Beyond ATTR in Japan: Accurate diagnosis of cardiac AL in the TTR stabilizer era

This activity is supported by an independent medical education grant from Alexion Pharma GmbH.
Jointly provided by Partners for Advancing Clinical Education and touchIME.
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Recognizing cardiac AL beyond ATTR patterns

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Key red flags that should raise suspicion for cardiac AL vs more typical ATTR presentations



Rapidly progressive HF symptoms[1,2]



Nephrotic syndrome[2]



Hypotension or orthostatic hypotension[2–5]



Refractory pleural and/or pericardial effusions[1,2,4,5]



Periorbital purpura or macroglossia[1–6]



Unintentional weight loss[4]

AL, amyloid light-chain; ATTR, transthyretin amyloidosis; HF, heart failure.

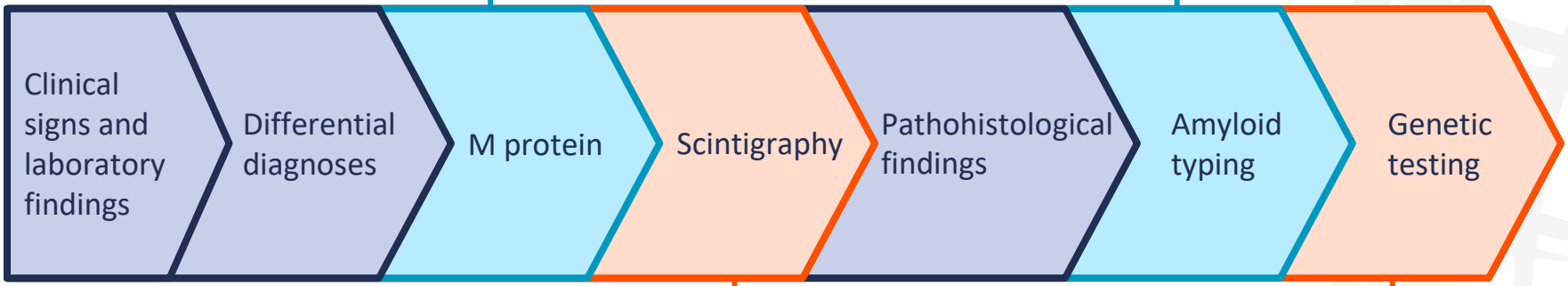
1. Aus dem Siepen F, Hansen T. *J Clin Med*. 2024;13:5873; 2. Marchionni G, et al. *J Clin Med*. 2025;14:8458; 3. Kitaoka H, et al. *Circ J*. 2020;84:1610–71; 4. Dima D, et al. *JCO Oncol Pract*. 2023;19:265–75; 5. Alashqar R, et al. *J Clin Med*. 2025;14:6668; 6. Chopra N. *J Pract Cardiovasc Sci*. 2024;10:1–8.

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JCS diagnostic algorithm for CA*

- Typically present in AL amyloidosis
- Not expected in isolated ATTRwt†

Positive for immunoglobulin light chains or TTR



- Bone scintigraphy has a sensitivity of 58–99% and a specificity of 79–100% for detecting ATTR
- Most false positives occur in cardiac AL

Identification of TTR pathogenic variants

***Investigations may occur in parallel; a non-biopsy ATTR diagnosis relies on bone scintigraphy plus absence of monoclonal protein.**
†If detected, further evaluation is required because ATTRwt and MGUS may coexist.
AL, amyloid light-chain; ATTR, TTR amyloidosis; CA, cardiac amyloidosis; JCS, Japanese Circulation Society; M protein, monoclonal protein; MGUS, monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance; TTR, transthyretin; wt, wild type.
Kitaoka H, et al. *Circ J*. 2020;84:1610–71.

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Applying the JCS algorithm before TTR stabilizers

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Applying the JCS pathway to diagnose cardiac AL

M protein screen[1]

SPEP/IFE alone are insufficiently sensitive for M protein screening in suspected AL

Serum FLC should also be obtained

Biopsy strategy[2]

Tissue confirmation of amyloid deposition is **required for diagnosis** of AL amyloidosis

Use less-invasive sites first, where appropriate; biopsy from another site or repeat as needed

Amyloid typing[2]

Essential for determining the treatment plan

Tissue specimens can be referred to the MHLW-supported amyloidosis typing consultation service for expert pathological evaluation

IHC usually recommended, but mass spectrometry may be used if higher sensitivity is required

Integration with imaging[2–5]

Echocardiography, CMR and scintigraphy support suspicion, urgency, and overall interpretation

Imaging supports diagnosis but does not replace biopsy and definitive AL typing

AL, amyloid light-chain; CMR, cardiac magnetic resonance imaging; FLC, free light chains; IEF, immunofixation electrophoresis; IHC, immunohistochemistry; JCS, Japanese Circulation Society; M protein, monoclonal protein; MHLW, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; SPEP, serum protein electrophoresis.

1. Rubinstein SM, Stockerl-Goldstein K, et al. *JAAC CardioOncol*. 2021;3:590–3; 2. Kitaoka H, et al. *Circ J*. 2020;84:1610–71; 3. Dima D, et al. *JCO Oncol Pract*. 2023;19:265–75; 4. Chaudhari M, Ashwath ML. *J Clin Med*. 2025;15:163; 5. Jimenez-Zepeda V, et al. *Clin Lymphoma Myeloma Leuk*. 2023;23:194–202.

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Why does correct amyloid subtyping matter?

	AL[1–3]	ATTR[1–3]
Disease course	**Rapidly progressive** disease, with worsening of symptoms within months	**Slowly progressive** disease
Prognosis	High mortality rate; prognosis with advanced HF may be as short as 4–6 **months***	ATTRv: 3–12 **years**† ATTRwt: 2–7 **years** without treatment*
Therapeutic target	Clonal light chain production	TTR misfolding and synthesis
Approved therapies	Include **plasma cell-directed therapy**	Include **TTR stabilizers and silencers**

Determining the CA subtype is critical because AL and ATTR require different treatment approaches[4]

*Prognosis depends on stage; †Prognosis depends on stage and degree of cardiac involvement.
AL, amyloid light chain; ATTR, TTR amyloidosis; CA, cardiac amyloidosis; HF, heart failure; TTR, transthyretin; v, variant; wt, wild type.
1. Aus dem Siepen F, Hansen T. *J Clin Med*. 2024;13:5873; 2. Bloom MW, et al. *J Card Fail*. 2025;31:456–63; 3. Alashqar R, et al. *J Clin Med*. 2025;14:6668;
4. Rubinstein SM, Stockerl-Goldstein K, et al. *JAAC CardioOncol*. 2021;3:590–3.

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Avoiding misdiagnosis in the TTR stabilizer era

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Practical tips to prevent TTR stabilizer misuse

- Exclude AL before confirming ATTR
- Do not diagnose ATTR on bone scintigraphy alone; always exclude AL first
- If MGUS is detected, complete AL workup; don’t assume MGUS alone explains the findings
- Look for discrepancies between imaging findings and clinical presentation
- Check for extra-cardiac organ involvement

AL, amyloid light chain; ATTR, transthyretin amyloidosis; MGUS, monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance.
Kubo T. Expert opinion. June 25, 2026.

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