

Congenital adrenal hyperplasia – current insights in pathophysiology, diagnostics and management

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1 **Congenital adrenal hyperplasia – current insights in pathophysiology, diagnostics and**
2 **management**

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60

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Abbreviations

AAV	Adeno-Associated Virus
ACTH	Adrenocorticotrophic hormone, corticotropin
BMD	Bone mineral density
BMI	Body Mass Index
CAH	Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia
cIMT	Carotid intima media thickness
COUP-TFII	Chicken Ovalbumin Upstream Promotor-Transcription Factor-2
CRF	Corticotropin-releasing factor
CRH	Corticotropin-releasing hormone
CYP21A2	21-hydroxylase
CYP19A1	Aromatase
Dex	Dexamethasone
DHEA	Dihydroeoiandrostenedione
DHEAS	Dehydroepiandrosterone sulfate
DELFIA	Dissociation-enhanced lanthanide fluoroimmunoassay
DHT	5-dihydrotestosterone
DOC	11 deoxycorticosterone
DSD	Differences in Sex development
ESC	Embryonic stem cell
FSH	Follicle stimulating hormone
GC	Gas Chromatography
HC	Hydrocortisone
HOMA- β	Homeostatic model assessment
HSD3B	3 β -hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase
HSD17B	17 β -hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase
IPSC	inducible Pluripotent Stem Cell
LC	liquid chromatography
LC-MS/MS	Liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry
LH	Luteinizing hormone
MC2R	Adrenocorticotrophic hormone receptor
MLPA	Multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification
MR	Mineralocorticoid receptor
MS	Mass spectrometry
NC	Non classic
OMM	Outer mitochondrial membrane
PGD	Preimplantation genetic diagnosis
POR	P450 oxidoreductase
RIA	Radioimmunoassay
TARTs	Testicular Adrenal Rest Tumors
SF-1	Steroidogenic factor-1
SRD5A1	5 α -reductase type 1
StAR	Steroidogenic acute regulatory protein

SV	Simple virilizing
SW	Salt wasting
TNXB	Tenascin-X
11KT	11- ketotestosterone
11OHD	11-hydroxylase deficiency
17OH-Preg	17-hydroxypregnenolone
17OHD	17-hydroxylase deficiency
17OHP	17-hydroxyprogesterone
21OHD	21-hydroxylase deficiency

88 **ABSTRACT**

89 Congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) is a group of autosomal recessive disorders affecting
90 cortisol biosynthesis. Reduced activity of an enzyme required for cortisol production leads to
91 chronic overstimulation of the adrenal cortex and accumulation of precursors proximal to the
92 blocked enzymatic step. The most common form of CAH is caused by steroid 21- hydroxylase
93 deficiency due to mutations in CYP21A2. Since the last publication summarizing CAH in
94 Endocrine Reviews in 2000 there have been numerous new developments. These include more
95 detailed understanding of steroidogenic pathways, refinements in neonatal screening, improved
96 diagnostic measurements utilizing chromatography and mass spectrometry coupled with steroid
97 profiling, and improved genotyping methods. Clinical trials of alternative medications and modes
98 of delivery have been recently completed or are under way. Genetic and cell-based treatments are
99 being explored. A large body of data concerning long-term outcomes in patients affected by CAH,
100 including psychosexual well-being, has been enhanced by the establishment of disease
101 registries. This review provides the reader with current insights in congenital adrenal hyperplasia
102 with special attention to these new developments.

103

104 **I. INTRODUCTION**

105 Congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) is an inherited inability to synthesize cortisol.
106 Approximately 90-99% of cases of CAH are caused by 21-hydroxylase deficiency (21OHD)
107 caused by mutations in the *CYP21A2* gene (1,2); the terms CAH and 21OHD will be used
108 interchangeably in this article. The literature has historically described classic and nonclassic (NC)
109 forms of this disorder, although current thinking views *CYP21A2* allelic variants and their
110 phenotypic manifestations as a continuum. The classic form, occurring in 1 in 14,000 to 18,000
111 based on newborn screening (**Table 1**), is defined by severely reduced or absent enzyme activity
112 with impaired cortisol production manifesting clinically in the neonatal period. In the most severe,
113 salt-wasting (SW) form of classic CAH, there is little or no residual enzymatic activity, resulting
114 in cortisol and aldosterone deficiency. Lack of negative feedback on the hypothalamic-pituitary-
115 adrenal axis leads to excess adrenal androgen production as elevated precursor steroids are shifted
116 to the non-affected androgen pathways. If not promptly treated, infants with this form of CAH
117 quickly develop potentially fatal “salt-wasting crises” with hyponatremia, hyperkalemia, acidosis
118 and shock. Those infants who produce slightly more aldosterone are less likely to suffer acute salt-
119 wasting crisis, but such patients still have severe cortisol deficiency and markedly elevated adrenal
120 androgen production. They are said to have “simple virilizing” (SV) CAH, associated with residual
121 enzymatic activity of 1 – 5% of normal. All infants affected with classic CAH benefit from
122 glucocorticoid plus adjunctive mineralocorticoid treatment at least within the first year of life,
123 when there is relative renal tubular resistance to the salt-retaining effects of aldosterone in early
124 infancy (28) and low sodium content of infant diets (29).

125 Whereas gonadal development is normal, severely increased prenatal adrenal androgen
126 production leads to virilization of the female external genitalia (30), including variable degrees of

127 clitoral enlargement and labial fusion. The genital appearance of affected 46,XX infants is
128 occasionally indistinguishable from that of male genitals with penis and scrotum but empty of
129 gonads. Müllerian duct development is normal, except for the formation of a urogenital sinus with
130 conjoined urethra and vagina. Thus, reproductive potential exists in females despite atypical
131 external genitalia. Males have normal external genitalia. Wolffian duct development is normal in
132 males but absent in females, who continue to produce COUP-TFII (Chicken Ovalbumin Upstream
133 Promoter-Transcription Factor-2), which induces Wolffian duct involution (31).

134 Adverse sequelae in CAH patients occur both as a result of adrenal hormone imbalance, and
135 from chronic glucocorticoid therapy (32). Androgen excess can cause inappropriately rapid
136 somatic growth, accelerated skeletal maturation and reduced adult height. A systematic review and
137 meta-analysis for >1000 classic CAH patients found shorter than average stature for mid-parental
138 heights (-1.03 standard deviations, corresponding to ~7 cm) (33), but many of these children were
139 diagnosed before the implementation of neonatal screening and did not receive the benefit of early
140 initiation of treatment.

141 Elevated levels of adrenal androgens affect the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis. Central
142 precocious puberty is a risk in patients experiencing prolonged periods of poor hormonal control.
143 Young women with well-controlled CAH usually experience normal menarche (34), but poor
144 control is associated with acne, female hirsutism, male pattern baldness, altered body habitus,
145 irregular menses, and sub-normal fertility (35). Males with poor hormonal control may develop
146 small testes and benign testicular adrenal rest tumors (TARTs) (see section VI.A.1) (36).

147 Individuals affected with milder allelic variants (i.e., NC CAH) tend to present to medical
148 attention after infancy, hence the former term, “late onset” CAH. The associated alleles encode
149 enzymes with residual activity of 20-50%. Thus, these individuals typically have normal basal

150 cortisol and aldosterone production but mildly elevated levels of adrenal androgens; however,
151 suboptimal cortisol levels after ACTH stimulation are reported in up to 30% of patients (37).
152 Children may present with symptoms due to elevated adrenal androgens such as premature
153 adrenarche, acne and accelerated skeletal maturation but many, especially males, are
154 asymptomatic. Adolescent girls or adult women may present with hirsutism, oligomenorrhea, acne,
155 and sub-normal fertility (37). Because NC CAH is not the primary target of neonatal screening
156 and is rarely detected by that strategy, the true prevalence of this milder disorder is unclear. The
157 estimated prevalence is ~1 in 200 in the Caucasian population (38).

158 Since the last publication summarizing CAH in Endocrine Reviews in 2000 (1), there have
159 been numerous new developments. These include more detailed understanding of steroidogenic
160 pathways, refinements in neonatal screening, improved diagnostic measurements utilizing high-
161 throughput liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) coupled with steroid
162 profiling, and improved genotyping methods. Clinical trials of alternative medications and modes
163 of delivery have been recently completed or are under way, with the nearer prospect of genetic and
164 cell-based treatments and a large body of data concerning long-term outcomes in patients affected
165 by CAH, including psychosexual well-being, enhanced by the establishment of disease registries.

166 Much remains to be learned in several other domains spanning fetal life through adulthood.
167 Both human and animal studies have illuminated risks of antenatal dexamethasone (Dex) treatment.
168 Non-invasive prenatal diagnosis of CAH in families with known *CYP21A2* pathogenic genotypes
169 has been accomplished by analysis of circulating free fetal DNA in maternal blood in proof-of-
170 concept studies, but is not yet widely available. Genital reconstructive surgery in affected females
171 is no longer viewed as an emergency procedure, and indeed the practice of genital surgery in
172 infancy has been questioned. Shared decision making among parents, patients, surgeons,

173 endocrinologists, mental health providers, and support groups has been promoted as model for
174 optimal care. Benefit-to-risk ratio for no surgery, early or late genital surgery for females with
175 CAH remains to be determined. Unfortunately, even in advanced societies, medical care for CAH
176 is neglected, increasing the risk for cardiovascular or metabolic morbidities due to suboptimal
177 corticosteroid therapy. Methods to improve transition of care from pediatric to adult healthcare, as
178 well as patient and provider education, are important goals.

179 This multi-authored review is the result of a planned European CAH Symposium, which was
180 postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The large international group of authors contributed
181 innovative approaches to understanding and managing this condition.

182

183 **II. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF STEROID SYNTHESIS AND ADRENAL ENZYMATIC** 184 **DEFECTS**

185 **A. *Physiology and pathophysiology of steroidogenesis***

186 Steroidogenesis in the adrenal cortex takes place in three concentric zones: the outermost zona
187 glomerulosa (mineralocorticoid biosynthesis), the zona fasciculata (glucocorticoid biosynthesis),
188 and the innermost zona reticularis (sex steroid precursor biosynthesis). It entails conversion of
189 cholesterol to active steroid hormones, and involves many enzymes, co-factors and accessory
190 proteins (**Figure 1**). Most of these are expressed in the appropriate zones of the adrenal cortex,
191 with others expressed in the gonads, placenta and some ‘peripheral’ tissues; these factors and the
192 conditions caused by their mutations have been studied in detail (39). Mutations have been
193 described in most of the genes encoding these proteins; those that disrupt cortisol synthesis with
194 compensatory elevations in ACTH cause CAH, but in common parlance ‘CAH’ refers to 21OHD.
195 This section describes all enzymatic conversions required to synthesize cortisol.

196 1. **Cholesterol side-chain cleavage**

197 Steroidogenesis is initiated by the conversion of cholesterol to pregnenolone, catalyzed by
198 the cholesterol side-chain cleavage enzyme, CYP11A1 (P450_{scc}). To initiate steroidogenesis,
199 cholesterol from cytoplasmic storage depots must reach CYP11A1 on the inner mitochondrial
200 membrane; this cholesterol influx requires the steroidogenic acute regulatory protein (StAR),
201 acting on the outer mitochondrial membrane (OMM) (40). The action of StAR requires its
202 phosphorylation and interaction with some other proteins, but the exact mechanism of StAR's
203 action remains under investigation (41,42). Mutations in StAR cause another rare form of CAH,
204 congenital lipoid adrenal hyperplasia, in which virtually no steroid hormones are made and 46,XY
205 fetuses are phenotypically female due to impaired testicular steroidogenesis (43,44). CYP11A1
206 defects were once considered incompatible with term pregnancy; however, more than 30 cases of
207 such defects have been reported (40). These two conditions are clinically and hormonally
208 indistinguishable, but lipoid CAH is typically associated with very large adrenals, whereas
209 CYP11A1 deficiency is not; gene sequencing is needed for definitive diagnosis. Milder 'non-
210 classical' forms of these conditions have been reported with intermediate phenotypes (45-48).
211 CYP11A1 is one of 7 human mitochondrial cytochrome P450 (CYP) enzymes, all of which require
212 electron donation via ferredoxin and ferredoxin reductase (49). Mutations in ferredoxin have not
213 been reported, but several patients have been described with ferredoxin reductase mutations that
214 disrupt synthesis of iron/sulfur centers, causing neuropathic deafness, optic atrophy,
215 encephalopathy and developmental delay (50-52); impaired steroidogenesis is to be expected but
216 not yet reported.

240 a zone-specific fashion: the enzyme is absent in the adrenal zona glomerulosa, hence pregnenolone
241 yields mineralocorticoids; only the 17 α -hydroxylase activity is found in the zona fasciculata, thus
242 pregnenolone yields cortisol; both activities are present in the zona reticularis, hence pregnenolone
243 yields 19-carbon (C19) precursors of sex steroids (Fig. 1). The principal factor regulating 17,20-
244 lyase activity is electron transport from NADPH via cytochrome P450 oxidoreductase (POR) with
245 the assistance of cytochrome *b*₅ (b₅). *CYP17A1* mutations causing 17-hydroxylase deficiency
246 (17OHD) are rare except in Brazil and China. Lack of CYP17A1 prevents sex steroid biosynthesis,
247 yielding a female phenotype in 46,XY males and sexual infantilism in both sexes; overproduction
248 of 11-deoxycorticosterone (DOC) in the zona fasciculata typically causes mineralocorticoid
249 hypertension; cortisol is not produced, but corticosterone substitutes for glucocorticoid
250 requirements (62). Rare cases of apparently isolated 17,20-lyase deficiency may be attributable to
251 mutations in CYP17A1, b₅ (*CYB5* gene) or POR (63-65).

252 The enzymology of adrenal 21-hydroxylase (CYP21A2, P450c21, encoded by *CYP21A2*
253 within the *HLA* locus), is discussed in section II.B.

254 4. P450 oxidoreductase

255 All microsomal cytochrome P450 (CYP) enzymes, including CYP17A1, CYP21A2, CYP19A1
256 (aromatase, P450aro), as well as the drug-metabolizing CYP enzymes of the liver, require the
257 activity of POR, a flavoprotein that transfers electrons from NADPH to all microsomal CYP enzymes
258 (49). Mutations in POR cause POR deficiency; patients have been described with highly variable
259 clinical and hormonal findings depending on the underlying mutations (66-72). Most POR mutations
260 impair CYP17A1, especially 17,20-lyase activity (including the G539R POR variant with a
261 phenotype simulating isolated 17,20 lyase deficiency)(63,68,73), with CYP21A2 and CYP19A1
262 being affected variably, depending on the POR mutation. It is difficult to reach definitive conclusions

263 about phenotype-genotype correlations with such rare disorders, although there is a suggestion that
264 compound heterozygotes carrying R457H in *trans* with null mutations tend to have a more severe
265 phenotype (72). Findings range from severely affected infants with 46,XX and 46,XY
266 disorders/differences of sex development (DSD), cortisol deficiency and the Antley-Bixler skeletal
267 malformation syndrome to mildly affected women who appear to have polycystic ovary syndrome,
268 or mildly affected men with gonadal insufficiency. The skeletal phenotype probably results from
269 diminished activity of CYP26B1, a POR-dependent enzyme that degrades retinoic acid (74). POR
270 mutations also result in clinically relevant disruption of hepatic CYP enzyme activity (75). Patients
271 with POR deficiency typically have normal electrolytes and mineralocorticoid function, nearly-
272 normal cortisol levels that respond poorly to ACTH stimulation, increased levels of 17OHP that
273 respond variably to ACTH, and low levels of sex steroids. Impaired CYP21A2 activity may generate
274 levels of 17OHP detected by newborn screening for 21OHD (66,76). Atypical genital
275 development occurs in both sexes, with considerable variability. The 17,20-lyase activity of
276 CYP17A1 is especially sensitive to disrupted electron transport (77), thus POR defects typically affect
277 fetal testicular steroidogenesis. Virilization of 46,XX females has two causes. First, POR deficiency
278 diverts steroids into the ‘backdoor pathway’ of dihydrotestosterone biosynthesis (Fig. 1), contributing
279 to the prenatal female virilization (69,78-80). Second, as placental CYP19 (aromatase) requires POR,
280 pregnant women carrying a fetus with the POR mutation R457H (but not POR A287P) may
281 experience virilization during pregnancy (66-68), similarly to women carrying an aromatase-deficient
282 fetus (81,82). The POR polymorphism A503V, which mildly affects many P450 activities, is found
283 commonly - from 19% among African Americans to 37% of Chinese Americans (83), but does
284 not affect the presentation of 21OHD (84).

285 5. **11 β -Hydroxylase and aldosterone synthase**

286 Steroid 11-hydroxylase (CYP11B1, P450c11 β) and aldosterone synthase (CYP11B2,
287 P450c11AS, P450aldo) are closely related enzymes that catalyze the final steps in the synthesis of
288 glucocorticoids and mineralocorticoids, respectively; they are encoded by duplicated genes (39,85).
289 Like CYP11A1, these are mitochondrial enzymes that require ferredoxin and ferredoxin reductase to
290 receive electrons from NADPH. CYP11B1 is expressed abundantly in the zona fasciculata, where it
291 converts 11-deoxycortisol to cortisol and DOC to corticosterone, and also in the zona reticularis,
292 where it initiates the 11-oxo-pathway (see later) (86). CYP11B2 expression is less abundant and
293 confined to the zona glomerulosa where it catalyzes the 11 β -hydroxylase, 18-hydroxylase and 18-
294 methyloxidase activities needed to convert DOC to aldosterone (87,88). Mutations in *CYP11B1* cause
295 11 β -hydroxylase deficiency (11OHD), with deficient cortisol, increased adrenal sex steroids, female
296 virilization, and increased DOC, causing mineralocorticoid hypertension; 17OHP may be elevated in
297 the newborn, leading to misdiagnosis of 21OHD (89). Mutations in *CYP11B2* selectively impair
298 aldosterone synthesis, causing hyponatremia and hyperkalemia with normal cortisol production
299 (39,90). However, hyponatremia is typically less severe than in 21OHD because of continued DOC
300 and cortisol secretion.

301 6. **17 β -hydroxysteroid dehydrogenases**

302 The synthesis of sex steroids requires the action of one of the 17 β -hydroxysteroid
303 dehydrogenases (17 β -HSD, HSD17B). These enzymes differ in their structures, co-factor
304 requirements, reactions catalyzed and tissue-specific expression (39). Several are important in
305 steroidogenesis. HSD17B1 is required for the synthesis of ovarian estradiol and placental estrogens
306 (91-93). No genetic deficiency syndrome for HSD17B1 has been described. HSD17B2 inactivates
307 estradiol to estrone and testosterone to androstenedione in the placenta, liver, small intestine, prostate,

308 secretory endometrium and ovary. Whereas HSD17B1 is found in placental syncytiotrophoblast cells,
309 HSD17B2 is expressed in endothelial cells of placental intravillous vessels, consistent with a role in
310 defending the fetal circulation from transplacental passage of maternal estrogens and androgens. No
311 deficiency state for 17 β HSD2 has been reported. HSD17B3 is the testicular form of 17 β HSD that
312 completes the synthesis of testosterone from androstenedione; its mutations cause a form of 46,XY
313 DSD (94,95). HSD17B5 (AKR1C3, an aldo-keto reductase enzyme), which is also a 3 α -
314 hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase, reduces androstenedione to testosterone (96) in the ovary and
315 several non-steroidogenic tissues. AKR1C3 is expressed at low levels in the zona reticularis,
316 accounting for the small amount of adrenally-produced testosterone (97). HSD17B6, also known
317 as RoDH for its homology to retinol dehydrogenases (98), is expressed at low levels in the fetal
318 testes, where it appears to catalyze oxidative 3 α HSD activities in the alternative or "backdoor"
319 pathway to 5 α -dihydrotestosterone (DHT) synthesis (79,99)(see later).

320 7. **Aromatase**

321 Aromatase (CYP19A1) converts 19-carbon androgens to 18-carbon estrogens (100).
322 Aromatase is abundantly expressed in the ovary, placenta and is slightly expressed in fat, but is
323 only expressed in the adrenal in certain malignancies. Nevertheless, it is central to the
324 pathophysiology of fetal development in CAH. The fetus with CAH fetus is only virilized by its
325 own adrenal androgens; even when maternal testosterone concentrations reach 300 ng/dl in a
326 mother who herself has CAH, the female fetus is not virilized because placental aromatase
327 inactivates the androgens from the maternal circulation (101).

328 **B. *Enzymology of CYP21A2***

329 CYP21A2 (P450c21), like CYP17A1, is a microsomal or type II cytochrome P450, which
330 catalyzes two essential reactions in adrenal steroidogenesis (39). The major substrate of CYP21A2

331 is 17OHP, which is converted to 11-deoxycortisol in the zona fasciculata during the biosynthesis
332 of cortisol. In the zona glomerulosa, CYP21A2 21-hydroxylates progesterone to 11-
333 deoxycorticosterone within the aldosterone pathway. Other hepatic cytochrome P450 enzymes
334 have some 21-hydroxylase activity with progesterone as a substrate (102), but this activity does
335 not rescue glucocorticoid deficiency in patients with classic CAH.

336 As with other microsomal P450s, CYP21A2 utilizes 2 electrons donated by POR to reduce
337 molecular oxygen, producing a hydroxylated substrate and water. The enzymology of CYP21A2
338 is unusual for a cytochrome P450 in that the primary site of oxygenation is a methyl group, which
339 is a kinetically disfavored site of hydrogen atom abstraction in the reaction cycle. The C-H bond
340 breaking step is partially rate-limiting, and deuterium substitution at C-21 of progesterone shifts
341 hydroxylation partially to the 16 α -hydrogen (103). The x-ray crystal structures of bovine (104)
342 and human CYP21A2 (105) with 17OHP bound to the active site explain this activity profile. The
343 steroid substrate is held perpendicular to the heme ring with the A-ring 3-keto oxygen hydrogen
344 bonded to arginine-234 (R234) furthest from the reactive iron-oxygen complex, with C-21
345 dangling just close enough for the reaction to occur. On the side of the active site, valine-359
346 (V359) holds the steroid substrate with hydrophobic interactions in the geometry required for 21-
347 hydroxylation and limits access of other reaction sites, principally the C-16 protons; mutagenesis
348 of V359 to the smaller amino acids alanine and glycine progressively shifts progesterone
349 hydroxylation to the 16 α -hydrogen (106). The crystal structures also contain a second molecule of
350 steroid outside the active site where the F-G loop that forms the roof of the active site abuts the α -
351 helical domain (104). Whether this second molecule reflects an intermediate state in substrate
352 binding or simply a hydrophobic interaction that favors crystal formation is not known.

353 The common mutations that cause 21OHD have been compared to wild-type CYP21A2 as
354 recombinant native enzymes in transfected mammalian cells (107), vaccinia-infected mammalian
355 cells (108,109) and yeast (110) or as purified proteins modified for expression in *E. coli* and
356 reconstitution in vitro (111). The catalytic activities of the mutants are reduced generally in
357 proportion to the severity of the deficiency observed in patients with CAH. The studies of purified,
358 reconstituted enzyme assays enable more detailed kinetic studies, which demonstrate that most
359 mutations variably impair substrate binding, catalytic efficiency, and thermal stability in some
360 combination. Extrapolation of these systems to the human adrenal in affected patients should be
361 considered a good approximation but with limitations.

362 When using purified, reconstituted assay systems, investigators must add phospholipid and
363 purified POR, in addition to the steroid substrate and NADPH. The phospholipid used does not
364 exactly replicate the endoplasmic reticulum of adrenal cortex cells but does bring together
365 CYP21A2 and POR in a proteoliposome to enable electron transfer and catalysis. The
366 phospholipid composition is known to influence the reconstituted activity of CYP17A1 and other
367 steroidogenic P450 enzymes (112), although CYP21A2 has not been studied well in this regard.

368 **C. *New Pathways; New Steroids***

369 **1. The alternative or “backdoor” pathway to dihydrotestosterone**

370 In addition to the classic pathway via DHEA, androstenedione, and testosterone, the most
371 potent endogenous androgen, 5-dihydrotestosterone (DHT), can also be synthesized via an
372 alternative or “backdoor” pathway that bypasses the classical pathway intermediates (71,79,113-
373 117). This alternative pathway is physiologically active during the major period of human sexual
374 differentiation in the 6th to 10th week of human fetal development (79) and into the second trimester
375 (118). To enter the alternative pathway to DHT, progesterone or 17OHP are 5 α -reduced by steroid

376 5 α -reductase type 1 (SRD5A1) to yield 5 α -dihydroprogesterone and 17 α -
377 hydroxydihydroprogesterone, respectively (for clarity, only the alternative pathway from 17OHP
378 is shown in Figure 1). These 3-ketosteroids are subsequently 3 α -reduced to allopregnanolone and
379 17 α -hydroxyallopregnanolone by isoforms of the AKR1C enzyme family. CYP17A1 converts
380 allopregnanolone to 17 α -hydroxyallopregnanolone and then to androsterone by its 17,20-lyase
381 activity, serving as its preferred substrate. Androsterone, which is also an inactive metabolite of
382 androstenedione and testosterone, can then be activated to DHT by sequential 17 β -reduction and
383 3 α -oxidase reactions (119) (**Figure 1**).

384 Because excessive 17OHP accumulation is a key characteristic of 21OHD, it is highly likely
385 that the alternative pathway to DHT is a major contributor to fetal female virilization in 21OHD.
386 Alternative pathway steroid metabolites can be detected in patients of all ages with 21OHD, most
387 prominently in the neonate (120). These studies indicate that the high concentrations of 17OHP in
388 individuals with 21OHD drive dihydrotestosterone production by the alternative pathway. The
389 alternative pathway intermediate 17 α -hydroxydihydroprogesterone (also termed 5 α -17-
390 hydroxypregnanolone) can be detected directly by urinary steroid profiling and indicates the
391 activity of the alternative pathway (120,121).

392 2. The role of 11-oxo-androgens in CAH

393 After cleavage of the side chain by 17,20-lyase activity of CYP17A1 in the zona reticularis,
394 the major 19-carbon product of the human adrenal cortex is dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) and
395 its sulfate ester DHEAS. Whereas the latter is not a precursor to testosterone, DHEA is efficiently
396 converted to androstenedione and also within the adrenal to lesser amounts of testosterone (122).
397 Both androstenedione and testosterone are good substrates for CYP11B1. Precursor steroids
398 accumulate in the adrenals of patients with 21OHD, and CYP17A1 and CYP11B1 activities are

399 high owing to chronic ACTH stimulation, hence the system can synthesize large quantities of
400 11OH-androstenedione, with concentrations exceeding that of androstenedione in both 21OHD
401 patients and unaffected controls (123). 11-ketotestosterone (11KT) is primarily generated from
402 circulating 11OH-androstenedione via the sequential action of 11 β -HSD type 2 (which converts
403 the 11 β -hydroxyl to a keto group) and AKR1C3 (124). 11KT, which is in fact the major testicular
404 androgen in teleost fishes (125), is nearly as potent as testosterone in transactivating the human
405 androgen receptor (126). The intermediate 11-ketoandrostenedione – but not 11OH-
406 androstenedione – is a much better substrate for AKR1C3 than androstenedione itself (127), which
407 explains why 11KT is the second-most abundant circulating 11-oxo-androgen in both 21OHD
408 patients and unaffected individuals. In addition, 11KT is a substrate for the 5 α -reductases (124),
409 yielding 11-ketoDHT (11KDHT), which appears to be a more potent androgen than 11KT
410 (reviewed in (86)), but is not detected in relevant concentrations in circulation.

411 In women with 21OHD, 11KT rises roughly proportionately to testosterone (123), reflecting
412 the adrenal rather than gonadal origin of these androgens. Furthermore, 11-oxo-androgens are poor
413 substrates for aromatase; whereas 11-oxo-androgens can be converted to 11-oxygenated estrogens,
414 the latter do not contribute substantially to the circulating estrogen pool (128). In contrast, 11KT
415 is inversely proportional to testosterone in men (123) and in boys Tanner stage 3-5 (129) with
416 21OHD. This is because men with poor disease control produce more 11OH-androstenedione,
417 which is preferentially metabolized to 11KT which then suppresses the hypothalamic-pituitary-
418 testicular axis, thereby decreasing testicular secretion of testosterone. In men with good disease
419 control, 11KT synthesis is low, whereas testicular testosterone synthesis is normal. Hence, a low
420 11KT/testosterone ratio in a man with 21OHD indicates both good disease control and good
421 testicular function.

422 It is difficult to evaluate long-term disease control in adults with classic CAH. Assessing
423 adrenal size, which might be the ultimate assessment, requires cross-sectional imaging with
424 associated cost and radiation exposure. The 11-oxo-androgens (and 21-deoxycortisol), correlate
425 better with adrenal size than traditional biomarkers of short-term disease control, such as
426 androstenedione and 17OHP (129). Elevated 11-oxo-androgens are also predictive of menstrual
427 irregularity in women and of TARTs in men with CAH (129). In contrast to DHEAS,
428 androstenedione and testosterone, 11KT does not decline with age in women from 20 to 80-years
429 old, and 11KT declines very gradually in men over the same age range (130). These data suggest
430 that 11-oxo-androgens may be useful biomarkers of 21OHD control well into adulthood and in
431 hypogonadal states. In patients with NC CAH, 11-oxo-androgens are elevated about 2-fold
432 compared to women with clinical features of androgen excess, although 11-oxo-androgens alone
433 cannot be used to establish the diagnosis of NC CAH (131). Finally, limited data suggest that 11-
434 oxo-androgens are rather specific for 21OHD and are not elevated in other androgen-excess forms
435 of CAH such as 11 β -hydroxylase deficiency and 3 β HSD2 deficiency, because either CYP11B1
436 activity or intra-adrenal androstenedione production are low, respectively (86,123).

437 In summary, androgens are generated in CAH patients via all three major pathways (132). First,
438 classic pathway androgen synthesis is enhanced through increased conversion of accumulating
439 17OHP to androstenedione via the 17,20-lyase activity of CYP17A1, an ordinarily minor reaction
440 compared to the preferred conversion of 17OH-Preg to DHEA (60). Second, the androstenedione
441 so generated consequently drives increased substrate flow to the 11-oxoandrogen pathway,
442 through conversion of androstenedione to 11 β -hydroxyandrostenedione. Third, while the
443 alternative pathway to DHT contributes to excess androgen generation in 21OHD, its relative

444 contribution appears to be more limited than that of classic and 11-oxo-pathways, as indicated by
445 in vivo urinary steroid metabolite profiling in CAH patients during glucocorticoid therapy (133).

446 3. **Biological activities of steroidal intermediates**

447 Aside from defects in StAR and CYP11A1, in which essentially no steroids are secreted, a
448 hallmark of inherited enzymatic defects in adrenal steroidogenesis is the accumulation of
449 ‘upstream’ steroids, proximal to the affected enzymatic step, which provide useful diagnostic
450 markers. In 21OHD, 17OHP, the steroid before 21-hydroxylase, accumulates and is traditionally
451 used to diagnose 21OHD (1,134,135). Besides 17OHP, several other ‘upstream’ steroids such as
452 pregnenolone, 17OH-Preg and progesterone, and may also accumulate but are not diagnostically
453 specific. In the absence of 21-hydroxylase activity, a substantial portion of 17OHP is converted
454 into 21-deoxycortisol by CYP11B1 (**Figure 1**). 21-deoxycortisol is a potentially useful marker
455 for the diagnosis of 21OHD (136).

456 Some steroids that accumulate in 21OHD, including 21-deoxycortisol, progesterone and
457 17OHP, may also bind to glucocorticoid or mineralocorticoid receptors and act variously as either
458 agonists or antagonists. In vitro, 21-deoxycortisol, corticosterone, 17OHP, and progesterone bind
459 the glucocorticoid receptor with 24-43% of the affinity of cortisol. However, the transactivation
460 activities of progesterone and 17OHP were only 0.2 to 0.8% of that for cortisol, whereas the
461 transactivation activity of 21-deoxycortisol was 8.5% and 17% in two different assays (137,138).
462 By contrast, 17OHP and progesterone inhibit aldosterone-mediated transactivation of the
463 mineralocorticoid receptor in a dose-dependent fashion, explaining the strong anti-
464 mineralocorticoid effect of 17OHP and progesterone in vitro (139,140). Androstenedione and
465 testosterone had no effect on mineralocorticoid receptor transactivation (140).

466 The clinical implications of these findings are not yet completely understood. Some adult
467 classic CAH patients stop glucocorticoid medication without developing symptoms and signs of
468 adrenal insufficiency (137,141). Perhaps elevated levels of other steroids partially compensate for
469 the low cortisol concentrations (142). Moreover, 21-hydroxylation of progesterone by hepatic
470 cytochrome P450 enzymes other than CYP21A2 may permit some mineralocorticoid (11-
471 deoxycorticosterone) synthesis (102). Clinical consequences of treatment lapses include androgen
472 excess in women and TARTs in men, adrenal hyperplasia and/or tumors, as well as the theoretical
473 risk of adrenal crisis in all patients.

474 **III. GENETICS IN CAH**

475 21OHD is caused by inactivating mutations in the gene coding for adrenal 21-hydroxylase
476 (*CYP21A2*, older nomenclature *CYP21*, *CYP21B*, *P450c21B*; GeneID 1589).

477 **A. *The CYP21 genes and the surrounding genetic region***

478 The *CYP21A2* gene encodes the microsomal P450 enzyme, 21-hydroxylase (*CYP21A2*,
479 *P450c21*), a protein of 495 amino acids. *CYP21A2* is located in the HLA Class III region on the
480 short arm of chromosome 6 (6p21.3), approximately 30-kilobases apart from the non-functional
481 *CYP21A1P* pseudogene (**Figure 2**). *CYP21A2* and *CYP21A1P* both consist of 10 exons and share
482 high nucleotide homology of about 98% and 96% in exons and introns respectively (143,144).
483 *CYP21A1P* and *CYP21A2* are arranged in tandem with the *C4A* and *C4B* genes encoding the fourth
484 complement factor (145). There are additional sense and antisense transcripts of unknown
485 significance near or overlapping the CYP21 genes (146,147). The *C4/CYP21* unit is flanked by
486 the serine-threonine kinase-19 (*STK19*, *RPI*) gene on the telomeric side and by the tenascin-X
487 gene (*TNXB*, which encodes an extracellular matrix protein on the opposite DNA strand)(148) on
488 the centromeric side, and their pseudogenes, *STK19B* and *TNXA*, forming a 30 kb tandem repeat

489 sometimes referred to as an RCCX module (*RP-C4-CYP21-TNX*) (149). The *STK19*, *C4* and
490 *CYP21* genes are transcribed in the telomeric to centromeric direction, whereas *TNXB* is
491 transcribed from the opposite strand. Most chromosomes have two copies of the module with a
492 *CYP21A1P* pseudogene in the telomeric module and a *CYP21A2* gene in the centromeric module.
493 However, this locus shows high structural variability with monomodular, trimodular or even
494 quadrimodular haplotypes detected (150,151). The *TNXA* and *STK19B* pseudogenes were
495 truncated during the duplication of the ancestral RCCX module. The last exons of *TNXA* and *TNXB*
496 overlap the 3-prime untranslated regions of exon 10 of *CYP21A1P* and *CYP21A2*, respectively.

497 *CYP21A1P* is transcribed but its mRNA cannot encode a functional protein owing to at least
498 10 deleterious mutations (143,144) including two frameshifts (8 bp deletion in exon 3, 1 bp
499 insertion in exon 7, a nonsense mutation (p.Gln318stop; Q318X) (152), and a mutation in intron 2
500 that activates a cryptic splice site and causes an extra 19 nucleotides to be included in the mRNA
501 (153). Missense mutations in the pseudogene include p.Pro30Leu (P30L) (108), p.Ile172Asn
502 (I172N) (154), a cluster of missense mutations in exon 6, p.Ile236Asn, Val237Glu, Met239Lys
503 (I236N, V237E, M239K), p.Val281Leu (V281L) (155) and p.Arg356Trp (R356W). Additionally,
504 4 single nucleotide differences in the 5' flanking region of *CYP21A1P* reduce its transcriptional
505 activity to 20% of that of *CYP21A2* (see section III.B.3)(146). Note that there is a polymorphism
506 of no functional significance in the hydrophobic leader sequence at the amino terminus of
507 *CYP21A2*, consisting of a single amino acid insertion. Consequently, some publications and
508 databases list mutations with positions incremented by 1; e.g. P31L instead of P30L.

509 B. *CYP21A2 gene expression*

510 1. **Pattern of *CYP21A2* expression**

511 By immunohistochemistry, *CYP21A2* expression is first detected robustly at 50–52 days
512 postconception within the nascent inner fetal zone. Within the outer definitive zone, *CYP21A2*, is
513 more weakly detected and persists up to 14 weeks postconception. All other enzymes required for
514 cortisol biosynthesis are present as well, and cortisol concentrations within the fetal adrenal are
515 high during the first trimester (156). From 14 to 22 weeks, *CYP21A2* is expressed only in the fetal
516 and transitional zones, but not the definitive zone, and cortisol secretion is relatively low; definitive
517 zone expression is detected starting at 23 weeks and continuing through the remainder of gestation,
518 as cortisol secretion increases (157). Cortisol secretion in the first trimester suppresses DHEA
519 production and thus minimizes fetal androgen secretion until placental aromatase expression
520 increases in the second trimester, by which time differentiation of the external genitalia is complete
521 and cannot be affected by DHEA levels. Cortisol is again required in the third trimester to support
522 lung maturation, including surfactant production (158). Low expression of *CYP21A2* during the
523 second trimester partially explains the high incidence of false-positives in newborn screens for
524 CAH in premature infants (see section IV.A)(159).

525 In normal adult adrenal glands, *CYP21A2* immunoreactivity is detected in all three cortical
526 layers, particularly the zonae glomerulosa and reticularis, with variegated expression in the zona
527 fasciculata. The immunoreactivity is more intense in adrenals from patients with Cushing disease
528 and at sites of regeneration in normal adrenal glands (160).

529 In addition to the adrenal cortex, *CYP21A2* is detected in other tissues by RT-PCR. These
530 include lymphocytes, which also express an additional 21-hydroxylase activity that is not mediated
531 by *CYP21A2* (161). *CYP21A2* is expressed throughout the human heart at levels approximately

532 0.1% those in the adrenal cortex. Expression patterns of other steroidogenic enzymes suggest
533 autocrine or paracrine roles for corticosterone and deoxycorticosterone, but not cortisol or
534 aldosterone, in the normal adult human heart (162).

535 2. Regulation of *CYP21A2* expression

536 Cortisol secretion is regulated mainly by ACTH, which acts via the G α -protein coupled MC2R
537 receptor to increase activity of adenylyl cyclase and thus increase intracellular levels of cAMP.
538 This in turn increases activity of protein kinase A. The main effect of corticotropin releasing
539 hormone (CRH) secreted by the hypothalamus is to increase ACTH secretion by the pituitary gland,
540 but additionally, it may act directly on adrenocortical cells to increase cortisol secretion, and
541 expression of *CYP21A2* and other steroidogenic enzymes (163). Infection, fever and pyrogens
542 stimulate the release of interleukins IL-1 and IL-6, promoting secretion of CRH, and stimulate IL-
543 2 and TNF promoting release of ACTH, increasing cortisol secretion during inflammation (164);
544 IL-6 can also directly stimulate adrenal synthesis and release of cortisol (165).

545 In contrast, aldosterone secretion is regulated mainly by angiotensin II, which activates the Gq-
546 protein coupled angiotensin 2 receptor (AT2R) , which acts primarily through the protein kinase
547 C pathway but also through Ca²⁺ signaling (166). Additionally, high extracellular potassium levels
548 trigger voltage sensitive calcium channels that also increase intracellular calcium levels. Calcium
549 then increases activity of protein kinase C (167).

550 Regulation of *CYP21A2* expression is consistent with these trophic stimuli. In the H295R human
551 adrenocortical cell line (168,169) and also in primary cultures of human adrenocortical cells
552 (169,170), mRNA and/or protein expression of *CYP21A2* are induced by increases in cAMP
553 analogs and by angiotensin II or tetradecanoyl phorbol acetate, which stimulate protein kinase C.
554 Insulin and IGF-I are additional trophic stimuli (170). Additional hormone and environmental

555 factors may regulate *CYP21A2* expression. These include orexins, which stimulate secretion of
556 cortisol (171), and potential endocrine disruptors including brominated flame retardants (172,173)
557 and organic freshwater contaminants (174).

558 3. **Transcriptional control of *CYP21A1P* and *CYP21A2***

559 The most important *CYP21A2* transcript begins 10–11 nucleotides before the initial AUG
560 codon (143). *CYP21A1P* is also transcribed specifically in the intact adrenal cortex at a level 10–
561 20% that of *CYP21A2* (146). However, the first 2 introns are inconsistently spliced out, and an
562 uncertain proportion of transcripts include additional exons in the region between the end of
563 *CYP21A1P* and the beginning of *C4B*. Some of these exons may overlap the truncated *TNXA* gene.
564 Adrenal transcripts in the same direction as *CYP21A2* have also been detected overlapping *TNXB*;
565 these are also of uncertain functional significance (175).

566 Similarly, *CYP21A1P* transcripts cannot be detected in primary cultures of human
567 adrenocortical cells, whereas *CYP21A2* is appropriately expressed under the same conditions
568 (170,176). In cultured mouse Y-1 or human H295 adrenocortical cells, the 5' flanking region of
569 human *CYP21A2* drives basal expression of reporter constructs at levels 2.5–8 times higher than
570 the corresponding region of *CYP21A1P* (176-178). Sequences responsible for this difference have
571 been localized to the first 176 nucleotides (176) although sequences upstream of this region are
572 required for full expression. There are only 4 nucleotide differences (-126C>T, -113G>A, -
573 110T>C, and -103A>G) between *CYP21A1P* and *CYP21A2* in this region. The first two listed
574 affect binding of the Sp1 transcription factor. In patients with 21OHD, gene conversions involving
575 this region reduce but do not eliminate *CYP21A2* expression. In isolation with no additional
576 mutations present, they can be associated with NC CAH (179). When the gene conversion extends

577 to the P30L missense mutation (which is usually a Group C, i.e. nonclassic allele; see section III.D),
578 it becomes a simple virilizing (Group B) allele (180).

579 The most important transcription factor for adrenal-specific expression of *CYP21A2* is
580 steroidogenic factor-1 (SF-1, Ad4BP, NR5A1). This protein is also required for development of
581 the adrenal gland and gonads (181,182). It interacts with specific DNA elements both within the
582 proximal promoter and in intron 35 of the linked *C4B* gene (183).

583 Additional relevant transcription factors include nerve growth factor induced-B (NGFI-B,
584 Nur77, NR4A1)(169,184), and Nur-related factor 1 (NURR1) (NR4A2); they may overlap in their
585 functions (185). NGFI-B is phosphorylated under basal conditions and dephosphorylated in
586 response to ACTH, which activates it. Thus it may help to mediate ACTH regulation of *CYP21A2*
587 expression. These transcription factors may also be important for mediating gene regulation by
588 angiotensin II (167). A third closely related transcription factor, neuron-derived orphan receptor 1
589 (NOR1, NR4A3), is also expressed in the adrenal cortex and may function similarly (186).

590

591 C. *Molecular genetics of CAH*

592 Over 90% of mutations causing 21OHD are the consequence of intergenic recombinations
593 within the 30 kb tandem repeat (**Figure 2**), promoted by the high recombination rate in the HLA
594 region along with the nucleotide identity shared across the 30 kb repeat. These include both
595 deletions generated by unequal meiotic crossing-over during gametogenesis, and gene conversions
596 between *CYP21A2* and the *CYP21A1P*, generated by either meiotic or mitotic events (187).
597 Unequal crossovers, owing to misalignment of the 30 kb tandem duplication, can occur with break
598 points anywhere along the duplicated region. Breakpoints originating in *STK19* or *C4A* lead to a
599 net deletion of one of the *C4* genes and *CYP21A1P* but leave *CYP21A2* unaffected. Such a

600 configuration occurs on at least 5% of normal chromosomes (145). Breakpoints originating in
601 *CYP21A1P* yield a deletion of *C4B* and a single chimeric *CYP21* gene that has a 5' end
602 corresponding to *CYP21A1P* and a 3' end corresponding to *CYP21A2*. This chimeric gene usually
603 (but not always (188)) includes *CYP21A1P* mutations that prevent synthesis of a functional protein,
604 so it represents a null allele and thus is usually referred to as a *CYP21A2* deletion. Occasionally a
605 breakpoint occurs in the *TNX* genes, leading to complete deletion of *C4B* and *CYP21A2*, and a
606 *TNXB/TNXA* chimeric gene (149,150,189). Homozygosity for such a chimera leads to a contiguous
607 gene syndrome consisting of CAH and Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (190), which is rarely clinically
608 reported in patients with severe CAH. However, 7-14% of patients with CAH have heterozygous
609 *TNXB* mutations (191,192). This extended phenotype has been termed the CAH-X syndrome.
610 CAH-X is associated with joint hypermobility, chronic arthralgia, joint subluxations, hernias, and
611 cardiac defects (193,194). Deletions account for approximately 20% of mutant alleles in 21OHD
612 (189,195-213). *CYP21A2* gene duplications are relatively common in some populations (214,215).
613 Many of these alleles carrying a *CYP21A2* gene duplication have a p.Gln318X (Q318X) mutation
614 in the duplicated *CYP21A2* gene next to the *TNXB* gene, and a wild-type *CYP21A2* gene next to
615 the *TNXA* pseudogene. Importantly, such alleles are non-disease causing, but can be easily
616 misinterpreted (214).

617 Approximately 70-75% of disease-causing *CYP21A2* mutations arise from the transfer of
618 deleterious mutations from *CYP21A1P*, i.e, gene conversion (**Figure 3**). In addition, over 200
619 pseudogene-independent mutations are listed in the Human Gene Mutation Database (HGMD,
620 <http://www.hgmd.cf.ac.uk>) and the Pharmacogene Variation Consortium
621 (<https://www.pharmvar.org/gene/CYP21A2>). Most of these rare mutations are sporadic. However,
622 due to founder effects increased frequencies of some pseudogene-independent mutations are

623 observed in some populations. Deletions, the splice site mutation in intron 2 (c.293-13A/C>G) and
624 p.Ile172Asn (I172N) are the most common mutations in most populations (189,195-213). The
625 p.Val281Leu (V281L) mutation is by far the most common allele detected in patients with NC
626 CAH and is highly prevalent in Ashkenazi Jews (155). Novel or rare mutations account for about
627 3-5% of detected mutations in large cohorts. The vast majority of these rare mutations have been
628 identified in single families or small populations. Approximately 1-2% of *CYP21A2* disease
629 causing mutations arise *de novo*.

630

631 D. *Genotype-phenotype correlation*

632 In descending order of compromised 21-hydroxylase activity, 4 general groups of *CYP21A2*
633 mutations have been established to predict the phenotype (**Figure 3**)
634 (195,196,201,203,208,213,216). Deletions, large gene conversions, nonsense mutations,
635 frameshifts, and missense mutations that totally abolish enzymatic activity are SW classic alleles,
636 comprising mutation Group 0 (“null”). A single nucleotide mutation that alters splicing of intron
637 2 (c.293-13A/C>G, “intron 2 G” mutation) (153) is particularly common, comprising 20-25% of
638 mutant alleles in most populations (**Table 2**). It has been seen in both SW and SV patients,
639 suggesting that there is a small amount of normally-spliced mRNA; it is generally considered its
640 own separate Group A (in the first analysis of this sort (195), Groups 0 and A were referred to as
641 Groups A1 and A2, respectively). A nonconservative amino-acid substitution, p.Ile172Asn
642 (I172N)(154) reduces enzymatic activity to <5% of normal and is associated with the SV form of
643 the disorder (mutation Group B)(107,109,221). Finally, missense mutations such as p.Val281Leu
644 (V281L) and p.Pro30Leu (P30L) (108) reduce enzyme activity to ~20-50% of normal (mutation
645 Group C), and are associated with NC CAH. Although enzyme function in vitro appears to be

646 similar (111), clinical observations suggest that patients carrying the P30L allele are somewhat
647 more symptomatic, straddling the border between SV and NC forms of CAH (213,222). As noted
648 in section III.B.3, in many cases this may be a consequence of gene conversions extending into
649 the 5' flanking transcriptional regulatory region, thus impairing gene expression (180).

650 CAH due to 21OHD is an autosomal recessive condition. About 65–75% of 21OHD patients
651 are compound heterozygotes; i.e., they carry different mutations on each allele. In cohort studies,
652 the clinical phenotype of CAH strongly correlates with the less severely impaired *CYP21A2* allele
653 (**Figure 3**); 96% of individuals carrying two Group 0 alleles have SW CAH, whereas 97% of those
654 with at least one Group C allele have NC CAH. The correlation is somewhat less strong for the
655 groups with enzymatic impairment of intermediate severity (Groups A and B, and the P30L
656 mutation). To some extent, this reflects the fact that the distinctions between SW and SV CAH, or
657 SV and NC CAH, are a continuum, and not absolute. For example, many SV CAH patients
658 nevertheless require mineralocorticoid supplementation early in life and might be classified as SW,
659 whereas the distinction between the SV and NC forms can be particularly challenging in males.
660 Without exhaustive sequencing, it is difficult to rule out the existence of additional mutations in
661 introns or flanking regions that might affect mRNA processing or gene expression; as noted in
662 section III.B.3, one transcriptional control region is several kilobases away from *CYP21A2*, in the
663 *C4B* gene (183). Data correlating genotype with intermediate phenotypes are limited and often are
664 not presented in a way that permits meta-analysis. In both American (195,223) and German (201)
665 data, median (interquartile range) Prader virilization scores (**Figure 4**) for females in Groups 0, A,
666 B and C are 4 (3-5), 4 (3-5), 3 (2-4) and 0 (0-2) respectively. (201). A similar correlation of severity
667 with genotype is seen when evaluating genital appearance in adult women (224). No factors
668 modulating androgen effects have been demonstrated to influence the degree of virilization

669 associated with each genotype group. Basal levels of 17OHP are also correlated with genotype
670 (195,200,201,225), with different studies reporting mean levels (in ng/dl) in Groups 0/A, B and C
671 of 23-41,000, 10-18,000, and 3-8000, respectively. However, there is substantial overlap in values
672 between genotype groups. Adult height and mean hydrocortisone doses are also influenced by
673 genotype (226). There are limited data directly correlating psychosexual functioning with
674 genotype (224,225), but gender dysphoria does tend to be most severe in women with SW CAH,
675 which in turn is highly correlated with group 0 and A genotypes (227). Long-term health outcomes
676 in adults do not correlate well with the genotype (212). However, girls and women with more
677 severe *CYP21A2* genotypes appear to have an increased risk for psychiatric conditions (228) and
678 variations of the complement component C4 may influence the risk of psychopathology (229). In
679 summary, genotype-phenotype correlations are strong but not absolute, and clinical management
680 should be based on clinical and hormonal data.

681 By analyzing the *CYP21A2* crystal structure, novel insights into the underlying molecular
682 pathology have been gained (105,230). Null and other severely deleterious mutations commonly
683 disrupt heme and/or substrate binding domains, the anchoring of the protein to the membrane, or
684 impair protein stability. Mutations categorized as group B partially impair membrane anchoring
685 or affect conserved hydrophobic clusters within the protein. Milder mutations (group C) result in
686 less severe alterations, often interfering with electron transfer from POR, salt-bridge and
687 hydrogen-bonding networks, and non-conserved hydrophobic clusters (105). However, other
688 factors potentially influence enzymatic activity including mRNA expression, splicing and stability,
689 and protein stability.

690 **IV.DIAGNOSTICS**

691 **A. Neonatal screening**

692 **1. Benefits**

693 Neonatal screening for classic CAH was introduced to prevent morbidity and mortality due to
694 adrenal crisis. Currently, all 50 states in the US, 35 other countries, and portions of 17 additional
695 countries screen for CAH (231,232). Results of these screens indicate that the incidence of classic
696 CAH in most populations is approximately 1:14,000 to 1:18,000. **Table 1** summarizes data since
697 2008; data reviewed 1997-2004 are similar (233-235). Although newborn screening for CAH is
698 now performed in an increasing number of countries, protocols and reported outcomes vary widely
699 (236).

700 Screening markedly reduces the time to diagnosis of infants with classic CAH (89,237-239),
701 consequently reducing morbidity and mortality. Diagnosis is more likely to be delayed in males
702 owing to the lack of genital ambiguity. Thus, a relative paucity of males in a patient population
703 may be taken as indirect evidence of unreported deaths from salt-wasting crises. Females do
704 outnumber males in some (12,240,241) although not all (242) retrospective studies in which CAH
705 was clinically diagnosed without neonatal screening. Moreover, there is a greater preponderance
706 of severe genotypes in screened infants than in those ascertained prior to screening, again
707 suggesting extra deaths of severely affected infants prior to screening (2,243). Nevertheless, infant
708 deaths from CAH are now rare (0-4%) in advanced economies even without screening (244,245).

709 Infants ascertained through screening have less severe hyponatremia and shorter
710 hospitalizations (238,242,246,247). The delay before correct sex assignment of severely virilized
711 females is also markedly reduced (233). Moreover, males with SV CAH, and (mildly) virilized
712 females, may otherwise not be diagnosed until later in childhood, at which time height may already

713 be compromised. Although not an aim of screening, children with NC CAH are occasionally
714 diagnosed. In some cases, the consequent close monitoring and, if necessary, treatment may
715 improve adult height.

716 2. Initial screening methodology

717 First-tier screens for CAH due to 21OHD employ immunoassays to measure 17OHP in dried
718 blood spots on the same filter paper (“Guthrie”) cards used for other newborn screening tests
719 (238,248,249). Radioimmunoassay (RIA) was the first method developed (250), but automated
720 time-resolved dissociation-enhanced lanthanide fluoroimmunoassay (DELFLIA) has almost
721 completely supplanted other immunoassays (251).

722 The main drawback to screening is that false positive rates are high, leading to substantial costs
723 for evaluation and increasing parental concern. Several factors limit accuracy of these tests. First,
724 premature, sick, or stressed infants tend to have higher levels of 17OHP than term infants; as
725 studied by high-performance liquid chromatography, preterm infants have a functional deficiency
726 of several adrenal steroidogenic enzymes with a nadir in function at 29 weeks of gestation (159).
727 This “adrenal prematurity” can generate many false positives unless screening programs use higher
728 screening cut-offs for preterm infants. For example, in 26 years of operation of the Swedish
729 screening program, the positive predictive value for full-term infants was 25%, whereas it was
730 only 1.4% for preterm infants, and it correlated very strongly with gestational age (252). There
731 are no universally accepted standards for stratifying infants. Most laboratories use a series of birth
732 weight-adjusted cut-offs (253,254) but actual gestational age, or both, might be preferable, because
733 gestational age correlates much better with 17OHP levels (27,255).

734 Second, 17OHP levels are normally high after birth, decreasing rapidly during the first few
735 postnatal days in healthy infants. In contrast, 17OHP levels increase with time in infants with

736 21OHD. Thus, diagnostic accuracy is poor in the first 2 days, and screening a second sample
737 several days later improves both sensitivity and positive predictive value with the risk of delaying
738 treatment (89,249,256). Moreover, a comparison of one-screen versus two-screen state programs
739 found a higher incidence of 21OHD when a second screen was employed (257). It has been
740 suggested that preterm infants should have additional samples rescreened at 2 and 4 weeks of age,
741 most practical in a hospitalized population where potential salt-wasting can be monitored (254).

742 Multiple courses of antenatal corticosteroids might reduce 17OHP levels and thus potentially
743 increase the likelihood of false negative screens. Studies have reported inconsistent effects of
744 antenatal corticosteroid administration in practice (258,259). Testing of later samples should
745 minimize this problem, but the delay may increase the risk of salt-wasting crisis.

746 Female infants have lower mean circulating 17OHP levels than males, slightly reducing
747 screening sensitivity (260). Because almost all females with SW CAH are virilized, most of them
748 are diagnosed based on clinical symptoms, and therefore the reduced sensitivity is not usually
749 problematic. However, even severely virilized girls can be missed as virilization is not always
750 noticed at physical examination (2,22,261,262). Finally, immunoassays may lack specificity; this
751 is discussed in Section IV.B.

752 3. Second-Tier Screening

753 Because 21OHD is a rare disease, the positive predictive value of neonatal screening is low,
754 even though the specificity and sensitivity of the tests are very high (232). The positive predictive
755 value might be improved with a second-tier screen.

756 a) *Biochemical Second Screens*

757 Direct biochemical analysis of steroids in blood samples using LC-MS/MS can obviate the
758 specificity problems of immunoassays (263-265) and both heel stick blood samples (266) and urine

759 samples (267,268) can also be analyzed by mass spectrometric methods. Measuring 21-
760 deoxycortisol instead of 17OHP may improve diagnostic accuracy (136). Measuring steroid ratios
761 further improves the screening specificity of LC-MS/MS. Such ratios have included
762 (17OHP+androstenedione)/cortisol (263,269,270), 17OHP/11-deoxycortisol (271), and
763 (17OHP+21-deoxycortisol)/cortisol(265). Some (272,273) but not all (254) laboratories have
764 reported markedly superior results with these approaches, with one recent report claiming a
765 positive predictive value of 71% (270). A recent statistical approach using principal component
766 analysis of six steroid levels (17OHP, both first and second-tier, 11-deoxycortisol,
767 androstenedione, 21-deoxycortisol and cortisol) achieved a positive predictive value of 67% (274).
768 Consistency of results might be improved by mandating participation in national proficiency
769 testing programs (275). However, caution should be exercised in developing reference ranges for
770 assays using dried blood spots that have been stored for prolonged periods at room temperature,
771 because cortisol and 11-deoxycortisol are not stable past 4 weeks of such storage (276).

772 *b) Molecular Genetic Second Screens.*

773 *CYP21A2* mutations can be detected in DNA extracted from the same dried blood spots used
774 for hormonal screening (see Section IV.A.2). Because >90% of mutant alleles carry one or more
775 of a discrete number of mutations, we can assume with >99% confidence that samples that carry
776 none of these mutations are unaffected. Several studies of genotyping of samples from screening
777 programs have suggested that this is a potentially useful adjunct to hormonal measurements (277-
778 282), but there has been no large-scale study of its efficacy as a second-tier screen in actual use.

779

780 **B. Biochemical evaluation**

781 Determining levels of steroid hormones and their precursors is a mainstay of diagnosis and
782 management of CAH. Currently, the determination of steroid hormones rests on analytical
783 techniques either based on the principle of immunoassay or on chromatographic methods coupled
784 to mass spectrometry (283).

785 The specificity of the antibody is crucial for the reliability of an immunoassay. Inefficient
786 discrimination between the analyte and structurally closely related substances will lead to cross
787 reactivity with consequent overestimation of the amount of analyte. The overestimation of 17OHP
788 in serum or plasma of premature infants, neonates or young infants by immunoassay techniques
789 used in screening procedures or clinical routine with the consecutive risk of over-diagnosing
790 21OHD, presents a typical and important example of this phenomenon (284). Cross-reactivity has
791 been documented with 17-OH pregnenolone sulfate, a steroid originating in extremely high
792 amounts from the fetal zone of the fetal adrenal (285), and 15 β -hydroxylated compounds
793 apparently generated by gut bacteria and resorbed through the entero-hepatic circulation (286).
794 There may be additional substances in dried blood spots that interfere with immunoassays (matrix
795 effect)(287). The DELFIA was reformulated in late 2009 to make it less sensitive to cross-reacting
796 compounds in premature infants (288). This modification improved the positive predictive value
797 from 0.4% to 3.7% for the first screen (249). The specificity of immunoassays may be further
798 improved with organic extraction to remove cross-reacting substances, such as steroid sulfates.
799 Additional preparative steps such as extraction, chromatographic pre-purification or dilution can
800 help to circumvent matrix effects.

801 Currently, mass spectrometry represents the most versatile and exact of all analytical
802 techniques for steroids. Initial separation by liquid chromatography (LC) or gas chromatography

803 (GC) can consistently improve specificity, and it also permits multi-component analysis, i.e. the
804 simultaneous determination of multiple analytes in a single run. This development laid the
805 foundation for the field of metabolomics, which presents the unbiased and systematic study of
806 small molecules present in a biological sample. If mass spectrometry records all ions of a particular
807 mass range, this is called an “untargeted” mode. If operated in “targeted” mode, mass spectrometry
808 only records preselected ions (283).

809 Of all separation techniques, GC provides the best resolution of steroids. In combination with
810 MS as the detection method, GC-MS presents a robust analytical tool, unsurpassed in determining
811 simultaneously a multitude of steroids including precursors or metabolites of progestins,
812 glucocorticoids, mineralocorticoids (all C₂₁-steroids), androgens (C₁₉-steroids) and estrogens (C₁₈-
813 steroids) (289,290). GC-MS is particularly useful for urinary steroid metabolome analysis, but it
814 can also be applied to the analysis of blood or tissues (291) or be used as a gold standard in quality
815 assurance (292). As over two-thirds of steroid hormones and their metabolites are excreted into
816 urine, the measurement of these urinary steroids provides an integrated picture of a patient’s steroid
817 hormonal status (steroidal fingerprint) and has enormous diagnostic power. Adrenal enzyme
818 defects show unique metabolic patterns (disease signatures, metabotypes) (293). Usually, a spot
819 urine sample is sufficient for diagnosing an adrenal enzyme defect (268,294,295). Timed samples
820 (e.g. 24-hr urine) provide additional information on hormonal production rates via determination
821 of steroid excretion rates (296,297). This information aids the diagnosis of hormonal
822 overproduction syndromes, e.g. Cushing syndrome or tumors, as well as in assessing compliance
823 with hormonal therapy in CAH (298,299). Moreover, this approach has been used to dissect the
824 contribution of the three androgen biosynthesis pathways discussed in Section II.C (133,300,301).
825 Unbiased systems biology approaches allow for clustering and describing various metabotypes

826 (302), reclassifying hitherto uncharacterized conditions (303) or improving metabolic monitoring
827 of 21OHD (304,305).

828 LC-MS is a more recent technique than GC-MS (303). Tandem MS (MS/MS) provides an extra
829 level of filtering, thus improving the relatively poor separation properties of LC. Simple work up
830 procedures and short run times permit much greater throughput than with GC-MS (283). Currently,
831 determination of most clinically relevant steroid hormones in plasma or serum can be carried out
832 by LC-MS/MS. It is the technique of choice for determining conjugated steroids (306). However,
833 factors such as relatively low chromatographic resolution and lower ionization fraction, compared
834 with electron impact in GC-MS, can impair the specificity of LC-MS/MS. Thus, GC-MS and LC-
835 MS/MS should be considered complementary techniques.

836 Whatever analytical method is used, thorough method validation is a *sine qua non*. Important
837 aspects of method validation comprise assessment of sensitivity, precision, reproducibility,
838 accuracy, limits of quantification and detection, recovery, stability, carryover and matrix effects.
839 Recommendations have been published for the hormonal diagnosis of steroid related disorders
840 (307).

841

842 **C. *Molecular genetic testing for CYP21A2 gene mutations***

843 Southern blot analysis was originally the gold standard for the detection of *CYP21A2* gene
844 deletions but is no longer used clinically because it requires relatively large amounts of high-
845 quality DNA, is labor intensive, and time consuming. Moreover, *CYP21A1P* duplications and
846 certain other rearrangements at this locus may impede the detection of *CYP21A2* gene deletions or
847 duplications (308). The most widely used current approach for gene dosage determination is
848 multiplex ligation-dependent probe amplification (MLPA). MLPA requires only small amounts of

849 DNA for detection of gene deletions, rearrangements and fusion genes (212,309-311). However,
850 complex rearrangements can lead to challenges interpreting the correct genotype. The design of
851 *CYP21A2*-specific primers for PCR-based amplification is crucial to avoid amplification of the
852 pseudogene and allele dropout by non-amplifying PCR fragments. This represents a challenge due
853 to the high number of polymorphisms within *CYP21A2* and the high sequence identity with its
854 *CYP21A1* pseudogene. A variety of targeted molecular genetic strategies for detecting the
855 common mutations have been published and are established in diagnostic laboratories. However,
856 direct sequencing of the amplified PCR products combined with a method for the detection of gene
857 deletions and chimeric genes are the only available strategies that allow for the detection of close
858 to 100% of *CYP21A2* mutated alleles. If possible, carrier testing should be performed in the parents
859 to set phase (i.e., confirm the parental origin of each mutation), which is required to determine
860 compound heterozygosity, distinguish hemizygoty from homozygosity in the index case, and
861 estimate the recurrence risk.

862

863 ***D. Prenatal diagnosis***

864 Prenatal diagnosis can be performed when both parents are carriers of *CYP21A2* mutations;
865 most often this situation arises when they have a previous child with 21OHD. The possible
866 methods for prenatal diagnosis have increased over the past decades. However, methods involving
867 invasive sampling should only be performed if the results will lead to changes in approach or
868 treatment (312).

869 Analysis of fetal hormones in amniotic fluid was the initial method available for prenatal
870 diagnosis (313-315). Fetal cells obtained this way were originally used for HLA typing to
871 determine the inheritance of maternal and paternal haplotypes (*CYP21A2* is located in the *HLA*

872 complex)(316) but can also be used for genetic analysis, although cells must first be cultured, a
873 time-consuming process.

874 Chorionic villus sampling to obtain fetal DNA can be performed as early as gestational week
875 10-11, as compared to week 12-14 for amniocentesis (317). This method is available in many
876 countries and centers today. Both amniocentesis and chorionic villus sampling are associated with
877 a small but increased risk of fetal loss (318).

878 1. **Non-invasive methods**

879 Cell-free fetal DNA can be isolated from maternal plasma (319). Unlike fetal cells, it
880 disappears from the maternal circulation shortly after delivery (319,320) and therefore does not
881 confound prenatal genetic investigations in subsequent pregnancies (321,322). Prenatal sex typing
882 (SRY detection) can be performed using PCR amplification of cell-free fetal DNA as early as week
883 6–9 (323) and may be useful in decisions regarding prenatal treatment with dexamethasone to
884 minimize treatment of male fetuses (see section V.C) (324). Next generation sequencing of cell-
885 free fetal DNA can ascertain mutations, but it is challenging to detect *CYP21A2* mutations in this
886 manner because the vast majority of such mutations are already present in the *CYP21A1P*
887 pseudogene. Instead, targeted massive parallel sequencing of cell-free fetal DNA in maternal
888 plasma can identify SNPs flanking *CYP21A2* that are specific for the mother, father, and proband
889 (previous child), thus constructing haplotype blocks to determine the maternal and paternal alleles
890 inherited by the fetus (325). The technique is promising but costly; it requires specific resources
891 and personnel and is not yet available as part of routine clinical care.

892 2. **Preimplantation genetic diagnosis**

893 Preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) is available in many countries for families at risk of
894 having a child with a severe genetic condition including 21OHD. PGD requires an in vitro

895 fertilization approach and enables implantation only of embryos without the specific genetic
896 disorder. It may present ethical challenges beyond the scope of this review (326). The preferred
897 approach to obtain DNA for PGD is a biopsy at day 5-6 from the trophectoderm of the blastocyst
898 when it comprises about 120 cells. The inner cell mass that will develop into the fetus, from which
899 5-10 cells are required, can then be separated from the trophectoderm (312). If the first polar body
900 of the oocyte is used in PGD, the procedure is performed before fertilization occurs, and the
901 analysis offers the unique possibility of pre-conceptual diagnosis. The disadvantage for
902 autosomal recessive disorders is that only the oocyte is assessed and the paternal allele is not
903 included in the assessment. The rate of fetal anomalies is not increased with PGD, rather it is
904 thought that if damage occurs during the procedure it is lethal to the embryo (327).

905

906 **V. MANAGEMENT**

907 **A. *Hormonal treatment of classic CAH***

908 Treatment of classic CAH is intended to replace both glucocorticoid and if necessary,
909 mineralocorticoid hormones to prevent adrenal and salt-wasting crisis and to reduce excessive
910 corticotropin driving adrenal androgen secretion (134). Clinical goals are normal growth and
911 development and pubertal maturation from birth to adolescence, and prevention of adrenal crisis,
912 virilization, and other long-term complications discussed below (134,328,329). The levels of
913 evidence for management guidelines are detailed in The Endocrine Society's Clinical Practice
914 Guideline published in 2018 (134) and are not repeated here. There are no large-scale prospective
915 randomized trials for any therapies discussed here. As such the evidence is generally of low or
916 moderate quality and rests to some extent on expert opinion, values and preferences.
917 Glucocorticoid replacement in CAH faces three particular challenges. First, it aims to replace

918 cortisol, but current treatment strategies cannot completely mimic the circadian rhythm of cortisol
919 with a typical early morning rise of cortisol leading to a peak concentration at 6-8 AM and a nadir
920 at midnight (330). Second, it aims to mimic the adaptation to stress (331). These distinctive
921 features of physiological cortisol biosynthesis could only be closely mimicked by an infusion
922 pump (332,333) which, however, is neither practical nor cost-effective and thus not routinely
923 available. Third, it aims to restore negative feedback on pituitary ACTH drive thereby controlling
924 adrenal androgen excess (334). Normalizing ACTH levels in CAH patients requires
925 supraphysiological glucocorticoid doses compared to the mere replacement doses of cortisol
926 required in other forms of adrenal insufficiency. Treatment in classic CAH therefore constantly
927 struggles to prevent overtreatment with multiple adverse side effects on growth and on metabolic,
928 cardiovascular and bone health, or undertreatment, which carries risks life-threatening adrenal
929 crises and virilization or, in children, accelerated skeletal maturation with consequently reduced
930 adult height. Both over- and undertreatment also affect reproductive function in both sexes.

931

932

1. Treatment in the neonatal period and early infancy

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In growing children with classic CAH, the preferred glucocorticoid is the synthetic form of cortisol, hydrocortisone (HC), because its shorter half-life minimizes the adverse side effects typical of longer-acting, more potent glucocorticoids, especially growth suppression (134). As cortisone must be converted to cortisol for bioactivity (335,336) and differences in conversion rates may influence drug effectiveness, cortisone acetate is not recommended (337,338). HC should be given in 3 to 4 divided doses totaling 10-15 mg/m² daily (**Table 3**), a supraphysiological dose under which many patients show satisfactory control of adrenal androgen production. Although there are data to suggest that 4 daily doses are preferable (339), this may not be practical for many patients or their families. Data remain inconclusive regarding morning versus evening

942 dose-weighting (340,341). The total dosage should be individualized based on adequate
943 monitoring (see below) and may need to be increased for short periods in certain circumstances;
944 such increased needs are described below. Therefore, all children with CAH should be under the
945 care of a pediatric endocrinologist (342).

946 In the neonatal period, some clinicians exceed the recommended glucocorticoid dose in order
947 to reduce elevated androgen levels as quickly as possible. If this treatment strategy is adopted,
948 more frequent monitoring is necessary to rapidly reduce the dose when target levels of monitored
949 steroids are achieved, to avoid adverse effects of high doses of glucocorticoids (343). After a few
950 months, maintenance daily totals of about 3-4 mg HC divided in 3 doses (i.e., 1-2 mg three times
951 daily) are usually sufficient. Infants have low sensitivity to androgens, and completely suppressed
952 adrenal androgens should not be the main goal in the first year of life. Commercial HC tablets,
953 which may be extemporaneously crushed and mixed into food or suspended, are preferred as there
954 have been reports of variable dose accuracies in compounded preparations (344,345). A
955 suspension would be preferable for small children, but the commercial suspension was withdrawn
956 20 years ago owing to unreliable therapeutic effects, although in some countries reliable solutions
957 are now available (346). An immediate-release granule formulation of hydrocortisone (Infacort[®]/
958 Alkindi[®], Diurnal Ltd.) available in 0.5, 1, 2 and 5 mg preparations has been approved for use in
959 the EU and USA (347,348).

960 Mineralocorticoid replacement is achieved with fludrocortisone. Monitoring is discussed in
961 section V.A.5. Subclinical or overt aldosterone deficiency is present in all forms of classic CAH
962 (349,350). Therefore, fludrocortisone is given to all newborns with classic CAH detected in
963 neonatal screening programs even before hyponatremia develops. Due to relative
964 mineralocorticoid resistance and the anti-mineralocorticoid effects of elevated 17OHP in this

965 period, neonates and young infants require higher fludrocortisone doses than older children,
966 typically 100-200 µg/day but occasionally more, divided in 1-2 oral doses. However, this treatment
967 requires frequent monitoring of electrolytes, plasma renin and blood pressure and tapering the
968 fludrocortisone dose in order to avoid iatrogenic hypertension. Because of a lower glomerular
969 filtration rate, immature renal tubules and the low sodium concentration in breast milk and infant
970 formula, infants often require additional supplemental sodium chloride to maintain sodium balance.
971 The recommended dosage is approximately 1-2 g (4-8 mEq/kg/d) NaCl given in divided doses
972 ideally using a standard saline solution (351) or crushed, aliquoted sodium chloride tablets. In
973 patients receiving high doses of fludrocortisone, NaCl supplementation may not be needed (352).
974 Moreover, 0.1 mg of fludrocortisone has the glucocorticoid potency of ~1 mg of hydrocortisone,
975 so high fludrocortisone doses may permit (or require) a reduction of the hydrocortisone dose in
976 young children.

977 2. Treatment during childhood

978 Children younger than 18 months should be monitored at least every 3 months, while older
979 children should be monitored every 4-6 months or more frequently after a change in dosing. The
980 suggested target 17OHP range is 100-1200 ng/dl (3-36 nmol/l) when measured in the early
981 morning before medication (337,338), and/or age-appropriate androstenedione levels. Attempts to
982 normalize 17OHP levels should be avoided because of the risk of HC overdosing causing
983 iatrogenic Cushing syndrome. Because prepubertal children normally have low circulating sex
984 steroid levels, adequate androgen suppression is important to achieve normal growth and puberty.
985 **Table 3** provides suggested dosing guidelines (134). HC dosing requirements may vary and
986 depend on differences in HC absorption and half-life (353). Long-acting glucocorticoids should
987 be avoided in growing children except for short intervals when necessary to restore hormonal

988 control, or if HC is unavailable (**Table 4**). If used, care must be taken to avoid overdosing, which
989 will suppress growth (354-356), and the dose should be decreased as quickly as possible once
990 hormonal control is achieved.

991 Aldosterone deficiency is described in up to 75- 90% of all classic CAH patients, now viewed
992 as a continuum of phenotypes rather than strict divisions between SV and SW disease. In classic
993 CAH after infancy, fludrocortisone is usually given in doses ranging between 50-200 µg.
994 Fludrocortisone has a biological half-life of approximately 18 – 36 hours. Therefore, low doses
995 can be administered once a day, although doses above 0.1 mg may still be divided to be given
996 twice daily. In hot and humid weather conditions, some endocrinologists suggest a seasonal
997 increase in fludrocortisone, although increased salt intake may suffice. In contrast to
998 glucocorticoid treatment fludrocortisone does not need to be increased during illness (Section
999 V.A.6)

1000 3. Treatment during puberty and adolescence

1001 Puberty is often associated with difficult hormonal control, even if the replacement dose seems
1002 adequate and there is good adherence to the medication regimen. During puberty, the
1003 pharmacokinetics of HC may be altered by increased clearance due to decreased activity of 11β-
1004 HSD1. Therefore, higher glucocorticoid doses are necessary during puberty (357). However, as
1005 adult height of patients with CAH correlates negatively with the glucocorticoid dose administered
1006 in early puberty (356), HC doses exceeding 17 mg/m² per day should be used with care. Treatment
1007 should be continued with the lowest effective dose to achieve treatment goals, prioritizing height
1008 attainment over arbitrary steroid measurements. At or near the completion of growth, long-acting
1009 glucocorticoids might be considered but are not preferred.

1010 Management of CAH during adolescence and the transition from pediatric to adult health care
1011 is challenging (358). CAH patients may have poorer health, beginning in adolescence and
1012 persisting into adulthood, highlighting the importance of this period in patient care (359). Multi-
1013 disciplinary transition clinics involving pediatric and adult endocrinologists, gynecologists,
1014 urologists and psychologists may promote good medical adherence among adults with CAH (134).
1015 Uninterrupted glucocorticoid and mineralocorticoid administration at the transition from
1016 adolescence to adulthood is required to prevent increased morbidity and mortality, particularly
1017 from adrenal crises. Treatment regimens should be reassessed and adapted to the recommendations
1018 for adult CAH patients. Importantly, mineralocorticoid requirements, which change from birth to
1019 adolescence, should be reassessed in adolescence/young adulthood to avoid mineralocorticoid
1020 over- and under-replacement (360). Transition, however, is more than just prescribing steroid
1021 replacement for primary adrenal insufficiency and must address sex- and gender-specific issues
1022 (361,362). In females, obesity and hyperandrogenism are common problems leading to menstrual
1023 irregularities and hirsutism (359). Gynecologic evaluation should be offered to all adolescents with
1024 CAH at transition, particularly in cases of blocked menstrual flow, planned penetrative vaginal
1025 intercourse or desired pregnancy (134,363). Boys should have a testicular ultrasound upon
1026 completion of puberty and regular examination for TARTs (359.). All patients should be aware of
1027 the risk of reduced fertility with poor medical adherence (134). Psychosexual and genetic
1028 counseling of the adolescent patient are strongly recommended during transition (364).

1029 **4. Treatment of adults**

1030
1031 Treatment of adults with classic CAH aims to replace the missing cortisol and aldosterone, and
1032 ameliorate adrenal androgen excess (334). Optimal hormone replacement theoretically should
1033 enable normal quality of life and life expectancy. However, this aim is not always achieved, and

1034 adults with classic CAH suffer from multiple disease-associated comorbidities (365-367), reduced
1035 health-related quality of life (360) and increased mortality (368).

1036 The decision of which preparation to use for glucocorticoid treatment in adults with classic
1037 CAH is based on the clinical experience of the individual physician and on the needs of each
1038 patient (**Table 4**). In general, the lowest possible doses should be prescribed that minimize risk of
1039 adrenal crises and control androgen excess. HC is associated with better bone mineral density and
1040 better metabolic and cardiovascular outcome than dexamethasone in both sexes; prednisolone and
1041 prednisone have adverse effect profiles intermediate between HC and dexamethasone (366,369).
1042 Therefore, immediate-release HC remains the preferred option for glucocorticoid treatment in
1043 adulthood. Due to its short half-life of 4-6 hours, however, it needs to be taken 3-4 times per day
1044 and requires reliable adherence.

1045 When patient adherence to a three times daily regimen is difficult, a twice daily regimen with
1046 prednisolone or prednisone (e.g. 1-5 mg per dose, for a total daily dose of 20-25% of the previous
1047 hydrocortisone dose) might be used instead (360,370,371). Prednisolone/prednisone also has been
1048 used for fertility induction when it might be more effective and can be continued throughout
1049 pregnancy (372). Dexamethasone (Dex) also effectively helps to establish regular menstrual cycles,
1050 but it is long-acting and associated with more adverse metabolic side effects (373). In contrast to
1051 prednisolone, prednisone or HC, dexamethasone traverses the placenta and therefore should be
1052 avoided during pregnancy (the use of Dex for prenatal treatment of a possibly affected fetus is
1053 discussed in Section V.C)(134,374-377). Due to its strong adrenal-suppressive effect, Dex is
1054 preferred in the treatment of TARTs (378,379). For this purpose, it needs to be given in
1055 supraphysiological doses, and should be given for short duration to avoid adverse metabolic effects
1056 such as weight gain, striae, edema and glucose intolerance.

1057 Sustained-release HC preparations have been developed as an alternative to longer-acting
1058 synthetic corticosteroids such as prednisone/prednisolone or dexamethasone. A modified-release
1059 HC formulation Plenadren® (Shire Services BVBA, Belgium), is approved in Europe for
1060 treatment of adrenal insufficiency in adults. When given once daily to patients with primary
1061 adrenal insufficiency, it significantly improves metabolic variables such as body weight, body
1062 mass index (BMI) and HbA1c, compared to conventional hydrocortisone replacement of the same
1063 daily dose (380,381). However, data on its use in CAH patients are lacking. Clinical experience
1064 shows that once daily hydrocortisone therapy fails to control early morning rise of ACTH with
1065 subsequent excess of adrenal androgens in CAH, requiring an additional glucocorticoid dose in
1066 the evening. Excessive nighttime glucocorticoid administration has potential adverse metabolic
1067 consequences (371,382). Another modified-release preparation (Chronocort®, Diurnal, UK)
1068 addressing this CAH-specific challenge is currently under regulatory review for the treatment of
1069 CAH. It exerts a delayed (4 hours following intake) and sustained action (383). If taken at 2300
1070 (11 PM), the delayed release mimics the overnight rise and following morning peak of cortisol
1071 (383,384). A second dose is given in the morning (7 AM) ensuring cortisol supply during the day.
1072 A phase III trial including 122 patients with classic CAH revealed superior hormonal control
1073 during the early morning and early afternoon compared to patients receiving standard
1074 glucocorticoid therapy (338,385).

1075 5. Monitoring

1076 Regular follow-up should include measurement of height, weight, blood pressure and physical
1077 examination. In children, special attention should be paid to accelerated or reduced height velocity,
1078 rapid weight gain, skin and mucosal hyperpigmentation, signs of virilization, pubic hair onset,
1079 development of apocrine odor and signs of central precocious puberty such as breast development

1080 or testicular enlargement. Medical history concerning symptoms of salt craving, phases of unusual
1081 fatigue during the day, irregular menstrual cycles in girls and skin hyperpigmentation point to the
1082 need for medication titration (**Table 5**).

1083 Laboratory monitoring traditionally relies on consistently timed serum 17OHP,
1084 androstenedione and plasma renin levels, whereas ACTH measurements are superfluous (**Table**
1085 **6**). Plasma renin activity and direct renin levels are extremely variable and should be used along
1086 with standing blood pressure and electrolytes to titrate mineralocorticoid dosing (134,386). Other
1087 hormonal monitoring approaches have been suggested but are not yet used routinely. Adrenal-
1088 specific metabolites such as 21-deoxycortisol (387) and 11-oxygenated androgens (86) may
1089 provide more direct evidence for adrenal androgen production in CAH. Steroids can be measured
1090 in blood, urine (268,305), saliva (388) and dried filter-paper blood samples (389,390) and fluctuate
1091 with both the circadian rhythm and the timing of glucocorticoid intake (298,391-393).

1092 Regular bone age X-rays in growing children beyond 2 years of age are helpful to detect
1093 unwanted bone age advancement as a result of cumulative exposure to excess adrenal androgens.
1094 The clinician should be alert to signs of central precocious puberty (e.g., testicular enlargement in
1095 boys, breast development in girls) because elevated adrenal androgens may activate the
1096 hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis (134). The decision to adjust HC and fludrocortisone doses
1097 should consider clinical symptomatology and should not solely rely on laboratory data. Monitoring
1098 for reproductive complications are discussed below including reduced fertility in females (section
1099 0), and TARTs in males (see section VI.A.1).

1100 6. Management of adrenal emergency in CAH

1101 The overwhelming majority of patients with CAH survive into adulthood, but with shortened
1102 life expectancy. Adrenal crises were responsible for 42% of deaths in 588 patients with CAH in a

1103 Swedish population-based study; those with the SW form were especially at risk, as they had the
1104 lowest cortisol and aldosterone reserves (368). In a retrospective matched-cohort study in the UK,
1105 all-cause mortality rates were higher in patients with CAH, with a mean age at death of 54.8 years
1106 versus 72.8 years in controls (394). The incidence of adrenal crisis in adults with adrenal
1107 insufficiency is estimated to be 5–10 crises/100 patient years with a mortality rate of 0.5/100
1108 patient years (395). Studies of children report similar findings. Two German studies estimated the
1109 incidence of adrenal crisis after the neonatal period to be 4.9-6.5 adrenal crises/100 patient years
1110 (396,397). In an American series, 55/155 children with SW CAH were hospitalized a total of 105
1111 times over a 14-year period (398). In an Australian population-based study of children and
1112 adolescents with CAH, both hospital admission and the risk of adrenal crisis decreased with age
1113 (399). A large multicenter international study of 518 children from low-middle income as well as
1114 high income countries reported an adrenal crisis rate of 2.6/100 patient years (400).

1115 Adrenal crisis is most often triggered by infectious illness (397,401,402). A population-based
1116 retrospective cohort study (drug prescriptions and clinical diagnoses) in the UK reported increased
1117 rates of infectious illnesses in patients with CAH (401). Gastrointestinal illnesses and upper
1118 respiratory tract illnesses are the most common precipitants of adrenal crises in both children and
1119 adults (397,398,401,402). Socioeconomic factors influence risk; in the USA, patients with
1120 government insurance (reflecting low family income) were twice as likely to be hospitalized as
1121 patients with commercial insurance (398). Pre-school children, adolescents, males and those with
1122 SW CAH, were more likely to experience sick days requiring stress dosing. Patients treated with
1123 higher glucocorticoid doses were less likely to suffer illness requiring stress dosing. The frequency
1124 of adrenal crises has decreased over time, perhaps due to greater awareness of this risk during sick
1125 days. None of the adrenal crises reported in a multicenter study were fatal (400).

1126 Hypoglycemia can occur unexpectedly (396), may be associated with seizures, and can
1127 occasionally result in permanent neurologic sequelae, especially in children (402,403). Patients
1128 with SW CAH have adrenomedullary dysfunction with epinephrine deficiency (404) and this
1129 contributes to the risk of hypoglycemia especially in young children.

1130 Protocols for the prevention and treatment of adrenal crisis are based on expert opinion and
1131 clinical experience (134,405,406). “Sick day rules” aim to prevent acute deterioration and a life-
1132 threatening adrenal crisis. However, the definition and reporting of sick days is more variable than
1133 that of adrenal crises, with evidence of systematic variation between centers (400). Adverse
1134 outcomes in children are related more to hypoglycemia than to electrolyte disturbances
1135 (396,402,407); thus, frequent intake of carbohydrates is important (402). Oral stress doses (2-3
1136 times usual doses) of glucocorticoid cannot always prevent the progression to adrenal crisis and
1137 the occurrence of hypoglycemia (407,408). Increased HC doses are suggested with infectious
1138 illnesses (**Table 7**). Hydrocortisone sodium succinate for intramuscular injection should be
1139 prescribed with instructions for home use if oral medication is not tolerated during episodes of
1140 major stress (e.g., febrile illness with vomiting), especially for patients residing far from medical
1141 facilities. Once brought to emergency care, intravenous HC and isotonic fluids should be given.
1142 Continuous intravenous infusion of hydrocortisone sodium succinate might have a theoretical
1143 advantage over intermittent bolus administration because of lower variability and avoidance of
1144 regular troughs in plasma cortisol levels (385,410), but these two approaches have not been
1145 compared directly and clinical outcomes are likely similar. Stress dosing is indicated for pregnant
1146 women in active labor, similar to that used in major surgical stress (405). Stress dosing is not
1147 recommended for everyday mental and emotional stress, minor illness or before routine exercise
1148 (134,405,406). Serum cortisol did not exceed 10 μ g/dL (276 nmol/L) in healthy children

1149 undergoing minor surgical procedures; therefore, stress dosing for minor procedures (e.g. brief
1150 medical or dental procedures performed under local anesthetic with or without light sedation)
1151 should be individualized (249,411).

1152 Approximately one-third of patients with NC CAH have mild but clinically silent cortisol
1153 impairment (412,413) and the risk of adrenal crisis is unknown. Adrenal crisis has only been
1154 reported in NC CAH patients receiving glucocorticoid therapy in the setting of iatrogenic tertiary
1155 hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis suppression (134,402). Thus, stress dosing for the prevention
1156 of adrenal crisis is recommended for glucocorticoid-treated patients with NC CAH. The Endocrine
1157 Society Clinical Practice Guideline (134) suggests HC stress dosing in the case of severe illness,
1158 major surgery, major trauma or childbirth for untreated individuals with a suboptimal ACTH test
1159 (in adults, cortisol below 14-18 µg/dL, <400–500 nmol/l).

1160 In general, prevention of adrenal crisis in patients with known adrenal insufficiency is best
1161 accomplished through repeated structured patient education regarding “sick day rules” (414,415).
1162 All patients should wear medical alert identification tags or have an emergency card (and/or
1163 emergency information on their mobile phones) indicating adrenal insufficiency. A medical card
1164 developed by the European Society of Endocrinology is downloadable and includes guidance for
1165 healthcare providers as well (<https://adrenals.eu/emergency-card/>). A UK version including a QR
1166 code rapidly linking emergency personnel to instructions on adrenal crisis treatment is available
1167 (<https://www.endocrinology.org/media/3652/steroid-nhs-card.jpg>).

1168

1169 ***B. Treatment of NC CAH***

1170 In NC CAH the estimated residual enzymatic activity of CYP21A2 is about 20 – 50% based
1171 on in vitro or in silico studies, resulting in a generally mild but highly variable phenotype

1172 (212,217,416). In contrast to classic CAH, no general guidelines exist for the management and
1173 follow-up of these patients and the overall evidence of recommendations for NC CAH is low
1174 (134,342,417-419). Decisions about starting treatment should be individualized and based mainly
1175 on clinical symptoms; the Endocrine Society guidelines do not recommend routine treatment with
1176 glucocorticoid in asymptomatic individuals (134). The general treatment goals in children are to
1177 maintain normal growth and pubertal development and to minimize risk of therapies; children
1178 should be regularly monitored clinically for height, weight, signs of androgen excess, puberty and
1179 bone age advancement (420).

1180 When glucocorticoid treatment is required, HC is preferred, as with classic CAH. Patients
1181 receiving glucocorticoid therapy require stress-dosing per guidelines (see Section V.A.6).
1182 Mineralocorticoid supplementation with fludrocortisone is not required.

1183 1. Growth

1184 In contrast to untreated children with SV CAH, children with NC CAH may not have increased
1185 growth velocity although bone age maturation can be accelerated, potentially leading to reduced
1186 adult height (421,422). However, most studies describe nearly normal adult height in NC CAH
1187 patients (417,423-425). Glucocorticoid treatment should be reserved for patients who suffer from
1188 androgen excess, although criteria for deciding when symptomatology warrants treatment are not
1189 well defined. Supraphysiological dosages of glucocorticoids similar to those used to treat classic
1190 CAH patients may be necessary to suppress adrenal androgen production (426). Treatment will
1191 suppress the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis requiring stress dosing in case of illness. In many
1192 cases glucocorticoid treatment may be discontinued after reaching adult height, if the individual is
1193 otherwise asymptomatic (134). Adverse effects such as excess weight gain may make continued
1194 glucocorticoid treatment less desirable.

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2. Puberty

Children with NC CAH can present with signs of increased adrenal androgen production such as premature pubarche, acne, mild hirsutism and menstrual disturbances that can progress over time (427), but in contrast to classic CAH, central precocious puberty is infrequently observed (37). Glucocorticoids can lower adrenal androgen concentrations ameliorating signs of hyperandrogenism, but prolonged glucocorticoid treatment may have long term adverse effects. Alternative treatment options in adolescent and young adult females to induce menstrual cycles and improve acne and hirsutism include oral contraceptives containing progestins with low androgenic activity such as desogestrel (428). Antiandrogens can be considered as an add-on for patient-important hirsutism that persists despite oral contraceptives (see the next section).

3. NC CAH in adult women

Most patients diagnosed with NC CAH are females suffering from mild adrenal androgen excess without clinically relevant deficiencies of gluco- and mineralocorticoids (134,429). Typical symptoms in affected women are hirsutism, oligo- and amenorrhea, acne, alopecia and sub- or infertility (427). Sometimes the diagnosis is made within the course of evaluation for adrenal incidentalomas (430-432). The main treatment goal is to reduce adrenal androgens and symptoms of androgen excess. Clinical studies comparing different treatment approaches in adults with NC CAH are lacking; treatment should only be started in symptomatic patients desiring treatment (134). The risks, benefits and effectiveness of various treatment options should be discussed. Fertility and childbearing in women with NC CAH are discussed in section VI.B).

1217 4. **Additional treatments for signs of androgen excess**

1218 Hirsutism is the most prevalent symptom in women with NC CAH, but also the most difficult
1219 to treat (433). Clinical experience suggests that a combination of oral contraceptives, topical
1220 eflornithine and cosmetic treatment (shaving, chemical depilatories, plucking, tweezing, threading,
1221 waxing or epilation therapy, electrolysis and intense pulsed light) might be the most effective
1222 treatment approach (434). For the treatment of acne and androgenic alopecia a dermatologist
1223 should be consulted.

1224 Oral contraceptives act on the production, transport (increase of sex hormone binding globulin)
1225 and action of androgens. Anti-androgenic oral contraceptives containing cyproterone acetate,
1226 chlormadinone acetate, dienogest, or drospirenone effectively reduce androgenic symptoms. If
1227 hirsutism is the leading symptom, oral contraceptives are the preferred treatment (134). One
1228 randomized study in 30 women with NC CAH found cyproterone acetate to be more effective than
1229 hydrocortisone for isolated hirsutism (435).

1230 Spironolactone, flutamide and finasteride can be used to treat hirsutism (433), acne and
1231 androgenic alopecia (436) but are teratogenic and not approved for this use. Eflornithine
1232 hydrochloride cream is used as topical therapy for facial hirsutism (433). It prevents hair growth
1233 by inhibiting the anagen phase of hair production. Eflornithine irreversibly binds to ornithine
1234 decarboxylase and thus prevents the natural substrate, ornithine, from accessing the active site. It
1235 is most effective when combined with physical means of hair removal, such as topical lasers.

1236 5. **Treatment of adult men with NC CAH**

1237 As androgen production in the testis far outweighs adrenal androgen production, men generally
1238 do not experience symptoms of androgen excess requiring treatment, and therefore remain
1239 undiagnosed. In rare cases, severe acne, reduced fertility or adrenal incidentaloma lead to the

1240 diagnosis of NC CAH in men (429). TARTs are rare in men with NC CAH (437-439). Therefore,
1241 routine scrotal ultrasound is not recommended in NC CAH males.

1242

1243 **C. Prenatal treatment**

1244 **1. Purpose**

1245 Since the mid-1980's, prenatal treatment with high doses of Dex has been proposed for to pregnant
1246 women with a fetus at risk for classic CAH using a treatment protocol of 20 µg/kg/day, maximum
1247 1.5 mg/day, with the aim of preventing prenatal virilization of the external genitalia in affected
1248 girls (313,317,440). The treatment is effective in ameliorating virilization of the external genitalia
1249 if started by gestational week 6-7 (441); in most centers this is before a fetal diagnosis can be made
1250 (see section IV.D). If prenatal diagnosis, most often by chorionic villus biopsy obtained in week
1251 10-11, shows that the fetus is a girl with classic CAH, the treatment is continued until term, but
1252 otherwise stopped. The treatment is controversial due to safety concerns (442). Risk-benefit
1253 assessments must consider that, on average, 8 pregnancies at risk for CAH must be treated for
1254 every affected female who might benefit from the treatment (443-446). Endocrine societies and
1255 others have stated that the treatment is experimental and should only be performed in centers taking
1256 part in long-term research studies of these treated pregnancies (134,328,375,377,447).

1257 **2. Fetal safety**

1258 There have not been randomized studies of prenatal dexamethasone (Dex) treatment, and so
1259 all discussions of adverse effects are based on animal or retrospective data. Dex is a pluripotent
1260 gene regulator and its introduction at a critical stage of embryonic development may impact much
1261 more than the developing hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. Numerous studies (**Table 8**) have
1262 delineated adverse outcomes affecting brain, cardiovascular, renal, reproductive, thyroid and

1263 metabolic functions in non-human mammalian species exposed to glucocorticoids in utero
1264 (reviewed in (375)).

1265 With respect to human teratogenicity, systematic review and meta-analysis found an odds ratio
1266 of 1.41 (95% confidence interval 1.14-1.74) for cleft lip and palate in case-control series of infants
1267 whose mothers were treated with glucocorticoids in the first trimester (468). Even when exposed
1268 later in gestation, multiple doses of antenatal steroids for preterm labor increased the number of
1269 infants with birth weight < 10th percentile and the risk for cerebral palsy (469). Among pregnancies
1270 at risk for CAH, prenatally Dex-treated newborns have lower, but nominally normal, birth weights
1271 compared to untreated controls (470); the decrease averages ~400 g (471). Other adverse events
1272 including failure to thrive, stroke-like events and midline defects have been observed in both short-
1273 term and full-term treated cases at risk for CAH (472-474).

1274 Prenatal Dex treatment has shown inconsistent long-term effects on cognition and behavior
1275 (**Table 9**). One study showed no cognitive differences but increased shyness and emotionality in
1276 treated children (475). A larger follow-up study from the same group of 126 non-CAH and 48 with
1277 CAH short-term exposed children and 8 girls with CAH treated until term did not show any effects
1278 on motor, cognitive, and social development or scholastic competence using parental
1279 questionnaires (476). In a later report including two different age groups (5-12 and 11-24 years)
1280 using neuropsychological testing, there were no significant findings in children without CAH (480).
1281 Swedish studies of healthy non-CAH children exposed to Dex only during the first trimester have
1282 shown negative effects on cognition, especially verbal working memory (477); a sexually
1283 dimorphic effect with a more pronounced negative effect on working memory and executive
1284 function was observed in the girls (483). A follow-up with a second neuropsychological testing in

1285 a subgroup of the cohort as adults showed less pronounced effects indicating a possibility for
1286 compensatory mechanisms over time (485).

1287 In two cohorts of girls with CAH treated throughout gestation, neurocognitive outcomes were
1288 negatively affected for mental processing and spatial memory (480) and broad deficits were found
1289 in most measures of cognition (488). In contrast, a Polish study reported better cognitive results
1290 in general in 9 girls with CAH who were treated throughout pregnancy, but 8 unaffected girls who
1291 had been treated with Dex had worse results than controls (481).

1292 Possible imprinting effects of prenatal exposure to Dex have only begun to be explored.
1293 Differences in DNA methylation in peripheral CD4+ T-cells seemed to be related to sex (485). Of
1294 particular interest were methylation effects of the genes *BDNF* and *FKBP5*, relevant for the
1295 development of the central nervous system, and *NR3C1* encoding the glucocorticoid receptor.
1296 There were also associations between DNA methylation and performance on cognitive tasks.

1297 Moreover, first trimester Dex exposure of non-CAH fetuses is associated with differences in
1298 brain morphology (489). MRI studies in adults showed enlargement of the amygdala, increased
1299 left superior frontal gyrus, and widespread white matter changes. The pathophysiology behind the
1300 observed neuropsychological effects of early Dex exposure are largely unknown. Infants
1301 prenatally exposed to betamethasone have altered responses of the HPA axis and a higher
1302 incidence of mental and behavioral disorders (490,491).

1303 Negative effects on glucose and lipid metabolism in childhood and in young adulthood have
1304 been reported in individuals without CAH but exposed to Dex during the first trimester. Lower
1305 insulin secretion, followed by lower glucagon secretion was reported in a French study (486). A
1306 lower HOMA- β was reported in the Swedish cohort, significant in girls but not in boys. Plasma
1307 glucose levels were higher in the younger treated group with no sex difference. In older adolescents

1308 and young adults, total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol were higher in the treated individuals
1309 (487). It is unknown if this implies an increased risk of developing metabolic syndrome later in
1310 life.

1311 In order to minimize the exposure to Dex, efforts have been made to develop diagnostic
1312 techniques using cell free fetal DNA in maternal blood samples, but these are not yet routinely
1313 available (see section IV.D)(325). Dose adjustments, with lower doses during the later phases of
1314 pregnancy, have been discussed (158) but such studies have not been reported.

1315 *D. New medical strategies (Figure 5)*

1316 The treatment goals for classic CAH include both hormonal replacement and reducing adrenal
1317 androgen production. Glucocorticoid therapy is used to achieve both goals, but normalizing
1318 adrenal androgen production requires supraphysiologic doses that are higher than required to
1319 replace the cortisol deficiency, contributing to comorbidities. Modified and delayed-release HC
1320 formulations were discussed in Section V.A.4 (492). Continuous subcutaneous delivery of HC is
1321 also suitable for mimicking physiologic cortisol secretion patterns and is useful in patients with
1322 rapid cortisol metabolism or impaired gut absorption (493), but this approach is less practical than
1323 oral drugs for widespread chronic use.

1324 Alternatively, medications that lower androgen production and/or action can be added to
1325 physiologic glucocorticoid therapy, similar to doses used to treat primary adrenal insufficiency.
1326 The combination of testolactone (an aromatase inhibitor) and flutamide (an androgen receptor
1327 antagonist) with 8 mg/m²/d HC normalized growth and bone maturation in a 2-year randomized
1328 trial of 28 children (494). A long-term study of this combination to determine the efficacy of this
1329 regimen on improving adult height will soon be completed (NCT00001521). Abiraterone acetate
1330 is a potent CYP17A1 inhibitor used to treat prostate cancer (495) When added to HC 20 mg/d, 6

1331 days of treatment with 100-250 mg/d of abiraterone acetate normalized androstenedione in 6 adult
1332 women (496) with parallel reductions in testosterone, androgen metabolites, and 11-oxo-
1333 androgens (497). Abiraterone acetate therapy can cause DOC accumulation and consequent
1334 hypertension and/or hypokalemia in patients with prostate cancer via CYP21A2-mediated 21-
1335 hydroxylation of intra-adrenal progesterone (497), however, this conversion cannot occur in
1336 patients with classic CAH (497). Abiraterone acetate is likely to be most useful in prepubertal
1337 children with classic CAH to suppress androgens and estrogens until the anticipated age of puberty,
1338 and a phase I trial testing this approach is underway (NCT02574910). Abiraterone acetate
1339 monotherapy might cause DOC accumulation in patients with NC CAH if not combined with
1340 glucocorticoid therapy or a mineralocorticoid receptor antagonist. Moreover, its use in pubertal
1341 girls would require concomitant estrogen treatment, for example with oral contraceptive pills.
1342 Third-generation anti-androgens such as enzalutamide, apalutamide, and darolutamide have not
1343 been tested in CAH patients but also might be useful treatments in women of reproductive age
1344 willing to use contraception.

1345 Agents that reduce the ACTH-mediated drive for androgen production are possible approaches.
1346 The binding of corticotropin-releasing hormone to its type 1 receptor (CRHR1) is a major input to
1347 corticotropes, raising intracellular cyclic AMP and stimulating ACTH secretion. A single-dose,
1348 fixed-sequence study of 8 women given 300 or 600 mg of the CRHR1 antagonist NBI77860 at
1349 2200 (10 PM) showed significant reductions in ACTH and 17OHP over the ensuing 16 hours
1350 relative to a control period during which glucocorticoid treatment was withheld (498). The CRHR1
1351 antagonists tildacerfont and crinecerfont were tested in 14-day continuous-dosing trials
1352 (NCT03257462 and NCT04045145, respectively), and tildacerfont therapy was extended in a 3-
1353 month trial (NCT03687242). Peer-reviewed results are unavailable as yet. Additional trials are

1354 required to further assess the long-term benefits of these treatments. Theoretically, an anti-ACTH
1355 antibody (499) or an antagonist of the melanocortin type 2 receptor (MC2R, the ACTH receptor)
1356 (500) might also reduce adrenal androgen synthesis in patients with classic CAH, but these
1357 approaches have only been tested in preclinical models (501). It should be kept in mind that most
1358 of these approaches do not eliminate the need to treat with, and monitor adequacy of,
1359 glucocorticoid replacement, albeit perhaps in lower doses.

1360 Unilateral or bilateral adrenalectomy has been suggested as an approach to long-term
1361 management of classic CAH to limit adrenal androgens (502). A recent meta-analysis of 48 CAH
1362 cases, 34 (71%) described symptomatic improvement after bilateral adrenalectomy but with 34
1363 cases (10%) reporting short-term and 13 cases (27%) long-term adverse outcomes, including an
1364 increased risk of adrenal crisis (503). The subsequent development of adrenal rest tumors due to
1365 elevated ACTH levels even in women has been reported (504,505), which defeats the purpose and
1366 allows the recrudescence of androgen excess. Consequently, this approach has fallen out of favor
1367 (134). Adrenolytic therapy with mitotane has been reported in men with TARTs as an approach to
1368 restore fertility (506), but long-term outcomes have not been published. The adrenolytic drug
1369 nevanimibe was testing in a dose-escalation study of 14-day treatment periods interrupted with 14-
1370 day placebo periods, up to 1000 mg twice daily (507). The median 17OHP was consistently lower
1371 in treatment periods and rose during placebo periods, consistent with a reversible effect on
1372 steroidogenesis, but only 20% met the primary endpoint (17OHP $\leq 2x$ upper limit of normal). A
1373 study using longer treatment periods in order to achieve greater and more sustained reductions in
1374 adrenal-derived androgens was initiated (NCT03669549) but terminated after an interim analysis
1375 (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT03669549>, accessed 22 Dec 2020). Thus current data do
1376 not support the approach of “medical adrenalectomy”.

1377 Growth hormone has been used to improve height in children with CAH (508-510). Growth
1378 hormone treatment for a mean duration of 5.6 years achieved nearly-adult height in 34 children
1379 with CAH (12 NC-CAH patients). In some of the patients, GnRH analogue was also used to delay
1380 puberty (509). Controlled studies in larger groups of patients are lacking. Therefore, growth
1381 hormone, with or without GnRH analogue therapy, cannot be generally recommended as
1382 adjunctive therapy.

1383

1384 *E. Novel cell- and gene- based therapies*

1385 1. **Potential cell-based therapies for CAH**

1386 Cellular reprogramming is the process whereby a fully differentiated, specialized cell type is
1387 forced to acquire a different phenotype that it would not reach under normal physiological
1388 conditions. Somatic cells can be induced to de-differentiate to an Embryonic Stem Cell (ESC)-like
1389 phenotype by forcing the expression of specific transcription factors; these cells, termed Inducible
1390 Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPSCs), are donor-specific and phenotypically highly similar to ESCs
1391 (511). An example of cell therapy used ESCs- and iPSCs-derived pancreatic beta cells for potential
1392 treatment for type 1 diabetes (512).

1393 An alternative strategy for reprogramming somatic cells without an intermediate state (iPSCs)
1394 is through lineage-conversion (also known as direct reprogramming or transdifferentiation), which
1395 entails the forced expression of lineage-determining transcription factors (513). Various
1396 human and mouse cell types have been used for lineage conversion to an adrenocortical phenotype
1397 (514). Adrenocortical-like cells have also been established from cells derived from human skin,
1398 blood and urine cells in humans using a combination of steroidogenic factor-1 (SF-1, NR5A1)
1399 expression (through lentiviral delivery) and activation of Protein Kinase-A (PKA) and GnRH

1400 pathways (515). These reprogrammed cells displayed ultrastructural features resembling steroid-
1401 secreting cells (such as larger mitochondria with a densely packed inner mitochondrial membrane),
1402 *de novo* expressed steroidogenic enzymes and secreted steroid hormones in response to
1403 physiologic (such as ACTH) and pharmacologic (such as non-degradable cyclic AMP-dependent
1404 PKA activators) stimuli. They are also viable when transplanted into the mouse kidney capsule or
1405 intra-adrenally. Importantly, the hypocortisolism observed in cells reprogrammed from epithelial
1406 cells recovered from the urine of patients with CAH (due to mutations in *CYP21A2*, *STAR*,
1407 *HSD3B2* and *CYP11A1*) was rescued by expressing the wild-type version of the defective enzyme.
1408 These studies model CAH in a dish to test personalized interventions. In the future, one could
1409 attempt to apply gene-editing on cells reprogrammed from patients to achieve normal
1410 steroidogenesis. The same approach could be employed *in vivo*, through delivery of gene-editing
1411 tools to the adrenal with viral vectors. Other, as yet untested, methodologies include establishment
1412 of adrenocortical-like cells from iPSCs and adrenocortical organoids capable of self-renewal.

1413 2. Potential gene-based therapies for CAH

1414 Gene therapy using Adeno-Associated Viruses (AAVs) is an alternative option, tested in an
1415 animal model of 21OHD. The active murine gene is named *Cyp21a1*, while the duplicated
1416 pseudogene is *Cyp21a2-p*. Mice bearing a deletion of approximately 80 kilobases of chromosome
1417 17 (516), including the *Cyp21* locus showed perinatal lethality, elevated ACTH, cortical
1418 hyperplasia with lack of proper zonation, accumulation of steroid precursors and both
1419 glucocorticoid and mineralocorticoid deficiency (517). Intra-adrenal injection of AAVs carrying
1420 human *CYP21A2* reverted the CAH-like phenotype for 40 days. A drawback of AAVs is their
1421 induction of an inflammatory response, but adrenals of mice treated with gene therapy did not
1422 show active inflammation, possibly due to high intra-adrenal levels of glucocorticoids. (517).

1423 Restoration of adrenocortical function in *Cyp21a1*-null mice was also achieved through AAV-
1424 mediated delivery of murine *Cyp21a1* to the thigh muscles, suggesting that functional 21-
1425 hydroxylase enzymatic activity does not have to be confined in the adrenal (518). Intravenous
1426 injections of AAVrh10-CAG-human CYP21A2-HA vector endowed with adrenocortical tropism
1427 efficiently restored near-normal adrenal function; cells in the zona fasciculata, but not in the zona
1428 glomerulosa or capsule, were efficiently transduced two weeks after a single AAV injection, and
1429 this was concomitant with a reduction of progesterone and ACTH levels (519). However, the
1430 restoration of proper steroidogenesis was only transient. A likely explanation of such phenomenon
1431 lies within the biology of the gland; through the use of specific transgenic mouse model (lineage
1432 tracing) we now know that the adrenal cortex undergoes a self-renewal process, and key paracrine
1433 effectors supporting a dynamic centripetal streaming of adrenocortical cells have been identified
1434 (520). Adrenocortical self-renewal relies on the differentiation of at least two cell populations of
1435 progenitor cells, located in capsular (expressing the transcription factor *Gli1*) and subcapsular
1436 compartments (secreting the morphogen Sonic Hedgehog, *Shh*). These two cell populations are
1437 able to differentiate and become fully mature steroidogenic cells forming the distinct histological
1438 and functional layers of the zona glomerulosa and zona fasciculata. If *Cyp21*--AAVs are not able
1439 to transduce adrenocortical stem/progenitor cells, as suggested from the studies cited above, newly
1440 formed steroidogenic cells will therefore be *Cyp21a1*-deficient and mice revert to a CAH
1441 phenotype. In the future, it will be important to determine AAVs serotypes that are able to
1442 efficiently transduce stem/progenitor cells in order to offer a long-term curative solution.

1443 In considering the applicability of animal models for gene therapy of 21OHD, it must be kept
1444 in mind that mice do not express *Cyp17a1* in their adrenal glands and consequently cannot
1445 synthesize sex steroid precursors in the adrenals. Thus, mice cannot be used to model the efficacy

1446 of suppression of adrenal androgen secretion with gene therapy. Moreover, enzyme kinetics
1447 suggest that extra-adrenal expression of CYP21A2 using gene therapy is likely to produce
1448 adequate amounts of cortisol only with very high levels of precursor steroids, which means that
1449 this approach will be of limited utility in controlling adrenal androgen secretion in humans.

1450

1451 ***F. Psychological risk factors, surveillance, and intervention***

1452 Historically, psychological studies in CAH have emphasized the role of prenatal androgens on
1453 gender development (i.e., gender identity, gender role, and sexual orientation) and other domains
1454 exhibiting sex-related variability (e.g., cognitive abilities) (521-524). Most studies only concern
1455 females with classic CAH, as only they provide opportunities to test hormonal hypotheses of
1456 gender development (525). However, this emphasis may promote the belief that atypical gender
1457 behavior or non-heterosexual attractions are causes for clinical concern to the extent that they are
1458 linked to the pathophysiology of CAH. Historically it has been assumed that men with CAH
1459 require little attention directed to their mental health because prenatal androgen exposure is typical
1460 of males.

1461 Advances in therapeutics contribute to a disease-specific (“categorical”) approach to care
1462 (526,527). In CAH, this approach has facilitated a fuller understanding of its genetics and
1463 pathophysiology and refinement of medical and surgical interventions (134,528). A disease-
1464 specific approach also emphasizes the psychosexual aspects of CAH in affected females (522).
1465 Yet, a substantial body of evidence suggests that successful developmental trajectories in people
1466 with chronic medical conditions are influenced as much by the psychosocial environment, supports,
1467 and organization of healthcare delivery as by the specific nature of the person’s medical condition
1468 (526,527). A more generic (or “noncategorical”) approach emphasizes the effects of repeated
1469

1470 hospitalizations on the person's psychosocial adaptation, irrespective of whether the
1471 hospitalizations were for asthma or CAH. Relatively neglected topics in CAH are those routinely
1472 addressed in more prevalent conditions, including effects on parenting and family, factors
1473 influencing adherence to the medical regimen, frequent doctor visits, impact on the person's body-
1474 and self-image, and transition from pediatric to adult healthcare (**Table 10**).

1475 **1. Generic (or noncategorical) factors**

1476 Parental reactions to learning that their child has a serious and chronic medical condition –
1477 expressed as shock, panic, worry, and sometimes feelings of guilt – are common generic stressors
1478 (593). The mental health of patients with CAH is another example; although most studies focus
1479 on females, increased psychiatric symptomatology in both sexes mirrors observations for a wide
1480 range of chronic medical conditions (547,594-597).

1481 **2. CAH-specific (or categorical) factors**

1482 Patient reactions to repeated genital examinations potentially threaten mental health and well-
1483 being (598). Apart from the effects of prenatal androgens on female reproductive anatomy, the
1484 influence of early androgen exposure on brain and gender development garners significant
1485 attention. Prenatal exposure to testosterone increases the expression of behaviors and interests
1486 more typical of males than females. The largest differences between females with CAH and
1487 unaffected females are observed for childhood toy preferences and adolescent and adult hobbies
1488 and interests. The majority of girls and women with CAH experience a female binary gender
1489 identity (578), yet there is evidence that the strength of that identity may be reduced (577,599).
1490 Although the sexual orientation of women with CAH is less likely to be exclusively heterosexual
1491 than is true for unaffected women, the majority are heterosexual (227,600). Though prenatal

1492 androgen exposure may play a role in the development of these outcomes, its influence is much
1493 smaller than effects on gender-role behavior (523,596,599,601).

1494 3. **Psychological assessment and interventions**

1495 In the general pediatric population, the base rate for having a psychiatric disorder at any time
1496 is about 20% (602), and is similar in European adults (603,604), yet many with mental health
1497 problems are neither identified nor referred for specialized treatment (605,606). Specialists treating
1498 patients with CAH should consider that many of their patients (and/or their caregivers) may be
1499 struggling with mental health problems which can impact the effectiveness of medical care
1500 provided. Consequently, regular screening of patient (and family) for risk and resilience factors
1501 are indicated along with evaluating the developmental, behavioral, emotional, social, and
1502 educational status of the patient as part of ongoing clinical care. Pediatric assessments should also
1503 encompass self-perceptions of domain-specific competencies, body image, and experiences of
1504 gender typicality and contentedness (607). Comparable surveillance in adulthood is recommended
1505 (360). Psychosocial screening should be both general (psychiatric symptoms, coping with illness)
1506 and specific (negative body image related to challenges of endocrine management, anticipated or
1507 experienced stigma, distress over non-heterosexual interests or behaviors, avoidance of potential
1508 romantic relationships as maladaptive coping strategy, sexual dysfunction potentially related to
1509 genital surgery, and fertility concerns). Adult healthcare providers need to be comfortable in
1510 assessing these topics and refer to knowledgeable specialists who understand the psychological
1511 issues in CAH. A recommendation to connect with peer support can also be extremely useful
1512 although careful consideration of where to direct patients is warranted (580). There is specific
1513 guidance for clinicians regarding the psychological aspects of CAH that warrant evaluation and
1514 possible intervention (524).

1515 Because optimal care in CAH involves multiple subspecialties, it is recommended that clinical
1516 services be comprehensive and integrated (342,608,609), but inclusion of medical psychologists
1517 in interdisciplinary healthcare teams for CAH is inconsistent. There are no mental health
1518 interventions specifically designed for CAH. Psychoeducational counseling that includes detailed
1519 discussion of CAH with the patient and caregivers should be provided in an iterative and
1520 developmentally-sensitive manner. For girls with genital virilization, such counseling necessarily
1521 involves education regarding the process of sex development and the influence of excess
1522 androgens on genital growth. A recent Cochrane review of psychological interventions for parents
1523 of youth with chronic illness provides clinicians with evidence-based strategies for managing
1524 parenting challenges and enhancing psychosocial adaptation in both the parent and the child (610).
1525 Interventions to promote treatment adherence in other chronic conditions should be transferable to
1526 CAH (611). Although preparation for and assessment of readiness for transition from pediatric to
1527 adult care (612,613) does not guarantee physical health and well-being in adulthood, reports of
1528 major morbidities in adult patients with CAH (360) warrant continued efforts to improve outcomes.

1529

1530 **G. Urogenital surgery**

1531 **1. Decisions concerning feminizing surgery**

1532 Most girls with classic CAH are born with virilized external genitalia. Virilization may consist
1533 of fusion of the outer labia, a single opening of a common urogenital sinus, a recessed vagina that
1534 enters into the common channel and clitoromegaly. The degree of virilization is variable, and is
1535 influenced by the severity of the enzymatic defect. To indicate the severity of virilization the Prader
1536 classification, or similar scales, may be used (**Figure 4**). These anatomical variations affect the

1537 decisions regarding surgery: the timing, one or two-stage surgery, the technique and the
1538 extensiveness of the procedure and risk for complications (614).

1539 Feminizing surgery is often performed in early infancy/childhood in order to provide a female
1540 appearance of the genitalia in childhood, and to enable sexual intercourse in adult life. This
1541 complex surgery may lead to short- and long-term complications. Early surgery for girls with CAH
1542 has become controversial. Many surgeons prefer complete surgical repair at an early age because
1543 of good elasticity of the tissue, prevention of possible hydrometrocolpos and reduction of parents'
1544 distress (615). However, concerns have been raised regarding body integrity and the inability of
1545 children to provide informed consent for early surgery. Unsatisfactory outcomes regarding genital
1546 sensation and sexual function, and greater acceptance of gender non-binary status have led some
1547 to advocate that surgery be postponed until patients can express their gender and wishes (616).
1548 However, the effects of growing up with atypical genitalia on mental health or on sexual
1549 satisfaction are unknown and may vary in different cultures. The majority of patients and their
1550 parents in an American survey endorsed early reconstructive surgery (617). Families should be
1551 informed about surgical options including avoiding or delaying surgery. There should be a shared
1552 decision-making process including the family, endocrinologist, surgeon and mental health
1553 professionals, and the surgery should be performed by an experienced surgeon (134,581,618,619).

1554 2. **Surgical techniques, outcomes and complications**

1555 Feminizing genitoplasty involves clitoroplasty, opening of the vaginal introitus and labioplasty.
1556 When the patient has a high urethra-vaginal confluence, vaginoplasty may be postponed to later in
1557 life. Surgical techniques have been adjusted for best preservation of clitoral sensitivity and least
1558 vaginal stenosis (620). However, functional results of the current techniques can only be evaluated
1559 after many years.

1560 In tandem with the Endocrine Society’s 2018 Guideline, a systematic review and meta-analysis
1561 found no data to support one approach over another (528). The data included 29 observational
1562 studies (1,178 CAH women, mean age at the time of surgery 2.7 ± 4.7 years, mostly classic CAH).
1563 After an average follow-up of 10.3 years, the majority who underwent surgery had a female gender
1564 identity (88.7%) and were heterosexual (76.2%). Women who underwent surgery reported a lower
1565 than optimal Female Sexual Function Index Score of 25.13 out of a maximum possible score of
1566 36, with 26 being the threshold accepted for risk for sexual dysfunction (621). Many patients
1567 reported impairment of clitoral sensitivity (622,623), uncomfortable vaginal penetrative
1568 intercourse, and low frequency of intercourse (21). The majority of patients (79.4%) and treating
1569 healthcare professionals (71.8%) were satisfied with the surgical outcomes. The most common
1570 clinical finding was vaginal stenosis, whereas other surgical complications, such as fistulas,
1571 urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections, were less common (624). Data on quality of life
1572 were sparse and inconclusive. To date there are no systematic prospective studies documenting
1573 outcomes in girls and women with CAH who did not undergo urogenital reconstruction; until
1574 recently most non-operated girls have been those who were only mildly virilized. Reoperations are
1575 usually much less extensive surgical procedures than the initial genitoplasty. Most consist of
1576 widening the vaginal introitus; clitoroplasty has also been performed.

1577 There are no studies comparing different techniques of feminizing surgery nor studies
1578 comparing early versus late surgery (528). The Endocrine Society’s Guideline (134) cites
1579 urogenital mobilization with or without neurovascular-sparing clitoroplasty as the techniques now
1580 preferred by many surgeons. No evidence-based guidelines for surgical management exist, and
1581 further long-term follow-up studies are needed.

1582

1583 **VI.LONG TERM SEQUELAE**

1584 **A. *Gonadal function in males***

1585 In men with CAH, gonadal and reproductive function are often impaired due to primary
1586 gonadal failure from TARTs and/or secondary gonadal failure due to suppressed hypothalamic-
1587 pituitary-gonadal axis as a consequence of high adrenal androgen concentrations
1588 (378,437,438,625).

1589 **1. Testicular adrenal rest tumors (TARTs)**

1590 TARTs are benign testicular tumors typically found in males with classic CAH (378,437).
1591 TARTs have histological similarities to adrenocortical cells and are believed to originate from
1592 aberrant adrenal like cells in the testes but the etiology is not yet fully understood (378). TARTs
1593 are usually bilateral (70-100% of the cases) and painless (129,437,438,626-631), but discomfort
1594 can occur, especially in patients with extensive tumors (632). TARTs less than 2 cm diameter are
1595 difficult to detect by palpation (437). Both ultrasound and MRI can be used to detect/confirm
1596 TARTs with similar sensitivity down to a few millimeters, but ultrasound costs less (439,630,633).
1597 The reported prevalence of TARTs in CAH ranges from 14% to 86% (437,634), with an average
1598 of 25% in adolescents, and 46% in men (378). TARTs are found occasionally in patients with NC
1599 CAH (437,439). They occur not only in 21OHD but also in 11 β -hydroxylase and 3 β -
1600 hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase type 2 deficiencies (635,636).

1601 Elevated ACTH concentrations may play an important role in the development of TARTs.
1602 Suppression of ACTH secretion by increased doses of glucocorticoid can decrease the size of
1603 TARTs in some cases and may restore fertility (637-639). However, TARTs also occur in well-
1604 controlled patients and only a few studies have found a clear association between hormonal control,

1605 and TARTs (437,640,641). Moreover, there seems to be no correlation between TARTs and
1606 bilateral adrenalectomy, a condition that usually leads to high ACTH concentrations (642,643).

1607 It is important to discriminate Leydig cell tumors from TARTs, due to the malignant potential
1608 of Leydig cell tumors, but this cannot be done by either palpation or imaging (632,644). TARTs
1609 are usually bilateral whereas Leydig cell tumors are mostly unilateral and often produce estrogens
1610 (378). TART size may decrease in some cases after intensified glucocorticoid dosing
1611 (588,632,637-639). Additionally, characteristic histologic structures called Reinke crystalloids can
1612 sometimes be found in Leydig cell tumors but never in TARTs (378,632,633).. Furthermore,
1613 Leydig cell tumors are very rare in CAH while TARTs are very common.

1614 The central location of TARTs in the testes may result in mechanical obstruction of the
1615 seminiferous tubules with azoospermia and irreversible peritubular fibrosis (645). Moreover, the
1616 paracrine effects of steroids produced by TARTs may destroy the surrounding Sertoli or germ cells
1617 (378). Testis sparing surgery has been described in TARTs but usually does not improve gonadal
1618 function, probably owing to irreversible damage to the testis (637). Regular testicular ultrasound
1619 is recommended (every 2-5 years if TARTs are small and stable) and if an increased TART burden
1620 is found, glucocorticoid therapy should be optimized and cryopreservation of sperm offered (437).

1621 2. Secondary gonadal failure

1622 Poor hormonal control in CAH results in increased risk of hypogonadotropic hypogonadism
1623 (437,626), because high levels of adrenal androgen precursors will be aromatized to estrogens and
1624 suppress the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis. Steroids produced by TARTs can also suppress
1625 gonadotropin secretion (438). Even though most males with CAH and secondary gonadal failure
1626 will compensate for reduced testicular testosterone production with increased adrenal testosterone,
1627 low testosterone levels are found in some patients (438,646). Overtreatment with glucocorticoids

1628 in men with CAH may also induce gonadal failure (589); optimizing glucocorticoid therapy will
1629 usually reverse this.

1630 3. Paternity

1631 There are few controlled studies of fertility in men with CAH. In a Finnish study of 29 young
1632 men with classic CAH a child rate of 0.07 children per adult male was reported, which was
1633 significantly lower than the 0.34 in the entire Finnish male population with a similar age
1634 distribution (647). In a similar Swedish study of 30 men with CAH the child rate was 0.9 compared
1635 to 1.8 in the entire age-matched Swedish population (437). Of 30 US men with CAH only 7% had
1636 fathered children (638), and of 22 German men with CAH, 23% had children (589). Of 65 British
1637 men with CAH, 25% had become fathers, two after fertility treatment, but only 37% had tried to
1638 become fathers (360). Finally, of 219 French men with classic CAH, 24% had children (11% after
1639 IVF), and this fertility rate was lower than the national reference population (626). Men with CAH
1640 seem to be less sexually active than matched controls (368). However, of 221 Swedish men with
1641 CAH and 22,100 matched controls, only those born before neonatal screening had a reduced child
1642 rate (odds ratio 0.5, i.e. half as likely to have fathered a child), suggesting that fertility may not be
1643 reduced for most men with CAH in the future. Men with NC CAH had a normal child rate and of
1644 those who, irrespective of genotype or phenotype, had succeeded in having children, the number
1645 of offspring was similar to controls (590). Men with CAH adopted children more often (odds ratio
1646 2.9) (590).

1647

1648 *B. Reproductive function in women*

1649 CAH affects gonadal function and fertility in women. In general, there is an association
1650 between the severity of the CAH phenotype and the level of gonadal dysfunction and fertility(625).

1651 1. **Pubertal development**

1652 Age of menarche is normal in well-controlled girls, with no difference between SW, SV and
1653 NC CAH (34,356,372,425,648). However, when glucocorticoid therapy is withheld or inadequate,
1654 menarche is delayed (649). Irregular menstrual patterns in CAH are associated with other
1655 hyperandrogenic signs such as acne and hirsutism and signs of insulin resistance. This clinical
1656 picture closely resembles polycystic ovary syndrome (429). Sonographic findings of polycystic
1657 ovarian appearance have been reported in adult women with CAH (about 20-50%) and in a
1658 minority of adolescent patients (650-654). Breast development can be impaired in case of
1659 inadequate androgen control (649,655). The European multicenter dsd-LIFE study showed that
1660 only 68% of adults with CAH had reached Tanner stage B5 compared to 90% in women without
1661 DSD (656).

1662 2. **Fertility**

1663 Compared to age-matched controls, women with CAH have fewer pregnancies and children.
1664 In a Finnish study, the mean child rate was 0.34 versus 0.91 in the general Finnish female
1665 population, and was lower in SW compared to non-SW women (657). In a Swedish study, the
1666 number of pregnancies was 50% lower compared to age-matched controls (372); 16 of 19 women
1667 who attempted pregnancy succeeded in becoming pregnant and there was a clear relationship
1668 between more severe genotypes and fewer children. Of 106 CAH patients in the UK, 25 considered
1669 motherhood and 23 had actively attempted conception, of whom 21 achieved 34 pregnancies (591).
1670 The pregnancy rate in this subgroup was similar to that in the normal UK population (95%), and
1671 similar in the SW (88.9%) and non-SW (92.9%) subgroups. However, women with SW were less
1672 likely to seek motherhood. More recently, the dsd-LIFE study reported that only 14.7% of 221
1673 CAH women had one or more children without assisted reproduction techniques (ART), and 1.9%

1674 with ART (658). In a recent Swedish epidemiological study using the national CAH registry, 272
1675 females with CAH (aged 14 years or above) were compared to 27,200 matched controls (659).
1676 Only 25.4% of women with CAH had given birth compared to 45.8% of controls. Furthermore,
1677 mothers with CAH were older and had fewer children.

1678 All studies have emphasized that the major cause for low child rates is that women with CAH
1679 are less likely to seek motherhood. Women with the SW phenotype show the lowest interest in
1680 motherhood. This may be caused by the effects of prenatal androgen exposure on gender role
1681 behavior, including reduced interest in infants (592,660), the lack of a partner, dissatisfaction with
1682 genital appearance, decreased sexual satisfaction, and urogenital and sexual dysfunction as a result
1683 of corrective surgery (365). When patients attempt pregnancy, the success rate seems to have
1684 increased in the last twenty years, as a result of various factors, including increased understanding
1685 of the effect of androgen and progesterone levels, and the level of mineralocorticoid substitution
1686 (35).

1687 3. Optimizing fertility in women

1688 A large review of case reports of women with classic CAH included 159 pregnancies since
1689 1999. In 84 pregnancies the mode of conception was reported, and 62/84 pregnancies were
1690 spontaneous (365). When pregnancy is attempted and especially when spontaneous conception
1691 fails, the first approach is to optimize glucocorticoid therapy, aiming at normal androgen and
1692 follicular-phase progesterone levels (591,661,662). Second, optimizing mineralocorticoid
1693 treatment appears to improve fertility SW and SV patients (365,591,663), but the exact mechanism
1694 remains unknown.

1695 If needed, and especially when the above approaches are unsuccessful, assisted reproduction
1696 techniques can be used for ovulation induction and conception (664,665).

1697 Most (53-68%) women with NC CAH conceive spontaneously without any treatment
1698 (650,666). Of 190 women with NC CAH, 95 wanted pregnancy and 187 pregnancies occurred in
1699 85 women. Of these pregnancies, 99 occurred before the diagnosis of NC CAH (96/99
1700 spontaneous), and 88 (47%) after the diagnosis (11/88 spontaneous) (650). Therefore, in case of
1701 subfertility (or recurrent miscarriages) there is a clear indication for temporary glucocorticoid
1702 treatment in NC CAH (37,134). Glucocorticoid treatment shortens the time to pregnancy from
1703 about one year to less than six months (667). If conception cannot be achieved with glucocorticoids,
1704 ovulation induction is usually successful. The course of pregnancy is usually uneventful; however,
1705 the miscarriage rate in women with NC CAH is substantially higher (25%) than in the general
1706 population (6%) in some (650,666) but not all (667) studies. The miscarriage rate can be reduced
1707 to normal in women treated with low to moderate doses of HC (650), prednisolone or prednisone
1708 (666) prior to and during pregnancy.

1709

1710 4. Pregnancy outcome

1711 Pregnancy outcome is good in women with CAH (365). Placental aromatase activity protects
1712 the fetus from maternal androgens (101). Gestational diabetes has been described relatively
1713 frequently (372,659). Adjustments in glucocorticoid (and fludrocortisone) dose are usually
1714 necessary, especially in the third trimester (134), similar to pregnancies in women with primary
1715 adrenal insufficiency (668,669). In the offspring, the rate for small-for-gestational-age seems to be
1716 increased in some (365), but not all (659) studies, and no other problems are seen at follow-up
1717 (670).

1718

1719 **C. Cardiovascular and metabolic morbidity**

1720 **1. Metabolic consequences**

1721 The prevalence of overweight and obesity are greater in adults with CAH in the UK (360) and
1722 Sweden (671) but similar to the general population in the US (217) and France (626,672).
1723 Increased abdominal adiposity, with a higher proportion of pro-inflammatory visceral adipose
1724 tissue compared to subcutaneous adipose tissue, was present in adolescents and young adults with
1725 CAH compared to age-, sex- and BMI-matched controls (673). Metabolic syndrome was observed
1726 in nearly 20% of adults in the NIH's cross-sectional study cohort (217), associated with older age
1727 but not with androgens, glucocorticoid type, or dose. The Endocrine Society's systematic review
1728 of relevant literature published through early 2016 included 20 observational studies (14
1729 longitudinal, 6 cross-sectional) with a moderate to high risk of bias (674). The average dose of
1730 glucocorticoids (in hydrocortisone equivalents) was 9-26.5 mg/m²/day. In the meta-analysis (416
1731 patients, 14 months-63 years old), compared to controls, individuals with CAH had increased
1732 values for the homeostatic model assessment of insulin resistance (HOMA-IR; weighted mean
1733 difference [WMD] 0.49; 95% CI 0.02-0.96), however, no differences were noted in fasting blood
1734 glucose, insulin level, glucose or insulin level after 2-hour glucose load, or serum lipids.

1735 **2. Blood pressure**

1736 Some studies report normal resting (217,626,675) and 24-hour blood pressure profiles (676)
1737 whereas others report a slight increase of either diurnal or both diurnal and nocturnal systolic blood
1738 pressure, compared to matched controls even in childhood (677,678). There are minimal data on
1739 the prevalence of hypertension in adults with CAH (679,680), with inconsistent results in
1740 individual studies conducted in different locales (626,671,681). The systematic review and meta-
1741 analysis (674) found that individuals with CAH had modestly increased systolic blood pressure

1742 (WMD 4.44 mm Hg; 95% CI 3.26-5.63 mm Hg) and diastolic blood pressure (WMD 2.35 mm Hg;
1743 95% CI 0.49-4.20 mm Hg). The authors were unable to draw conclusions regarding the effects of
1744 several important variables such as sex, glucocorticoid type and dose, fludrocortisone dose, and
1745 genotype, and bias in the individual reports was moderate to high.

1746 3. Cardiovascular consequences

1747 Cardiovascular morbidity and mortality are difficult to assess in CAH, as few of the studied
1748 patients are older than 50 years (682). Results for carotid intima media thickness (cIMT), a
1749 surrogate marker of cardiac dysfunction, vary in existing studies (677,678,683), without
1750 correlation between cIMT and cumulative glucocorticoid doses or androgen levels (683). A
1751 systematic review and meta-analysis showed slight but significantly greater carotid intima
1752 thickness (WMD 0.08 mm; 95% CI 0.01-0.15 mm) (674). In adolescent and adult CAH patients,
1753 normal left ventricular morphology has been reported (677,684), but mild diastolic
1754 dysfunction and impaired exercise performance were shown. Recently, a French group reported
1755 the complex interactions between gonadotropins and steroid hormones on the duration of
1756 ventricular repolarization. QT interval duration was shorter in women with CAH than in control
1757 women (685). A Swedish study analyzed cardiovascular and metabolic morbidity in CAH patients,
1758 finding increases in both cardiovascular and metabolic disorders including higher frequencies of
1759 hypertension, dyslipidemia and atrial fibrillation (671). Obesity was consistently increased in all
1760 subgroups while diabetes was increased in females, SV and NC phenotypes and those above 40
1761 years of age. However, the non-obese patients were similarly affected by hypertension and diabetes
1762 as the entire CAH cohort. This study also found an increased frequency of venous thromboembolic
1763 events, which should be studied further to determine if, as reported in both Cushing syndrome and

1764 glucocorticoid use, there is a higher risk of venous thromboembolism due to hypercoagulability
1765 that should prompt a lower threshold for thrombosis prophylaxis in this population.

1766 Thus, CAH may be associated with higher cardiovascular risk (686,687). Increased
1767 cardiovascular mortality has been reported in CAH in Sweden, second only to adrenal crisis as a
1768 cause of death (368). Data on cardiac events are sparse, and most of the literature has focused on
1769 surrogate outcomes, rather than episodes of acute myocardial infarction, heart failure or death.
1770 Some subgroups of patients seem to be more affected by cardiovascular risk factors. Regular
1771 follow-up is needed, along with lifestyle interventions, to limit weight gain, prevent obesity, and
1772 screen for diabetes (especially gestational diabetes), and dyslipidemia. Close monitoring of
1773 glucocorticoid and mineralocorticoid doses is important. Further prospective studies on larger
1774 cohorts are necessary to clarify the mechanisms leading to metabolic and cardiovascular
1775 abnormalities, and to understand the respective roles of adrenal sex hormones, lifelong
1776 glucocorticoid and mineralocorticoid treatment (366), and the impact of genetic background, such
1777 as glucocorticoid receptor gene polymorphisms, and other loci contributing to adverse cardio-
1778 metabolic risk profiles (688).

1779 **4. Neurological aspects**

1780 Early hormonal alterations affect the development of mammalian neural circuits. Widespread
1781 expression of androgen and glucocorticoid receptors in the brain suggest that fetal and postnatal
1782 imbalances in androgen and glucocorticoid exposure characteristic of CAH might influence brain
1783 development and function, with the potential to impact mental health (689). Compared to controls,
1784 patients with classic CAH have higher prevalence of anxiety, depression, alcohol misuse,
1785 suicidality and adjustment disorders (394,547,597)(also see section V.F). Males diagnosed beyond

1786 the neonatal period and women with the most severe null genotype are especially at risk for mental
1787 health issues (547,594,597).

1788 Neuroimaging studies in patients with CAH have revealed alterations in brain structure and
1789 function. In a functional MRI study of 14 adolescents with classic CAH compared to age-matched
1790 controls, girls with CAH showed a similar pattern of amygdala activation to control boys,
1791 suggesting an androgen effect on amygdala function in girls with CAH (690). Glucocorticoid
1792 therapy has been implicated in the development of white matter hyperintensities which reflect
1793 reduction of white matter structural integrity (691). White matter hyperintensities are found in
1794 patients with CAH, but are an uncommon finding in healthy adults aged < 45 years (692,693).
1795 Glucocorticoid therapy in CAH has been reported to affect working memory and digit span scores;
1796 patients on higher glucocorticoid doses have worse performance (691). Memory impairment is
1797 similarly found among patients with Cushing disease and Cushing syndrome (694).

1798 Structural differences in gray matter morphometry in the medial temporal lobe were found in
1799 a cross-sectional MRI study of 27 adolescents with CAH (695). Young people with classic CAH
1800 had smaller regional volumes in the prefrontal cortex, amygdala and hippocampus and overall
1801 smaller brain volumes compared to age-matched controls. In a study of 37 young adults with CAH,
1802 alterations in grey matter structure, including the middle frontal gyrus and the parietal and superior
1803 occipital cortex were found in CAH patients compared to controls (696). These regions play a role
1804 in visuospatial working memory and patients performed worse in visuospatial working memory
1805 tasks.

1806 All of the neuroimaging studies are hindered by small sample size (689). Decreased brain
1807 volume has been observed in patients compared to controls in multiple studies and this needs to
1808 be accounted for when evaluating individual brain regions. Moreover, sex matching is essential

1809 since human male/female differences have been found in total brain volume (697), gray matter
1810 brain volume in specific regions (698) and brain connectivity (699); sexual dimorphism of the
1811 brain has also been found during childhood (700)(reviewed in (689)). In CAH, there are multiple
1812 hormonal imbalances including *in utero* glucocorticoid deficiency and androgen excess, postnatal
1813 androgen excess and iatrogenic glucocorticoid excess, and epinephrine deficiency, all possibly
1814 occurring during different developmental periods and with varying potential impact on neural
1815 circuits.

1816 5. Bone

1817 Since patients with CAH are on lifelong glucocorticoid supplementation, reduced bone
1818 mineral density (BMD) and osteoporosis are potential long-term outcomes. Epidemiological and
1819 other studies have demonstrated that glucocorticoids cause secondary osteoporosis and increase
1820 fracture risk (701,702). Both direct and indirect effects by glucocorticoids on bone result in initial
1821 increased resorption and later decreased bone formation leading to micro-architectural distortion
1822 and fracture risk (703). Moreover, glucocorticoids may cause secondary hyperparathyroidism by
1823 decreasing intestinal calcium absorption and increasing renal calcium excretion. Despite the
1824 known negative effects of glucocorticoids on BMD, studies with patients with CAH have reported
1825 inconsistent finding. A few studies have reported normal (704-709) or even high BMD (710), but
1826 most have shown low BMD at all or at least some sites (209,217,360,646,711-722). These
1827 differences may be due to both glucocorticoid and androgen exposure, since androgens stimulate
1828 osteoblast proliferation and differentiation in both genders (723). Adrenal androgens, including
1829 DHEAS, affect bone metabolism throughout life, especially during adrenarche, with effects mainly
1830 on cortical bone (724). Thus, late diagnosis and/or poor hormonal control may improve BMD due
1831 to high androgen concentrations (646,718). Moreover, different glucocorticoid regimens may

1832 affect BMD differently; hydrocortisone seems to affect BMD less than longer acting
1833 glucocorticoids, especially dexamethasone (369). A recent meta-analysis comparing patients with
1834 CAH and matched controls found slightly decreased BMD in patients with CAH (725).
1835 Furthermore, adult women with CAH had more fractures than matched controls (718) whereas
1836 men with CAH did not (646). Patients with classic CAH had more nontraumatic fractures than
1837 those with NC CAH (724). However, osteoporosis-related fractures typically occur after 50 years
1838 of age and very few older patients have been included in studies of BMD and fractures. BMD
1839 screening is recommended by the Endocrine Society in adults with CAH and a prolonged period
1840 of higher-than-average glucocorticoid dosing, or in patients who have had a nontraumatic fracture
1841 (134). Others have also suggested screening any patient upon transfer to adult care and every 2-5
1842 years thereafter (682).

1843 6. **Adrenal tumors**

1844 Approximately 20-30% of adult patients with CAH have adrenal masses (726). Almost a quarter
1845 of these are benign adrenal myelolipomas, which generally occur in patients with a history of poor
1846 hormonal control, suggesting that persistent ACTH stimulation may play a role in pathogenesis
1847 (628,726,727). There is no evidence that adrenocortical carcinoma, a rare malignancy with poor
1848 prognosis, is more prevalent in CAH. Adrenocortical carcinomas can be distinguished from benign
1849 adrenal masses by their characteristic steroid profile as assessed with mass spectrometry-based
1850 methods (728).

1851 **VII. CAH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES – CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS**

1852 CAH management in developing countries is challenging. Newborn screening for CAH is not
1853 available in many developing countries (729,730), delaying diagnosis and increasing mortality,
1854 particularly in boys who lack atypical genitalia (731,732). Pediatric endocrinologists are scarce

1855 (560,730,733), and late referral to specialized centers may delay diagnosis and treatment.
1856 Hormonal assays for diagnosis and follow-up have limited availability and are expensive (730,733).
1857 Needed medications may be available only on the black market (137,556,733). Delayed diagnosis
1858 (557,734), emotional (731), and gender assignment problems (732,735) negatively influence
1859 quality of life (560,736).

1860 There are also socio-economic and cultural issues (733). Myths and misconceptions about
1861 ambiguous genitalia in certain communities may lead to discrimination against patients and
1862 families (556,560). Gender reassignments in late-identified patients may be met with resistance or
1863 refusal because of social stigma and cultural pressure (730). Moreover, many developing countries
1864 also face poverty and insufficient basic medical knowledge (556,733). These issues imply the need
1865 for better primary health care education. Educational materials in the local language may increase
1866 understanding of CAH among families and communities. Clinical guidelines for developing
1867 countries are needed, along with advocacy to encourage government policy to improve access to
1868 essential medications and implementation of newborn screening.

1869

1870 **VIII. FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

1871 **A. *Basic science***

1872 As discussed previously, there has been much recent progress in adrenal steroidogenesis
1873 as regards the alternative “backdoor” pathway to androgens and the importance of 11-oxo-
1874 androgens. Other unanswered questions in steroidogenesis remain (summarized in (42)). Areas
1875 requiring further study include more detailed understandings of how StAR imports cholesterol to
1876 the mitochondria inner membrane, and how the 17,20-lyase activity of CYP17A1 is regulated.
1877 Secretion of androgens and androgen precursors by the fetal adrenal gland is a key component of

1878 the pathophysiology of CAH, yet regulation of fetal adrenal growth and postnatal involution of the
1879 fetal zone are poorly understood, and teleologically it is unclear why primate adrenal glands
1880 normally secrete DHEA and androgens either prenatally or at adrenarche. Steroid synthesizing
1881 enzymes, including CYP21A2, are found in nonglandular tissues, but the functional significance
1882 of extraglandular steroidogenesis remains uncertain.

1883

1884 **B. Clinical management**

1885 Given the relative rarity of CAH, national and international registries are valuable in developing
1886 and testing best practices throughout the lifespan (737). Whereas it may be unrealistic to expect
1887 that every clinical site caring for CAH patients possesses a comprehensive, multidisciplinary team,
1888 networks of expert centers can ensure access to specialty care when necessary. Criteria defining a
1889 comprehensive expert level of care for CAH have been published (342,738). Surveys show that
1890 patient satisfaction, provider training, research and quality improvement activities vary among
1891 medical centers (739,740); thus, there is a need for clinical benchmarks in management. Real world
1892 data including patient and family satisfaction, as well as peer-observation of clinical care can help
1893 develop guidelines and decision-support tools. By providing robust data on epidemiology, patients'
1894 characteristics and current standard of care, registries have the potential to shape health care policy
1895 and, by engaging with patients, increase stakeholder involvement and improve the patient-centered
1896 experience (741). One example of outcomes from the I-CAH Registry has been to define acute
1897 adverse events associated with adrenal insufficiency including sick day episodes, adrenal crises
1898 and hospitalizations among CAH patients (401). The challenge for rare disease registries is to
1899 ensure that the data represent the widest range of patients, and that the data are findable, accessible,
1900 interoperable and reusable (FAIR) within a rigorous framework of data governance, integrated

1901 with other data sources through multiomics technology (742). With anticipated therapeutic
1902 advances over the next decade, the use of registries for measuring therapeutic effectiveness, as
1903 well as maintaining clinician and patient engagement, will become imperative (401). Given the
1904 relative rarity of CAH, national and international registries are valuable in developing and testing
1905 best practices throughout the lifespan (737). As it may be unrealistic to expect that every clinical
1906 site caring for CAH patients possesses a comprehensive, multidisciplinary team, networks of
1907 expert centers can ensure access to specialty care when necessary. Criteria defining a
1908 comprehensive expert level of care for CAH have been published (342,738). Surveys show that
1909 patient satisfaction, provider training, research and quality improvement activities vary among
1910 medical centers (739,740), thus there is a need for clinical benchmarks in disease management.
1911 (401,741). Other areas that could benefit from large-scale collaborative data collection include
1912 prenatal and neonatal diagnosis and treatment. With recent data pointing to potential serious
1913 adverse outcomes, long-term follow-up studies should closely monitor both CAH patients and
1914 unaffected siblings subjected to prenatal Dex treatment. As discussed in section IV.A, the
1915 suboptimal positive predictive value for immunoassay in many newborn screening programs
1916 mandates further studies to determine the most cost effective strategies to improve screening
1917 sensitivity and specificity. Clinical trials for novel drug targets and potential gene therapy are in
1918 progress or planned that should provide additional treatment options. At the same time, more
1919 widespread availability of mass spectrometry-based assays for new steroid biomarkers, *e.g.*, 11-
1920 oxo-androgens, may improve monitoring and titrating existing medication regimens.

1921 Long-term management should emphasize the importance of a smooth transition from pediatric
1922 to adult medical care, with continued emphasis on risk assessment for adverse reproductive,
1923 psychosexual, cardiovascular, metabolic and musculoskeletal outcomes. To this end,

1924 implementation of telemedicine services have lately been recognized as a valuable resource in
1925 managing patients living in remote areas or lacking access to specialty centers.

1926 Much discourse and debate has centered on whether and when surgical intervention ought to
1927 be considered. A systematic review and meta-analysis found scant sound evidence to favor early
1928 surgery, delayed surgery or no surgery (528). More work is needed to develop evidence-based
1929 guidelines for surgical treatment of CAH, including ideal timing of surgery, surgical technique,
1930 risk of incontinence, risk of additional surgery (such as repair of vaginal stenosis at puberty), risk
1931 of loss of sexual function, and extent of clitoral surgery. Given that the likelihood of performing
1932 randomized controlled trials in this area is minimal, long-term surveillance using commonly
1933 agreed and routinely collected clinical and patient reported outcome measures should be prioritized.

1934 Not least among desired goals is for mental health professionals in collaboration with other
1935 specialists to develop and validate quality of life instruments specific to CAH. In summary, based
1936 on what has been learned from collective clinical and basic research, the outlook is optimistic for
1937 improved modes of CAH treatment and consequently better quality of life.

1938

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4160 **Figure 1.** Adrenal steroidogenesis. Enzymes are boxed with dotted lines extending to arrows
4161 denoting each enzymatic conversion; two enzymes, CYP11B2 and CYP17, catalyze several
4162 successive enzymatic conversions. Accessory proteins required for activity of cytochrome P450
4163 enzymes are shown next to each such enzyme: POR, P450 oxidoreductase, required by CYP
4164 enzymes in the endoplasmic reticulum; FDXR/FDX1, ferredoxin reductase and ferredoxin,
4165 required by mitochondrial CYP enzymes. Cytochrome B5 (CYP5A) is required for full 17,20-
4166 lyase activity of CYP17A1. There are two 11 β -hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase isozymes;
4167 HSD11B1, expressed mainly in the liver, catalyzes reduction (e.g., cortisone to cortisol), whereas
4168 HSD11B2, expressed mainly in the kidney, catalyzes oxidation (e.g., cortisol to cortisone). The
4169 steps affected by 21OHD, including steroids secreted in increased amounts in this disease, are
4170 denoted by red lines and red lettering. Steps taking place only in the adrenal glands are in unshaded
4171 boxes; steps taking place partly or predominantly outside the adrenal cortex are denoted by shaded
4172 boxes. Planar structures of cholesterol, aldosterone, cortisol and testosterone are illustrated; the
4173 position of the 11-oxo (11-keto) group in 11-ketotestosterone is illustrated in green. Colored
4174 rectangles indicate the following: grey, early steps of steroidogenesis common to all zones of the
4175 cortex; orange, steps in the zona glomerulosa leading to aldosterone; blue, steps in the zona
4176 fasciculata leading to cortisol; magenta; steps in the zona reticularis and extra-adrenal tissues
4177 leading to androgens; purple, the “backdoor” or alternative pathway from 17-OH progesterone to
4178 dihydrotestosterone (for clarity, the alternative pathway from progesterone is not shown); green,
4179 conversions leading to 11-oxo androgens.

4180

4181 **Figure 2.** Genetics of the CYP21 genes. **A**, the genetic region on chromosome 6p21.3, using data
4182 from the Human Genome database (<http://genome.ucsc.edu/>). The location of this region is

4183 indicated on a schematic of the entire chromosome. A scale is marked every 10 kb, with positions
4184 in the genome assembly numbered every 0.1 Mb. Genes transcribed in the telomeric-to-
4185 centromeric direction (left to right) are on the strand denoted by a right-facing arrow: *SKIV2L*,
4186 Ski2 like RNA helicase; *STK19*, serine/threonine kinase 19; *C4A*, complement component C4A;
4187 *CYP21A1P*, cytochrome P450 family 21 subfamily A member 1 (21-hydroxylase) pseudogene;
4188 *STK19B*, serine/threonine kinase 19 pseudogene; *C4B*, complement component C4B, *CYP21A2*,
4189 cytochrome P450 family 21 subfamily A member 2 (21-hydroxylase). Genes transcribed from the
4190 opposite strand (right to left in the figure) are immediately below: *ATF6B*, activating transcription
4191 factor 6 beta; *TNXB*, tenascin XB; ; *TNXA*, tenascin XA pseudogene; *DXO*, Decapping and
4192 exoribonuclease protein. ZA and ZB are adrenal-specific noncoding transcripts overlapping the
4193 C4 genes in the sense direction (146,147); additional transcripts exist but are not shown. The 30
4194 kb duplication of part of *STK19*, all of *C4*, all of *CYP21*, and part of *TNX* (a so-called RCCX
4195 module) is indicated.

4196
4197 **B**, an illustration of unequal meiotic crossing-over generating a deletion representing a salt-wasting
4198 21-hydroxylase deficiency allele. The other chromosome has 3 copies of the RCCX tandem and is
4199 not associated with disease. The scale is expanded from Figure 1A. For clarity, only the *C4* and
4200 *CYP21* genes are illustrated.

4201
4202 **Figure 3. A**, Structure of the *CYP21* genes. Exons are numbered. Mutations affecting enzymatic
4203 function that are normally present in the *CYP21A1P* pseudogene are shown. They are positioned
4204 vertically to show the severity of CAH they cause when transferred to *CYP21A2* in gene
4205 conversion events. These are grouped into 4 mutation groups (0, A-C) and are associated with

4206 particular forms of CAH, as indicated. **B**, associations between mutation groups and forms of CAH.
4207 These are displayed in tabular form on the left and as histograms on the right.

4208

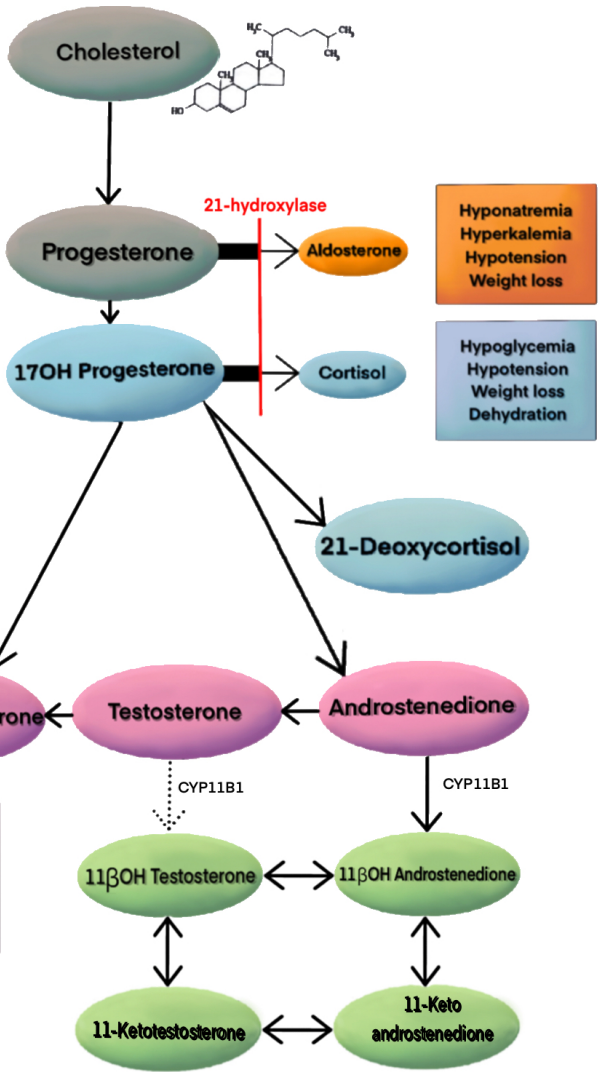
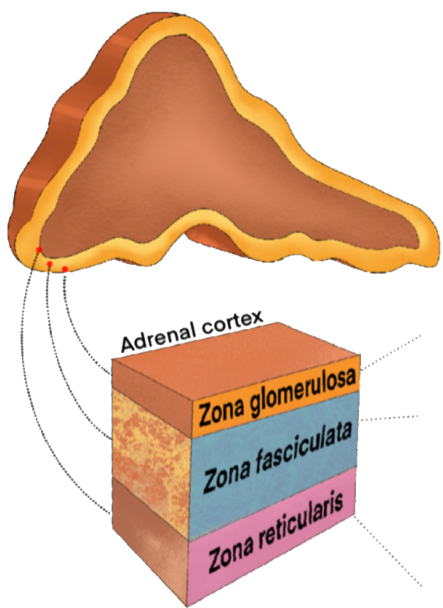
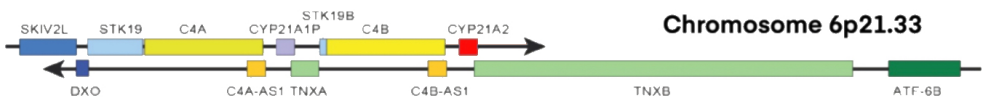
4209 **Figure 4.** Genital development. Top, Differentiation of male and female reproductive systems are
4210 illustrated in schematic cross-section (not to scale). Bottom, the Prader scale of genital virilization.

4211

4212 **Figure 5.** New therapeutic approaches target different aspects of the pathophysiology of CAH.

4213 Circadian cortisol replacement with a modified-release glucocorticoid or subcutaneous
4214 hydrocortisone infusion aim to control corticotropin-driven hyperandrogenism by replacing
4215 cortisol in a physiological manner. Other approaches to reduce androgen production without
4216 chronic supraphysiological glucocorticoid exposure include corticotropin-releasing hormone
4217 receptor-1 antagonists, adrenocorticotrop hormone (corticotropin, ACTH) antibodies,
4218 adrenocorticotrop hormone receptor (MC2R) antagonists, adrenolytic agents, adrenalectomy,
4219 and pharmacological inhibition of steroidogenic enzymes or steroid receptors in the adrenal or
4220 peripheral tissues. Since CAH owing to 21OHD is a monogenic disorder, gene therapy with cell-
4221 based and gene-editing technologies may be able to restore defective steroidogenesis. CRH
4222 denotes corticotropin-releasing hormone (sometimes referred to as corticotropin-releasing factor
4223 [CRF]). From New England Journal of Medicine, Merke DP, Auchus RJ, Congenital Adrenal
4224 Hyperplasia Due to 21-Hydroxylase Deficiency, Volume 83, Page 1258. Copyright © (2020)
4225 Massachusetts Medical Society. Reprinted with permission.

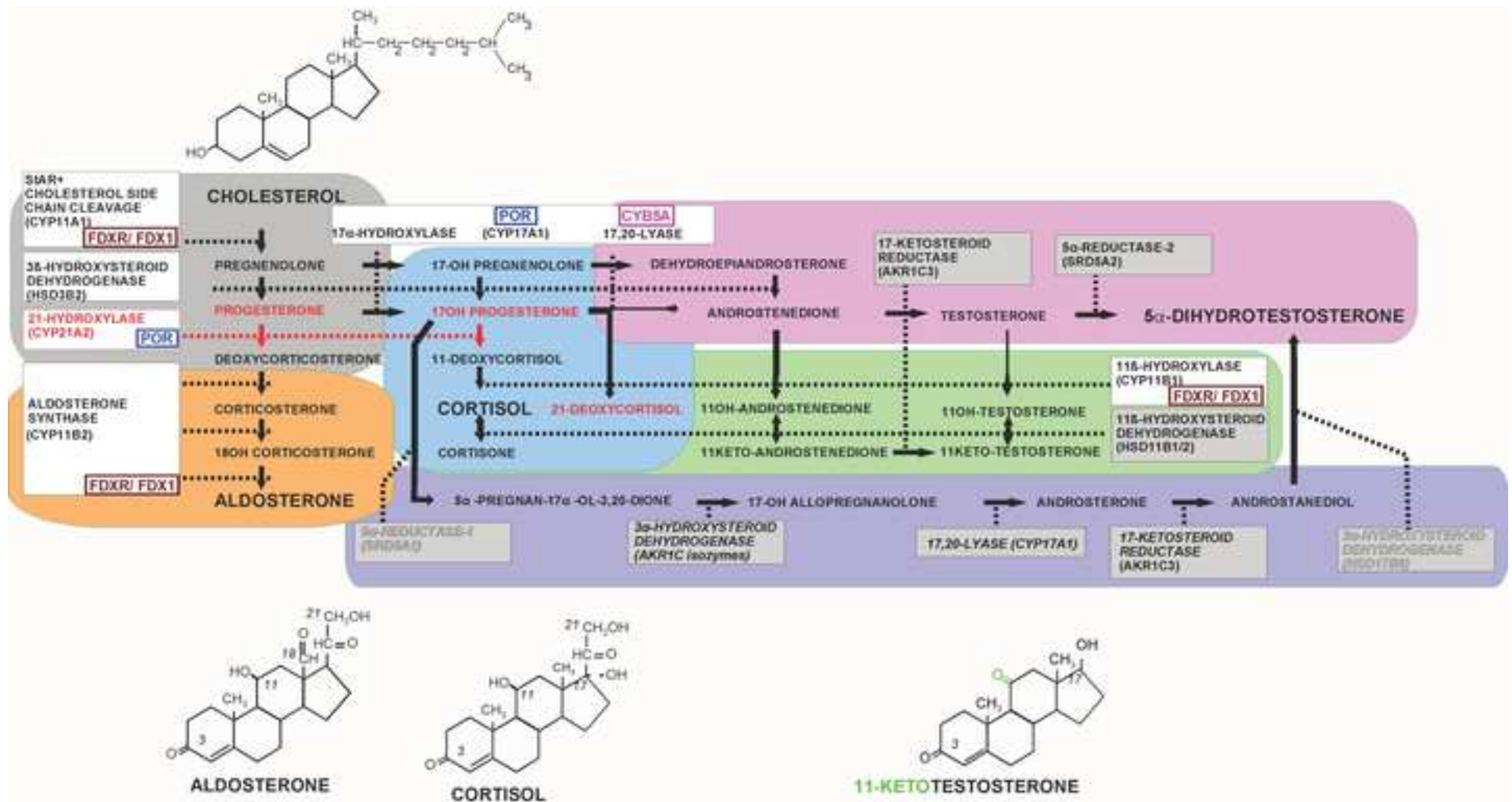
Congenital adrenal hyperplasia due to 21-hydroxylase deficiency

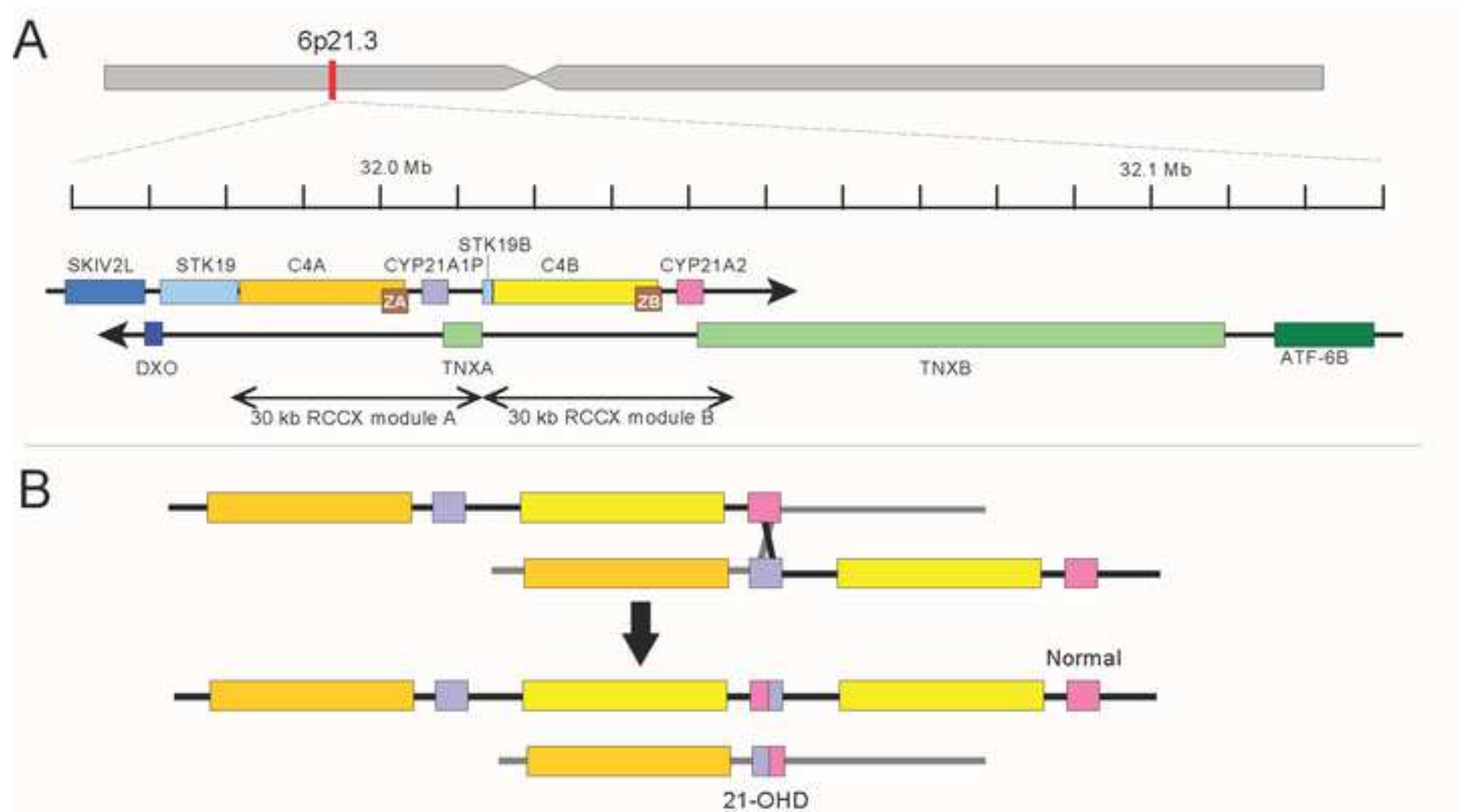


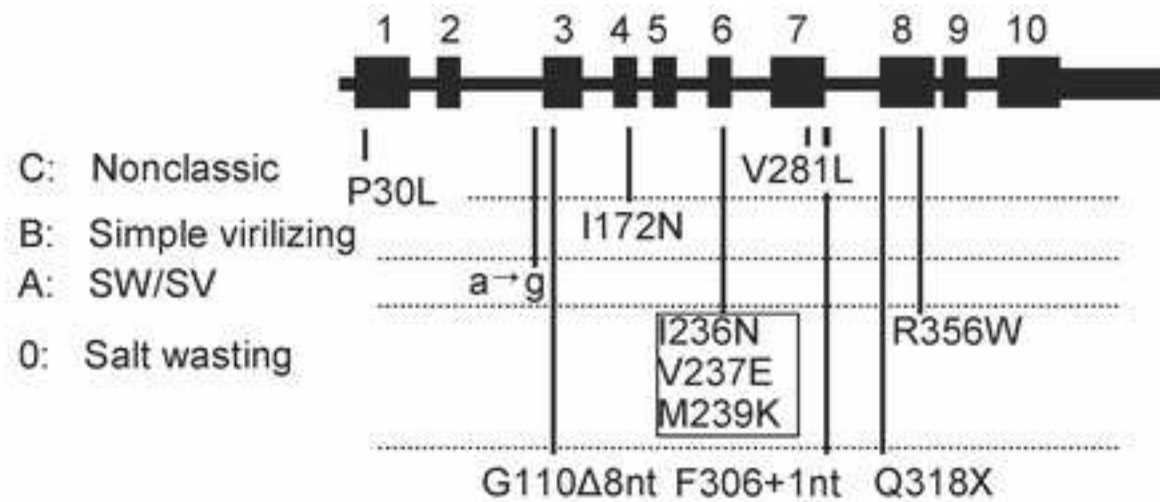
Hyponatremia
Hyperkalemia
Hypotension
Weight loss

Hypoglycemia
Hypotension
Weight loss
Dehydration

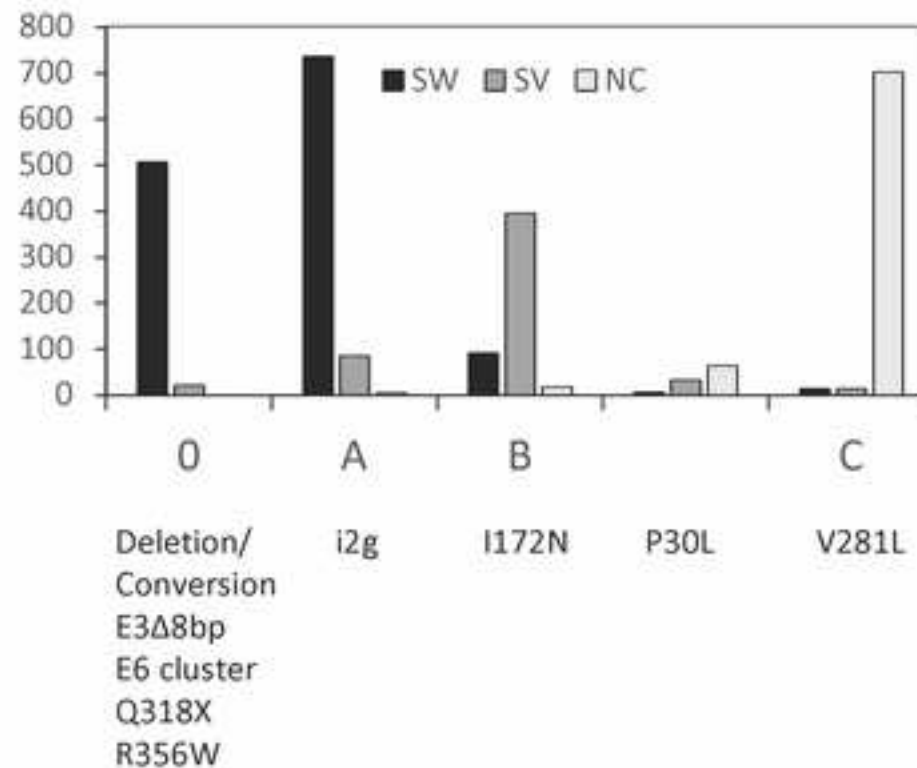
Precocious puberty
Increased height velocity
Impaired final height
Acne/ hirsutism
Menstrual disturbances

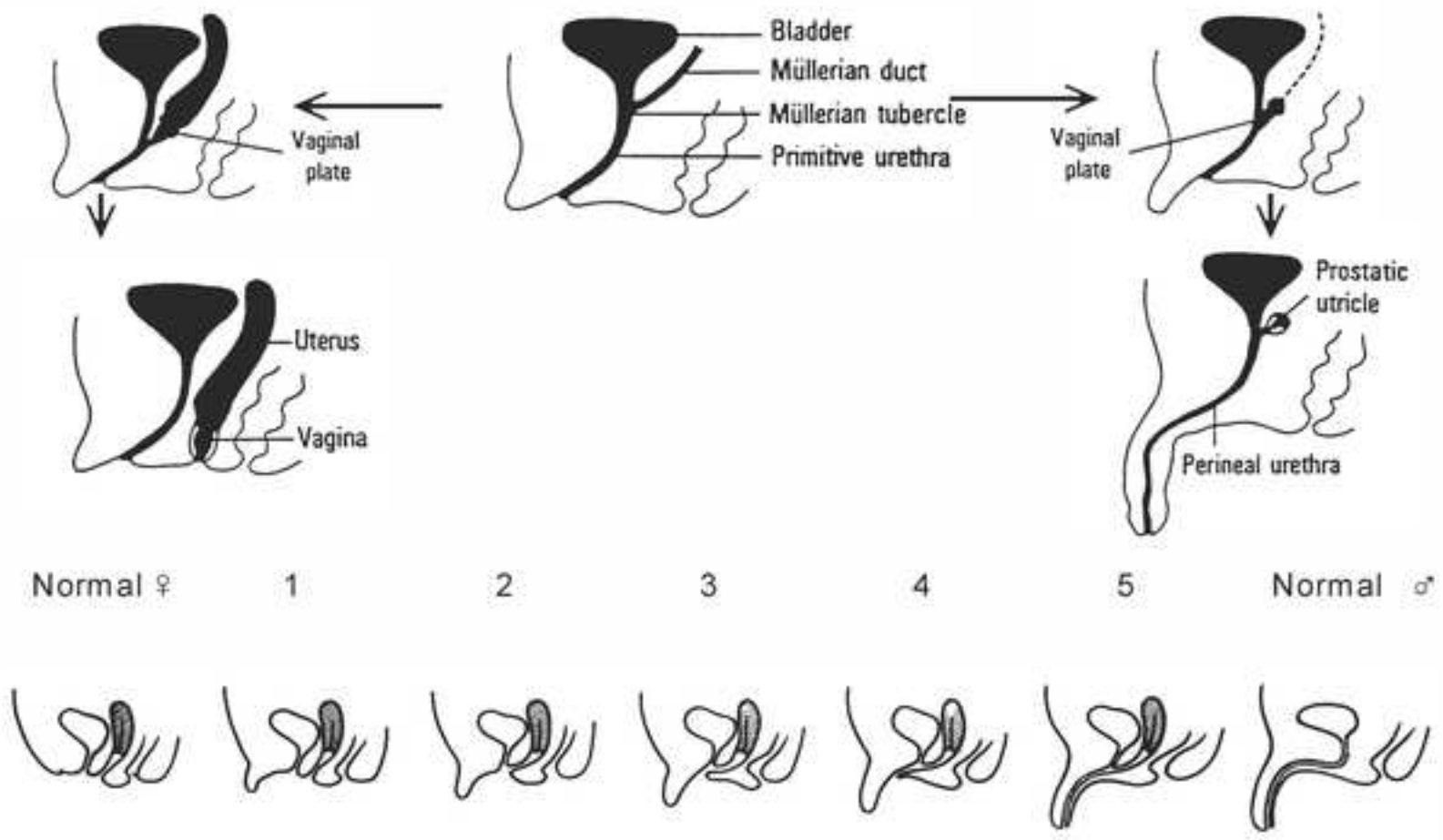






	SW	SV	NC	Predictive value
0	505	20	0	0.96
A	735	84	3	0.89
B	90	394	16	0.79
(P30L) 5		31	62	0.63
C	13	12	700	0.97





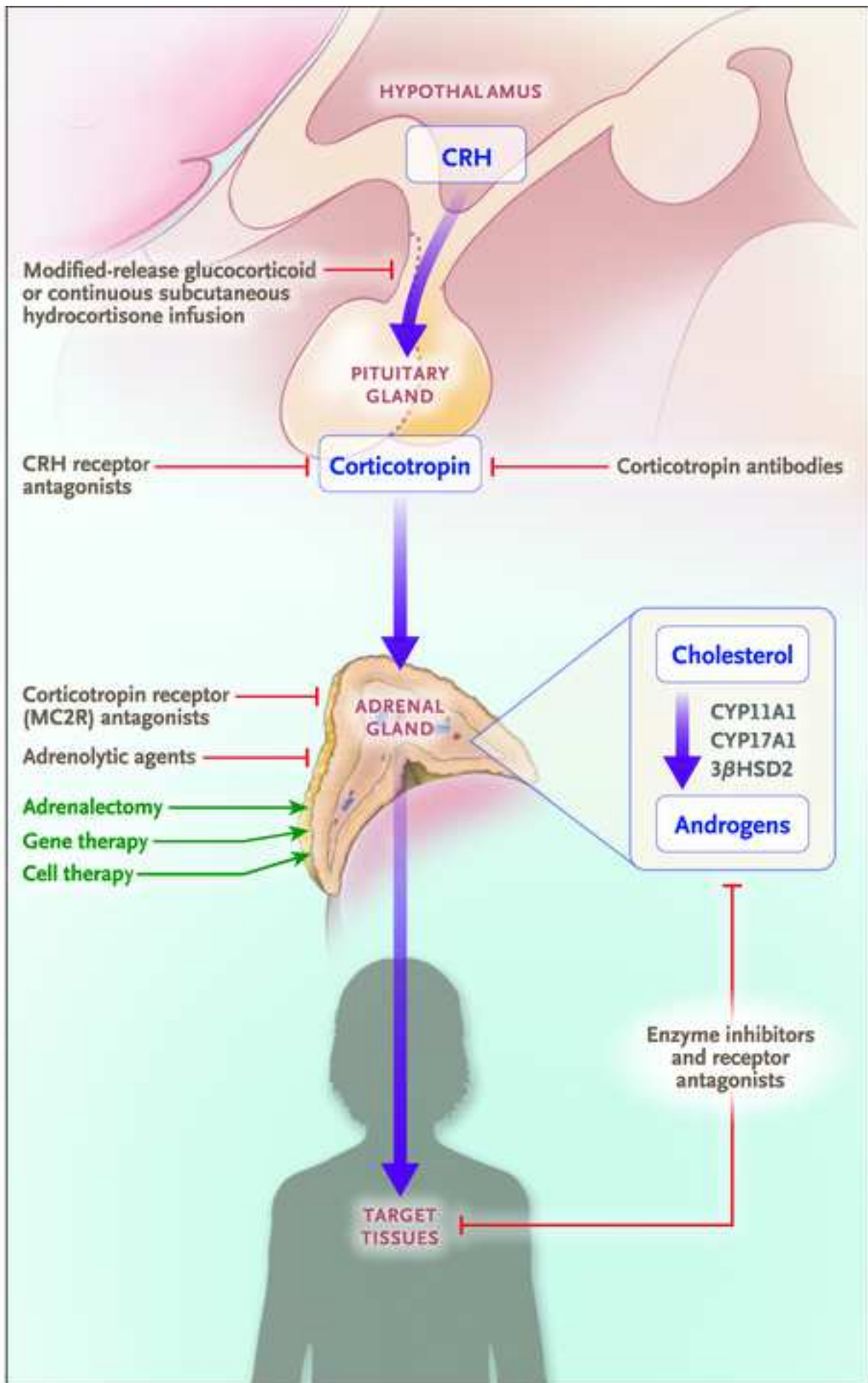


Table 1. Incidence of CAH in different countries					
Country	Complete national data?	Sample size	1/Incidence	PPV (term infants or overall)	Reference
Argentina (Buenos Aires)	No	80,436	8,937	50	(3)
Australia*	Yes		18,034	N/A	(4)
Australia (New South Wales)	No	185,854	15 488	1.8	(4)
Australia (Western Australia)*	No	550,153	14,869	N/A	(5)
Brazil	No	748,350	14,967		(6)
Brazil (Goiás state)	No	82,603	10,325	28.6	(7)
Brazil (Minas Gerais state)	No	159,415	19,927	2.1	(8)
Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul state)	No	108,409	13,551	1.6	(9)
China	No	30,000	6,084		(10)
China (Beijing)	No	44,360	7,393	3.0	(11)
Croatia	Yes	532,942	14,403		(12)
Cuba	Yes	621,303	15,931	0.3	(13)
Czech Republic	Yes	888,891	12,520	1.6	(14)
France	Yes	6,012,798	15,699	2.3	(15)
Germany (Bavaria)	No	1,420,102	12,457	5	(16)
India	No	55,627	6,334		(17)
Israel	Yes	1,378,132	16,910	16.5	(18)
Japan (Sapporo)	No	498,147	20,756	8	(19)
Japan (Tokyo)	No	2,105,108	21,264	25.8	(20)
Netherlands	Yes	2,235,931	17,468	24.7	(21)
New Zealand	Yes	1,175,988	26,727		(22)
Sweden	Yes	2,737,932	14,260	25.1	(2)
Turkey	No	241,083	15,067	1.9	(23)
United Arab Emirates	Yes	750,365	9,030		(24)
United Kingdom*	Yes		18,248	N/A	(25)
Uruguay	Yes	190,053	15,800		(26)

Data are from studies published in 2008 and later; Earlier studies are summarized by (27) and (2).

Data are from newborn screening except those marked (*) which are from national case registries.

PPV, positive predictive value.

Table 2. Allele frequencies in various regions					
	North America	South America	Europe	China	Total
References	(195,208,213,217)	(200,218)	(197,203,212,219)	(216,220)	
Allele					
Deletion/ conversion	21.1%	11.1%	28.8%	21.9%	21.5%
P30L*	2.4%	1.0%	1.2%	1.1%	1.8%
I2G	23.1%	20.6%	26.7%	33.8%	25.3%
E3Δ8bp	2.3%	0.9%	2.4%	0.3%	1.8%
I172N	9.0%	9.4%	15.6%	15.1%	11.4%
E6	2.2%	1.8%	2.4%	1.9%	2.1%
V281L *	22.2%	24.5%	6.2%	1.4%	15.7%
Q318X	3.6%	6.5%	3.5%	5.3%	4.2%
R356W	3.8%	4.8%	4.3%	6.6%	4.5%
Other	10%	10%	8.9%	12.4%	10.2%
Alleles analyzed	3527	1094	1338	1142	7101

Gene conversion mutations occur with similar frequencies in most populations (**Table 2**).

*P30L and V281L are found mainly in patients with nonclassic CAH and therefore their allele frequencies depend on the proportions of nonclassic patients included in each study.

Table 3. Maintenance therapy in patients with CAH classic CAH		
Drug	Recommended total daily dose	Divided dosing frequency (times daily)
Children		
Hydrocortisone	10-15 mg/m ²	3-4
Fludrocortisone	0.05-0.2 mg	1-2
Sodium chloride supplements	1-2 g (17-24 mEq/day) in infancy	Several
Adults		
<i>Glucocorticoids</i>		
Hydrocortisone	15-25 mg	2-3
Prednisone	5-7.5 mg	2
Prednisolone	4-6 mg	2
Methylprednisolone	4-6 mg	2
Modified-release hydrocortisone (Plenadren®)	15-25 mg	*no published data in CAH patients, clinical experience shows that in addition to the morning dose a second GC dose is required in the evening
Modified- and delayed-release hydrocortisone (Chronocort®) ^a	15-25 mg	2 (2/3 of dose at 2300 and 1/3 of dose at 0700) ^a
Dexamethasone ^b	0.25-0.5 mg	1
Fludrocortisone	0.05-0.2 mg	1

^a Not yet launched, currently only available within the extension phase of the phase III study.

^b Avoid if possible or limit to a short time. Adapted from Speiser et al. (134).

Table 4. Indications for different glucocorticoid (GC) preparations			
Steroid	Clinical indication	Pros	Cons
Hydrocortisone	Preferred option for GC replacement.	Best long-term outcome with regard to metabolic, cardiovascular and bone health.	Short half-life. Needs to be given three times daily. Adrenal androgen suppression overnight may escape.
Prednisolone (Prednisone)	Might be a preferred option for regulation of menstrual cycles or fertility induction, or if patient adherence is poor with thrice daily HC.	Longer half-life, twice daily regimen. Potentially better patient adherence compared to three times daily regimen.	Potential higher rate of adverse effects on metabolic, cardiovascular and bone health compared to HC.
Dexamethasone	Fertility induction TART treatment	Strong adrenal suppressive effect, longest half-life, once daily regimen often possible.	Highest rate of adverse effects on metabolism, bone health. Traverses placenta barrier.

Table 5. Biochemical monitoring of glucocorticoid replacement in children and adults		
Sample	Variable	Goals and Comments*
Serum	Androstenedione	Normal values for sex and age <i>(often useful to assess together with testosterone in males)</i>
	Testosterone	Normal values for sex and age <i>(assess in the context of gonadotropins and androstenedione)</i>
	Sex hormone-binding globulin	For calculation of free and bioavailable testosterone
	DHEAS	Low to suppressed, not a good marker of disease control, but can be used to check for compliance/adherence
	17OHP	Normal values indicate overtreatment, aim at ULN to 400-1200 ng/dl (12-36 nmol/l)
	ACTH	Not a useful parameter for disease control; normal values indicate overtreatment
	Androstenedione/Testosterone ratio	Healthy woman: <2 Women with CAH: >4 indicates testosterone mainly of adrenal origin Healthy Males: <0.2 Men with CAH: >0.5 indicates testosterone mainly of adrenal origin Men with CAH: >1.0 + LH, FSH suppressed indicates testosterone only of adrenal origin due to poor disease control
	Progesterone (Females)	Goal is <2 nmol/l (<0.6 ng/ml) in follicular phase for women trying to conceive
	11-oxygenated C19 steroids (11-ketotestosterone, 11-hydroxytestosterone, 11-hydroxyandrostenedione, 11-ketoandrostenedione)	Translational method; not yet established in clinical care
Saliva	Androstenedione	Normal values for sex and age
	17OHP	Up to ~3 times upper normal limit
Urine	GC-MS urinary steroid metabolome analysis (C ₂₁ -, C ₁₉ -, C ₁₈ -steroids)	Translational method; not yet established in clinical care

*These goals are derived from clinical experience and based on expert opinion as there are no established optimal biomarkers nor target values for treatment monitoring.

Table 6. Monitoring glucocorticoid replacement by history and clinical/technical examination (generally every 4 – 6 months in adults, every 3 – 4 months in children >18 months old)	
Parameter	Goals and Comments
History	
Symptoms of adrenal insufficiency (fatigue, headache, nausea, abdominal pain, postural dizziness, frequent stress dosing)	No signs of adrenal insufficiency
Adrenal crisis prevention	Well-educated and equipped patient with knowledge of sick day rules, and possession of steroid emergency card and injection kit; medical alert identification worn at all times.
Menstrual cycle	Regular menstrual cycles
Libido, erections (males)	Normal
Sexual health (females)	Pain-free intercourse
Physical examination	
Height (children)	Linear growth within target range
Pubertal development/Tanner stage (children and adolescents)	Normal pubertal development
Blood pressure	Within age- and sex-dependent reference range
BMI	Within age- and sex-dependent reference range
Cushingoid features, Striae distensae	No clinical signs of hypercortisolism
Gynecological assessment only if indicated	
Imaging	
Bone age yearly (children >2 years old /adolescents)	Bone age within 2 SD
Scrotal ultrasound every 2 – 5 years	No gonadal masses
Ovarian ultrasound only indicated in unexplained hyperandrogenism	
Bone mineral density every 3 – 5 years (adults treated with high GC doses)	Within age- and sex-dependent reference range
Others	
Semen analysis if indicated i.e presence of TARTs (males)	Normal results (WHO guideline)
Genetic assessment and counselling	Confirmation diagnosis CAH; counselling for family planning

Table 7. Suggested Management and Glucocorticoid Stress Dosing for patients with Adrenal Insufficiency due to Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (395,398,399,402)		
Clinical Scenario	Glucocorticoid Management	Additional considerations
<i>At home</i>		
Major illness or high-grade fever (> 39°C children)	Children: Three times the usual dose of hydrocortisone divided into 4 doses (given every 6 hours).	Drink regularly and increase fluid* intake for concentrated (dark) urine.
	Adults: 20 mg of hydrocortisone orally 3 times daily in addition to usual glucocorticoid or triple usual glucocorticoid.	Eat regularly simple and complex carbohydrates. 15 g (children) or 30 g (adults.) Adults with severe infections should divide dose every 6 hours.
Gastroenteritis with diarrhea ± vomiting (with or without fever)	Children: Three times the usual dose of hydrocortisone divided into 4 doses (given every 6 hours); Adults: 10-20 mg of hydrocortisone 3 to 4 times daily in addition to usual glucocorticoid or double or triple usual glucocorticoid; Dose depends on severity of diarrhea.	Consider early parenteral hydrocortisone. If unable to tolerate fluids, call emergency services for evaluation following glucocorticoid injection.
	Repeat oral dose if vomiting occurs within 1 hour of medication. If vomiting reoccurs, parenteral hydrocortisone 100 mg (children 50-100 mg/m ²).	Return to usual dose within 1-2 days of recovery with return to usual diet.
Minor illness or low-grade fever (>38°C in children)	Children: two to three times the usual dose of hydrocortisone divided into 3-4 doses (given every 6-8 hours).	Drink regularly and increase fluid* intake for concentrated (dark) urine.
	Adults: 10 mg of hydrocortisone orally 3 times daily in addition to usual glucocorticoid, or double usual glucocorticoid.	Eat regularly simple and complex carbohydrates. 15 g (children) or 30 g (adults). Return to usual dose within 1 day of recovery.

Exhausting physical exercise	Add one usual dose (children) or 10 mg hydrocortisone (adults) 30 to 60 minutes before exercise.	For unusual activities beyond normal routines. Not for routine use. Can repeat dose(s) if extended time period of strenuous exercise (e.g., marathon)
<i>Procedures</i>		
Major Surgery	Hydrocortisone intravenous bolus 50-100 mg (children 50-100 mg/m ²) followed by continuous intravenous hydrocortisone infusion 100-200 mg (children 100 mg/m ²) over 24 hours. Alternatively, divided doses every 6 hours, intravenous hydrocortisone 100-200 mg/day (children 100 mg/m ² /day)	Taper over 2-3 days with return to usual dose
Short Surgeries	Hydrocortisone intramuscularly or intravenous bolus 50-100 mg (children 50 mg/m ²) just before general anesthesia. Alternatively, give triple the usual morning dose before oral intake is held.	Rapid return to oral regimen
Labor and Delivery	As for surgical procedures	
Bowel procedures requiring overnight laxative	Double or triple usual glucocorticoid dose prior to laxative and repeat every 6 hours if oral medication tolerable and allowed. Alternatively, hydrocortisone 50-100 mg (children 50 mg/m ²) intramuscularly with laxative Hydrocortisone 50 mg (children 50 mg/m ²) intramuscularly or intravenous prior to procedure	
Dental surgery	Extra morning dose 1 hour prior to surgery	Can repeat dose depending on recovery No additional doses for routine dental procedures

Minor procedures with no sedation No adjustment needed

Acute emergency

Rapid infusion of Intravenous fluids: 1000 ml of 0.9% sodium chloride (children 20mL/kg normal saline, repeat up to 60 mL/kg) during the first 60 minutes, further fluid administration guided by individual patient needs

Hydrocortisone bolus 100 mg (children 50-100 mg/m²) followed by continuous intravenous infusion 200 mg over 24 hours or 50 mg every 6 hours (children 50-100 mg/m²/day divided every 6 hours). Reduce to 100 mg (children 50 mg/m²/day) over 24 hours the following day.

For hypoglycemia: dextrose 0.5-1g/kg dextrose or 2-4 ml/kg of D25W (maximum single dose 25 g) infused slowly at rate of 2 to 3 mL/min. Alternatively, 5-10 mL/kg of D10W for children < 12yrs old

Measurement of glucose and electrolytes

Cardiac monitoring

Consider antibiotics

Rapid hydrocortisone tapering and switch to oral regimen depending on clinical status

- *electrolyte-and sugar-containing fluids recommended. If hydrocortisone sodium succinate is unavailable, another parenteral glucocorticoid, such as dexamethasone, methylprednisolone, or prednisolone may be used in equivalent doses. Fludrocortisone replacement is not required if hydrocortisone doses exceed 50 mg every 24 hours but is generally administered, in those normally on fludrocortisone, when oral hydrocortisone is started.

Table 8. Animal models of prenatal glucocorticoid exposure			
Animal	Medication/Dosing¹	Outcome	Reference
Mouse	NK1R antagonists 30 – 300 mg/kg/day ²	9% cleft palate in higher dosage	(448)
Rat	Dex 0.1 mg/kg/day during the whole pregnancy	Lower body weight and kidney size, postnatal hypertension, albuminuria, sodium retention, and decreased glomerular filtration	(449)
Spiny mouse	Mini osmotic pump with dex 125 mcg/kg	Decreased the number of nephrons and altered expression of genes involved in nephron development in the spiny mouse	(450)
Rat	Dex	Impaired thyroid development with fewer follicular cells and C cells	(451)
Rat	Carbenoxolone ³ 12.5 mg/day	Lower birth weight and increased blood pressure	(452)
Rat	Dex 100 mcg/kg/day sc in late pregnancy	Glucose intolerance, 25% increase in hepatic expression of glucocorticoid receptor	(453)
Rat	Dex 100 mcg/kg/day sc in late pregnancy	Lower birth weight, fatty acid esterification and triglyceride synthesis	(454)
Rodents	Dex 50-120-200 mcg/kg/day	Impaired glucose tolerance, hyperinsulinism increased blood pressure, reduced postnatal growth at 1 year of age despite normal birth weight	(455)
Rat	Carbenoxolone 12.5 mg/day	Reduced birth weight	(456)
11 β HSD mutant mouse	None	Mice lacking Hsd11b2 had lower birthweights and increased anxiety compared to wild type littermates	(457)
Sheep	Betamethasone 0.5 mg/kg during 3 days	Retardation of fetal brain development	(458)
Sheep	Single or repeated betamethasone injections	Reduced brain weight	(459)

Sheep	Repeated betamethasone injections		Reduced neuronal myelinization	(460)
Rhesus macaque	Dex 0.5 or 5 or 10 mg/kg or repeated injections		Decreased numbers of pyramidal neurons in the hippocampal CA regions	(461)
Neural stem cells of newborn rat	Dex in vitro		Impairment of neuron and oligodendrocyte size and differentiation	(462)
Fetal guinea pig	Betamethasone mg/kg for 4 days	1	Changes in GR DNA binding and DNA methylation in the fetal hippocampus	(463)
Guinea pig	Betamethasone mg/kg for 4 days	1	Reduced locomotor activity; effect on programming HPA axis and hippocampal glucocorticoid feedback	(464)
Spiny mouse	125 mcg/kg Dex sc for 60 hours using mini pump		Reduction of adrenal steroidogenesis, decrease in plasma DHEA reduced adrenal expression of steroidogenic enzymes in adulthood	(465)
Guinea pig	Betamethasone mg/kg for 4 days	1	Altered DNA methylation underlies both the long-term effects of glucocorticoids and of maternal stress on the fetus	(466)

¹ Note that the doses given to animals exceed the typical doses given in pregnancies at risk for CAH.

²NK1R antagonists modulate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis leading to increased corticosterone secretion.

³Carbenoxolone is a glycerrheticinic acid derivative with a steroid-like structure. It inhibits placental Hsd11b2 activity, thereby increasing fetal exposure to maternal glucocorticoids (467).

Table 9. Studies of human prenatal exposure to glucocorticoids						
Study group			Results			
Dex exposed	Controls	Age at study	Questionnaire findings	Psychological tests	Laboratory and MRI	Reference
<i>First trimester exposure only¹</i>						
26 total 3 with CAH	14 total 3 with CAH	6 mo-5.5 Yrs Mean 2.5±1.3 yrs	NS overall development Dex treated higher shyness, emotionality, lower sociability (EAS), internalizing (CBCL) (parental Q)			(475)
174 total 48 with CAH	313 total 195 with CAH	1-12 yrs 3 diff age groups	No developmental differences NS CBCL school scale (parental Q)			(476)
22 total 10 F 7 M and 5 M with CAH	35 total all healthy	7-17 yrs Median 11 yrs	NS CBCL school scale (parental Q) Poorer scholastic competence (self-reported)	NS IQ, but Poorer working memory (WISC-III) NS learning, memory (NEPSY)		(477)
Same study Population			NS behavior (CBCL), or shyness (SPAI-CP). Higher scores sociability (EAS) (parental) more social anxiety (self-reported Q)			(478)

Same study population			M reported more neutral behavior KI-GRB (self reported Q) F, NS			(479)
<u>Study 1</u> 67 total 51 non-CAH (35 F, 16 M) 8 M CAH (8 F full term Dex)	73 total 31 F 16 M 15 CAH F 11 CAH M	<u>Study 1</u> 5-12 yrs		<u>Study 1</u> Few significant findings K-ABC Sequential Processing positive for M alone p=0.095		(480)
<u>Study 2</u> 7 total (1 CAH F Full term Dex)	13 total 2 F 1 M 4 CAH F 6 CAH M	<u>Study 2</u> 11-24 yrs		<u>Study 2</u> Non-CAH F performed significantly less well on Faces & Places M, NSerence.		
9 F	8 non-CAH 9 CAH non-DEX All F	Mean 12 yrs But CAH untreated 16 yrs	NS psychopathology (CBCL) (parental Q)	Lower scores in non-CAH Dex treated F (WAIS-R-PL, WISC-R)		(481)
34 total 16 F 18 M	66 total 36 F 30 M	7-17 yrs Mean age 10.5 yrs		Poorer working memory (WISC-III) Sex difference with larger neg effects in F for executive functions and psychometric intelligence (WISC-III, WMS-III)		(482)

34 15 F 19 M	67 total 36 F 31 M	7-17 yrs Mean age 10.5 yrs	CBCL, SPAI-R and EAS (parental Q) SASC-R (self reported Q))	NS. Generally well adjusted.		(483)
23 Adults 12 F 11 M	Population controls 31 F 27 M	16-24 yrs Mean age 20-21		No significant neuropsychological changes; no increase in anxiety, depression or autistic traits.		(484)
29 total 12 F 17 M	37 total 18 F 19 M	Mean age 16.5-17 yrs		Methylation in BDNF, FKBP5, and NR3C1 genes were associated with the performance on WAIS	Altered DNA methylation in peripheral CD4+ T-cells	(485)
16 total 9 F 7 M	15 total 8 F 7 M	Mean 24 yrs			Lower insulin secretion by 17%- 22%. Lower glucagon	(486)
40 total 18 F 22 M	75 total 35 F 40 M	Mean age 16.3±6.2 Age groups Young<16 Older ≥16			HOMA-β index, lower β-cell function in younger F. Glucose level, higher in younger age group	(487)

					Higher cholesterol, and LDL in older age group	
19 total 9 F 10 M	43 total 26 F 17 M	16-26 yrs			MRI Alterations in brain structure Enlarged amygdala, surface area and volume of left sup frontal gyrus, widespread white matter changes	(483)
<i>Girls with CAH, Dex-treated until term</i>						
4				1 not able to perform neuropsychological testing Generally low IQ		(477)
Study 1 8	Study 1 15 CAH girls	Study 1 5-12 yrs		Performed more poorly on K-ABC Mental Processing Composite (p=0.09)		(480)
Study 2 1	Study 2 4 CAH F	Study 2 11-24 yrs		Performed (marginally) less well on Hand Movements (subtest Sequential Processing) and Spatial Memory (Simultaneous Processing).		
9	8 non-CAH	Mean 12 yrs	NS psychopathology (CBCL) (parental Q)	Higher scores IQ in Dex treated F.		(481)

	9 CAH untreated	and CAH untreated 16 yrs		Lower in non-CAH Dex treated F (WAIS-R-PL, WISC-R)		
4	25 F CAH		Diff in self-perceived deficits in executive function (B-DEFS-SF)	Broad deficits in most measures of cognition in Dex treated F (WAIS-IV, WMS-III)		(488)

¹ The earlier studies reported results from mixed cohorts, short-term treated boys and girls without CAH and boys with CAH, while more recent studies have assessed individuals with and without CAH, males and females, separately.

Abbreviations

NS, not significantly different; Dex, dexamethasone; CAH, congenital adrenal hyperplasia; CBCL, Child Behavior Checklist; EAS Temperament Survey for Children; WISC-III, Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children; NEPSY, Developmental Neuropsychological Assessment; SPPC, Self-Perception SPAI-C-P, Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory for Children – Parent Report; K-ABC, Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children; WAIS, Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale; WMS, Wechsler Memory Scale; KI-GRB, The Karolinska Inventory of Gender Role Behavior; B-DEFS-SF, Barkley Deficit in Executive Functioning Scale – Short Form.

HOMA- β homeostasis model assessment of beta cell function; LDL, low density lipoprotein; MRI magnetic resonance imaging.

Table 10. Selected generic and CAH-specific risk factors for mental health, psychosocial/psychosexual adaptation and well-being.		
A.	Generic (noncategorical)	Illustrative studies
Males and Females		
	Challenges to parenting with ...	(529)
	... accompanying caregiver psychological distress	(530,531)
	... negative emotional spillover effects from parent to child	(532-534)
	... perceived child vulnerability and overprotectiveness	(535,536)
	Burdens of clinic visits and adherence to sometimes complex and changing treatment regimens; emergency room visits and hospitalizations	(537-539)
	Threats to body-image and self-esteem	(540,541)
	Higher rates of missed school and peer victimization	(542,543)
	Academic challenges	(544)
	Problems of psychosocial adaptation (i.e., increased psychological symptomatology in youth and adults compared to healthy comparison groups)	(542,545-547)
	Systemic weaknesses in the process of transitioning from pediatric to adult care	(548-550)
	Career barriers for people with chronic illness	(551)
B.	CAH-specific (categorical)	
Female-specific		
	Early reactions to newborn with atypical genitalia (experiences in medical environment)	(549,552)
	Stigma (anticipated or experienced) stemming from atypical genitalia and its modulation by culture	(553-563)
	Tension between person-first (i.e., CAH as a medical condition) versus identity-first (intersex and LGBT advocacy); and related human rights perspectives	(564-566)
	Secrecy	(562,567-570)

Genital examinations and medical photography	(550,571)
Gender of rearing in Prader V cases	(134,572-574)
Genital surgery decision making and ...	(575)
... consequences for sexual function	(528)
... outcomes of postponing surgery	(576)
Gender identity	(577-579)
Effects on social support	(580,581)
Model of care	(342)
Males and Females	
Terminology	(582-584)
Early puberty/attenuated adult height; growth hormone therapy	(33,509)
Neurocognitive sequelae	(488,585,586)
... prenatal dexamethasone	(374,482,489)
... hyponatremic episodes	(587)
Fertility problems (testicular adrenal rest tumors in males; low levels of fecundity in females)	(588-592)

Essential points:

- Congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) is most often caused by deficiency of steroid 21 hydroxylase encoded by *CYP21A2*.
- Allelic variants are associated with a spectrum of phenotypes.
- CAH in its severe, classic form includes cortisol and aldosterone deficiencies, as well as androgen excess.
- Newer concepts in steroid biosynthesis, hormonal and genetic diagnostic tools, and novel therapeutics have expanded our understanding of CAH.
- Long term sequelae of this disease have been reported in detail and strategies are being developed to improve quality of life for these patients.