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- 1 A novel nonsense *PIEZO2* mutation in a family with scoliosis and proprioceptive defect
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### 16 ABSTRACT

17 PIEZO2 mutations have been described in dominant arthrogryposis, but homozygous 18 mutations of *PIEZO2* may also be responsible for more complex clinical patterns, associating 19 distal arthrogryposis, neonatal respiratory insufficiency, scoliosis and proprioceptive 20 impairment. We report here two sisters presenting with these clinical and genetic features. 21 They had a similar phenotype, with severe hypotonia and respiratory distress at birth, delayed 22 acquisition of motor milestones and need of scoliosis surgery. Hypotonia and alteration of 23 proprioception were at the forefront of clinical examination for both, along with areflexia, 24 hyperlaxity, *cutis laxa*, and discrete facial dysmorphy. Electrophysiological studies, including 25 electroneuromyography and sensory evoked potentials, showed a mild sensory axonopathy 26 without any myopathic features, but revealed a peripheral proximal lemniscal defect. Creatine 27 kinase, muscular MRI and biopsy were normal, as well as cerebral MRI and neurometabolic 28 biological explorations. They had a moderate restrictive syndrome on respiratory function 29 tests and cardiac function was normal. Molecular studies performed on a panel of genes 30 involved in distal arthrogryposis disclosed a nonsense homozygous c.3241C>T (p.Arg1051\*) 31 mutation in the *PIEZO2* gene, which was also present at the heterozygous state in their 32 mother's DNA. This new *PIEZO2* mutation was in accordance with the phenotype combining 33 arthrogryposis, scoliosis, hyperlaxity and proprioceptive impairment.

34

### 35 HIGHLIGHTS

36 Arthrogryposis and proprioceptive defects suggests a recessive *PIEZO2* mutation

37 Patients with arthrogryposis should be screened for *PIEZO2* mutations

- 3
- 38 Dominant PIEZO2 mutations are mostly missense whereas recessive cases are truncating
- 39 KEYWORDS
- 40 PIEZO2
- 41 Arthrogryposis
- 42 Proprioceptive impairment
- 43

### 44 Abbreviations

- 45 ENMG: Electroneuromyography; SEP: Sensory Evoked Potentials; DA: Distal
- 46 Arthrogryposis; MWS: Marden-Walker Syndrome;

#### 47 1. INTRODUCTION

48	Arthrogryposis is defined by reduced mobility of multiple joints and highly heterogeneous,
49	with more than 400 genes described. Arthrogryposis can be of both dominant and recessive
50	inheritance, and associated with other clinical features, namely orthopedic malformations,
51	facial deformities, central nervous system (CNS) abnormalities, peripheral neuropathy or
52	myopathy. [1] Among these genes, heterozygous missense PIEZO2 mutations have been
53	associated with either distal Gordon Syndrome (Distal arthrogryposis (DA) type 3 or DA type
54	5 or Marden-Walker Syndrome (MWS) [5]. Later on, homozygous nonsense mutations in the
55	PIEZO2 gene have been held responsible for arthrogryposis, scoliosis and, strikingly,
56	proprioception defects [6], neonatal respiratory insufficiency [7, 8] and muscle weakness [9].
57	PIEZO polypeptides are mechanosensitive transmembrane cation channels [2,3]. They are
57 58	PIEZO polypeptides are mechanosensitive transmembrane cation channels [2,3]. They are expressed in several mechanosensitive tissues, such as neurons of the dorsal root ganglia,
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58 59 60 61 62	expressed in several mechanosensitive tissues, such as neurons of the dorsal root ganglia, endothelium and visceral tissues, including lungs. Mouse models lacking PIEZO2 in mechanosensory neurons showed impaired limb coordination, and unstable gait [4]. We describe here the cases of two sisters prominently characterized by distal arthrogryposis and proprioception loss; a clinical phenotype which led us to find a novel nonsense

#### 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS 65

2.1. Patients 66

We report the cases of two twin sisters of Tunisian origin, followed from age 20 to 24 years 67 (Patient II.3 and II.4), the first one (Patient II.3) at the Neuromuscular Reference Center of 68

69 Pitié Salpêtrière Hospital (Paris) and the other (Patient II.4) at the Neuromuscular Reference
70 Center in the University Hospital of Bordeaux.

71 2.2. Clinical, electrophysiological and muscle Magnetic Resonance Imaging features 72 Both sisters have undergone clinical examination, extended neurophysiological evaluations, 73 including electroneuromyography (ENMG) and sensory evoked potentials (SEP). Routine 74 biological analyses, including lysosomal enzymes and vitamin dosages, have been performed, 75 as well as respiratory function tests, cardiac explorations (Patient II.3 and II.4), muscle 76 Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) (Patient II.3). and biopsy (Patient II.3 and II.4). 77 2.3.Genetic studies 78 All samples were processed after informed consents for molecular diagnosis had been 79 obtained from the patients. Mutations in the probands' DNA have been screened on a panel of 80 eleven genes involved in distal arthrogryposis. The design of the gene panel was realized with 81 the AmpliSeq Designer tool (Thermo Fischer Scientific) and libraries for Next Generation 82 Sequencing (NGS) were prepared according to manufacturer recommendations and analyzed 83 on IonTorrent PGM instrument (Thermo Fischer Scientific). The coverage for the PIEZO2 84 gene (NM\_022068) was 99.3 % with a mean depth of 390X (ranging from 34 to 1486). 85 Results of the sequencing were processed with the Torrent Suite 5.0 (Thermo Fischer 86 Scientific) and annotation of the variants performed with a homemade script based on the 87 Variant Effect Predictor tool [10]. The presence of the mutation was controlled by Sanger 88 sequencing using specific primer designed to amplify exon 22 of the *PIEZO2* gene and an 89 ABI PRISM Big Dye Terminator Cycle Sequencing (V3.0) reaction kit with an analysis on an 90 ABI 3130 DNA Analyzer (Thermo Fischer Scientific).

91 **3. RESULTS** 

92 3.1.Clinical, electrophysiological and muscle MRI features

93	Our 2 patients were born from healthy parents, who were not known to be consanguineous.
94	They had 5 siblings, including one sister (II.2) who died at six years of age, with similar
95	symptoms. Their father died in a car accident at age 32 (Figure 1)
96	Pregnancy was uneventful, but the 2 sisters were severely hypotonic at birth and experienced
97	transient neonatal respiratory failure. Later on, they displayed delayed acquisitions of motor
98	skills and started walking independently at 5 (Patient II.4) and 7 (Patient II.3) years only.
99	From the onset of the disease, gait was very unstable, and a wheelchair was needed early on
100	during childhood. They also had severe scoliosis, requiring arthrodesis in both cases.
101	There was no cognitive impairment, and both sisters were able to pursue higher studies.
102	On examination, at age 20, hypotonia was still at the fore. Both patients displayed diffuse
103	distal wasting along with muscular deficit and discrete fingers and wrist retractions,
104	compatible with arthrogryposis. Hyperlaxity was noticed in multiple joints. Proprioceptive
105	abnormalities were major, with diffuse apallesthesia, positive Romberg sign, and unsteady
106	wide-based gait, as well as dysmetria appearing with eyes closed. Tendon reflexes were
107	abolished in the four limbs. There was no facial involvement, no cerebellar ataxia, no
108	pyramidal or bulbar syndrome, and no ocular motor impairment. Patient II.3 also displayed
109	cutis laxa (Figure 2)
110	ENMG showed a mild sensory axonal neuropathy in patient II.3 and was normal in patient

112 lemniscal sensory pathways for both (Figure 3). Cerebral and medullar MRI were normal,

II.4. There was no myopathic feature in both sisters. SEP revealed bilateral impairment of

apart from the scoliosis. Muscular MRI showed no abnormality in patient II.3. Muscular

biopsy was normal for patient II.3 and showed mild muscular abnormalities for patient II.4:

type 2 fiber predominance and rare isolated concentric lamellar bodies.

6

116 Respiratory function tests revealed a mild restrictive syndrome. The forced vital capacity was

117 46% (Patient II.3) and 69% (Patient II.4) of predicted value. No other functional studies were

118 realized to assess diaphragmatic function.

119 Echocardiography and electrocardiogram were normal.

120 3.2.Molecular findings

121 Patient 1 was first screened for the FKBP14 gene, known to be responsible for Ehlers-Danlos 122 Syndrome with progressive kyphoscoliosis and myopathy [11]. No mutation was found, and 123 DNA of the patient was then screened for genes involved in distal arthrogryposis on a gene 124 panel with an IonTorrent PGM instrument. The mean coverage for a minimal depth of 30X 125 for the 11 genes explored was 92.45 %. The analysis of SNP with an allelic frequency under a threshold of 0.5% in the EXAC database identified only the c.3241C>T;p.Arg1051\* variation 126 127 in the exon 22 of the *PIEZO2* gene at the homozygous state. This variation resulted in a 128 premature STOP codon in exon 22 and in a biallelic loss-of-function of the PIEZO2 gene. The 129 segregation of the variation performed on the DNA of the probands' mother and sister showed 130 compatibility with a recessive mode on inheritance. The father's DNA was not available.

131

### 132 **4. DISCUSSION**

A recessive condition associating arthrogryposis and a proprioception defect with transient respiratory failure, scoliosis, hypotonia, hyperlaxity is highly evocative of *PIEZO2* biallelic loss-of-function mutation, as established by previously published works [6-9] (Table 1). The clinical phenotype of our two patients, encompassing these features, led us to a specific DNA sequencing targeting the *PIEZO2* gene, and allowed us to identify a novel homozygous mutation, without using whole exome or mendeliome sequencing as previously described [6-

139 9]. It is worth noticing that our two patients, although most of our symptoms were similar,

140 displayed some phenotypical differences: age of motor skills achievement, ENMG and biopsy

141 findings. The fact that they were followed in two different centers could account for those

findings, this might suggest that there is some variability in the clinical expression of thedisease.

144 4.1.Two types of *PIEZO2* mutations inducing two different phenotypes

145 PIEZO2 gene mutations are particularly interesting and may cause two very distinguishable 146 phenotypes according to the type of mutation and their mode of inheritance. Homozygous 147 recessive mutations lead to a loss of function of the gene, whereas heterozygous dominant 148 mutations cause a gain of function. Consequently, those two mechanisms induce very 149 different conditions: although they share some clinical characteristics, namely arthrogryposis 150 and scoliosis, there are distinguished by the presence of severe alterations of proprioception in 151 the biallelic *PIEZO2* whereas the heterozygous mutations correspond to a purer form of distal 152 arthrogryposis, such as Gordon Syndrome, Marden-Walker Syndrome, or Distal 153 Arthrogryposis Type 5 [2,5].

4.2. *PIEZO2* and proprioception

155 So far, mutations of PIEZO2 seem to be the only possible genetic cause of proprioception

156 impairment with arthrogryposis. In humans, specialized mechanosensory neurons called

157 proprioceptors convey information about the stretch and tension experienced by muscles,

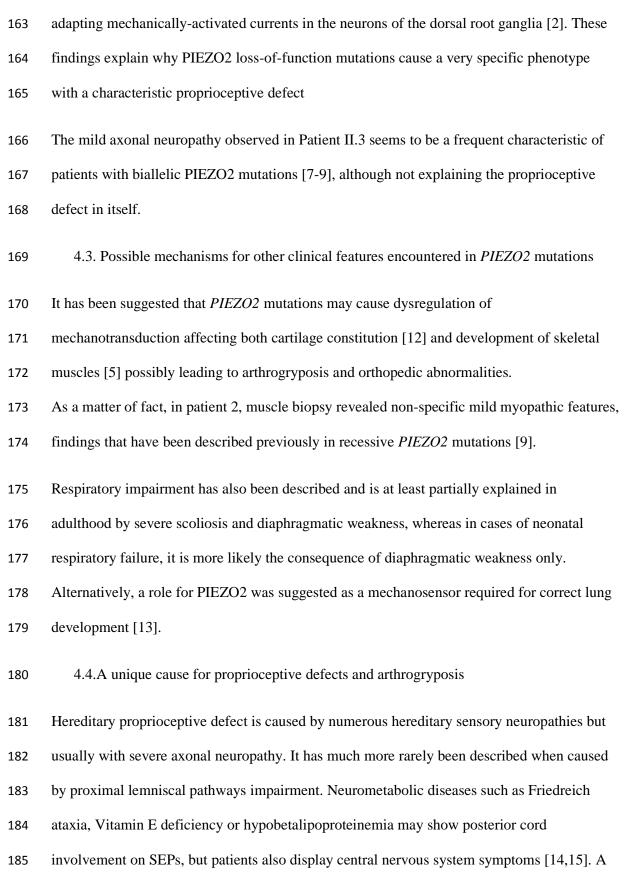
tendons, skin, and joints. PIEZO polypeptides are mechanosensitive cation channels and are

activated in response to mechanical displacement of the cell surface membrane. [3]

160 PIEZO2 is expressed, in particular, at the endings of somatosensory neurons, which convey

information about tension and stretch experienced by joints, skin, muscles and tendons [4, 8].

162 Mice models have evidenced that PIEZO2 is responsible for the transduction of rapidly-



186	case of hereditary sensory ataxic neuropathy has been reported in a Japanese family with a
187	mild sensory axonal neuropathy but significantly prolonged central conduction time on SEPs.
188	Patients were not screened for PIEZO2 mutations, but, unlike ours, their sensory complaints
189	went beyond sole ataxia, proximal muscle weakness was systematic, age at onset was much
190	older (after 40 years), and there was neither scoliosis nor respiratory failure. [16].
191	More recently, mutations in RFN170 coding for the Ring Finger Protein 170 have been
192	described, responsible for progressive sensory ataxia linked to degeneration of the posterior
193	columns of the spinal cord. Patients with RFN170 mutations had, however, a progressive,
194	isolated, form of ataxia predominating in the legs; they were older, and inheritance was
195	dominant. [17]. Mutations in the FLVCR1 gene also cause posterior column ataxia, sometimes
196	associated with scoliosis and retinis pigmentosa,, but ENMG reveals a ganglionopathy [18].
197	Finally, secondary arthrogtyposis may occur in several neuromuscular disorders, and thus
198	could be associated with conditions causing proprioceptive defects and neuropathy. However,
199	in those cases, it tends to appear later on in the course of the disease than in our patients.
200	
201	PIEZO2 is a unique gene with two very distinct phenotypes corresponding to the inheritance
202	mode. As heterozygous dominant mutations are responsible for arthrogryposis multiplex
203	congenita, PIEZO2 biallelic mutations have a typical clinical presentation, with scoliosis and
204	proprioceptive deficit as main symptoms, together with arthrogryposis, hypotonia and
205	transient neonatal respiratory failure. The role of PIEZO2 as a mechanosensitive receptor in
206	somatosensory neurons and its implication in bones and joint development as well as lung
207	development probably intervene in the occurrence of those symptoms. The association of
208	these clinical features is highly evocative and should prompt practitioners to screen PIEZO2

209 gene, as few other disorders display the same characteristics.

### 212 **DECLARATIONS**

213	Ethics approval an	d consent t	o participate:	Authors	declare	that	this	work	received	all
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- 214 necessary ethical approvals and that all the patients involved consented to participate.
- 215 **Consent for publication:** Yes.
- 216 Availability of data and material: Please contact author for data requests.
- 217 Competing interests: Authors declare no financial or non-financial competing interests in218 relation to this manuscript.
- 219 **Funding:** No funding was necessary

Author contributions: MM, JF, GS, TS, SLL were involved in conception and design of the research project, in analysis and interpretation of the data. MM, TS and SLL were involved and writing of the first draft of the manuscript. SLL and GS were involved in the acquisition of clinical data and JF was involved in the acquisition of molecular data. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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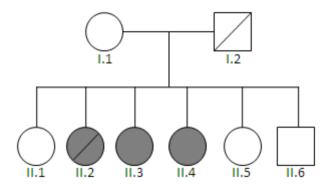
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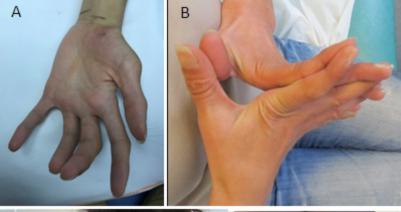
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- 277

279	Table 1: Genetic and clinical characteristics of previously published recessive mutations in
280	the PIEZO2 Gene
281	
282	Figure 1: Family pedigree
283	
284	
285	
286	Figure 2: Patients clinical features
287	Both patients displayed distal wasting and arthrogryposis (A and D), hyperlaxity (B) and
288	severe scoliosis (C).
289	
290	
291	Figure 3: Sensory Evoked Potentials in the upper limbs of Patient 1
292	Peripheric conduction was normal (N5). N13 amplitude was reduced on the left upper limb
293	(A, white circle) and absent on the right (B, white arrow). Bulbar components (N/P14 – black
294	circle) were reduced and latency of cortical components (N9-N20) were extended, indicating
295	bilateral impairment of the lemniscal pathways.
296	







## А

VCN 10uV/D 5ms/D

Erb's-Fz 5uV/D 5ms/D

C7-Cou 5uV/D 5ms/D

C7-Fz 5uV/D 5ms/D

ParD-ErbD 5uV/D 5ms/D

Cz-Erbcontra 5IIV/D 5ms/D

ParG-ErbD 5uV/D 5ms/D

PaD-PaG 5IIV/D 5ms/D

## В

VCN 10uV/D 5ms/D

Erb's-Fz 5uV/D 5ms/D

C7-Cou 5IIV/D 5ms/D

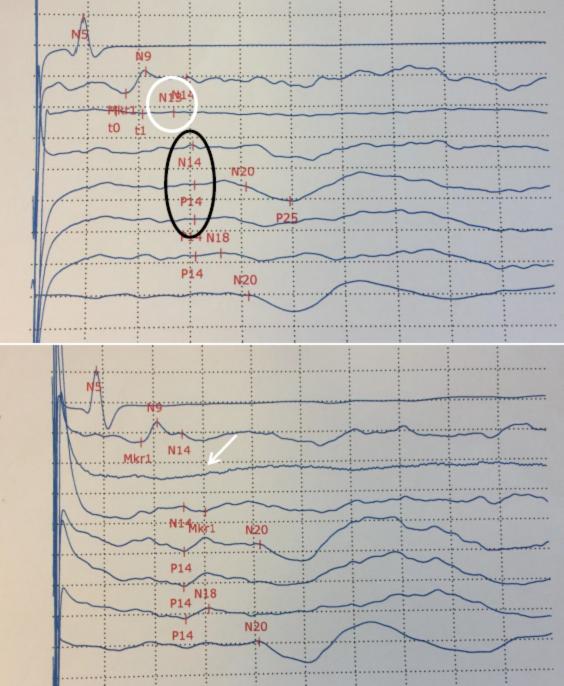
C7-Fz 5IIV/D 5ms/D

ParG-ErbG 5uV/D 5ms/D

Cz-Erbcontra 511V/D 5ms/D

ParD-ErbG 511V/D 5ms/D

PaG-PaD 5IIV/D 5ms/D



	Clinical Features	Mutation
	10 individuals, 4 families	- c.5621delT (p.Leu1874Argfs*5) homozygous
	Arthrogryposis, spontaneously	- c.3019_3029del(p.Pro1007Leufs*3) homozygous
Delle Vedove	resolving respiratory insufficiency	- c.1550_1552delGCTinsCGAA (p.Ser517Thrfs*48)
et al. 2016	at birth, muscular atrophy > distal	homozygous
	lower limbs, scoliosis, mild sensory	- c.493-?_917+?del (p0?) homozygous
	involvement	
	2 subjects, 2 families	- c.4723>T (p.R1575*)/ c.5053C>T (p.R1685*)
Chelser et al.	Scoliosis, hypotonia and shallow	- c.5054G>C (p.R1685P)/ c.5053C>T (p.R1685*)
2016	breathing during infancy, unsteady	
	gait with proprioceptive defect	
Haligolu et al. <i>2017</i>	Hypotonia, distal laxity, contractures, muscle weakness, scoliosis, proprioceptive defect	c.1384C>T, (p.R462*) homozygous
Mahmud et al. <i>2017</i>	Scoliosis, contractures involving distal joints, proprioception and touch sensation defects	c.2708C>G; p.S903* homozygous