

The *DOT1L* rs12982744 polymorphism is associated with osteoarthritis of the hip with genome-wide statistical significance in males

Osteoarthritis (OA) of the hip is a major cause of pain, disability and use of healthcare resources.¹ Although OA is multifactorial, it is known to have significant genetic contribution and a number of studies have attempted to dissect such contribution (see² for review).

The *DOT1L* gene encodes the DOT1-like histone H3 methyltransferase, a potentially dedicated enzyme for Wnt target gene activation in leukaemia recently shown to be associated with endochondral bone formation.³

A polymorphism (rs12982744) in *DOT1L* has been found to be strongly associated with minimum joint space width (minJSW) at the hip. This exact same single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) was previously identified to be associated with increased height.⁴⁻⁵ The C allele associated with lower minJSW and lower height was associated with hip OA, although this association did not reach genome-wide significance (GWS) (OR 1.14, CI 1.06 to 1.22; $p=1.5 \times 10^{-4}$).³

The GWS level of $p < 5 \times 10^{-8}$ is the threshold at which genetic associations are considered credible.⁶ The aim of our study was to prove that common genetic variation in the *DOT1L* gene is important in hip OA at this level of confidence.

Genetic association data for rs12982744 and hip OA were derived from the Translational Research in Europe Applied Technologies for OsteoArthritis (TREAT-OA) consortium and

combined with data from the UK (arcOGEN consortium), Estonia (Estonian Genome Center of the University of Tartu) and other studies (Nottingham, GOAL).³ The total sample size was 9789 hip OA cases and 31 873 controls of which there were 4155 cases and 15 213 controls in male subjects and 5634 cases and 16 660 controls in female subjects. Summary OR was calculated using a fixed effects model. The individual study estimates and sample sizes are shown in figure 1. A full detailed description of each study cohort on recruitment, radiographic and clinical assessment is found in.⁷⁻⁸ Studies were approved by the relevant Ethics Committee and informed consent was obtained from all study participants.

The results of the meta-analysis show that in male subjects the C allele of *DOT1L* rs12982744 is GWS with a 17% increased risk of hip OA (OR 1.17, 95% CI 1.11 to 1.23, $p=7.8 \times 10^{-9}$) with no observed heterogeneity ($I^2=0$). In female subjects, the OR is 1.05 (95% CI 1.00 to 1.10, $p=0.04$) with $I^2=31\%$. The effect size estimate is significantly different between both sexes ($p=0.003$) with non-overlapping CIs. For both genders combined, the p value was 8.1×10^{-8} ($I^2=35\%$) (figure 1). The difference in effect size between genders is not surprising considering the sexual dimorphism of this trait: men have a larger mJSW and prevalence of hip OA rises specifically in women after menopause, suggesting a role of sex hormones in the disease process.

In this large-scale meta-analysis we show that the association between a *DOT1L* SNP and hip OA achieves GWS in male subjects strengthening the robustness of *DOT1L* as a risk factor for hip OA.

This makes *DOT1L* a potential therapeutic target for modulation and intervention in hip OA. This is relevant since small molecular inhibitors have been developed and a phase I trial has been started (<http://epizyme.com/programs/dot1l.asp>).

This result also highlights the greater statistical power of quantitative endophenotypes for genetic studies.

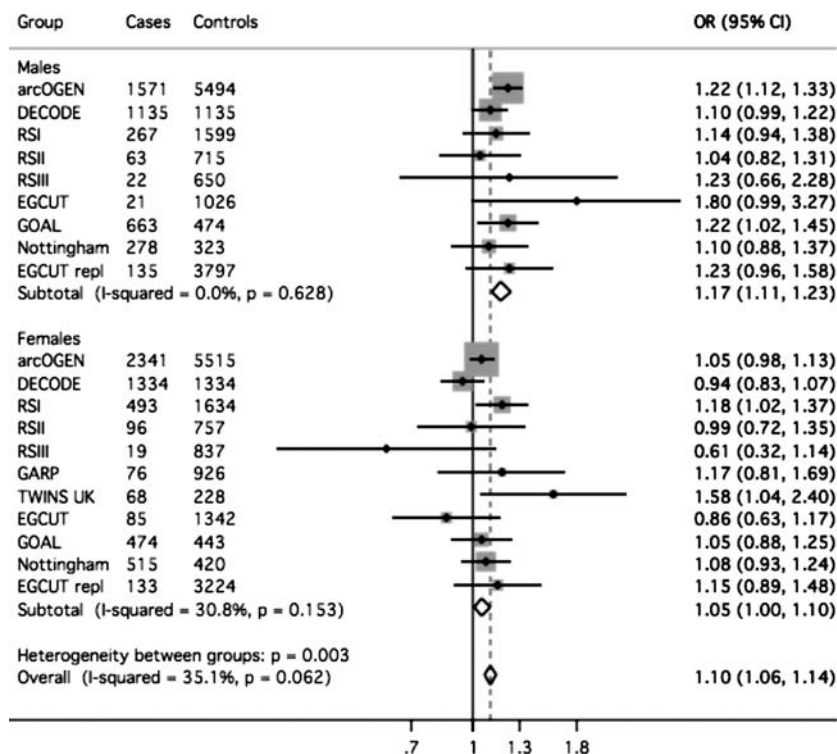


Figure 1 Forest plot of study-specific estimates and fixed effects summary OR estimates and 95% CIs for the association between the C allele and the rs12982744 polymorphism of the *DOT1L* gene and hip osteoarthritis. Analyses were carried out using Stata V.12 (College Station, Texas, USA).

Evangelos Evangelou,^{1,2} Ana M Valdes,^{2,3} Martha C Castano-Betancourt,^{4,5} M Doherty,³ Sally Doherty,³ Tonu Esko,⁶ Thorvaldur Ingvarsson,^{7,8,9} John P A Ioannidis,^{1,10} Margreet Kloppenburg,¹¹ Andres Metspalu,⁶ Evangelia E Ntzani,¹ Kalliope Panoutsopoulou,¹² P Eline Slagboom,^{5,13} Lorraine Southam,¹² Tim D Spector,² Unnur Styrkarsdottir,¹⁴ Kari Stefansson,^{9,13} André G Uitterlinden,^{4,5} Margaret Wheeler,³ Eleftheria Zeggini,¹² Ingrid Meulenbelt,^{5,13} Joyce B van Meurs,^{4,5} arcOGEN consortium, the TREAT-OA consortium

¹Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, University of Ioannina Medical School, University Campus, Ioannina, Greece

²Department of Twin Research and Genetic Epidemiology, St. Thomas' Hospital, King's College, Lambeth Palace Road, London, UK

³Academic Rheumatology, University of Nottingham, City Hospital Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

⁴Department of Internal Medicine, ErasmusMC, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

⁵The Netherlands Genomics Initiative-sponsored Netherlands Consortium for Healthy Aging (NGI-NCHA), Rotterdam/Leiden, The Netherlands

⁶Estonian Genome Center, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia

⁷Department of Orthopedic Surgery, Akureyri Hospital, Akureyri, Iceland

⁸Institution of Health Science, University of Akureyri, Akureyri, Iceland

⁹Faculty of Medicine, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland

¹⁰Stanford Prevention Research Center, Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford, USA

¹¹Department of Rheumatology and Department of Clinical Epidemiology, Leiden University Medical Center, Leiden, The Netherlands

¹²Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, Hinxton, UK

¹³Department of Molecular Epidemiology, Leiden University Medical Centre, Leiden, The Netherlands

¹⁴deCODE Genetics, Reykjavik, Iceland

EE and AMV contributed equally.

Correspondence to Dr Ana M Valdes, Academic Rheumatology, University of Nottingham, Clinical Sciences Bld, Nottingham City Hospital, Nottingham NG5 1PE, UK; ana.valdes@nottingham.ac.uk

Contributors All authors contributed to the study design, data interpretation and the final manuscript. In addition, EE analysed the data; JvM, EE and AMV interpreted the data and prepared the manuscript; and JvM supervised the study.

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Competing interests None.

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