

出國報告（出國類別：國際會議）

參加第28屆肌萎縮性側索硬化症暨運動

神經元疾病國際研討會

(28th International symposium on

ALS/MND) 心得報告

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## 摘要

感謝科技部的補助及台北榮總的支持，讓我們有機會參加 2017 年 12 月 8 日至 12 月 10 日在美國波士頓由 Motor Neuron Disease Association 及 International Alliance of ALS/MND 所舉辦的第二十八屆肌萎縮性側索硬化症及運動神經元疾病國際學術研討會(28<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on ALS/MND)。此會議秉持了過去高品質的傳統，除了開幕及閉幕的 joint sessions 外，在 3 天內同步在 3 個會場分別進行 8 個 Scientific Sessions 及 11 個 Clinical Sessions。我所參加的 Scientific Sessions 內容豐富包含了 ALS/MND 主題各領域中近一年的新發現，其主題包括了 Cell Biology and Pathology、RNA binding and Transport、RNA and Stress response、Therapeutic Strategies、Genetics、以及 Integrated OMICs and Pathway Analysis。我所參加的 Clinical Sessions 主題包括 Biofluid markers 與 Epidemiology。而我同時也以學術壁報的形式發表了我們族群 ALS 病患的臨床突變基因的研究結果，主題為 Investigating *CCNF* mutations in a Taiwanese cohort with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, 由於 *CCNF* 基因是於去年才被發現會造成 ALS，我們的研究在此相關主題研究中算是較早完成的，因而引起部分與會者的興趣。整體而言，本次會議內容新穎豐富，有許多地方值得國內神經學界參考。

關鍵字: 肌萎縮性側索硬化症、運動神經元疾病、ALS、*CCNF*

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## 一、目的

肌萎縮性側索硬化症(amyotrophic lateral sclerosis; ALS)是因為中樞神經系統中運動神經元細胞漸進性廣泛性退化而發生的疾病，進而導致病患表現出全身肌肉漸進性萎縮無力。這樣的病症可以從肢體開始，也可以從口咽肌肉開始，但病患最後都會因肌肉無力而導致吞嚥咳痰及呼吸困難，而無法維持生存。除了少部分病患會併發額顳型失智症(frontotemporal dementia; FTD)外，大部分病患的智能及感覺能力都是大致完好的；諷刺的是，這些功能的完好常造成病患更大的痛苦。ALS 疾病病程相當快，發病後平均餘命常為兩至三年，約五分之一的病患可以生存過 5 年，而僅有約十分之一的病患可活超過 10 年，目前尚無能逆轉病情的藥物。因為此病的特別悲劇性，且曾發生在一些名人身上，如著名美國大聯盟棒球選手 Lou Gehrig 及史蒂芬霍金，歐美及日本對此疾病的研究如火如荼，遠遠超過一般與其發生率（約每十萬人中 1-3 人）相當的罕見疾病。

我大概從七年前起開始對 ALS/MND (MND：運動神經元疾病) 的基因研究開始感到興趣。我個人本身最早的研究興趣是遺傳性運動感覺神經病變(Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease; CMT)的基因研究，而 CMT 中有一類罕見的亞型為遺傳性運動神經病變(Hereditary Motor Neuropathy; HMN)。這類疾病的病患只有運動神經病變而感覺神經是正常的，臨床表現也僅有肌肉萎縮無力的症狀，與 MND 相似，但症狀較輕。因此關聯，我同時開始對 ALS/MND 的基因研究感到興趣，對此主題相關訊息也開始密切注意。ALS 的研究在近年來有連續重大突破，每年都有重要的致病基因被發現，如 *TARDBP* (2008)、*FUS* (2009)、*C9ORF72* (2011 年底)、和 *TBKI* (2015)、和 *CCNF* (2016) 等基因，進而幫助深入瞭解 ALS 的細胞分子致病機制，同時也提供家族性 ALS 病患切確的分子診斷。我們在近

幾年內，也跟隨國際的腳步對我們族群內 255 餘位不具有親屬關聯的 ALS 病友進行 *SOD1*, *TARDBP*, *FUS*, *OPTN*, *VCP*, *UBQLN2*, *SQSTM1*, *PFN1*, *HNRNPA1*, *HNRNPA2B1*, *MATR3*, *TBK1*, 和 *CCNF* 等基因的突變分析；其中，43 餘位 ALS 病友，約佔所有 ALS 病友的百分之十七的致病突變都能被明確地找出來。由於我們這一系列的研究在世界各族群同領域的研究中算是較早期完成的，因而能在 2011-2017 連續發表六篇研究論文於神經醫學及老年醫學領域中名聲頗佳的 *Neurobiology Aging* 雜誌上。

由於深刻感受到近年來國際間 ALS 相關研究的迅速進展，及我們研究團隊對 ALS 現今的各項基礎研究瞭解不足，並計畫未來投注更多時間在此一研究領域，因此參加此國際研討會。我們非常慶幸有參加此次會議，聽到許多令人非常欽佩的研究論文及正在進行的 ALS 相關研究的研究構想。另外，在與會期間，我們也有幸與美國國家衛生院的 Dr. Bryan Traynor 會談關於進行東方族群 ALS 的 genome-wide association study 的可能性與細節。Dr. Bryan Traynor 是 ALS genetics 領域中的大師，他最著名的成就是他領導的團隊發現了 *C9ORF72* 基因內的 GGGGCC 六核苷重複序列的擴增是在高加索人種族群中造成家族性 ALS 或 FTD 最常見的病因。他希望能藉由進行東方族群的 ALS GWAS study 找出前所未知影響 ALS 的 genetic factors。

## 二、 過程

感謝科技部的補助及台北榮總的支持，讓我有機會參加 2017 年 12 月 8 日至 12 月 10 日在美國波士頓由 Motor Neuron Disease Association 及 International Alliance of ALS/MND 所舉辦的第二十八屆肌萎縮性側索硬化症及運動神經元疾病國際學術研討會(28<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on ALS/MND)。此次會議是由 ALS Hope Foundation，ALS Therapy Development Institute 及國際 ALS 病友會聯盟所主辦，在研討會之前兩三天是國際 ALS 病友大會，緊接的才是與臨床及基礎研究相關的 ALS/MND 國際研討會。歐美的 ALS 病友會都非常活躍，且有不錯募款能力，不僅能主辦大型會議還常能設立獎項並提供研究經費，鼓勵各項 ALS 研究。此會議秉持了過去高品質的傳統，除了開幕及閉幕的 joint sessions 外，在 3 天內同步在 3 個會場分別進行 8 個 Scientific Sessions 及 11 個 Clinical Sessions。我所參加的 Scientific Sessions 內容豐富包含了 ALS/MND 主題各領域中近一年的新發現，其主題包括了 Cell Biology and Pathology、RNA binding and Transport、RNA and Stress response、Therapeutic Strategies、Genetics、以及 Integrated OMICs and Pathway Analysis。我所參加的 Clinical Sessions 主題包括 Biofluid markers 與 Epidemiology。其中，我個人認為特別精彩的演講如下：

1. ALS/MND. Defining the disease. 由美國 Dr. J Rosenfeld 主講。
2. RNA-binding proteins and nucleocytoplasmic transport deficits in ALS. 由比利時 Dr. L Van Den Bosch 主講。
3. Phase separation of FUS is suppressed by the nuclear import receptor Transportin and FUS arginine methylation. 由德國 Dr. D Dormann 主講。
4. Antisense oligonucleotide-based therapies for motor neuron diseases. 由美

國 Dr. F Bennett 主講。

5. Improving drug access to the CNS. 由美國 Dr. F Walsh 主講。
6. Genetic mutations shorten the multistep process in ALS. 由義大利 Dr. Adriano Chio 主講。
7. Characterisation of a novel ALS-associated candidate gene identified from whole Exome sequencing. 由英國 Dr. C Shaw 主講。
8. The ALS-FTD continuum. 由美國 Dr. C Lomen-Hoerth 主講。
9. Early analysis of clinical and iPS motor neuron multi-omics signature from a large population of sporadic and familial ALS patients reveals verifiable subtypes and molecular pathway. 由美國 Dr. J Rosenfeld 主講。

而我同時也以學術壁報的形式發表了我們族群 ALS 病患的臨床突變基因的研究結果，主題為 Investigating *CCNF* mutations in a Taiwanese cohort with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, 由於 *CCNF* 基因是於去年才被發現會造成 ALS，我們的研究在此相關主題研究中算是較早完成的，因而引起部分與會者的興趣。這篇論文我們在投稿給此 ALS/MND 學術研討會的同時，就已經被 *Neurobiology Aging* 雜誌所接受刊登。整體而言，本次會議內容新穎豐富，有許多地方值得國內神經學界參考。

### 三、心得

經過在這次會議中的學習，我對於ALS有更深刻的瞭解與新的認識，其中之  
一新的瞭解就是如何去更清楚地界定ALS。ALS的診斷是根據漸進性上下運動神  
經元退化所造成的臨床徵象，包括漸進廣泛性的肌肉萎縮無力、肌腱反射增強、  
痙攣等。但在臨床上，符合這樣條件的ALS病人彼此間的臨床表現仍可有顯著的  
差異包括有些病人是以顯著的上運動神經元病徵為主、有些病人是以顯著的下運  
動神經元病徵為主、有些病人是以顯著的口咽病徵為主、而有些病人併有如額顱  
型失智症等顯著的認知功能障礙。這些臨床病症的多樣性反映出ALS病因與致病  
機制的複雜，也就是說ALS其實是一群因不完全相同的病因與機制所造成的疾病  
的集合體，因而如果把它當作單一疾病個體，在發展治療策略上必定會遭受挫折。  
因此對於ALS的再分類，有其在臨床處置與研究上的必要性。而Dr. J Rosenfeld  
就建議ALS的臨床分類可根據上運動神經元病徵、下運動神經元病徵、口咽病  
徵、以及併發認知功能障礙等四個面相，將每個面相的嚴重程度從輕到重定為  
A、B、C、D等四個等級來進行ALS的臨床分類。當然在基因型上可根據是否具  
有ALS致病突變，及何種突變作為分類。這樣努力蘊含著精準醫學的精神，希望  
能發展尋找出ALS sub-population specific 的有效治療策略。

另一個重要的心得是感受到神經退化遺傳疾病的基因治療時代真的來臨了！  
這是因為antisense oligo (ASO)等基因治療方法已日漸成熟。經由過去近二十年的  
努力，運用藥物化學修飾技術，現今的ASO藥物可以經intrathecal給予進入CSF  
space後，廣泛且持久地作用於中樞神經系統，單一注射的效果甚至可以持續到4  
至13週以上。在這樣的技術進步下，第一個有效用來治療spinal muscular atrophy  
的藥物，Nusinersen，就被發展出來而且在2016年12月被美國FDA所approved。



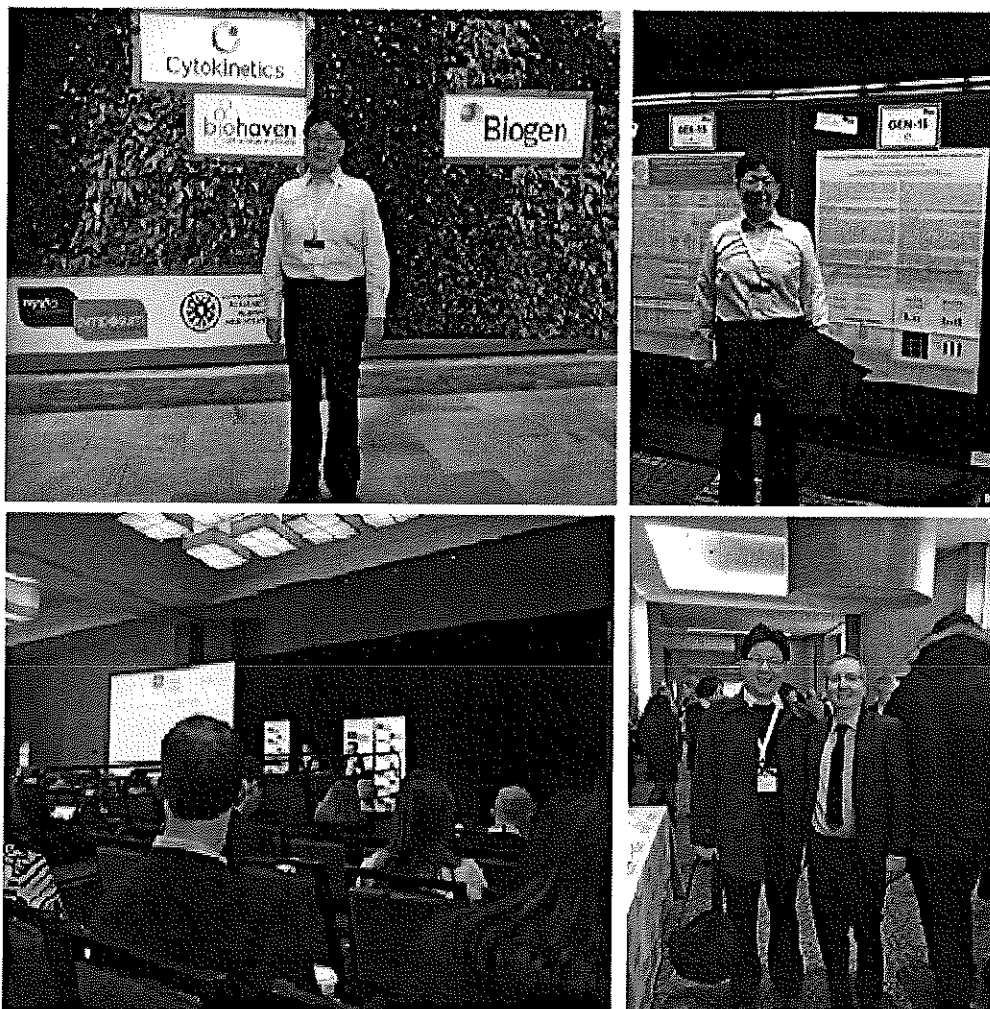
在本次會議中，有一段影片很驚人地展現Nusinersen對於type II 也就是6-18個月嬰幼兒期發病SMA的療效。使用Nusinersen的SMA病人，不僅能延長生命，還能重建其運動系統的發育。在影片中看到一位SMA的嬰幼兒患者，在長期治療至兒童期過後竟然能騎馬，真是令人印象深刻。Ionis是專門研究ASO治療的公司。除了已上市的SMA治療藥物外，目前其他進行到Phase II clinical trail以上的ASO藥物標的包括了TTR、HTT、SOD1、與MAPT。也就是說，在不久的未來，這些蛋白質相關的疾病，如亨丁頓氏症，*SOD1*基因突變所造成的ALS都很可能治療。這是一個新的藥物治療時代的開始，相同的治療原理未來勢必會衍生出許多不同的臨床應用，我們應該要積極熟悉這個領域。

#### 四、 建議事項（包括改進作法）

ALS 雖然是罕病，在這次第 28 屆肌萎縮性側索硬化症暨運動神經元疾病國際研討會中，參與者超過 1200 人，但台灣的參與者僅有三人，而鄰近的中國有超過三十位以上的與會者，這對我們來說是一個警訊。建議政府應擴大鼓勵獎助醫師出國參加學術會議，增進專業涵養；而醫院也可考慮把出國參加學術會議當作重要的醫師在職教育的一環，其本質應為鼓勵而非研究做得好的獎勵。

雖然政府及民間媒體常直強調台灣的醫療水準是非常傑出優越，身為臨床醫療專業的我們應該深知，尤其在尖端醫學研究上，我們與歐美仍有相當大的差距。醫學如逆水行舟，也需要恆常的努力來保持卓越。

## 附錄（會議相關相片紀錄及所發表的學術海報縮影）



(右上下)在 Westin Boston Waterfront 的大會會場

(左上)以學術壁報的形式發表了我們族群 ALS 病患的臨床突變基因的研究結果, 主題為 Investigating CCNF mutations in a Taiwanese cohort with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (左下)與美國國家衛生院的 Dr. Bryan Traynor 合影。他最著名的研究是發現了 C9ORF72 基因內的 GGGGCC 六核苷重複序列的擴增是在高加索人種族群中造成家族性 ALS 或 FTD 最常見的病因。

# Investigating CCNF Mutation in a Taiwanese cohort with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis

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## Background

Mutations in CCNF were recently identified in patients with familial and sporadic ALS and/or frontotemporal dementia (FTD)<sup>1</sup>. However, the contribution of CCNF mutations to ALS remains unclear because studies about them in various populations are still sparse. CCNF encodes cyclin F, which is important in two major biological processes. First, cyclin F helps to form an E3 ubiquitin-protein ligase complex and transfer ubiquitin to target proteins for degradation via ubiquitin-proteasome system (UPS)<sup>2</sup>. Then, cyclin F has a role in coordinating the cell cycle. Its levels rise through interphase, peaking in G2 and then dropping at mitosis<sup>3</sup>.

To further understand the role of CCNF mutations in ALS in Han Chinese populations, we screened a cohort of 244 unrelated patients with ALS in Taiwan. Functional effects of the mutant gene products were also evaluated by *in vitro* studies.

## Methods

### Mutational Analysis

Mutational analysis of CCNF was carried out by direct heteroduplex sequencing in a cohort of 244 unrelated ALS patients, of whom 37 patients had a positive family history and 191 had unknown genetic cause after mutations in SOD1, C9orf72, TARDBP, FUS, APOE4, GFN1, VCP, UBQLN2, SOX11, FBN1, HNRB1, FUS394G391A, MATR3, CHCHD10, TRO44A and TBK1 had been excluded.

### In vitro functional study

The coding region of CCNF was cloned into pFLAG-CMV2a (Sigma-Aldrich) and the variants, c.684T>C (p.S222P) and c.1596C>G (p.S532R), were introduced into the wild-type (WT) construct using Site-Directed Mutagenesis method. Myc-tagged RRM2 expression vector was constructed by subcloning the coding sequence of RRM2 into pcDNA3.3myc-His (Invitrogen). The GFP reporter construct is a fusion of the C-terminal 54 amino acid constitutive degradation signal with the carboxyl terminus of green fluorescent protein (GFP) in EGFP-C1 plasmid backbone (Clontech). GFP1 is a specific substrate for the UPS and the GFP1 levels in cells expressing GFP1 can reflect UPS function. Accumulation of GFP1 indicates UPS impairment<sup>4</sup>. Ubiquitin-Lipostatin 2000 (Invitrogen), DUBCO1 cells were co-transfected with both Cyclin F and RRM2 constructs for evaluating RRM2 degradation, which is processed through cyclin F-mediated proteasomal pathway. The GFP1 levels in cells co-transfected with cyclin F and GFP1 constructs were analyzed by western blotting and confocal laser scanning fluorescence microscopy system. Proteasome enzymatic activities in cells expressing WT or mutant cyclin F were assayed using a proteasome 20S activity assay kit (Sigma-Aldrich).

## Discussion

We screened a Taiwanese cohort of 244 unrelated patients with ALS for mutations in the CCNF gene and identified two novel heterozygous missense mutations, p.S222P and p.S532R, in one single patient each. Although no segregation analysis was possible because both mutations were found in one single case each, their pathogenicity is supported by the following points. First, the mutation is absent in 1,497 ethnically matched control subjects and absent or present with an extremely rare allele frequency (1/166,000) in the gnomAD. Second, both mutations were predicted to be pathogenic by the CADD, Mutation Taster, SIFT and PolyPhen-2 programs. Third, *in vitro* functional study demonstrated that both mutations resulted in a general and cyclin F-mediated UPS dysfunction.

Mutations in CCNF may be associated with a wide clinical spectrum of diseases. In the study by Williams et al., patients with CCNF mutations may present with typical ALS, FTD or FTD-ALS<sup>1</sup>. Our patients with a CCNF mutation manifested ALS alone. These findings support the role of CCNF in ALS-FTD spectrum disorders and add CCNF, in addition to C9orf72, TARDBP, FUS, VCP and TBK1, to the list of genes involved in both ALS and FTD.

In conclusion, this study identified two novel CCNF mutations, p.S222P and p.S532R, in two out of 244 unrelated Han Chinese patients with ALS in Taiwan and stresses on the importance to consider CCNF mutation as a possible cause of ALS in patients with unknown genetic causes.

## Results

### Identification of the novel CCNF variants

Mutational analysis of CCNF in the 244 ALS patients revealed 10 heterozygous missense variants, including p.W554 (c.1630A>G), p.S222P (c.684T>C), p.R456Q (c.1217G>A), c.P425L (c.1305G>T), p.P487R (c.1496G>T), p.R529H (c.1596C>G), p.L631R (c.1892T>G), p.S532R (c.1896C>G), p.F698I (c.2107T>A), and p.R691D (c.2072G>A). Among them, only p.S222P and p.S532R were absent in the 937 Taiwanese control samples in the Taiwan Biobank database (https://www.tbiobank.org/). (Fig. 1A). Both mutations were identified in one single apparently sporadic case each and also absent in another 500 ethnically matched healthy controls. The p.S532R is absent in the approximately 131,000 ethnically diverse individuals in the gnomAD, which includes about 8,600 individuals from East Asian population, and the p.S222P is present in only one East Asian out of all individuals in the gnomAD. Both mutations alter residues of cyclin F (Fig. 1B) which are conserved at least from human to yeast. The pathogenicity of these two CCNF mutations are also supported by *in silico* analyses using four different programs - PolyPhen2, SIFT, Mutation Taster and CADD. The CADD v1.2 PHRED scores for the p.S222P and p.S532R are 22.9 and 25, which place the two variants in the top 0.5% most deleterious variants in the genome. Mutation Taster, SIFT and PolyPhen-2 predicted these two variants to be disease-causing or damaging.

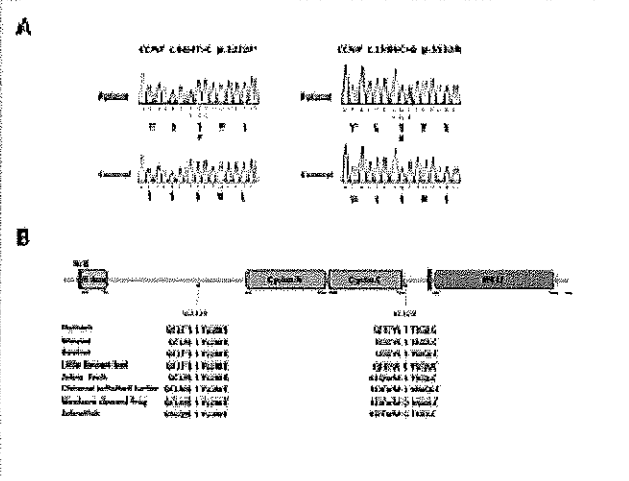
### In vitro functional studies

To verify the pathogenicity of CCNF p.S222P and p.S532R, *in vitro* functional studies were performed. We first examined whether these two mutations would affect cyclin F-mediated proteasome function. We investigated RRM2 levels in cells co-transfected with cyclin F constructs and RRM2 expression plasmid using western blotting, which showed that cells expressing S222P or S532R cyclin F had a significantly increased RRM2 levels in comparison to those expressing WT cyclin F, suggesting that both mutations compromise cyclin F-mediated proteasomal degradation (Fig. 2A).

We next utilized GFP1 as a marker to evaluate general UPS function. Western blotting revealed that cells co-expressing S222P or S532R cyclin F and GFP1 had a significantly increased GFP1 level in comparison to those expressing WT cyclin F and GFP1 (Fig. 2B). Fluorescence analysis also demonstrated that cells co-expressing S222P or S532R cyclin F, as well as GFP1 had abundant cytoplasmic GFP1 which formed aggregates, whereas cells co-expressing WT cyclin F and GFP1 exhibited a much lower level of green fluorescence (Fig. 2C). The ubiquitin-independent 20S proteasome chymotrypsin activity assay revealed no differences in the proteasome proteolytic activities between cells expressing WT, S222P, or S532R cyclin F (Fig. 2D). These findings suggested that the p.S222P and p.S532R mutations lead to UPS impairment in the upstream of proteasome, probably via aberrant ubiquitination or transport to the proteasome.

### Clinical information of the CCNF mutations

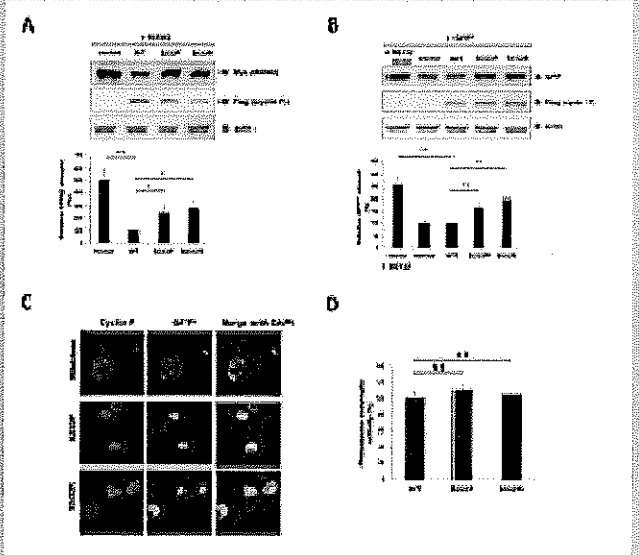
The frequency of CCNF mutations in ALS in Taiwan is approximately 0.6% (2/44). Patient G961, carrying the p.S222P mutation, had a disease onset at age 62 y with progressive proximal weakness and atrophy in the right upper and lower limbs. Then, he developed dysarthria, dysphagia, emotional lability, weakness in the lower limbs and loss of independent ambulation at age 63. Physical examination at age 64 revealed tongue atrophy with fasciculation, severe dysarthria, weakness and atrophy with fasciculation in right side limbs (3/5, MRC), a mild motor involvement in left side limbs (4/5), increased deep tendon reflexes and right extensor plantar responses. In the last clinical follow-up at age 67, the patient was quadriplegic and fed by nasogastric tube with a fair respiratory function. Patient Z176, harboring the p.S532R mutation, initially suffered from progressive left arm weakness at age 59 y. The symptoms progressed rapidly and he suffered weakness and atrophy in the bilateral upper limbs, dysarthria and dysphagia within 1 year after the disease onset. Physical examination at age 70 revealed tongue atrophy with fasciculation, dysarthria, weakness and atrophy with fasciculation in the bilateral upper limbs (3-4/5), normal or hyperactive deep tendon reflexes and bilateral extensor plantar responses. He refused to receive tube feeding despite of having difficulty in swallowing. He died of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest at age 71.



**Fig. 1. Novel CCNF mutations to ALS identified in this study.** (A) Sanger sequencing traces demonstrating the c.684T>C (p.S222P) and c.1596C>G (p.S532R) mutations. (B) The domain diagram of human cyclin F, the location of mutations identified in this study and alignment of multiple cyclin F orthologues showing conservation of the S222 and S532 residues at least from human to yeast. NLS, nuclear localization signal; PEST, the amino acid sequences enriched in proline, glutamic acid, serine and threonine.

## References

Williams JL, Topp B, Yang S, et al. CCNF mutations in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and frontotemporal dementia. *Nat Commun* 2016;7:11293.  
D'Angelis V, Eberly M, Pagano M. A cyclin without cyclin-dependent kinases: cyclin F controls genome stability through ubiquitin-mediated proteolysis. *Trends Cell Biol* 2013;23:116-40.



**Fig. 2. (A)** CCNF mutations impairing cyclin F-mediated or general ubiquitin-proteasomal degradation. (B) HEK293 cells expressing S222P or S532R cyclin F had a significantly increased RRM2 levels in comparison to those expressing WT cyclin F.

