



Identification of a 5 bp duplicate in the *AP1S2* gene of an individual with X-linked intellectual disability

Dengna Zhu¹ · Mingmei Wang¹ · Yiran Xu^{1,2} · Jiamei Zhang¹ · Fan Yang³ · Zuozhen Yang³

Received: 26 December 2021 / Accepted: 25 March 2022 / Published online: 7 April 2022
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2022

Abstract

Adaptor-related protein complex 1 subunit sigma 2 (*AP1S2*) is a subunit of AP1 that is crucial for the reformation of the synaptic vesicle. Variants in *AP1S2* have been reported to cause a rare neurodevelopmental disorder, Pettigrew syndrome (PGS) (OMIM: 304,340), which is characterized by walking delay, abnormal speech, mild to profound X-linked intellectual disability (XLID), and abnormal brain, and behaviors. Here, we describe a 2-year- and 5-month-old male patient who presented with global developmental delay (GDD). Trio whole exome sequencing (WES) revealed a 5 bp duplicate in the *AP1S2* gene (NM_003916.5: exon 2: c.96_100dup, p. Leu34Glnfs*8) predicted to cause early termination of translation, which was inherited from the unaffected mother. The clinical features of our patient were consistent with previous reports. This is the second case in the Chinese family and the eleventh variant found in *AP1S2*-related XLID. Our findings expand the *AP1S2* variant spectrum in neurodevelopmental disorders and provide evidence for the application of WES in PGS diagnosis.

Keywords *AP1S2* · Whole-exome sequencing · XLID

Introduction

Intellectual disability (ID) is a type of neurodevelopmental disorder [1] characterized as substantial impediments in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. The worldwide prevalence of ID has been estimated at 2–3% [2], and it can be divided into “isolated” or “syndromic” according to its clinical symptoms. The fundamental reasons for ID are extremely heterogeneous and the genetic factors are significant. With the development of next-generation sequencing, 2588 ID-related genes have been identified [3]. However, a large number of patients with ID have unknown etiologies,

and more than 1000 genes related to developmental disorders have not yet been identified [4].

X chromosome genes account for approximately 4% of the human genome, and 10–15% of ID is related to gene variants in the X chromosome [5]. Males have been deeply affected due to harboring only a single X-chromosome, and 5–10% among all cases of male mental retardation were X-linked ID (XLID) [6]. It is not surprising that 40% of protein-encoding genes on the X chromosome are expressed in the brain [7], which may be important for cognition. Pettigrew syndrome (PGS) is an XLID disorder caused by a mutation in the *AP1S2* gene on chromosome Xp22. Patients with PGS characterized with basal ganglia disease, seizures, and Dandy-Walker malformation were first described in 1972 by Fried, and later, the genetic variants of *AP1S2* in patients with PGS were clarified [8]. Nonetheless, cases for PGS are still rare, and only nine variants in nine families have been reported thus far.

The *AP1S2* gene encodes a subunit of AP1 that is located in the Golgi complex to recruit clathrin and recognize sorting signals [9]. *AP1S2* deficiency in mice reduced synaptic vesicle recycling and increased endosomes [10], which may reveal the pathogenic mechanism by which *AP1S2* affects neurodevelopment by influencing synaptic transmission.

✉ Dengna Zhu
zhudengna@126.com

¹ Henan Key Laboratory of Child Brain Injury and Henan Pediatric Clinical Research Center, Third Affiliated Hospital and Institute of Neuroscience of Zhengzhou University, Zhengzhou 450052, China

² Commission Key Laboratory of Birth Defects Prevention, Henan Key Laboratory of Population Defects Prevention, Zhengzhou 450052, China

³ Cipher Gene LLC, Beijing 100080, China

Due to the rarity of *APIS2*-related XLID, the clear pathogenic mechanism needs to be further explored.

Here, we report a proband in a Chinese family with GDD. Whole-exome sequencing (WES) identified a 5 bp duplicate of the *APIS2* gene (NM_003916.5: exon 2: c.96_100dup, p. Leu34Glnfs*8) in the patients, and it was inherited from their mother. The PGS cases that we report are the second in the Chinese family, and our findings expand the genotype spectrum of *APIS2*.

Methods

Editorial policies and ethical considerations

Written informed consent was obtained from the legal guardians of the patients to participate in this study. This study was approved by the Human Ethics Committees of the Third Affiliated Hospital of Zhengzhou University.

Patient

The clinical manifestations, brain magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), malformations, investigations of other organs, and gene variations were analyzed. We also combined the cases of the *APIS2* variant reported previously in our analysis. Additional phenotypes and genetic findings for individuals are summarized in Table 1.

WES

Genomic DNA was extracted from the peripheral blood of the patient and his parents. The genomic DNA library was captured using the IDT XGen Exome Research Panel. Then WES was performed on the NovaSeq 6000 Sequencing platform using Paired-end reads. After sequencing, Bcl2Fastq, Burrows-Wheeler aligner (BWA), Annovar [11], Genome Analysis Toolkit software (GATK), SIFT, Polyphen2, LRT, MutationTaster, and FATHMM were used for data processing and analysis. The detected variants were analyzed using the dbSNP, OMIM, HGMD, and ClinVar databases. All detected variants were filtered by clinical characteristics, inherent pattern, type, frequency, and databases included. Subsequently, Sanger sequencing was performed to validate the variants identified by WES.

Copy number variation sequencing

Copy number variation sequencing (CNV-seq) has been supplemented for genome-wide CNV detection. Genomic DNA was fragmented and sequencing libraries were prepared using the TruSeq Library Construction Kit. Libraries were sequenced using a high-throughput sequencing platform

(Illumina, San Diego, USA). Sequences were aligned to the human reference genome hg38 using the Burrows-Wheeler algorithm. CNVs were detected through tools containing CNVkit and CNVnator and subsequently annotated. The reference databases for the detection of the pathogenicity of the CNVs include OMIM, DECIPHER, DGV, Orphanet, and other databases.

Modeling 3D protein structures

A 3D protein modeling analysis was performed to show gene variation in our patient. The structure of wild-type (WT) and mutated proteins were predicted by AlphaFold [12] and SWISS-MODEL [13]. UCSF Chimera [14] was used to visualize the WT and mutated structures.

Results

Clinical features

The 2-year- and 5-month-old male patient was delivered by cesarean section at 38 weeks due to hyperglycemia of the mother during pregnancy. He is the third child (G3P3) of non-consanguineous patients (Fig. 1a). He had a normal birth history with a birth weight of 4.2 kg and a head circumference of 34.5 cm. Subsequently, he was hospitalized at a local hospital for four days due to “poor response” and was diagnosed with “neonatal hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy, neonatal pneumonia, high-risk infant, and macrosomia.” His could raising his head at 3 months old, sitting without support at 7 months old, and his development was delayed with becoming aware of grasping objects at 8 months old.

A brain MRI revealed brain effusion when he was 1 year old, which was followed by rehabilitation treatment. A repeat MRI when he was 2 years old (Supplementary Fig. 1a–c) showed short corpus callosum, abnormal signals at the posterior horns of the bilateral ventricles, and bilateral maxillary sinus, ethmoid sinus, and bilateral middle ear mastoid effusion. During the recent follow-up, he was able to walk at 1 year and 5 months. However, he has no language, and mainly expresses himself through hand gestures at 2 years and 5 months. The MRI results were normal from March 2022 and showed no obvious abnormalities in the brain parenchyma or FLAIR signal and no ventricle enlargement or midline structure displacement (Supplementary Fig. 1d–f). The Gesell development scale was evaluated for the patient in March 2022. His adaptive ability assessment indicated moderate developmental delay with DA12.9 M, DQ43.9, his gross motor assessment indicated mild developmental delay with DA21.6 M, DQ73.5, his fine motor assessment indicated moderate developmental

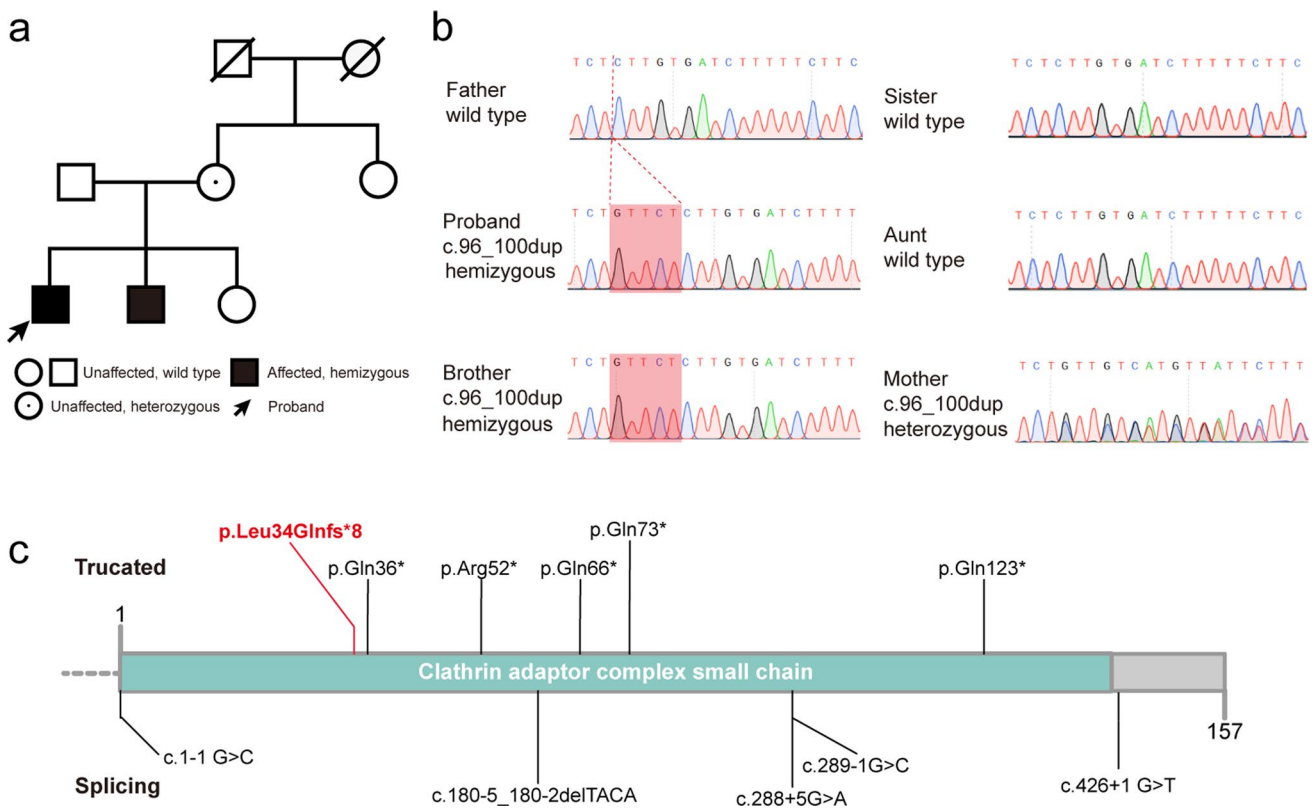


Fig. 1 Identification of a duplicated variant in *AP1S2*. **a** Pedigree of the family. The proband and his brother affected by GDD and likely ASD are indicated by filled symbols. **b** Sanger sequencing of the proband, his brother, his sister, his aunt, and his parents showed a variant c.96_100dup (red translucent box) in the proband. The *AP1S2* gene, which was inherited from the mother. **c** Domain structure and

modeling of *AP1S2* variants in previous studies. The upper panel shows the truncated variants. The splicing variants are presented below. The *AP1S2* protein contains a clathrin adaptor complex small chain domain (1–139 aa) is indicated in green. The variant detected in our patient is highlighted in red

Table 2 Variant information

Gene	Variant	Inheritance	MAF			Category
			ExAc	gnomAD	1000 genome	
<i>AP1S2</i>	c.96_100dup (p.Leu34Glnfs*8)	XLR	NE	NE	NE	LP (PVS1 + PM2_Supporting)

Transcript, NM_003916.5; *XLR*, X-linked recessive inheritance; *MAF*, minor allele frequency; *NE*, not exist; *LP*, likely pathogenic

frameshift or early termination. In particular, they are classified as pathogenic or likely pathogenic (our study) according to the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) guidelines. It seems that SNVs are extremely rare, and their evidence of pathogenicity has been sufficient.

Protein analysis for the AP1S2 variant

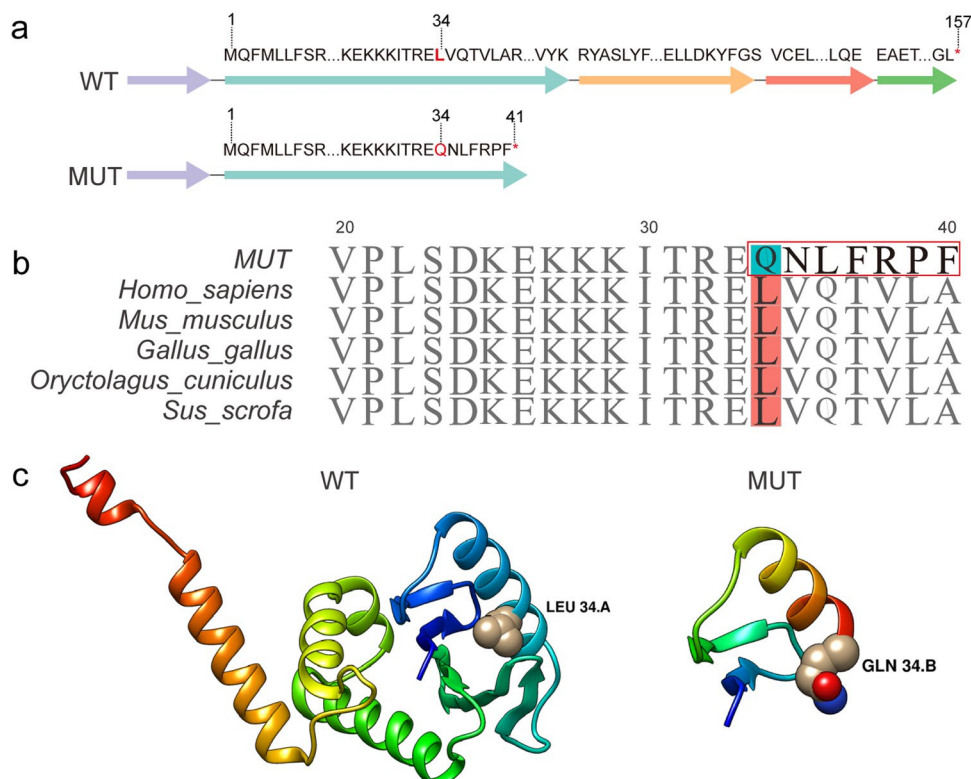
The truncated protein was visualized to understand the molecular structures of the mutated *AP1S2* (Fig. 2). The *AP1S2* gene contains five exons that encode 157 amino acids. The 5 bp duplication (GTTCT) in exon 2 leads to a frame change and early termination at 41 amino acids

(Fig. 2a). The 34th amino acid changed from leucine to glutamine and is conserved in multiple species (Fig. 2b). The 3D protein structures showed that the variation c.96_100dup (p.Leu34Glnfs*8) loses most of the functional domain, which is likely to affect the function of the protein (Fig. 2c).

Discussion

The *AP1S2* gene is composed of five exons and encodes the σ 1B subunit of the heterotetrameric AP1 complex, which mediates the recruitment of clathrin and the recognition of transmembrane receptors [15]. There are three σ 1 subunits

Fig. 2 Protein changes in WT and the *AP1S2* variant. **a** The WT protein, containing 157 aa is shown in the upper panel and the *AP1S2* variant leads to a frameshift and early termination (1–41 aa), as shown in the lower panel. The arrows in different colors represent each exon. **b** Species conservation analysis of *AP1S2*. The amino acids from 34 to 41 which changed by the variant were conserved in different species. **c** 3D protein structures in WT and variant proteins. The 3D models revealed early termination in the variant protein. The mutated 34th amino acid is highlighted by the sphere



expressed in vertebrates: σ 1A, σ 1B, and σ 1C [16, 17]. Additionally, σ 1A and σ 1B have the highest expression levels in the brain [18, 19], meaning that they may play an important role in the brain. Mice with σ 1B deficiency have reduced motor coordination and severely disabled long-term spatial memory [19]. An in vitro experiment indicated that the reformation of the synaptic vesicle (SV) in σ 1B-deficient mice decreases upon stimulation. This will uncover the molecular mechanism for severe human X-chromosome-linked ID.

This disorder, which is related to *AP1S2* variations (MIM 300,629) was well known in 2006 in patients with mild to profound XLID, abnormal behavior, and neurodevelopmental problems [8]. The abnormal behaviors manifested itself in walking delay, abnormal speech, hypotonia, and aggressive behavior (Table 1). Some of the patients had abnormal brain development, such as hydrocephalus, microcephaly, cerebral calcification, and iron deposition in the basal ganglia. The patient in our study had a development delay with becoming aware of grasping objects at 8 months old. Moreover, he has no language and mainly expresses himself in hand gestures up to now. The Gesell development scale results showed moderate developmental disability. Similar phenotypes were also shown in the patient's brother. He had developmental delay and walked at 2 years old. The brother also has language disorder. He could speak only 4–5 words and was capable of only simple communication with others when he was 4 years old. Furthermore, he developed autistic behavior (he liked “spinning things”), and self-harming behavior

(headbutting the floor when he was upset) at 3 years old. The Gesell development scale results indicated severe developmental disability. The brother's more severe developmental delay may be related to his head injury 6 months ago. No facial abnormalities, microcephaly, or epilepsy were found in our study. Furthermore, the MRI examination when the patient was 2 years old indicated an abnormal signal in the posterior horns of both the lateral ventricles and the short corpus callosum. The MRI results in March 2022 revealed no obvious abnormalities in the brain parenchyma or FLAIR signal. No ventricle enlargement or midline structure displacement (Supplementary Fig. 1d–f). The variable clinical characteristics are consistent with previous reports.

The severity of the phenotype does not appear to be related to the variants. Interestingly, variant types in the *AP1S2* gene have been reported to be only spliced or truncated. Epilepsy was reported to be correlated with splicing variants since all patients with epilepsy had splicing variations in *AP1S2* except one patient reported in 2019 [20]. Our patient, who has a truncated variant (p. Leu34Glnfs*8) in *AP1S2*, does not have epilepsy. This may also be a consequence of the fewer variants (Fig. 1c) currently identified in *AP1S2*. The duplicated variant in our patient leads to a frameshift and early termination in *AP1S2* (Fig. 2a), which results in the loss of the functional domain and likely affects the function of *AP1S2*. The mechanisms of *AP1S2* deficiency with neurodevelopment were reported to affect the SV recycling in synapses. AP-1/ σ 1A and AP-1/ σ 1B compete

in the regulation of early endosome maturation and degradation of SV proteins, thus controlling the transport of synaptic vesicle proteins into a degradative pathway [9]. The change in the AP1S2 protein (Fig. 2c) will affect competition binding and break the balance of SV regulation, further leading to the phenotype observed in our patients.

In conclusion, our study reports a novel variant in the *AP1S2* gene that resulted in GDD in a Chinese family. Truncated and spliced were the main types of variation. Next-generation sequencing helped obtain a clear diagnosis of PGS for our patient. Furthermore, the application of WES in patients with GDD, variable ID, walking delay and abnormal speech, behavior, and brain is needed for the confirmation of PGS.

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10048-022-00691-8>.

Acknowledgements We wish to gratefully thank the patient's parents for allowing us to publish this clinical report. And also thank Cipher Gene for their sequencing knowledge support. This work was supported by Joint Open Research Fund of Henan Key Laboratory of Child Brain Injury and Henan Pediatric Clinical Research Center (KFKT2021102), the Henan Medical Science and Technique Foundation (212102310221, LHGJ20190337), and the national Health Commission Key Laboratory of Birth Defects Prevention and Henan Key Laboratory of Population Defects Prevention (2021-03).

Author contribution DZ and MW conceived and designed the experiments. YX and JZ did the patient recruitment and clinical analysis. FY and ZY did the WES and molecular analysis. DZ wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Data availability The datasets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

- Fell CW, Nagy V (2021) Cellular models and high-throughput screening for genetic causality of intellectual disability. *Trends Mol Med* 27(3):220–230
- van Bokhoven H (2011) Genetic and epigenetic networks in intellectual disabilities. *Annu Rev Genet* 45:81–104
- Kochinke K, Zweier C, Nijhof B, Fenckova M, Cizek P, Honti F, Keerthikumar S, Oortveld MA, Kleefstra T, Kramer JM et al (2016) Systematic phenomics analysis deconvolutes genes mutated in intellectual disability into biologically coherent modules. *Am J Hum Genet* 98(1):149–164
- Kaplanis J, Samocha KE, Wiel L, Zhang Z, Arvai KJ, Eberhardt RY, Gallone G, Lelieveld SH, Martin HC, McRae JF et al (2020) Evidence for 28 genetic disorders discovered by combining healthcare and research data. *Nature* 586(7831):757–762
- Ropers HH (2008) Genetics of intellectual disability. *Curr Opin Genet Dev* 18(3):241–250
- Lubs HA, Stevenson RE, Schwartz CE (2012) Fragile X and X-linked intellectual disability: four decades of discovery. *Am J Hum Genet* 90(4):579–590
- Ropers HH, Hamel BC (2005) X-linked mental retardation. *Nat Rev Genet* 6(1):46–57
- Tarpey PS, Stevens C, Teague J, Edkins S, O'Meara S, Avis T, Barthorpe S, Buck G, Butler A, Cole J et al (2006) Mutations in the gene encoding the Sigma 2 subunit of the adaptor protein 1 complex, AP1S2, cause X-linked mental retardation. *Am J Hum Genet* 79(6):1119–1124
- Candiello E, Kratzke M, Wenzel D, Cassel D, Schu P (2016) AP-1/σ1A and AP-1/σ1B adaptor-proteins differentially regulate neuronal early endosome maturation via the Rab5/Vps34-pathway. *Sci Rep* 6:29950
- Kratzke M, Candiello E, Schmidt B, Jahn O, Schu P (2015) AP-1/σ1B-dependent SV protein recycling is regulated in early endosomes and is coupled to AP-2 endocytosis. *Mol Neurobiol* 52(1):142–161
- McKenna A, Hanna M, Banks E, Sivachenko A, Cibulskis K, Kernytsky A, Garimella K, Altshuler D, Gabriel S, Daly M et al (2010) The genome analysis toolkit: a MapReduce framework for analyzing next-generation DNA sequencing data. *Genome Res* 20(9):1297–1303
- Jumper J, Evans R, Pritzel A, Green T, Figurnov M, Ronneberger O, Tunyasuvunakool K, Bates R, Židek A, Potapenko A et al (2021) Highly accurate protein structure prediction with AlphaFold. *Nature* 596(7873):583–589
- Waterhouse A, Bertoni M, Bienert S, Studer G, Tauriello G, Gumienny R, Heer FT, de Beer TAP, Rempfer C, Bordoli L et al (2018) SWISS-MODEL: homology modelling of protein structures and complexes. *Nucleic Acids Res* 46(W1):W296–w303
- Petersen EF, Goddard TD, Huang CC, Couch GS, Greenblatt DM, Meng EC, Ferrin TE (2004) UCSF Chimera—a visualization system for exploratory research and analysis. *J Comput Chem* 25(13):1605–1612
- Kongsvik TL, Höning S, Bakke O, Rodionov DG (2002) Mechanism of interaction between leucine-based sorting signals from the invariant chain and clathrin-associated adaptor protein complexes AP1 and AP2. *J Biol Chem* 277(19):16484–16488
- Baust T, Czupalla C, Krause E, Bourel-Bonnet L, Hoflack B (2006) Proteomic analysis of adaptor protein 1A coats selectively assembled on liposomes. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* 103(9):3159–3164
- Borner GH, Harbour M, Hester S, Lilley KS, Robinson MS (2006) Comparative proteomics of clathrin-coated vesicles. *J Cell Biol* 175(4):571–578
- Takatsu H, Sakurai M, Shin HW, Murakami K, Nakayama K (1998) Identification and characterization of novel clathrin adaptor-related proteins. *J Biol Chem* 273(38):24693–24700
- Glyvuk N, Tsytsyura Y, Geumann C, D'Hooge R, Hüve J, Kratzke M, Baltes J, Boening D, Klingauf J, Schu P (2010) AP-1/σ1B-adaptin mediates endosomal synaptic vesicle recycling, learning and memory. *Embo j* 29(8):1318–1330
- Huo L, Teng Z, Wang H, Liu X: A novel splice site mutation in AP1S2 gene for X-linked mental retardation in a Chinese pedigree and literature review. *Brain Behav* 2019, 9(3):e01221.

Publisher's note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.