

Thomas Liehr

With contributions by Unique

Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes (sSMC)

A Guide for Human Geneticists and Clinicians

 Springer

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With contributions by Unique
(The Rare Chromosome Disorder Support Group)

 Springer

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Foreword

When Unique started up in 1984 as the Trisomy 9p Support Group, there was virtually no information or support for families about any rare chromosome disorder. Today it is different for people diagnosed with a known syndrome, but for the majority, including most people with a small supernumerary marker chromosome, little has changed. With its ever-increasing membership – currently standing at more than 10,000 individuals in 80 different countries – Unique fills that gap.

Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes is a welcome collaboration between a leading scientist and a family support group to create an up-to-date picture of one type of rare chromosome disorder. Scientific and clinical reports are brought to life by families' descriptions of the consequences of having a child with a small extra chromosome. Eighteen Unique families tell you in words and photographs what having this rare chromosome disorder means. Most of the children's names have been changed in accordance with their parents' wishes.

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Preface

Since 1992 I have been working in the field of clinical cytogenetics. My diploma, i.e., a master's thesis, was about a special subgroup of patients with small supernumerary marker chromosomes (sSMC), the cat eye syndrome (Liehr et al. 1992). Since that time much progress has been achieved in the field of sSMC. Especially the sSMC homepage (Liehr 2011) with presently more than 4,000 single sSMC case reports together with the advance of technical possibilities for a comprehensive characterization of this special group of rearranged chromosomes enables today much better genotype–phenotype correlations than when I started to study sSMC.

Nonetheless, I recently met a family with the following story, providing evidence that lots of knowledge on sSMC that is nowadays available did not reach the public health system as it should. An sSMC was detected after amniocentesis in the fetus of a pregnant woman who was referred for cytogenetic analysis because of advanced maternal age; sonographic findings were normal. The gynecologist told the couple that the cytogenetic finding was connected with an adverse prognosis and that the developing child would be “100% disabled and mentally retarded.” The parents thus terminated the pregnancy. Later, it turned out that the sSMC was not only parentally derived but also that the first healthy child of the couple also had the same sSMC. This book is intended to help avoid similar situations and to be informative to clinicians, cytogeneticists, and families.

Besides the present knowledge on sSMC, including the biological background, also clinically relevant information is included together with personal reports of families having a child affected with an sSMC. The latter was realized in close collaboration with Unique, the Rare Chromosome Disorder Support Group (<http://www.rarechromo.org/>), and by contributions provided by families in contact with the author.

Jena, October 2011

Thomas Liehr

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Contents

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| 1 | Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 | The Problem | 2 |
| 1.1.1 | Definition of sSMC | 2 |
| 1.1.2 | Nomenclature | 3 |
| 1.1.3 | Shapes of sSMC | 3 |
| 1.2 | Frequency of sSMC | 4 |
| 1.2.1 | Normal Population | 4 |
| 1.2.2 | Healthy Population with Fertility Problems | 6 |
| 1.2.3 | Developmentally and Mentally Retarded Persons | 7 |
| 1.3 | Chromosomal Origin of sSMC | 7 |
| 1.3.1 | sSMC in Individuals with 47 Chromosomes | 8 |
| 1.3.2 | sSMC in Individuals with 46 Chromosomes: Turner Syndrome Karyotype Cases | 8 |
| 1.3.3 | Multiple sSMC | 8 |
| 1.3.4 | Neocentric sSMC | 8 |
| 1.4 | What Are the Effects of sSMC | 10 |
| 1.4.1 | Gain of Copy Number | 11 |
| 1.4.2 | Uniparental Disomy | 13 |
| 1.4.3 | Mosaicism | 14 |
| 2 | Inheritance of Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes | 17 |
| 2.1 | De Novo and Familial sSMC | 17 |
| 2.2 | B Chromosomes and sSMC | 18 |
| 3 | Formation of Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes | 21 |
| 3.1 | Inverted-Duplication-Shaped sSMC | 21 |
| 3.1.1 | Centromeric Activity of Dicentric sSMC | 22 |
| 3.2 | Centric Minute-Shaped sSMC | 23 |
| 3.3 | Ring-Shaped sSMC | 25 |
| 3.4 | Complex sSMC | 26 |

3.5 Mixtures of Different Shapes 27

3.6 Multiple sSMC 27

3.7 Breakpoint Characteristics of sSMC 28

4 Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes in Genetic

Diagnostics and Counseling 31

4.1 sSMC Diagnostics 31

 4.1.1 First Steps: Banding Cytogenetics 31

 4.1.2 Molecular Cytogenetics 33

 4.1.3 Molecular Genetics 36

 4.1.4 How To Characterize an sSMC 37

4.2 Personal Experiences of Patients Receiving the Diagnosis

 sSMC Prenatally 39

 4.2.1 Personal Experience 1 39

 4.2.2 Personal Experience 2 40

 4.2.3 Personal Experience 3 42

 4.2.4 Personal Experience 4 45

4.3 sSMC in Genetic Counseling 45

5 Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes Known To Be Correlated with Specific Syndromes 47

5.1 Emanuel Syndrome 47

 5.1.1 Clinical Characteristics 48

 5.1.2 Cytogenetic Characteristics 48

 5.1.3 Patient Report 48

5.2 Cat Eye Syndrome 52

 5.2.1 Clinical Characteristics 52

 5.2.2 Cytogenetic Characteristics 53

 5.2.3 Patient Reports 54

5.3 Pallister–Killian Syndrome 59

 5.3.1 Clinical Characteristics 59

 5.3.2 Cytogenetic Characteristics 59

 5.3.3 Patient Report 60

5.4 Isochromosome 18p Syndrome 61

 5.4.1 Clinical Characteristics 61

 5.4.2 Cytogenetic Characteristics 62

 5.4.3 Patient Report 62

5.5 Turner Syndrome 65

 5.5.1 Clinical Characteristics 65

 5.5.2 Cytogenetic Characteristics 65

 5.5.3 Patient Report 66

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 6 | Centric Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes | 69 |
| 6.1 | Chromosome 1 | 70 |
| 6.1.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 70 |
| 6.1.2 | Clinical Signs | 71 |
| 6.1.3 | Mosaicism | 72 |
| 6.1.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 72 |
| 6.1.5 | Case Report | 72 |
| 6.1.6 | Chromosomes 1/5/19 | 76 |
| 6.2 | Chromosome 2 | 76 |
| 6.2.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 76 |
| 6.2.2 | Clinical Signs | 76 |
| 6.2.3 | Mosaicism | 78 |
| 6.2.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 78 |
| 6.2.5 | Case Report | 78 |
| 6.3 | Chromosome 3 | 79 |
| 6.3.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 79 |
| 6.3.2 | Clinical Signs | 80 |
| 6.3.3 | Mosaicism | 80 |
| 6.3.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 81 |
| 6.4 | Chromosome 4 | 81 |
| 6.4.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 81 |
| 6.4.2 | Clinical Signs | 82 |
| 6.4.3 | Mosaicism | 82 |
| 6.4.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 83 |
| 6.5 | Chromosome 5 | 83 |
| 6.5.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 83 |
| 6.5.2 | Clinical Signs | 84 |
| 6.5.3 | Mosaicism | 84 |
| 6.5.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 85 |
| 6.5.5 | Chromosomes 1/5/19 | 85 |
| 6.6 | Chromosome 6 | 85 |
| 6.6.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 85 |
| 6.6.2 | Clinical Signs | 85 |
| 6.6.3 | Mosaicism | 86 |
| 6.6.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 87 |
| 6.6.5 | Case Report | 87 |
| 6.7 | Chromosome 7 | 88 |
| 6.7.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 88 |
| 6.7.2 | Clinical Signs | 89 |
| 6.7.3 | Mosaicism | 90 |
| 6.7.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 90 |
| 6.7.5 | Case Report | 90 |

- 6.8 Chromosome 8 93
 - 6.8.1 Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region 93
 - 6.8.2 Clinical Signs 93
 - 6.8.3 Mosaicism 95
 - 6.8.4 Uniparental Disomy 95
 - 6.8.5 Case Report 95
- 6.9 Chromosome 9 96
 - 6.9.1 Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region 96
 - 6.9.2 Clinical Signs 96
 - 6.9.3 Mosaicism 98
 - 6.9.4 Uniparental Disomy 98
 - 6.9.5 Case Report 98
- 6.10 Chromosome 10 100
 - 6.10.1 Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region 100
 - 6.10.2 Clinical Signs 100
 - 6.10.3 Mosaicism 101
 - 6.10.4 Uniparental Disomy 101
 - 6.10.5 Case Report 101
- 6.11 Chromosome 11 104
 - 6.11.1 Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region 104
 - 6.11.2 Clinical Signs 104
 - 6.11.3 Mosaicism 106
 - 6.11.4 Uniparental Disomy 106
- 6.12 Chromosome 12 106
 - 6.12.1 Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region 106
 - 6.12.2 Clinical Signs 106
 - 6.12.3 Mosaicism 108
 - 6.12.4 Uniparental Disomy 108
 - 6.12.5 Case Report 108
- 6.13 Chromosome 13 108
 - 6.13.1 Potentially Non-dose-Sensitive Pericentric Region 108
 - 6.13.2 Clinical Signs 109
 - 6.13.3 Mosaicism 109
 - 6.13.4 Uniparental Disomy 110
 - 6.13.5 Chromosomes 13/21 110
- 6.14 Chromosome 14 110
 - 6.14.1 Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region 110
 - 6.14.2 Clinical Signs 110
 - 6.14.3 Mosaicism 111
 - 6.14.4 Uniparental Disomy 112
 - 6.14.5 Case Reports 112
 - 6.14.6 Chromosomes 14/22 114
- 6.15 Chromosome 15 115
 - 6.15.1 Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region 115
 - 6.15.2 Clinical Signs 116
 - 6.15.3 Mosaicism 117

| | | |
|--------|---|-----|
| 6.15.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 117 |
| 6.15.5 | Case Reports | 118 |
| 6.16 | Chromosome 16 | 122 |
| 6.16.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 122 |
| 6.16.2 | Clinical Signs | 122 |
| 6.16.3 | Mosaicism | 123 |
| 6.16.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 123 |
| 6.16.5 | Case Reports | 123 |
| 6.17 | Chromosome 17 | 126 |
| 6.17.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 126 |
| 6.17.2 | Clinical Signs | 126 |
| 6.17.3 | Mosaicism | 127 |
| 6.17.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 128 |
| 6.17.5 | Case Report | 128 |
| 6.18 | Chromosome 18 | 130 |
| 6.18.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 130 |
| 6.18.2 | Clinical Signs | 131 |
| 6.18.3 | Mosaicism | 132 |
| 6.18.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 132 |
| 6.18.5 | Case Report | 132 |
| 6.19 | Chromosome 19 | 132 |
| 6.19.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 132 |
| 6.19.2 | Clinical Signs | 132 |
| 6.19.3 | Mosaicism | 134 |
| 6.19.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 134 |
| 6.19.5 | Case Report | 134 |
| 6.19.6 | Chromosomes 1/5/19 | 135 |
| 6.20 | Chromosome 20 | 135 |
| 6.20.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 135 |
| 6.20.2 | Clinical Signs | 136 |
| 6.20.3 | Mosaicism | 137 |
| 6.20.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 137 |
| 6.20.5 | Case Report | 137 |
| 6.21 | Chromosome 21 | 139 |
| 6.21.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 139 |
| 6.21.2 | Clinical Signs | 140 |
| 6.21.3 | Mosaicism | 141 |
| 6.21.4 | Uniparental Disomy | 141 |
| 6.21.5 | Case Reports | 141 |
| 6.21.6 | Chromosomes 13/21 | 144 |
| 6.22 | Chromosome 22 | 145 |
| 6.22.1 | Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region | 145 |
| 6.22.2 | Clinical Signs | 145 |
| 6.22.3 | Mosaicism | 146 |

- 6.22.4 Uniparental Disomy 146
- 6.22.5 Case Reports 146
- 6.22.6 Chromosomes 14/22 146
- 6.23 X Chromosome 147
 - 6.23.1 Potentially Non-dose-sensitive Pericentric Region 147
 - 6.23.2 Clinical Signs 147
 - 6.23.3 Mosaicism 148
 - 6.23.4 Uniparental Disomy 148
 - 6.23.5 Case Report 148
- 6.24 Y Chromosome 150
 - 6.24.1 Case Report 150
- 6.25 Centric sSMC of Unknown Origin 150

7 Neocentric Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes

- by Chromosome** 151
- 7.1 Chromosome 1: Neocentrics 152
 - 7.1.1 Balanced Situation 153
 - 7.1.2 Unbalanced Situation 153
- 7.2 Chromosome 2: Neocentrics 153
 - 7.2.1 Balanced Situation 153
 - 7.2.2 Unbalanced Situation 154
- 7.3 Chromosome 3: Neocentrics 154
 - 7.3.1 Balanced Situation 154
 - 7.3.2 Unbalanced Situation 154
 - 7.3.3 Case Report 155
- 7.4 Chromosome 4: Neocentrics 157
- 7.5 Chromosome 5: Neocentrics 158
- 7.6 Chromosome 6: Neocentrics 158
 - 7.6.1 Balanced Situation 158
 - 7.6.2 Unbalanced Situation 159
- 7.7 Chromosome 7: Neocentrics 159
- 7.8 Chromosome 8: Neocentrics 160
- 7.9 Chromosome 9: Neocentrics 160
 - 7.9.1 Balanced Situation 160
 - 7.9.2 Unbalanced Situation 160
- 7.10 Chromosome 10: Neocentrics 161
 - 7.10.1 Balanced Situation 161
 - 7.10.2 Unbalanced Situation 161
- 7.11 Chromosome 11: Neocentrics 161
 - 7.11.1 Balanced Situation 162
 - 7.11.2 Unbalanced Situation 162
- 7.12 Chromosome 12: Neocentrics 162
- 7.13 Chromosome 13: Neocentrics 162
 - 7.13.1 Balanced Situation 163
 - 7.13.2 Unbalanced Situation 163
- 7.14 Chromosome 14: Neocentrics 164

| | |
|--|------------|
| 7.15 Chromosome 15: Neocentrics | 164 |
| 7.15.1 Balanced Situation | 164 |
| 7.15.2 Unbalanced Situation | 165 |
| 7.16 Chromosome 16: Neocentrics | 165 |
| 7.17 Chromosome 17: Neocentrics | 166 |
| 7.18 Chromosome 18: Neocentrics | 166 |
| 7.19 Chromosome 19: Neocentrics | 166 |
| 7.20 Chromosome 20: Neocentrics | 167 |
| 7.21 Chromosome 21: Neocentrics | 167 |
| 7.22 Chromosome 22: Neocentrics | 167 |
| 7.23 X Chromosome: Neocentrics | 167 |
| 7.24 Y Chromosome: Neocentrics | 168 |
| 7.25 Neocentric sSMC of Unknown Origin | 168 |
| 8 Multiple Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes | 169 |
| 8.1 Case Reports | 169 |
| 9 Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes Additionally to Other Chromosomal Rearrangements | 175 |
| 9.1 Numerical Aberrations | 175 |
| 9.1.1 TS Karyotype | 175 |
| 9.1.2 Gain of Gonosomes | 176 |
| 9.1.3 Trisomy 21 | 176 |
| 9.1.4 Other Autosomal Gain | 176 |
| 9.2 Structural Aberrations | 176 |
| 9.2.1 Microdeletions | 176 |
| 9.2.2 McClintock Mechanism | 177 |
| 9.2.3 Other Structural Chromosomal Rearrangements | 177 |
| 9.3 Molecular Aberrations | 178 |
| 10 Complex Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes | 179 |
| 11 Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes and Tumors | 181 |
| Appendix: Patient Organizations in Connection with Small Supernumerary Marker Chromosomes | 183 |
| A1 Rare Chromosome Disorder Support Groups | 183 |
| A1.1 Unique: Rare Chromosome Disorder Support Group | 183 |
| A1.2 Contact a Family: for Families with Disabled Children | 184 |
| A1.3 LEONA: Verein für Eltern chromosomal geschädigter Kinder e.V. | 184 |
| A1.4 Valentin APAC | 185 |
| A1.5 Unique Danmark | 185 |
| A1.6 Chromosome Disorder Outreach | 185 |

- A1.7 Asociația Prader Willi din România 186
- A1.8 Living with Trisomy 186
- A1.9 National Organization for Rare Disorders 186
- A2 Chromosome-Specific Support Groups 186
 - A2.1 Chromosome 7 187
 - A2.2 Chromosome 9 188
 - A2.3 Chromosome 11 188
 - A2.4 Chromosome 12 189
 - A2.5 Chromosome 14 190
 - A2.6 Chromosome 15 190
 - A2.7 Chromosome 16 194
 - A2.8 Chromosome 17 194
 - A2.9 Chromosome 18 195
 - A2.10 Chromosome 20 196
 - A2.11 Chromosome 21 197
 - A2.12 Chromosome 22 197
 - A2.13 X and Y Chromosomes 198

- Glossary** 199
 - Chromosomes and Nomenclature 199
 - Alphabetic List of Terms 200

- References** 205

- Index** 217

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| AC | Accessory chromosome |
| aCGH | Array-based comparative genomic hybridization |
| ACH | Accessory chromosome |
| AS | Angelman syndrome |
| BWS | Beckwith–Wiedemann syndrome |
| caNC | Cancer-associated neochromosome |
| CBG | C bands by barium oxide using Giemsa stain |
| CES | Cat eye syndrome |
| CGH | Comparative genomic hybridization |
| CVS | Chorionic villus sampling |
| der | Derivative chromosome |
| ES | Emanuel syndrome |
| ESAC | Extra structurally abnormal chromosome |
| FISH | Fluorescence in situ hybridization |
| GTG | G bands by trypsin using Giemsa stain |
| hUPD | Heterodisomy |
| i18pS | Isochromosome 18p syndrome |
| inv dup | Inverted-duplication-shaped small supernumerary marker chromosome |
| ISCN | International System for Human Cytogenetic Nomenclature |
| iUPD | Isodisomy |
| LCR | Low copy repeat |
| Mb | Megabase |
| min | Centric minute-shaped small supernumerary marker chromosome |
| NMC | Neocentric marker chromosome |
| NOR | Nucleolus organizing region |
| OMIM | Online Mendelian Inheritance in Man |
| p | Short chromosome arm |
| PCR | Polymerase chain reaction |
| PKS | Pallister–Killian syndrome |
| PWS | Prader–Willi syndrome |

| | |
|------|--|
| q | Long chromosome arm |
| r | Ring chromosome |
| SAC | Small accessory chromosome |
| SBAC | Small bisatellited additional chromosome |
| SMRC | Supernumerary minute ring chromosome |
| SMC | Supernumerary marker chromosome(s) |
| SRC | Supernumerary ring chromosome |
| SRS | Silver–Russell syndrome |
| sSMC | Small supernumerary marker chromosome(s) |
| TND | Transient neonatal diabetes |
| TS | Turner syndrome |
| UBCA | Unbalanced chromosomal abnormality |
| UPD | Uniparental disomy |

Chapter 1

Introduction

The topic of this book is small supernumerary marker chromosomes (sSMC). Below, sSMC will be introduced, defined, and information will be given about their nomenclature, shapes, the frequencies with which they appear, and their effects. But first we have to understand the field we are entering by focusing on sSMC. So, in general we are talking here about a group of patients identifiable by human genetic diagnostics, especially by cytogenetics. The latter is a branch of genetics concerned with the study of the structure and function of chromosomes.

The cytogenetic era started when the first chromosomes were visualized through microscopes, which was around 1880 (Arnold 1879). However, the first really evaluable human metaphase chromosome spread for diagnostics was published almost six decades ago (Tjio and Levan 1956). Interestingly, the determination of the correct modal human chromosome number (Tjio and Levan 1956), the detection of the first chromosomal abnormalities such as Down syndrome (Lejeune 1959), and the detection of the presence of sSMC (Ilberry et al. 1961) occurred before the invention of the Q-banding method by Dr. Lore Zech from Uppsala, Sweden (Caspersson et al. 1968). The ability to generate a black-and-white banding along the chromosomes enabled the detection of more abnormalities, such as translocations, inversions, deletions, and insertions. Nowadays, the G bands by trypsin using Giemsa stain (GTG) banding approach (Seabright 1971) is still the starting point and gold standard of all cytogenetic techniques (see Sect. 4.1). It is relatively cheap, easy to perform, and gives an overview of the whole human genome; the resolution is limited to some ten million base pairs (Mb).

The pure chromosome banding era ended in 1986 with the first so-called “molecular cytogenetic” experiment on human chromosomes, which was at the same time the starting point of the youngest discipline in human genetic diagnostics (for a review see Liehr and Claussen 2002; see Sect. 4.1). The major technique in molecular cytogenetics is fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH; for reviews see Liehr and Claussen 2002; Liehr 2009a). FISH is an approach that allows nucleic acid sequences to be examined inside cells or on chromosomes, and was described first in 1986 for humans (Pinkel et al. 1986). Between 1986 and 1996 one-color to three-color FISH experiments were performed, but since 1996 multicolor FISH

probe sets have become more and more important in routine cytogenetics (for reviews see Liehr et al. 2006b; Liehr 2011b). Recently, the so-called array techniques (Forster et al. 2003) were introduced in cytogenetic diagnostics, providing high resolution for the determination of chromosomal breakpoints. Particularly, array-based comparative genomic hybridization (aCGH; for reviews see Tabor and Cho 2007; Liehr 2009a), which is a refined molecular cytogenetic technique (chromosome-based comparative genomic hybridization, CGH; Kallioniemi et al. 1992), is widely used nowadays for sSMC characterization (Backx et al. 2007; Pietrzak et al. 2007; Tsuchiya et al. 2008).

Overall, cytogenetics means chromosomal analysis at the single-cell level. In contrast, molecular analysis of DNA, including aCGH, and other new whole-genome-directed approaches such as “next- or second-generation sequencing” (ten Bosch and Grody 2008) are investigations of millions of cells. Thus, cytogenetics and molecular genetics can complement and assist each other to achieve the goal of characterizing aberrant karyotypes as comprehensively as possible. For sSMC detection and characterization, cytogenetic analysis is in almost all cases the initial step.

1.1 The Problem

Marker chromosomes, in general, are according to the International System for Human Cytogenetic Nomenclature (ISCN) “structurally abnormal chromosomes of unknown origin, frequently found in karyotypes of cancer patients and patients with constitutional genetic disorders” (ISCN 2009). This definition of markers includes a conglomerate of differently shaped and sized chromosomes, including those this book is about. However, sSMC are something special, as outlined below.

In older literature, the report most often cited as the first description of an sSMC is that of Froland et al. (1963), describing an isochromosome 18p (Rivera et al. 1984). However, this was in fact the third sSMC report, preceded by the report of Ellis et al. (1962), who reported “an aberrant small acrocentric chromosome,” and that of Ilberry et al. (1961), who reported the first sSMC ever.

1.1.1 *Definition of sSMC*

Up to 2003 a clear definition of sSMC was lacking throughout the literature. A “minimal definition” for sSMC was that they are “small structurally abnormal chromosomes that occur in addition to the normal 46 chromosomes” (Crolla et al. 1997). Part of the problem with definition is that the phenotypes associated with sSMC are hugely variable, from normal to severely abnormal (Paoloni-Giacobino et al. 1998). Additionally, sSMC are a morphologically heterogeneous group of structurally abnormal chromosomes (see Sect. 1.1.3). Thus, the denomination of

sSMC as “markers” makes sense and should be maintained even after their identification by molecular cytogenetics, even though ISCN (2009) recommends the use of “derivative” if the chromosomal origin is known.

Nowadays, sSMC can be defined cytogenetically as *structurally abnormal chromosomes that cannot be identified or characterized unambiguously by conventional banding cytogenetics alone, and are (in general) equal in size to or smaller than a chromosome 20 of the same metaphase spread*. sSMC can be present additionally (1) in a karyotype of 46 normal chromosomes, (2) in a numerically abnormal karyotype (e.g., Turner syndrome or Down syndrome), or (3) in a structurally abnormal but balanced karyotype (e.g., Robertsonian translocation; Wolff and Schwartz 1992) or ring chromosome formation (Baldwin et al. 2008).

In contrast, an sSMC larger than chromosome 20 can usually be identified on the basis of chromosome banding. Thus, the definition of sSMC vs. large(r) supernumerary marker chromosomes (SMC) is a cytogenetic not a “functional” one, i.e., sSMC and larger SMC can have the same modes of formation and karyotypic evolution (Liehr et al. 2004; see Chap. 3).

1.1.2 Nomenclature

sSMC have been given various names over the last few decades. The three best known are “SMC,” which does not distinguish between larger and smaller SMCs, extra structurally abnormal chromosome (ESAC), and supernumerary ring chromosome (sSRC). In addition, the following names can be found: accessory chromosome (AC or ACH), small accessory chromosome (SAC), marker chromosome (MC), extra or additional marker chromosome, supernumerary or extra microchromosome, additional or metacentric chromosome fragment, (centric) fragment, small bisatellited additional chromosome (SBAC), neocentric marker chromosome (NMC), supernumerary minute ring chromosome (SMRC), and cancer-associated neochromosome (caNC) in exceptional cases where an sSMC is acquired in neoplasia (reviewed in Liehr et al. 2004; Liehr 2011a).

This flood of names is presently tending to be replaced by the use of sSMC, facilitating tremendously a literature search.

1.1.3 Shapes of sSMC

sSMC can have three different shapes (Fig. 1.1). There are (1) inverted duplicated (shaped) sSMC, abbreviated in the karyotype formula as “inv dup” (2) ring-shaped sSMC, written as “r” in the karyotype, and (3) centric minute-shaped sSMC. The latter are most often referred to as “min” or also as “del” (for deleted in parts) or as “der” (for derivative). As outlined in Liehr (2009b) there is ongoing discussion about the correct karyotypic nomenclature for sSMC.