

Cohort profile

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Cohort profile: Multicenter Networks for Ideal Outcomes of Rare Pediatric Endocrine and Metabolic Diseases in Korea (OUTSPREAD study)

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Rare endocrine diseases are complex conditions that require lifelong specialized care due to their chronic nature and associated long-term complications. In Korea, a lack of nationwide data on clinical practice and outcomes has limited progress in patient care. Therefore, the Multicenter Networks for Ideal Outcomes of Pediatric Rare Endocrine and Metabolic Disease (OUTSPREAD) study was initiated. This study involves 30 centers across Korea. The study aims to improve the long-term prognosis of Korean patients with rare endocrine diseases by collecting comprehensive clinical data, biospecimens, and patient-reported outcomes to identify complications and unmet needs in patient care. Patients with childhood-onset pituitary, adrenal, or gonadal disorders, such as craniopharyngioma, congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), and Turner syndrome were prioritized. The planned enrollment is 1,300 patients during the first study phase (2022–2024). Clinical, biochemical, and imaging data from diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up during 1980–2023 were retrospectively reviewed. For patients who agreed to participate in the prospective cohort, clinical data and biospecimens will be prospectively collected to discover ideal biomarkers that predict the effectiveness of disease control measures and prognosis. Patient-reported outcomes, including quality of life and depression scales, will be evaluated to assess psychosocial outcomes. Additionally, a substudy on CAH patients will develop a steroid hormone profiling method using liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry to improve diagnosis and monitoring of treatment outcomes. This study will address unmet clinical needs by discovering ideal biomarkers, introducing evidence-based treatment guidelines, and ultimately improving long-term outcomes in the areas of rare endocrine and metabolic diseases.

Keywords: Rare disease, Endocrine system diseases, Cohort studies, Treatment outcome, Child, Congenital adrenal hyperplasia, Craniopharyngioma, Turner syndrome

Highlights

- The OUTSPREAD study is a nationwide, multicenter initiative in Korea aimed at improving the long-term prognosis of patients with rare pediatric endocrine diseases by collecting comprehensive clinical, biochemical, and psychosocial data.
- The study prioritizes rare endocrine diseases such as craniopharyngioma, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, and Turner syndrome, aiming to enroll 1,300 patients during its initial phase (2022–2024) and collect data spanning from 1980 to 2023.

- By identifying ideal biomarkers and addressing unmet clinical needs, the study seeks to establish evidence-based guidelines and enhance the diagnosis, treatment, and quality of life for affected patients.

Introduction

Childhood-onset rare endocrine disorders affecting the pituitary, adrenal, and gonadal systems are complex conditions that necessitate lifelong specialized care. These disorders present unique challenges for pediatric patients as hormonal deficiencies frequently disrupt normal growth and pubertal progression.¹⁻³⁾ Timely and appropriate hormone replacement therapy is therefore essential to ensure optimal growth and development in these patients.^{4,5)}

Craniopharyngioma (CRP), congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), and Turner syndrome (TS) are representative examples of rare endocrine disorders affecting the pituitary, adrenal, and gonadal systems. Even with proper hormone replacement therapy, patients with these conditions are at a high risk for complications, including osteoporosis, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and infertility.⁶⁻⁸⁾ These complications can have a profound impact on the quality of life for both the patients and their caregivers. In addition, these patients often experience significant psychosocial challenges that arise from both the burden of chronic illness and the specific psychosocial issues inherent to each disorder.⁹⁻¹¹⁾

In Korea, research on childhood-onset rare endocrine disorders has been limited with most studies confined to single institutions.¹²⁻¹⁵⁾ Due to the rarity of these conditions, multicenter collaborations are crucial for generating meaningful research and improving patient outcomes. Globally, various initiatives have been established to address the challenges of rare endocrine disorders, including the German CRP Registry,¹⁶⁾ I-CAH Registry,¹⁷⁾ the InsigniTS Registry,¹⁸⁾ and the European Reference Network for Rare Endocrine Conditions.¹⁹⁾ However, healthcare environments differ across countries necessitating research and guidelines tailored to local contexts. To date, there has not been a multicenter cohort study focused on rare endocrine disorders in Korea.

The Multicenter Networks for Ideal Outcomes of Rare Pediatric Endocrine and Metabolic Disease (OUTSPREAD) study is the first nationwide Korean multicenter cohort study focusing on rare pediatric endocrine disorders. The study aims to improve the long-term prognosis of patients by collecting comprehensive clinical data to identify complications and unmet needs. In addition, the study seeks to analyze biospecimens to discover novel biomarkers for disease management. Ultimately, the study's goal is to propose optimal hormone therapy regimens and develop clinical guidelines, thereby contributing to improved patient care and outcomes.

Study population and recruitment

Patients with childhood-onset endocrine disorders affecting the pituitary, adrenal, or gonadal systems were prioritized in

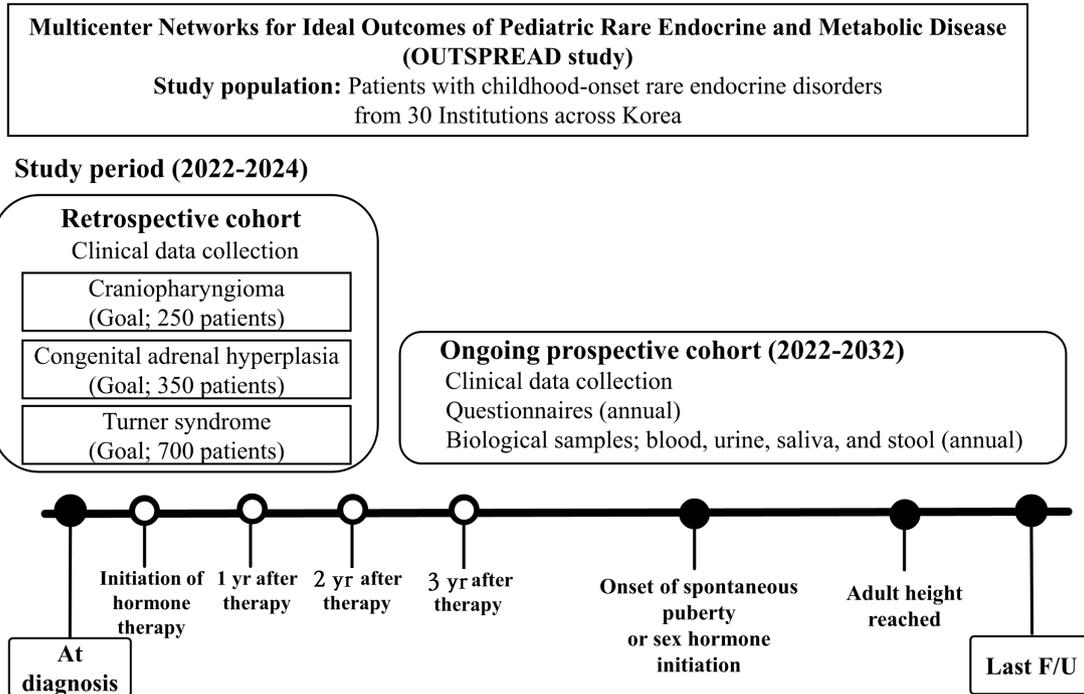


Fig. 2. Study design. F/U, follow-up.

Table 1. Key time points for clinical data collection by disease categories

| Congenital adrenal hyperplasia | Craniopharyngioma | Turner syndrome |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| At diagnosis | At diagnosis | At diagnosis |
| Adrenal hormone replacement | Childhood GH therapy | GH therapy |
| Initiation | Initiation | Initiation |
| After 1 yr | After 1 yr | After 1 yr |
| After 2 yr | After 2 yr | After 2 yr |
| After 3 yr | After 3 yr | After 3 yr |
| GH therapy | Temporary discontinuation | Temporary discontinuation |
| Initiation | Restart of therapy | Restart of therapy |
| At the end of GH therapy | At the end of GH therapy | At the end of GH therapy |
| Spontaneous pubertal onset | Spontaneous pubertal onset | Spontaneous pubertal onset |
| Development of precocious puberty | Sex hormone initiation | Sex hormone initiation |
| Initiation of GnRH agonist therapy | Adult height reached | Adult height reached |
| At the end of GnRH agonist therapy | Adult GH therapy | Last visit |
| Adult height reached | Initiation | |
| Last visit | After 2 years | |
| | Recurrence of tumor | |
| | Last visit | |

GH, growth hormone; GnRH, gonadotropin releasing hormone.

consistency in data collection across the study. Patients who provided informed consent for ongoing research participation are enrolled in the prospective cohort. These participants will undergo annual follow-up evaluations until 2032, allowing for an extended observation period of disease progression and treatment outcomes.

Clinical data collection

Clinical information collected included demographic information, birth history, family history, anthropometrics, karyotype or genotypes, disease course, hormone replacement therapy, other medical treatments, or surgical interventions. For anthropometric data, z-scores were calculated based on the 2017 Korean National Growth Charts.²⁰⁾ Biochemical data, including hormone levels, both basal and stimulated, and fasting

Table 2. Multidimensional assessment parameters in the cohort study

| Category | Measurements | Details |
|---|--|---|
| Clinical information | Demographics | Age, sex |
| | Birth history | Gestational week, birth weight |
| | Family history | Anthropometrics and puberty history of parents, family history of chronic disorders |
| | Initial presentation | Symptoms and signs |
| | Karyotype, genotype | If applicable |
| | Anthropometrics, physical examinations | Height, weight, body mass index, pubertal exam, presence of goiter, waist circumference, blood pressure, body composition |
| | Comorbidities or complications | Diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, hypertension, osteoporosis, psychosocial problems, adrenal rest tumor, menstrual disorders |
| | Hormone replacement therapy | GH, thyroid hormone, adrenal hormone, ADH, sex hormone |
| | Surgical therapy | Brain, cardiac, renal, gonads |
| Other medical treatment | Medications for complications (diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, psychiatric diseases) | |
| Biochemical tests | Hormone profiles | Basal pituitary, thyroid, adrenal, sex hormone; stimulated hormone levels (GH, ACTH, TRH, GnRH- stimulation test; water deprivation test) |
| | Metabolic profiles or others | Fasting serum glucose, insulin, lipid profiles, glycated hemoglobin, liver function tests, electrolyte |
| Imaging (x-ray, US, CT, or MRI) | Bone age | - |
| | Brain | - |
| | Thyroid | - |
| | Cardiac | - |
| | Abdomen | Liver, kidney, adrenal, gonads |
| | Bone mineral density | Dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry |
| Questionnaires (prospective cohort) | Psychosocial factors | Participants: quality of life, depression scale Caregivers: quality of life, stress scale |
| | Medical history | Menstrual history, psychosocial disease history |
| | Family history | Diabetes, dyslipidemia, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, thyroid disorders |
| Biological samples (prospective cohort) | Blood, urine, saliva, stool | Annual collection |

ADH, antidiuretic hormone; GH, growth hormone; ACTH, adrenocorticotropic hormone; TRH, thyrotropin-releasing hormone; GnRH, gonadotropin releasing hormone; US, ultrasonography; CT, computed tomography; MRI, magnetic resonance imaging.

metabolic profiles, were reviewed. Imaging studies, including bone age assessment and magnetic resonance imaging, computed tomography, and ultrasonography findings for brain, thyroid, cardiac, abdominal, and gonadal evaluations, were also analyzed. Detailed measurements for this cohort are presented in Table 2.

Questionnaires

Annual questionnaires assessing psychosocial factors, medical history, and family history are collected from participants in the prospective cohort study (Table 2). Psychosocial outcomes are measured using validated instruments, including the PedsQL 4.0 for quality of life²¹⁾ and age-appropriate depression scales (Korean version of the Children's Depression Inventory or Beck's Depression Inventory).^{22,23)} Caregiver quality of life is evaluated using the CarerQoL-7D Korean version,²⁴⁾ and stress levels are measured using the Perceived Stress Scale-14.²⁵⁾ The questionnaires also collect information on participants' menstrual and psychosocial disease history and family histories of chronic conditions including diabetes, dyslipidemia,

cardiovascular diseases, and thyroid disorders.

Biological sample collection

For participants in the prospective cohort, blood, urine, saliva, and stool samples are collected annually alongside clinical data (Table 2). Participants are instructed to collect urine, saliva, and stool samples on the same day as blood sampling. These specimens will be used to identify potential biomarkers predictive of disease control and prognosis.

Substudy: Development of steroid hormone profiling for CAH diagnosis and monitoring

As part of this cohort study, we have been developing a comprehensive steroid hormone profiling method using liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry. This approach addresses two critical needs in the management of CAH: (1) improving the differential diagnosis of various CAH types, particularly enzyme deficiencies beyond 21-hydroxylase deficiency (21OHD); and (2) enhancing the monitoring of

21OHD treatment. Annually collected biospecimens from patients with CAH will be used to validate the newly developed steroid hormone profiling method.

Conclusion

The OUTSPREAD cohort, the first nationwide study in Korea focusing on rare endocrine disorders, seeks to address the unmet needs of patients from childhood through adulthood. By collecting comprehensive clinical data and fostering collaboration across a national research network, this study aims to develop optimal management guidelines for rare pediatric endocrine diseases, potentially reducing long-term complications and enhancing patients' quality of life. The extensive biospecimen collection serves as a valuable resource for future biomarker research. This could lead to the discovery of novel diagnostic and prognostic indicators. Additionally, this research will provide for evidence-based policy reforms and facilitate the development of novel therapeutic approaches that ultimately enhance patient care and healthcare efficiency in the management of rare pediatric endocrine disorders.

Notes

Conflicts of interest: No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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