *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A* and *NCRNA00201* in a panel of human 1 2tissues.

3cDNA were obtained using the MMLV reverse transcriptase (Invitrogen) with random primers from 1 µg of human total RNA of five adult and four fetal tissues. Real-time PCR 4 5was performed in triplicates using Takara SYBR premix on Light Cycler 480 (Roche diagnostics). The ∆∆Ct method was used to assess expression level of three target genes - 6 *HNRNPU*, *FAM36A* and *NCRNA00201* – relative to the expression level of the β-actin 8(ACTB) and cyclophilin E (PPIE) housekeeping genes. For a given target gene, the ∆Ct of 9each tissue was compared to the median of the ∆Ct of the 6 tissues analyzed.

TABLE I. Clinical features and array CGH data of the 11 patients with 1q44 microdeletion



Patient ID	Last centromeric normal probe		First centromeric deleted probe		Last telomeric deleted probe		First telomeric normal probe		Size of the deletions	
	Agilent probe	Genomic	Agilent probe	Genomic	Agilent probe	Genomic	Agilent probe	Genomic	minimum	maximum
	number	position	number	position	number	position	number	position	size	size
		chr1:24312716		chr1:24316902		chr1:24542780		chr1:245428632-		
	A 18 P10580799	2-243127221	A 18 P18165872	8-243169078	A 16 P15516910	9-245427868	A 16 P56350629	245428691	2258840	2301470
		chr1:24398142		chr1:24398165		chr1:24655035		chr1:246550861-		
2	A 18 P18170199	9-243981487	A 16 P56348234	7-243981707	A 18 P18179048	8-246550417	A 16 P563519972	246550920	2568760	2569433
		chr1:24436896		chr1:24436904		chr1:24516281		chr1:245162911-		
3	A 16 P15514696	8-244369027	A 16 P00291606	0-244369093	A 16 P00292517	5-245162874	A 16 P15516265	245162970	793834	793943
		chr1:24446357		chr1:24446364		chr1:24537234		chr1:245373000-		
4	A 16 P00291762	1-244463630	A 18 P18170664	4-244463696	A 16 P563500560	8-245372405	A 18 P18173616	245373057	908709	909427
		chr1:24446311		chr1:24446348		chr1:24562809		chr1:245628202-		
5	A_18_P181717703	2-244463156	A 18 P18171183	3-244463537	A 16 P00293234	6-245628148	A 18 P10584150	245628246	1164665	1165090
		chr1:24451166		chr1:24451217		chr1:24670789		chr1:246707983-		
6	A 16 P15515033	4-244511723	A 16 P00291804	9-244512226	A 16 P00294898	3-246707952	A 16 P15520201	247708042	2195773	2196319
		chr1:24453568		chr1:24453604		chr1:24546638		chr1:245466879-		
	A 16 P00291835	7-244535746	A 16 P15515090	1-244536093	A 16 P56350678	1-245466440	A 16 P15516988	245466938	891827	931192
		chr1:24466880		chr1:24466987		chr1:24617294		chr1:246173423-		
8	A 16 P56349373	2-244668861	A 16 P15515367	5-244669934	A 18 P10586547	8-246173007	A 16 P35539723	246173482	1503132	1504562
		chr1:24476487		chr1:24476533		chr1:24544326		chr1:245446121-		
9	A 16 P00292062	7-244764926	A 16 P00292063	0-244765375	A 16 P56350651	2-245443321	A 16 P15516929	245446180	677991	681244
		chr1:24489098		chr1:24489111		chr1:24552646		chr1:245527049-		
10	A 18 P181724450	3-244891027	A 18 P18172462	7-244891162	A 18 P18175051	9-245527024	A 16 P15517164	245527100	635907	636022
		chr1:24497457		chr1:24497472		chr1:24633261		chr1:246332753-		
11	A 16 P56350022	8-244974632	A 16 P56350024	1-244974774	A 18 P10588331	0-246332669	A 18 P18177727	246332812	1357948	1358234
		chr1:24519752		chr1:24519752		chr1:24582342		chr1:245823589-		
<b>CNP</b>	A 18 P18171833	2-245197581	A 16 P56350270	2-245197581	A 16 P15517963	0-245823479	A 16 P15517964	245823648	625957	626008

Supplementary TABLE I. Boundaries and sizes of the deletions identified by array CGH

### Figure 1



Patient 1

Patient 3



Patient 4



Patient 5

Patient 6

Patient 10



# Figure 3

