

Chapter 10

FETAL SKELETAL SYSTEM ANOMALIES

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Skeletal system anomalies are a group of diseases that affect the healthy growth and development of both bone and cartilage and cause morphological disorders. When normal embryological development is somehow disrupted, the severity of the disorder and anomaly that will occur according to the current gestational week will also be different. The sooner the damage starts, the more complex the anomaly will be¹. Anomalies may develop as a result of a chromosomal disorder, a single gene mutation, or the mother's exposure to teratogenic substances used during pregnancy. Fetal skeletal system anomalies are a very large group of diseases and their number is increasing with each new update.

In this article, it will be first focus on the embryology and development of the skeletal system, and then will be explain how to approach fetuses with skeletal dysplasia. I will try to explain by giving some examples that we frequently encounter in daily obstetric ultrasonography practice about extremity and skeletal system dysplasia anomalies from my personal archive.

EMBRYOLOGY

In the embryonic period, ossification occurs in two forms as enchondral and intramembranous ossification. In enchondral ossification; trunk and extremity bones develop from the hyaline cartilage model, while flat bones develop directly from the mesenchyme in intramembranous ossification. Upper extremity buds begin to form a few days before the lower extremity buds at 5-6 weeks of gestation during the embryonic period. Fetal ossification begins in the clavicle at the 8th gestational week. Frontal bones and long bones are ossified at 11th gestational week, metacarpal and metatarsal bones are ossified between 12th and 16th gestational weeks and can be visualized ultrasonographically. Carpal bones are ossified after birth².

Damages occurring during the organogenesis period, in which the tissues rapidly differentiate from day to day, become irreversible and result in major anomalies. Teratogens, trauma and genetic mutations that the mother is exposed to are also factors in the development of anomalies.

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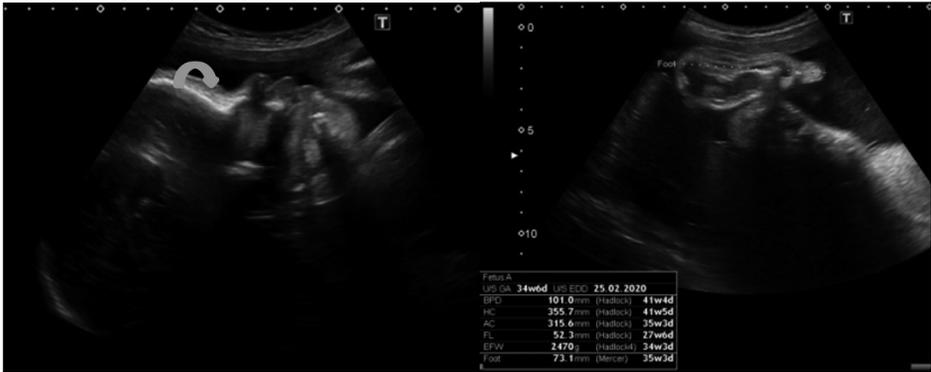


Figure 14: (A) Macrocephaly incompatible with the last menstrual period, frontal bossing (arrow) and (B) according to fetal measurements, while the foot is compatible with the last menstrual period, the femur length is observed short (risomelia Short Rib Polydactyly Syndrome)

It is an extremely rare skeletal dysplasia characterized by small thorax secondary to short ribs. There are four subtypes. It is accompanied by micromelia, polydactyly, congenital heart disease, cleft lip, polycystic kidney and brain malformations. It is incompatible with life.

Camptomelic Dysplasia

Its incidence is 1 in 20,000 live births (Camptos: means bowing). Various degrees of abnormal bowing are observed in the femur, tibia and humerus. Thorax is narrow, scapulae are hypoplastic. There is a disproportionately small face versus a large head. It has micrognathia. 30% cardiac defects and 30% hydronephrosis accompany. Polyhydramnios is common. Male fetuses have gender development problems. Mortality occurs due to pulmonary problems secondary to thoracic hypoplasia³⁸.

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