Genetic polymorphisms and associated susceptibility to asthma

Michael E March¹
Patrick MA Sleiman¹
Hakon Hakonarson^{1,2}

¹Center for Applied Genomics, Abramson Research Center of the Joseph Stokes Jr Research Institute, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, ²Department of Pediatrics, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia, USA

Abstract: As complex common diseases, asthma and allergic diseases are caused by the interaction of multiple genetic variants with a variety of environmental factors. Candidate-gene studies have examined the involvement of a very large list of genes in asthma and allergy, demonstrating a role for more than 100 loci. These studies have elucidated several themes in the biology and pathogenesis of these diseases. A small number of genes have been associated with asthma or allergy through traditional linkage analyses. The publication of the first asthma-focused genome-wide association (GWA) study in 2007 has been followed by nearly 30 reports of GWA studies targeting asthma, allergy, or associated phenotypes and quantitative traits. GWA studies have confirmed several candidate genes and have identified new, unsuspected, and occasionally uncharacterized genes as asthma susceptibility loci. Issues of results replication persist, complicating interpretation and making conclusions difficult to draw, and much of the heritability of these diseases remains undiscovered. In the coming years studies of complex diseases like asthma and allergy will probably involve the use of high-throughput next-generation sequencing, which will bring a tremendous influx of new information as well as new problems in dealing with vast datasets.

Keywords: genome-wide association study, high-throughput next-generation sequencing, allergy, environmental irritant, allergen

Introduction

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory condition of the lungs characterized by excessive responsiveness of the lungs to stimuli in the forms of infections, allergens, and environmental irritants.

Due to the variability of the disease and lack of generally agreed-on standards for diagnosis, it can be difficult to estimate the prevalence of asthma. Further, variations in practice from country to country complicate worldwide estimates. In the USA, it is estimated that at least 22.9 million Americans suffer from the condition. Asthma is the leading chronic illness in US children, with 6.8 million affected in 2006.¹ It is estimated that 300 million individuals suffer from asthma worldwide, with increased prevalence in both adults and children in recent decades.² Prevalence is rising in locations where rates were previously low and variation in rates from country to country appears to be diminishing.³ Twin studies have shown that there is a genetic element to asthma susceptibility, with heritability of the condition estimated at between 36% and 77%.⁴⁻⁷ Since the publication of the first study linking a genetic locus to asthma in 1989, more than 100 candidate genes have been reported in connection to asthma or asthma-related phenotypes such as bronchial hyperresponsiveness and elevated levels

Correspondence: Patrick MA Sleiman;
Hakon Hakonarson
Center for Applied Genomics,
1216E Abramson Research Center,
3615 Civic Center Blvd, Philadelphia,
PA 19104-4318, USA
Tel +1 267 426 0088
Fax +1 267 426 0363
Email sleimanp@email.cop.edu;
hakonarson@email.cop.edu

of serum immunoglobulin (Ig) E. Initial studies were usually candidate-gene analyses, examining the role of specific loci in asthma in a hypothesis-based manner. A few loci were identified in a hypothesis-independent manner through traditional linkage analysis. Recently, the application of genome-wide association (GWA) studies has led to the hypothesis-independent identification of a much larger list of loci associated with asthma.

Functional categories revealed through genetic analyses

Before describing the loci identified through various study designs, it would be useful to summarize the findings of the last 25 years of genetics research in asthma. The numerous genome-wide linkage, candidate gene, and GWA studies performed on asthma and asthma-related phenotypes have resulted in an increasingly large list of genes implicated in asthma susceptibility and pathogenesis. This list can be categorized into broad functional groups, from which several themes have emerged (reviewed previously⁸).

T_H2-mediated cell response

Given the appreciation of asthma as a disease of dysregulated immunity and its connection to atopy and allergic disease, it is perhaps unsurprising that genes controlling the development and regulation of the immune response have been implicated in asthma. T helper (T_H) 2 cell-mediated adaptive immune responses have been widely recognized as a crucial component of allergic disease. Pathways involved in T_H2 cell differentiation and function have been extensively studied in asthma candidate-gene association studies. Additionally, single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in many of these genes have been associated with asthma and other allergic phenotypes. Genes important for T_H1 versus T_H2 T cell polarization, such as *GATA3*, *TBX21*, *IL4*, *IL4RA*, *STAT6*, and *IL12B*, have been implicated in asthma and allergy.^{9–20} The genes encoding interleukin (IL)-13 and the beta-chain of the IgE receptor FcεR1 are well-replicated contributors to asthma susceptibility.^{10,12,21–24}

Inflammation

Unsurprisingly, several genes involved in inflammation have been associated with asthma. Genes for the cytokine IL-18²⁵ and its receptor IL18R1²⁶ have been implicated, as has the general mediator of inflammation tumor necrosis factor alpha.²⁷ Molecular mediators of inflammation have also been implicated, with the identification of leukotriene C4 synthase and other enzymes involved in the generation of leukotrienes, such as ALOX-5.^{28–30}

Environmental sensing and immune detection

A second class of associated genes is involved in the detection of pathogens and allergens. These genes include pattern-recognition receptors and extracellular receptors, such as *CD14*, *toll-like receptor (TLR) 2*, *TLR4*, *TLR6*, *TLR10*, and intracellular receptors, such as *nucleotide-binding oligomerization domain-containing 1 (NOD1/CARD4)*.^{31–36} Additional studies have strongly associated variations in the *human leukocyte antigen (HLA) class II* genes with asthma and allergen-specific IgE responses.²¹

Airway remodeling

A variety of genes involved in mediating the response to allergic inflammation and oxidant stress on the tissue level appears to be an important contributor to asthma susceptibility. Examples include *a disintegrin and metalloproteinase domain-containing protein 33 (ADAM33)*, which is expressed in lung fibroblasts and smooth muscle cells; the *alpha-1 chain of a specific collagen (COL6A5)*; *DPP10*, a potentially inactive serine protease; and *G protein-coupled receptor for asthma (GPRA)*, activation of which upregulates metalloprotease expression in the lung.^{37–40}

Bronchoconstriction

Acute asthma episodes involve constriction of the airways. Genes encoding proteins involved in this process have been identified as susceptibility loci for asthma. These loci include *CHRNA3/5*, which encodes a receptor for acetylcholine; *PDE4D*, which encodes a phosphodiesterase with enzymatic activity that generates molecular mediators of smooth muscle cell constriction; and *NOS1*, which encodes a nitric oxide synthase.^{41–43}

Epithelial barrier function

Studies of asthma genetics have raised new interest in the body's first-line of immune defense, the epithelial barrier, in the pathogenesis of asthma. Mutations in the *filaggrin (FLG)* gene were initially identified in the rare single-gene disorder ichthyosis vulgaris;⁴⁴ however, loss-of-function variants were reported subsequently to be strongly associated with atopic dermatitis, eczema, and asthma, both dependent on and independent of atopic dermatitis.^{45–48} Filaggrin, a protein involved in keratin aggregation, is not expressed in the bronchial mucosa,⁴⁹ which has led others to suggest that asthma susceptibility in patients with loss-of-function *FLG* variants may be due to allergic sensitization that occurs after breakdown of the epithelial barrier.⁵⁰ Several epithelial

genes with important roles in innate and adaptive immune function have also been implicated in asthma. These genes include *defensin-beta1* (*DEFB1*; an antimicrobial peptide), *utero globin/Clara cell 16-kD protein* (*CC16*) (an inhibitor of dendritic cell-mediated T_H2 -cell differentiation), and several chemokines (*CCL-5*, *-11*, *-24*, and *-26*) involved in the recruitment of T cells and eosinophils.^{51–57}

Overview of genetic analyses of asthma

Most of the published reports examining genetic contributions to asthma have been candidate-gene studies. Over 100 loci have been associated with asthma through candidate-gene studies, in which specific genes are investigated for their involvement in the phenotype based on their suspected roles or plausible hypothetical contributions to disease. The loci identified in candidate-gene studies of asthma and associated phenotypes have been extensively reviewed elsewhere.^{58–60} Among the genes identified in candidate studies are various cytokines and cytokine-signaling proteins involved in T cell survival, proliferation, and differentiation; genes involved in lung function, development, and response to stimuli; receptors for detection of microbial products; genes involved in epithelial barrier function and innate immunity,^{48,53} and molecules involved in responses to the environment.^{59,61–63} Genes that have been extensively replicated include the *beta2 adrenergic receptor* (*ADRB2*) gene,^{64–66} the cytokines, receptors, signaling proteins, and transcription factors involved in T_H1 and T_H2 differentiation of T cells, such as *IL4*, *IL4RA*, *IFNG*, *IFNGR1*, *STAT6*, *GATA3*, and *TBX21*;^{9,11,14,15,17–20} and genes involved in the cellular responses that characterize atopic disease, such as *IL13* and *FCER1B*.^{12,13,22–24} Many genes identified through candidate-gene studies have failed to be replicated, either because replication has never been attempted or due to failure of replication in subsequent experiments. Failure of replication is a considerable complication in the genetic analysis of asthma.⁸ Genes that have been well replicated in candidate-gene studies examining asthma are summarized in Table 1.

Genome-wide linkage studies rely on families of affected and unaffected individuals and use the differentially shared regions of inherited chromosomes to track genetic markers that segregate with the disease status. Genes within disease-associated regions become candidates for further study or for positional cloning of the disease-causing variant. Linkage studies are hypothesis-independent experiments, allowing for the identification of truly novel and previously unsuspected

disease-associated variants. Due to the requirement for large family cohorts, genome-wide linkage studies can be difficult and expensive to perform, and are often sufficiently powered to detect only variants with large effects. Linkage studies have identified multiple well-replicated chromosomal regions that contain genes of biological relevance to asthma and allergic disease, including the cytokine cluster on chromosome 5q (containing *IL3*, *IL5*, and *granulocyte/macrophage colony-stimulating factor* [*GMCSF*]), *FCER1B* on 11q, *interferon g* (*IFNG*) and *STAT6* on 12q, and *IL4R* (the IL-4Ra chain, also part of the IL-13R) on 16p. Linkage studies followed by positional cloning have identified a comparatively small set of novel asthma susceptibility loci, including *CYFIP2*,⁶⁷ *DPP10*,⁶⁸ *HLA*,⁶⁹ *PHF11*,⁷⁰ *GPRA*,³⁹ and *ADAM33*.³⁷ As molecules with plausible (and potentially drug-targetable) roles in the lung pathology of asthma, *GPRA* and *ADAM33* have generated considerable interest.³⁹ Genes identified through genome-wide linkage analyses are summarized in Table 2.

The availability of high-density genotyping arrays and comparatively low costs of applying such technology to increasingly large patient and control cohorts have led to the development of a third kind of genetics experiment: the GWA study. Large numbers of SNPs can be screened in large numbers of individuals and assessed for association with a disease state. As with linkage analyses, GWA studies are hypothesis-independent study designs, allowing the discovery of the contributions of novel loci. Currently, more than 30 GWA studies have been published using asthma, allergy, or related phenotypes such as serum IgE levels or blood eosinophil counts as endpoints. Many of these reports do not report any loci that reach the required level of statistical significance to be considered true GWA results. However, the reports of suggestive associations are valuable, as are reports of failures to replicate previously published results. The loci identified through GWA studies that have reached high statistical significance are summarized in Table 3. This list has grown rapidly in the last few years, as the arrays available for genotyping provide more SNPs for analysis and as researchers collaborate to assemble larger and more completely controlled cohorts to add more statistical power to their analyses.

The first GWA study that focused on bronchial asthma as an endpoint was reported in 2007.⁷¹ Markers on chromosome 17q21 were reproducibly associated with childhood-onset asthma. The findings were replicated in German and British cohorts. Independent replication of the 17q21 association has been reported in multiple populations of

Table I Well-replicated loci identified through candidate-gene studies

Gene	Chromosomal locus	Function
<i>IL10</i>	1q31-q32	Cytokine – immune regulation
<i>CTLA4</i>	2q33	Control/inhibition of T cell responses/immune regulation
<i>IL13</i>	5q31	Induces T _H 2 effector functions
<i>IL4</i>	5q31.1	T _H 2 differentiation
<i>CD14</i>	5q31.1	Microbe detection – recognizes pathogen associated molecular patterns
<i>HAVCR1</i>	5q33.2	T cell responses – hepatitis A virus receptor
<i>LTC4S</i>	5q35	Leukotriene synthase – inflammatory mediator
<i>LTA</i>	6p21.3	Inflammatory mediator
<i>TNF</i>	6p21.3	Inflammatory mediator
<i>HLA-DRB1</i>	6p21	Major histocompatibility complex class II – antigen presentation
<i>HLA-DQB1</i>	6p21	
<i>HLA-DPB1</i>	6p21	
<i>FCER1B</i>	11q13	Receptor for IgE – atopy
<i>IL18</i>	11q22.2-q22.3	Inflammation
<i>STAT6</i>	12q13	IL-4 and IL-13 signaling
<i>CMA1</i>	14q11.2	Chymase – mast cell expressed serine protease
<i>IL4R</i>	16p12.1-p12.2	Alpha chain of receptors for IL-4 and IL-13
<i>FLG</i>	1q21.3	Epithelial integrity and barrier function
<i>SPINK5</i>	5q32	Epithelial serine protease inhibitor
<i>CC16</i>	11q12.3-q13.1	Potential immunoregulatory function – epithelial expression
<i>NOS1</i>	12q24.2-q24.31	Nitric oxide synthase – cellular communication
<i>CCL11</i>	17q21.1-q21.2	Eotaxin-1 – eosinophil chemoattractant
<i>CCL5</i>	17q11.2-q12	RANTES – chemoattractant for T cells, eosinophils, basophils
<i>GSTM1</i>	1p13.3	Detoxification, removal of products of oxidative stress
<i>ADRB2</i>	5q31-q32	Smooth muscle relaxation
<i>GPRA</i>	7p14.3	Regulation of metalloprotease expression, neuronal effects
<i>NAT2</i>	8p22	Detoxification
<i>GSTP1</i>	11q13	Detoxification, removal of products of oxidative stress
<i>ACE</i>	17q23.3	Regulation of inflammation
<i>TBXA2R</i>	19p13.3	Platelet aggregation
<i>TGFB1</i>	19q13.1	Influences cell growth, differentiation, proliferation, apoptosis
<i>ADAM33</i>	20p13	Cell–cell and cell–matrix interactions
<i>GSTT1</i>	22q11.23	Detoxification, removal of products of oxidative stress

Abbreviations: IgE, immunoglobulin E; IL, interleukin; RANTES, regulated and normal T cell expressed and secreted; T_H, Thelper.

diverse ethnic backgrounds.^{72–77} This locus contains the genes *ORMDL3* and *GSDMB* and variable expression of both was linked to asthma susceptibility.⁷¹

A case-control GWA study of North American asthmatics of European ancestry from the Childhood Asthma Management Program (CAMP) cohort has also been reported. The strongest association found was to variants of the *PDE4D* gene on chromosome 5q12, which encodes a bronchially expressed phosphodiesterase.⁴² The association of *PDE4D* to asthma was not observed in individuals of African descent. In a separate study, GWA data from the CAMP cohort was

investigated for replication of previously reported candidate-gene associations.⁷⁸ Thirty-nine genes were investigated with five SNP-based associations replicating to a nominal significance in the *IRAK-3*, *PHF11*, *IL10*, *ITGB3*, *ORMDL3*, and *IL4R* genes. Another GWA study on allergic asthma in children 6 years of age has recently been reported.⁷⁹ No single SNP achieved genome-wide significance, but one SNP in an intron of *PDE11A* was cited as potentially interesting. *PDE11A* encodes a phosphodiesterase related to *PDE4D*, suggesting that this family of proteins may play a broader role in asthma pathogenesis.

Table 2 Loci identified through linkage studies and positional cloning

Gene	Chromosomal locus	Reference
<i>DPP10</i>	2q14.1	Allen et al ⁶⁸
<i>GPRA</i>	7p14.3	Laitinen et al ³⁹
<i>HLA</i>	6p21.33	Nicolae et al ⁶⁹
<i>ADAM33</i>	20p13	Van Eerdevewegh et al ³⁷
<i>PHF11</i>	13q14.3	Zhang et al ⁷⁰
<i>CYFIP2</i>	5q33.3	Noguchi et al ⁶⁷
<i>IRAK3</i>	12q14	Balaci et al ¹³⁰
<i>COL6A5</i>	3q21	Söderhäll et al ³⁸
<i>OPN3/CHML</i>	1qter	White et al ¹³¹

An association was reported between several SNPs in the *transducin-like enhancer of split 4* (*TLE4*) gene on chromosome 9q and asthma in a population of 492 Mexican children with asthma, but, again, these associations did not reach genome-wide significance.⁸⁰ However, the investigators replicated these findings in an independent cohort of 177 Mexican case-parent trios. *TLE4* had not previously been linked to the pathogenesis of asthma, but does play a role in early B cell development.⁸¹

Association of asthma with SNPs in multiple genes was reported in a GWA study containing more than 10,000 asthmatics and 16,000 controls.²⁶ SNPs in several loci achieved genome-wide significance, including *IL1RL1* and *IL18R*, *HLA-DQ*, *IL33*, *SMAD3*, and *IL2RB*. The authors observed association with the previously reported *ORMDL3/GSDMB* locus on chromosome 17 only in childhood-onset asthma. Many of these genes have direct or indirect roles in T cell responses (*IL2RB*, *HLA-DQ*) and the development of T_H1 (*IL18R1*) or T_H2 (*IL33*) responses.

A GWA study from our group was recently reported on a series of pediatric asthma patients consisting of North American cases of European ancestry with persistent asthma requiring daily inhaled glucocorticoids for symptom control, and matched controls without asthma.⁸² In this study, in addition to the previously reported 17q21 locus, we uncovered association to a novel asthma locus on chromosome 1q31. The locus contains *DENND1B*, a gene that is expressed by natural killer cells and dendritic cells. The association of *DENND1B* with asthma replicated in a cohort of African Americans, although the associated allele at each SNP was the alternative allele to that associated with asthma in the discovery set. Allele reversal at shared-risk loci can be attributed to differences in the underlying genomic architecture at the loci between populations of different ancestry. The *DENND1B* gene has since been replicated in Crohn's disease⁸³ and in primary biliary cirrhosis.⁸⁴

A GWA study examining pediatric asthma in a Japanese discovery cohort and Japanese and Korean replication cohorts recently confirmed the role of the *HLA* locus in these populations.⁸⁵ Additionally, this study identified *TSLP* on chromosome 5, along with a gene-rich region on chromosome 12 and the *USP38-GAB1* region on chromosome 4.

Four loci were identified in a GWA study that examined Australian cases and controls in combination with large numbers of genotyped samples from the GABRIEL (A Multi-disciplinary Study to Identify the Genetic and Environmental Causes of Asthma in the European Community) Consortium and multiple in silico cohorts.⁸⁶ Reported statistically significant loci were *IL6R* on chromosome 1, *C11orf30/LRRC32* on chromosome 11, *PRKG1* on chromosome 10, and *RPL32P28/OR7E156P* on chromosome 13. The locus on chromosome 11 was also associated with atopy among asthmatics.

A recent meta-analysis examined three ethnically diverse North American populations (European American, African American or African Caribbean, and Latino), searching for asthma susceptibility loci that replicated across ethnic cohorts.⁸⁷ Four previously identified loci were identified in this study (17q21, *IL1RL1*, *TSLP*, *IL33*), although this is the first report that has shown they are shared across three ethnic groups. Additionally, the *PYHIN1* locus was identified as a new susceptibility locus in African Americans.

Several GWA studies have been reported using intermediate phenotypes and quantitative traits, rather than asthma itself, as study endpoints. The first report used GWAs to identify variants that modulate serum protein levels.⁸⁸ A promoter SNP in the *CHI3L1* gene that encodes the chitinase-like protein YKL-40 was shown to influence serum YKL-40 levels and to be weakly associated with asthma, bronchial responsiveness, and pulmonary function in the Hutterite population. A GWA study showed significant association of the *FCER1A* and *RAD50* genes with expression of CHI3L1, and evidence for association of the *STAT6* gene with IgE levels. IgE levels are closely correlated with the clinical expression and severity of both asthma and allergy. The *RAD50* variants were further shown to be associated with increased risk of asthma and atopic eczema.⁸⁹ Several loci (*IL4R*, *FCER1A*, *IL13*, *STAT6*, and *HLA*) with known functions in T_H2 and allergic responses were associated with IgE levels in another recent GWA study.⁹⁰

Eosinophils are leukocytes that play an important role in the initiation and propagation of inflammatory signals. This makes them probable mediators of inflammatory disease and a GWA study was performed examining blood eosinophil counts.⁹¹

Table 3 Genome-wide association study loci referenced in this review

Reported gene	Locus	Top single nucleotide polymorphism	Endpoint analyzed	Reference
<i>ORMDL3</i>	17q12	rs7216389	Asthma	Moffatt et al ⁷¹
<i>CHI3L1</i>	1q32.1	rs4950928	Asthma/YKL-40 serum levels	Ober et al ⁸⁸
<i>IL1RL1</i>	2q12.1	rs1420101	Asthma/blood	Gudbjartsson et al ⁹¹
<i>IKZF2</i>	5q31.1	rs12619285	Eosinophil count	
<i>GATA2</i>	3q21.3	rs4857855		
<i>IL5</i>	2q12.1	rs4143832		
<i>SH2B3</i>	12q24.12	rs3184504		
<i>TLE4</i>	9q21.31	rs2378383	Asthma	Hancock et al ⁸⁰
<i>PDE4D</i>	5q12.1	rs1588265	Asthma	Himes et al ⁴²
<i>PDE11A</i>	2q31.2	rs11684634	Asthma	DeWan et al ⁷⁹
<i>RAD50</i>	5q31.1	rs2244012	Asthma	Li et al ²¹
<i>HLA-DR/DQ</i>	6p21.32	rs3998159		
<i>ADRA1B</i>	5q33	rs10515807	Asthma	Mathias et al ¹³²
<i>PRNP</i>	20p12	rs6052761		
<i>DPP10</i>	12q12.3	rs1435879		
<i>IL1RL1/IL18R1</i>	2q12.1	rs3771166	Asthma	Moffatt et al ²⁶
<i>HLA-DQ</i>	6p21.32	rs9273349	Childhood-onset asthma	
<i>IL33</i>	9p24.1	rs1342326		
<i>SMAD3</i>	15q22.33	rs744910		
<i>IL2RB</i>	22q12.3	rs2284033		
<i>ORMDL3/GSDMB</i>	17q12	rs2305480		
<i>HLA-DPA1/HLA-DPB1</i>	6p21.3	rs987870	Pediatric asthma	Noguchi et al ¹³³
<i>DENND1B</i>	1q31.3	rs2786098	Pediatric asthma	Sleiman et al ⁸²
<i>IL6R</i>	1q21.3	rs4129267	Asthma	Ferreira et al ⁸⁶
<i>C11orf30/LRRC32</i>	11q13.5	rs7130588		
<i>USP38-GAB1</i>	4q31	rs7686660	Asthma	Hirota et al ⁸⁵
<i>TSLP/WDR36</i>	5q22	rs1837253		
<i>NOTCH4/HLA-DRA1</i>	6p21.32	rs404860		
<i>HLA-DQA2/IKZF4</i>	6p21.32	rs404860		
<i>LOC338591</i>	10p14	rs10508372		
<i>IKZF4/CDK2</i>	12q13	rs1701704		
<i>GSDMB</i>	17q12	rs11078927	Asthma in four ethnically diverse North American populations	Torgerson et al ⁸⁷
<i>IL1RL1</i>	2q12.1	rs10173081		
<i>TSLP</i>	5q22.1	rs1837253		
<i>IL33</i>	9p24.1	rs2381416		
<i>PYHIN1</i>	1q23.1	rs1102000		
<i>C11orf71</i>	11q23.2	rs11214966		
<i>CRCT1</i>	1q21.3	rs4845783		
<i>ORMDL3</i>	17q12	rs6503525	Asthma	Ferreira et al ⁷⁷
<i>C11orf30/LRRC32</i>	11q13.5	rs2155219	Allergic rhinitis/grass sensitization	Ramasamy et al ⁹⁰
<i>TMEM232/SLCA25A46</i>	5q22.1	rs17513503		
<i>HLA region</i>	6p21	rs7775228		
<i>FCER1A</i>	1q23.2	rs2251746	IgE levels	Granada et al ¹³⁴
<i>IL13</i>	5q31.1	rs20541		
<i>HLA-A</i>	6p22.1	rs2571391		
<i>STAT6/NAB2</i>	12q13.3	rs1059513		
<i>DARC</i>	1q23.2	rs13962		
<i>HLA-DQA2</i>	6p21.32	rs2858331		
<i>FCER1A</i>	1q23.2	rs2427837	Serum IgE levels	Weidinger et al ⁸⁹
<i>STAT6</i>	12q13	rs12368672		
<i>RAD50</i>	5q31.1	rs2706347		
<i>CHRNA3/5</i>	15q24	rs8034191	COPD	Pillai et al ¹³⁵
<i>FAM13A</i>	4q22.1	rs7671167	COPD	Cho et al ¹³⁶
<i>RAB4B/EGLN2/MIA/CYP2A6</i>	19q13	rs7937	COPD	Cho et al ¹³⁷
<i>HHIP</i>	4q31.22	rs13147758	FEV ₁ /FVC	Wilk et al ⁹²

(Continued)

Table 3 (Continued)

Reported gene	Locus	Top single nucleotide polymorphism	Endpoint analyzed	Reference
<i>HHIP</i>	4q31.22	rs1980057	FEV ₁ /FVC	Hancock et al ⁹³
<i>GPR126</i>	6q24.1	rs3817928	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>ADAM19</i>	5q33	rs2277027	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>AGER-PPT2</i>	6p21.3	rs2070600	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>FAM13A</i>	4q22.1	rs2869967	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>PTCHI</i>	9q22.32	rs16909898	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>PID1</i>	2q36.3	rs1435867	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>HTR4</i>	5q33.1	rs11168048	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>INTS12-GSTCD-NPNT</i>	4q24	rs17331332	FEV ₁	Repapi et al ⁹⁴
<i>TNSI</i>	2q35	rs2571445	FEV ₁	
<i>GSTCD</i>	4q24	rs10516526	FEV ₁	
<i>HHIP</i>	4q31.22	rs12504628	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>HTR4</i>	5q33.1	rs3995090	FEV ₁	
<i>AGER</i>	6p21.32	rs2070600	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>THSD4</i>	15q23	rs12899618	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>MFAP2</i>	1p36.13	rs2284746	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>TGFB2</i>	1q41	rs993925	FEV ₁ /FVC	Soler Artigas et al ¹³⁸
<i>HDAC4</i>	2q37.3	rs12477314	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>RARB</i>	3p24	rs1529672	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>MECOM</i>	3q26	rs1344555	FEV ₁	
<i>SPATA9</i>	5q15	rs153916	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>ZKSCAN3</i>	6p22.1	rs6903828	FEV ₁	
<i>NCR3</i>	6p21.3	rs2857595	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>ARMC2</i>	6q21	rs2798641	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>C10orf11</i>	10q22.2	rs11001819	FEV ₁	
<i>LRPI</i>	12q13.3	rs11172113	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>CCDC38</i>	12q23.1	rs1036429	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>MMP15</i>	16q21	rs12447804	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>CFDP1</i>	16q23.1	rs2865531	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>KCNE2</i>	21q22.1	rs9978142	FEV ₁ /FVC	
<i>DLEU7</i>	13q14.3	rs9316500	FEV ₁	
				Imboden et al ¹³⁹

Abbreviations: COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; FEV₁, forced expiratory volume in 1 second; FVC, forced vital capacity; IgE, immunoglobulin E.

Five loci reached GWA significance, one of which, *IL1RL1*, was also shown to be associated with asthma in a collection of ten different populations.

Altered lung function, and airflow obstruction in particular, is associated with both asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Two SNPs at the α -nicotinic acetylcholine receptor (*CHRNA3/5*) surpassed genome-wide significance in the study and replicated in two of three independent cohorts. The authors also reported that SNPs at the *HHIP* locus on chromosome 4 showed association and were consistently replicated across the study cohorts but did not reach genome-wide significance.⁴¹ In the first of the three lung-function GWA studies that included 7691 Framingham Heart Study participants, the only locus to surpass genome-wide significance for association with forced expiratory volume in 1 second/forced vital capacity ratio and replicate in an independent cohort of 835 Family Heart Study participants was *HHIP*.⁹² Two studies resulted in the

identification of eleven novel loci associated with measures of lung function; both studies also replicated the previously reported association of the *HHIP* locus.^{93,94}

The future of asthma genetics

New technology

As the technologies that exist for the identification of genetic variants and the analysis of those variants continue to evolve, the information dealing with the effects of genetic variations on the development of and susceptibility to asthma will grow at a rapidly increasing pace. The advent of next-generation sequencing is bringing complete sequences of genomes and exomes into the public domain. High-throughput sequencing will allow the identification of rare variants with minor allele frequencies far too low to be captured with array technologies that contribute to complex common diseases like asthma. An excellent recent report used targeted sequencing of nine candidate genes to discover rare variants in those loci that

associate with asthma.⁹⁵ The authors show evidence for the probable existence of rare variants that associate with asthma and identify variants in the *IL12RB1* locus that contribute to asthma susceptibility in Americans of both European and African ancestries. Many of the associated variants were unexpectedly found in noncoding regions of these genes, indicating that regulation of the genes plays a crucial role in disease susceptibility. Future efforts that include whole exome and whole genome sequencing will greatly expand this type of information, while bringing the considerable challenge of identifying which variants in an individual are relevant for the diseases being studied.

An additional factor to consider is the issue of uncharacterized genes. Many of the most recent GWA studies have identified loci associated with asthma containing genes that have either no known function or no known function that is easily correlated with the disease phenotype. Genes involved in the development of the immune system or specifically in the skewing of the immune response towards or away from an allergic phenotype have obvious implications for asthma susceptibility or severity. However, genes are now being identified with no obvious connections to asthma. The *DENND1B*⁸² and *ORMDL3*²⁶ loci are examples of genes that are difficult to connect to asthma-related phenotypes. Additionally, the list of loci in Table 3 includes several loci corresponding to completely uncharacterized genes with no known function (*c11orf30/LRRC32*),^{86,90} (*c11orf71*),⁸⁷ (*GPR126*),⁹³ (*c10orf11*),¹³⁸ or to pseudogenes (*LOC338591*)⁸⁵ reported to be unexpressed. A sizeable effort will be required to understand how these genes contribute to asthma and it remains to be seen if researchers will undertake such challenges and if institutes and agencies will provide funding for this kind of work.

Gene–environment interactions

Asthma, as an immune-mediated disease, involves the response of the body to the environment, in the form of pollutants, allergens, viruses, and other pathogens and irritants. These environmental factors interact with genetic variation to influence the development or severity of disease. Researchers are finding that specific genetic variants affect susceptibility to, and the severity of, asthma in different ways depending on the environments of the individuals carrying those variants, a phenomenon known as “gene–environment interaction.” Several examples of gene–environment interaction exist in asthma, with perhaps the best characterized being *CD14*, which was originally associated with asthma in linkage studies.^{96–100} A polymorphism in the *CD14* promoter was associated with increased CD14 protein levels in serum and reduced

serum IgE levels.^{101,102} Several studies attempted to associate this polymorphism with asthma, with conflicting results.^{103–109} These conflicts were resolved when the polymorphism was considered in the context of environmental influences. Different alleles of the CD14 promoter were associated with allergic phenotypes in children, depending on the type of pets or animals to which the children were exposed. One allele correlated with higher IgE levels in children exposed to household pets such as cats and dogs, while the other allele associated with the same phenotype in children exposed to stable animals like horses.¹¹⁰ Homozygotes for one allele were found to be at lower risk for asthma if exposed to comparatively low levels of house dust endotoxin but at higher risk at higher endotoxin exposures.¹¹¹ Other polymorphisms at the *CD14* locus have been associated with different outcomes in specific populations, depending on environmental exposure.¹⁰⁵ Given the large number of identified asthma susceptibility loci and the daunting number of environmental variables that may influence complex diseases, much work remains to be done before we have a reasonable understanding of the roles of gene–environment interactions in asthma.

Gene–gene interactions

A comparatively small number of studies have been published to date examining the role in asthma of gene–gene interactions, where variation at one locus alters the effects of variations at a second locus, reflecting epistasis between two or more genes. The existing literature consists mainly of studies in which researchers have chosen two or more specific genes (and occasionally specific variants of those genes) to examine in the context of asthma, looking for evidence of interactions between the two loci. Examples of gene–gene interactions that have been observed in association with asthma include *IL9* and *IL9R* polymorphisms in Koreans,¹¹² *TGFBR2* and *FOXP3* in specific IgE production,¹¹³ *IL13* and *IL4* in Dutch cohorts,¹¹⁴ and *LTA4H* and *ALOX5 AP* in Latinos.³⁰ Larger scale analysis examining 169 SNPs in 29 genes identified a number of gene–gene interactions affecting both total and antigen-specific IgE levels.¹¹⁵ Methods are actively being developed to enable large scale and unbiased analysis of gene–gene interactions¹¹⁶ and visualization of the resulting networks,¹¹⁷ but these efforts are in their relative infancy. Given the number of previously identified relevant genes and the possibilities for discovery of new loci, the combinatorial potential for interactions between gene effects is daunting. Much development of methods and tools remains to be done before we can truly grasp these vast possibilities.

Pharmacogenetics

Pharmacogenetics, in which variations in genotype are examined for their effects on the response to treatments, is of growing interest with asthma, with the hope that it will increase efficacy and reduce toxic side effects of medications. The best example at this time is provided by beta-adrenergic receptor agonists (or simply beta-agonists), which are prescribed to treat bronchoconstriction and provide long-term symptom control for asthmatics. The *ARDB2* locus encodes the beta₂-adrenergic receptor, which binds to and is activated by beta-agonists. Two studies have implicated variations in *ARDB2* as modulators of response to inhaled bronchodilators.^{118,119} However, a randomized double-blind study was performed in which subjects were genotyped before being enrolled so that they could be stratified by genotype before receiving prescriptions.¹²⁰ This study showed no association of genotype with the response to beta-agonists. Another study showed that a polymorphism in the *ARDB2* protein influences the response to regularly administered albuterol, with one genotype receiving less relief from regular long-term use of short-acting beta-agonists.¹²¹ Yet another group has shown that genotype at *ARDB2* does not affect the response to combined beta-agonist and inhaled corticosteroid treatment.¹²²

A recent study identified variants in the promoter of the *GLCCII* gene that are associated with reduced responses to inhaled glucocorticoids.¹²³ A specific promoter variant was found to possess reduced transcriptional activity in reporter assays. The same variant was associated with reduced changes in lung function following glucocorticoid treatment. The authors calculate that this variant accounts for about 6.6% of the variability in inhaled glucocorticoid responses. Another recent publication reports variants in the low affinity IgE receptor gene, *FCER2*, associated with severe exacerbations in children in a trial of inhaled glucocorticoids. The association was present in both European Americans and African Americans and one of the polymorphisms correlated with reduced *FCER2* expression. Variants have been identified that alter the response to a 5-lipoxygenase inhibitor¹²⁴ and that associate with variability in the response to a cysteinyl leukotriene receptor 1 antagonist.¹²⁵ Polymorphisms in corticotrophin-releasing hormone receptor (*CRHR1*)¹²⁶ and the *STIP1* gene (involved in the signaling initiated by glucocorticoids)¹²⁷ associate with variable forced expiratory volume in 1 second response after inhaled glucocorticoid treatment, as do polymorphisms in *TBX21*, encoding a transcription factor important in the generation of T_H1 cells.¹⁹ This latter study demonstrates that variations in genes not

directly involved in the metabolism or signaling cascades of a drug can be important modulators of the response to that drug. New study designs and analysis techniques will be required if the pharmacogenetics field is to be able to account for all the variables that may contribute to variable responses to therapies.

Conclusion

Considerable challenges remain in our understanding of the genetic underpinnings of asthma. The incredibly large quantity of data collected to date only explains a fraction of the heritability of asthma. This missing heritability is a common problem in the genetics of complex diseases. Future GWA studies may fill some of the gap in knowledge, although GWA studies are best suited to finding relatively common alleles of modest effect sizes. The use of next-generation sequencing in complex disease research may bring the identification of rare variants with larger effects, which will likely explain at least some of the missing heritability. Additionally, techniques for studying epigenetic phenomena, such as DNA methylation, have the power to expand our understanding of the causes of asthma. Recently, variations in DNA methylation in transformed B cells were described at a specific locus in a specific subset of asthmatics.¹²⁸ Variations, including methylation, in the promoter of the *Prostaglandin D2 receptor* gene, were reported in cohorts of asthmatic and atopic individuals.¹²⁹ It is probable that many more epigenetic variations, in a variety of cell types relevant to the development, severity, and treatment of asthma, will be reported in the near future. The expanded genetic and epigenetic information from future studies, combined with improved understanding and analysis of gene–gene and gene–environment interactions are likely to fill many of the gaps in our current understanding and allow us to improve the care we provide to asthma sufferers.

Disclosure

The authors declare no conflicts of interest in this work.

References

1. American Lung Association. *Lung Disease Data: 2008*. New York, NY: American Lung Association; 2008. Available from: http://www.lung.org/assets/documents/publications/lung-disease-data/LDD_2008.pdf. Accessed January 7, 2012.
2. Masoli M, Fabian D, Holt S, Beasley R; Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) Program. The global burden of asthma: executive summary of the GINA Dissemination Committee report. *Allergy*. 2004;59(5):469–478.
3. Pearce N, Ait-Khaled N, Beasley R, et al; ISAAC Phase Three Study Group. Worldwide trends in the prevalence of asthma symptoms: phase III of the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood (ISAAC). *Thorax*. 2007;62(9):758–766.

4. Duffy DL, Martin NG, Battistutta D, Hopper JL, Mathews JD. Genetics of asthma and hay fever in Australian twins. *Am Rev Respir Dis*. 1990;142(6 Pt 1):1351–1358.
5. Harris JR, Magnus P, Samuelson SO, Tambs K. No evidence for effects of family environment on asthma. A retrospective study of Norwegian twins. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 1997;156(1):43–49.
6. Koppelman GH, Los H, Postma DS. Genetic and environment in asthma: the answer of twin studies. *Eur Respir J*. 1999;13(1):2–4.
7. Nieminen MM, Kaprio J, Koskenvuo M. A population-based study of bronchial asthma in adult twin pairs. *Chest*. 1991;100(1):70–75.
8. Bossé Y, Hudson TJ. Toward a comprehensive set of asthma susceptibility genes. *Ann Rev Med*. 2007;58:171–184.
9. Baschore MJ, Howard TD, Lange LA, et al. A comprehensive evaluation of IL4 variants in ethnically diverse populations: association of total serum IgE levels and asthma in white subjects. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2004;114(1):80–87.
10. Genuneit J, Cantelmo JL, Weinmayr G, et al; ISAAC Phase 2 Study Group. A multi-centre study of candidate genes for wheeze and allergy: the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood Phase 2. *Clin Exp Allergy*. 2009;39(12):1875–1888.
11. Haller G, Torgerson DG, Ober C, Thompson EE. Sequencing the IL4 locus in African Americans implicates rare noncoding variants in asthma susceptibility. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2009;124(6):1204–1209. e1209.
12. Howard TD, Koppelman GH, Xu J, et al. Gene-gene interaction in asthma: IL4RA and IL13 in a Dutch population with asthma. *Am J Hum Genet*. 2002;70(1):230–236.
13. Kabesch M, Schedel M, Carr D, et al. IL-4/IL-13 pathway genetics strongly influence serum IgE levels and childhood asthma. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2006;117(2):269–274.
14. Munthe-Kaas MC, Carlsen KH, Haland G, et al. T cell-specific T-box transcription factor haplotype is associated with allergic asthma in children. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2008;121(1):51–56.
15. Pykäläinen M, Kinos R, Valkonen S, et al. Association analysis of common variants of STAT6, GATA3, and STAT4 to asthma and high serum IgE phenotypes. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2005;115(1):80–87.
16. Raby BA, Hwang ES, Van Steen K, et al. T-bet polymorphisms are associated with asthma and airway hyperresponsiveness. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2006;173(1):64–70.
17. Randolph AG, Lange C, Silverman EK, et al. The IL12B gene is associated with asthma. *Am J Hum Genet*. 2004;75(4):709–715.
18. Suttner K, Rosenstiel P, Depner M, et al. TBX21 gene variants increase childhood asthma risk in combination with HLX1 variants. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2009;123(5):1062–1068. e1–e8.
19. Tantisira KG, Hwang ES, Raby BA, et al. TBX21: a functional variant predicts improvement in asthma with the use of inhaled corticosteroids. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2004;101(52):18099–18104.
20. Zhou H, Hong X, Jiang S, Dong H, Xu X. Analyses of associations between three positionally cloned asthma candidate genes and asthma or asthma-related phenotypes in a Chinese population. *BMC Med Genet*. 2009;10:123.
21. Li X, Howard TD, Zheng SL, et al. Genome-wide association study of asthma identifies RAD50-IL13 and HLA-DR/DQ regions. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2010;125(2):328–335. e311.
22. Potaczek DP, Nishiyama C, Sanak M, Szczeklik A, Okumura K. Genetic variability of the high-affinity IgE receptor alpha-subunit (FcεR1α). *Immunol Res*. 2009;45(1):75–84.
23. Vladich FD, Brazille SM, Stern D, Peck ML, Ghittoni R, Vercelli D. IL-13 R130Q, a common variant associated with allergy and asthma, enhances effector mechanisms essential for human allergic inflammation. *J Clin Invest*. 2005;115(3):747–754.
24. Wu X, Li Y, Chen Q, et al. Association and gene-gene interactions of eight common single-nucleotide polymorphisms with pediatric asthma in middle China. *J Asthma*. 2010;47(3):238–244.
25. Thompson SR, Humphries SE. Interleukin-18 genetics and inflammatory disease susceptibility. *Genes Immun*. 2007;8(2):91–99.
26. Moffatt MF, Gut IG, Demenais F, et al; GABRIEL Consortium. A large-scale, consortium-based genomewide association study of asthma. *N Engl J Med*. 2010;363(13):1211–1221.
27. Lykouras D, Sampsonas F, Kaparinos A, Karkoulas K, Spiropoulos K. Role and pharmacogenomics of TNF-alpha in asthma. *Mini Rev Med Chem*. 2008;8(9):934–942.
28. Duroudier NP, Tulah AS, Sayers I. Leukotriene pathway genetics and pharmacogenetics in allergy. *Allergy*. 2009;64(6):823–839.
29. Sayers I, Barton S, Rorke S, et al. Allelic association and functional studies of promoter polymorphism in the leukotriene C4 synthase gene (LTC4S) in asthma. *Thorax*. 2003;58(5):417–424.
30. Via M, De Giacomo A, Corvol H, et al. The role of LTA4H and ALOX5AP genes in the risk for asthma in Latinos. *Clin Exp Allergy*. 2010;40(4):582–589.
31. Eder W, Klimecki W, Yu L, et al; ALEX-Team. Association between exposure to farming, allergies and genetic variation in CARD4/NOD1. *Allergy*. 2006;61(9):1117–1124.
32. Eder W, Klimecki W, Yu L, et al; ALEX Study Team. Toll-like receptor 2 as a major gene for asthma in children of European farmers. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2004;113(3):482–488.
33. Hysi P, Kabesch M, Moffatt MF, et al. NOD1 variation, immunoglobulin E and asthma. *Hum Mol Genet*. 2005;14(7):935–941.
34. Kabesch M, Carr D, Weiland SK, von Mutius E. Association between polymorphisms in serine protease inhibitor, kazal type 5 and asthma phenotypes in a large German population sample. *Clin Exp Allergy*. 2004;34(3):340–345.
35. Kormann MS, Depner M, Hartl D, et al. Toll-like receptor heterodimer variants protect from childhood asthma. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2008;122(1):86–92.
36. Smit LA, Siroux V, Bouzigon E, et al; Epidemiological Study on the Genetics and Environment of Asthma, Bronchial Hyperresponsiveness, and Atopy (EGEA) Cooperative Group. CD14 and toll-like receptor gene polymorphisms, country living, and asthma in adults. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2009;179(5):363–368.
37. Van Eerdekewegh P, Little RD, Dupuis J, et al. Association of the ADAM33 gene with asthma and bronchial hyperresponsiveness. *Nature*. 2002;418(6896):426–430.
38. Söderhäll C, Marenholz I, Kerscher T, et al. Variants in a novel epidermal collagen gene (COL29A1) are associated with atopic dermatitis. *PLoS Biol*. 2007;5(9):e242.
39. Laitinen T, Polvi A, Rydman P, et al. Characterization of a common susceptibility locus for asthma-related traits. *Science*. 2004;304(5668):300–304.
40. Vendelin J, Bruce S, Holopainen P, et al. Downstream target genes of the neuropeptide S-NPSR1 pathway. *Hum Mol Genet*. 2006;15(19):2923–2935.
41. Pillai SG, Ge D, Zhu G, et al; ICGN Investigators. A genome-wide association study in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD): identification of two major susceptibility loci. *PLoS Genet*. 2009;5(3):e1000421.
42. Himes BE, Hunninghake GM, Baurley JW, et al. Genome-wide association analysis identifies PDE4D as an asthma-susceptibility gene. *Am J Hum Genet*. 2009;84(5):581–593.
43. Sugiura H, Ichinose M. Nitrate stress in inflammatory lung diseases. *Nitric Oxide*. 2011;25(2):138–144.
44. Smith FJ, Irvine AD, Terron-Kwiatkowski A, et al. Loss-of-function mutations in the gene encoding filaggrin cause ichthyosis vulgaris. *Nat Genet*. 2006;38(3):337–342.
45. Marenholz I, Nickel R, Rüschenhoff F, et al. Filaggrin loss-of-function mutations predispose to phenotypes involved in the atopic march. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2006;118(4):866–871.
46. Morar N, Cookson WO, Harper JL, Moffatt MF. Filaggrin mutations in children with severe atopic dermatitis. *J Invest Dermatol*. 2007;127(7):1667–1672.
47. Palmer CN, Irvine AD, Terron-Kwiatkowski A, et al. Common loss-of-function variants of the epidermal barrier protein filaggrin are a major predisposing factor for atopic dermatitis. *Nat Genet*. 2006;38(4):441–446.

48. Palmer CN, Ismail T, Lee SP, et al. Filaggrin null mutations are associated with increased asthma severity in children and young adults. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2007;120(1):64–68.
49. Ying S, Meng Q, Corrigan CJ, Lee TH. Lack of filaggrin expression in the human bronchial mucosa. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2006;118(6):1386–1388.
50. Hudson TJ. Skin barrier function and allergic risk. *Nat Genet*. 2006;38(4):399–400.
51. Laing IA, de Klerk NH, Turner SW, et al; Perth Infant Asthma Follow-up Cohort. Cross-sectional and longitudinal association of the secretoglobin 1A1 gene A38G polymorphism with asthma phenotype in the Perth Infant Asthma Follow-up cohort. *Clin Exp Allergy*. 2009;39(1):62–71.
52. Lee JH, Moore JH, Park SW, et al. Genetic interactions model among Eotaxin gene polymorphisms in asthma. *J Hum Genet*. 2008;53(10):867–875.
53. Levy H, Raby BA, Lake S, et al. Association of defensin beta-1 gene polymorphisms with asthma. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2005;115(2):252–258.
54. Min JW, Lee JH, Park CS, et al. Association of eotaxin-2 gene polymorphisms with plasma eotaxin-2 concentration. *J Hum Genet*. 2005;50(3):118–123.
55. Raby BA, Van Steen K, Lazarus R, Celedón JC, Silverman EK, Weiss ST. Eotaxin polymorphisms and serum total IgE levels in children with asthma. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2006;117(2):298–305.
56. Sengler C, Heinzmann A, Jerkic SP, et al. Clara cell protein 16 (CC16) gene polymorphism influences the degree of airway responsiveness in asthmatic children. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2003;111(3):515–519.
57. Zhang YG, Huang J, Zhang J, et al. RANTES gene polymorphisms and asthma risk: A meta-analysis. *Arch Med Res*. 2010;41(1):50–58.
58. Ober C, Hoffjan S. Asthma genetics 2006: the long and winding road to gene discovery. *Genes Immun*. 2006;7(2):95–100.
59. Vercelli D. Discovering susceptibility genes for asthma and allergy. *Nat Rev Immunol*. 2008;8(3):169–182.
60. Zhang J, Paré PD, Sandford AJ. Recent advances in asthma genetics. *Respir Res*. 2008;9:4.
61. Halapi E, Hakonarson H. Recent development in genomic and proteomic research for asthma. *Curr Opin Pulm Med*. 2004;10(1):22–30.
62. Hoffjan S, Nicolae D, Ober C. Association studies for asthma and atopic diseases: a comprehensive review of the literature. *Respir Res*. 2003;4:14.
63. Kabesch M. Candidate gene association studies and evidence for gene-by-gene interactions. *Immunol Allergy Clin North Am*. 2005;25(4):681–708.
64. Liggett SB. Genetics of beta 2-adrenergic receptor variants in asthma. *Clin Exp Allergy*. 1995;25 Suppl 2:89–94; discussion 95–96.
65. Martinez FD, Graves PE, Baldini M, Solomon S, Erickson R. Association between genetic polymorphisms of the beta2-adrenoceptor and response to albuterol in children with and without a history of wheezing. *J Clin Invest*. 1997;100(12):3184–3188.
66. Potter PC, Van Wyk L, Martin M, Lentjes KU, Dowdle EB. Genetic polymorphism of the beta-2 adrenergic receptor in atopic and non-atopic subjects. *Clin Exp Allergy*. 1993;23(10):874–877.
67. Noguchi E, Yokouchi Y, Zhang J, et al. Positional identification of an asthma susceptibility gene on human chromosome 5q33. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2005;172(2):183–188.
68. Allen M, Heinzmann A, Noguchi E, et al. Positional cloning of a novel gene influencing asthma from chromosome 2q14. *Nat Genet*. 2003;35(3):258–263.
69. Nicolae D, Cox NJ, Lester LA, et al. Fine mapping and positional candidate studies identify HLA-G as an asthma susceptibility gene on chromosome 6p21. *Am J Hum Genet*. 2005;76(2):349–357.
70. Zhang Y, Leaves NI, Anderson GG, et al. Positional cloning of a quantitative trait locus on chromosome 13q14 that influences immunoglobulin E levels and asthma. *Nat Gen*. 2003;34(2):181–186.
71. Moffatt MF, Kabesch M, Liang L, et al. Genetic variants regulating ORMDL3 expression contribute to the risk of childhood asthma. *Nature*. 2007;448(7152):470–473.
72. Bisgaard H, Bønnelykke K, Sleiman PM, et al. Chromosome 17q21 gene variants are associated with asthma and exacerbations but not atopy in early childhood. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2009;179(3):179–185.
73. Galanter J, Choudhry S, Eng C, et al. ORMDL3 gene is associated with asthma in three ethnically diverse populations. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2008;177(11):1194–1200.
74. Leung TF, Sy HY, Ng MC, et al. Asthma and atopy are associated with chromosome 17q21 markers in Chinese children. *Allergy*. 2009;64(4):621–628.
75. Sleiman PM, Annaiah K, Imielinski M, et al. ORMDL3 variants associated with asthma susceptibility in North Americans of European ancestry. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2008;122(6):1225–1227.
76. Tavendale R, Macgregor DF, Mukhopadhyay S, Palmer CN. A polymorphism controlling ORMDL3 expression is associated with asthma that is poorly controlled by current medications. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2008;121(4):860–863.
77. Ferreira MA, McRae AF, Medland SE, et al. Association between ORMDL3, IL1RL1 and a deletion on chromosome 17q21 with asthma risk in Australia. *Eur J Hum Genet*. 2011;19(4):458–464.
78. Rogers AJ, Raby BA, Lasky-Su JA, et al. Assessing the reproducibility of asthma candidate gene associations, using genome-wide data. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2009;179(12):1084–1090.
79. DeWan AT, Triche EW, Xu X, et al. PDE11A associations with asthma: results of a genome-wide association scan. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2010;126(4):871–873. e9.
80. Hancock DB, Romieu I, Shi M, et al. Genome-wide association study implicates chromosome 9q21.31 as a susceptibility locus for asthma in Mexican children. *PLoS Genet*. 2009;5(8):e1000623.
81. Milili M, Gauthier L, Veran J, Matte MG, Schiff C. A new Groucho TLE4 protein may regulate the repressive activity of Pax5 in human B lymphocytes. *Immunology*. 2002;106(4):447–455.
82. Sleiman PM, Flory J, Imielinski M, et al. Variants of DENND1B associated with asthma in children. *N Engl J Med*. 2010;362(1):36–44.
83. Franke A, McGovern DP, Barrett JC, et al. Genome-wide meta-analysis increases to 71 the number of confirmed Crohn's disease susceptibility loci. *Nat Genet*. 2010;42(12):1118–1125.
84. Mells GF, Floyd JA, Morley KI, et al. Genome-wide association study identifies 12 new susceptibility loci for primary biliary cirrhosis. *Nat Genet*. 2011;43(4):329–332.
85. Hirota T, Takahashi A, Kubo M, et al. Genome-wide association study identifies three new susceptibility loci for adult asthma in the Japanese population. *Nat Genet*. 2011;43(9):893–896.
86. Ferreira MA, Matheson MC, Duffy DL, et al; Australian Asthma Genetics Consortium. Identification of IL6R and chromosome 11q13.5 as risk loci for asthma. *Lancet*. 2011;378(9795):1006–1014.
87. Torgerson DG, Ampleford EJ, Chiu GY, et al; Mexico City Childhood Asthma Study (MCAAS), Gilliland FD; Children's Health Study (CHS) and HARBORS study, Burchard EG; Genetics of Asthma in Latino Americans (GALA) Study, Study of Genes-Environment and Admixture in Latino Americans (GALA2) and Study of African Americans, Asthma, Genes and Environments (SAGE), Martinez FD; Childhood Asthma Research and Education (CARE) Network, Weiss ST; Childhood Asthma Management Program (CAMP), Williams LK; Study of Asthma Phenotypes and Pharmacogenomic Interactions by Race-Ethnicity (SAPPHIRE), Barnes KC; Genetic Research on Asthma in African Diaspora (GRAAD) Study, Ober C, Nicolae DL. Meta-analysis of genome-wide association studies of asthma in ethnically diverse North American populations. *Nat Genet*. 2011;43(9):887–892.
88. Ober C, Tan Z, Sun Y, et al. Effect of variation in CHI3L1 on serum YKL-40 level, risk of asthma, and lung function. *N Engl J Med*. 2008;358(16):1682–1691.
89. Weidinger S, Gieger C, Rodriguez E, et al. Genome-wide scan on total serum IgE levels identifies FCER1A as novel susceptibility locus. *PLoS Genet*. 2008;4(8):e1000166.

90. Ramasamy A, Curjuric I, Coin LJ, et al. A genome-wide meta-analysis of genetic variants associated with allergic rhinitis and grass sensitization and their interaction with birth order. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2011;128(5):996–1005.
91. Gudbjartsson DF, Bjornsdottir US, Halapi E, et al. Sequence variants affecting eosinophil numbers associate with asthma and myocardial infarction. *Nat Genet*. 2009;41(3):342–347.
92. Wilk JB, Chen TH, Gottlieb DJ, et al. A genome-wide association study of pulmonary function measures in the Framingham Heart Study. *PLoS Genet*. 2009;5(3):e1000429.
93. Hancock DB, Eijgelsheim M, Wilk JB, et al. Meta-analyses of genome-wide association studies identify multiple loci associated with pulmonary function. *Nat Genet*. 2010;42(1):45–52.
94. Repapi E, Sayers I, Wain LV, et al. Genome-wide association study identifies five loci associated with lung function. *Nat Genet*. 2010;42(1):36–44.
95. Torgerson DG, Capurso D, Mathias RA, et al. Resequencing candidate genes implicates rare variants in asthma susceptibility. *Am J Hum Genet*. 2012;90(2):273–281.
96. Martinez FD, Holberg CJ, Halonen M, Morgan WJ, Wright AL, Taussig LM. Evidence for Mendelian inheritance of serum IgE levels in Hispanic and non-Hispanic white families. *Am J Hum Genet*. 1994;55(3):555–565.
97. Meyers DA, Postma DS, Panhuysen CI, et al. Evidence for a locus regulating total serum IgE levels mapping to chromosome 5. *Genomics*. 1994;23(2):464–470.
98. Noguchi E, Shibasaki M, Arinami T, et al. Evidence for linkage between asthma/atopy in childhood and chromosome 5q31-q33 in a Japanese population. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 1997;156(5):1390–1393.
99. Postma DS, Bleecker ER, Amelung PJ, et al. Genetic susceptibility to asthma – bronchial hyperresponsiveness coinherited with a major gene for atopy. *N Engl J Med*. 1995;333(14):894–900.
100. Xu J, Levitt RC, Panhuysen CI, et al. Evidence for two unlinked loci regulating total serum IgE levels. *Am J Hum Genet*. 1995;57(2):425–430.
101. Baldini M, Lohman IC, Halonen M, Erickson RP, Holt PG, Martinez FD. A Polymorphism* in the 5' flanking region of the CD14 gene is associated with circulating soluble CD14 levels and with total serum immunoglobulin E. *Am J Respir Cell Mol Biol*. 1999;20(5):976–983.
102. Gao PS, Mao XQ, Baldini M, et al. Serum total IgE levels and CD14 on chromosome 5q31. *Clin Genet*. 1999;56(2):164–165.
103. Koppelman GH, Reijmerink NE, Colin Stine O, et al. Association of a promoter polymorphism of the CD14 gene and atopy. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2001;163(4):965–969.
104. Leung TF, Tang NL, Sung YM, et al. The C-159T polymorphism in the CD14 promoter is associated with serum total IgE concentration in atopic Chinese children. *Pediatr Allergy Immunol*. 2003;14(4):255–260.
105. Pacheco KA, Rose CS, Silveira LJ, et al. Gene-environment interactions influence airways function in laboratory animal workers. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2010;126(2):232–240.
106. Ober C, Tsalenko A, Parry R, Cox NJ. A second-generation genome-wide screen for asthma-susceptibility alleles in a founder population. *Am J Hum Genet*. 2000;67(5):1154–1162.
107. Woo JG, Assa'ad A, Heizer AB, Bernstein JA, Hershey GK. The -159 C→T polymorphism of CD14 is associated with nonatopic asthma and food allergy. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2003;112(2):438–444.
108. Heinzmann A, Dietrich H, Jerkic SP, Kurz T, Deichmann KA. Promoter polymorphisms of the CD14 gene are not associated with bronchial asthma in Caucasian children. *Eur J Immunogenet*. 2003;30(5):345–348.
109. Sengler C, Haider A, Sommerfeld C, et al; German Multicenter Allergy Study Group. Evaluation of the CD14 C-159 T polymorphism in the German Multicenter Allergy Study cohort. *Clin Exp Allergy*. 2003;33(2):166–169.
110. Eder W, Klimecki W, Yu L, et al; Allergy And Endotoxin Alex Study Team. Opposite effects of CD 14/-260 on serum IgE levels in children raised in different environments. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2005;116(3):601–607.
111. Zambelli-Weiner A, Ehrlich E, Stockton ML, et al. Evaluation of the CD14/-260 polymorphism and house dust endotoxin exposure in the Barbados Asthma Genetics Study. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2005;115(6):1203–1209.
112. Namkung JH, Lee JE, Kim E, et al. An association between IL-9 and IL-9 receptor gene polymorphisms and atopic dermatitis in a Korean population. *J Dermatol Sci*. 2011;62(1):16–21.
113. Bottema RW, Kerkhof M, Reijmerink NE, et al. Gene-gene interaction in regulatory T-cell function in atopy and asthma development in childhood. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2010;126(2):338–346. e1–e10.
114. Bottema RW, Nolte IM, Howard TD, et al. Interleukin 13 and interleukin 4 receptor-alpha polymorphisms in rhinitis and asthma. *Int Arch Allergy Immunol*. 2010;153(3):259–267.
115. Reijmerink NE, Bottema RW, Kerkhof M, et al. TLR-related pathway analysis: novel gene-gene interactions in the development of asthma and atopy. *Allergy*. 2010;65(2):199–207.
116. De Lobel L, Geurts P, Baele G, Castro-Giner F, Kogevinas M, Van Steen K. A screening methodology based on Random Forests to improve the detection of gene-gene interactions. *Eur J Hum Genet*. 2010;18(10):1127–1132.
117. Chu JH, Weiss ST, Carey VJ, Raby BA. A graphical model approach for inferring large-scale networks integrating gene expression and genetic polymorphism. *BMC Syst Biol*. 2009;3:55.
118. Hawkins GA, Weiss ST, Bleecker ER. Clinical consequences of ADRbeta2 polymorphisms. *Pharmacogenomics*. 2008;9(3):349–358.
119. Moore PE, Ryckman KK, Williams SM, Patel N, Summar ML, Sheller JR. Genetic variants of GSNOR and ADRB2 influence response to albuterol in African-American children with severe asthma. *Pediatr Pulmonol*. 2009;44(7):649–654.
120. Wechsler ME, Kunselman SJ, Chinchilli VM, et al; National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's Asthma Clinical Research Network. Effect of beta2-adrenergic receptor polymorphism on response to longacting beta2 agonist in asthma (LARGE trial): a genotype-stratified, randomised, placebo-controlled, crossover trial. *Lancet*. 2009;374(9703):1754–1764.
121. Taylor DR, Drazen JM, Herbison GP, Yandava CN, Hancox RJ, Town GI. Asthma exacerbations during long term beta agonist use: influence of beta(2) adrenoceptor polymorphism. *Thorax*. 2000;55(9):762–767.
122. Bleecker ER, Postma DS, Lawrance RM, Meyers DA, Ambrose HJ, Goldman M. Effect of ADRB2 polymorphisms on response to longacting beta2-agonist therapy: a pharmacogenetic analysis of two randomised studies. *Lancet*. 2007;370(9605):2118–2125.
123. Tantisira KG, Lasky-Su J, Harada M, et al. Genomewide association between GLCCI1 and response to glucocorticoid therapy in asthma. *N Engl J Med*. 2011;365(13):1173–1183.
124. Drazen JM, Yandava CN, Dubé L, et al. Pharmacogenetic association between ALOX5 promoter genotype and the response to anti-asthma treatment. *Nat Genet*. 1999;22(2):168–170.
125. Lima JJ, Zhang S, Grant A, et al. Influence of leukotriene pathway polymorphisms on response to montelukast in asthma. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2006;173(4):379–385.
126. Tantisira KG, Lake S, Silverman ES, et al. Corticosteroid pharmacogenetics: association of sequence variants in CRHR1 with improved lung function in asthmatics treated with inhaled corticosteroids. *Hum Mol Genet*. 2004;13(13):1353–1359.
127. Hawkins GA, Lazarus R, Smith RS, et al. The glucocorticoid receptor heterocomplex gene STIP1 is associated with improved lung function in asthmatic subjects treated with inhaled corticosteroids. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2009;123(6):1376–1383. e7.

128. Pascual M, Suzuki M, Isidoro-Garcia M, et al. Epigenetic changes in B lymphocytes associated with house dust mite allergic asthma. *Epigenetics*. 2011;6(9):1131–1137.
129. Isidoro-García M, Sanz C, García-Solaesa V, et al. PTGDR gene in asthma: a functional, genetic, and epigenetic study. *Allergy*. 2011;66(12):1553–1562.
130. Balaci L, Spada MC, Olla N, et al. IRAK-M is involved in the pathogenesis of early-onset persistent asthma. *Am J Hum Genet*. 2007;80(6):1103–1114.
131. White JH, Chiano M, Wigglesworth M, et al; GAIN investigators, Vestbo J, Pillai SG. Identification of a novel asthma susceptibility gene on chromosome 1qter and its functional evaluation. *Hum Mol Genet*. 2008;17(13):1890–1903.
132. Mathias RA, Grant AV, Rafaels N, et al. A genome-wide association study on African-ancestry populations for asthma. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2010;125(2):336–346. e4.
133. Noguchi E, Sakamoto H, Hirota T, et al. Genome-wide association study identifies HLA-DP as a susceptibility gene for pediatric asthma in Asian populations. *PLoS Genet*. 2011;7(7):e1002170.
134. Granada M, Wilk JB, Tuzova M, et al. A genome-wide association study of plasma total IgE concentrations in the Framingham Heart Study. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2012;129(3):840–845. e21.
135. Pillai SG, Ge D, Zhu G, et al; ICGN Investigators. A genome-wide association study in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD): identification of two major susceptibility loci. *PLoS Genet*. 2009;5(3):e1000421.
136. Cho MH, Boutaoui N, Klanderman BJ, et al. Variants in FAM13A are associated with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. *Nat Genet*. 2010;42(3):200–202.
137. Cho MH, Castaldi PJ, Wan ES, et al; ICGN Investigators; ECLIPSE Investigators; COPDGene Investigators. A genome-wide association study of COPD identifies a susceptibility locus on chromosome 19q13. *Hum Mol Genet*. 2012;21(4):947–957.
138. Soler Artigas M, Wain LV, Repapi E, et al; Medical Research Council National Survey of Health and Development (NSHD) Respiratory Study Team, et al; SpiroMeta Consortium. Effect of five genetic variants associated with lung function on the risk of chronic obstructive lung disease, and their joint effects on lung function. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2011;184(7):786–795.
139. Imboden M, Bouzigon E, Curjuric I, et al. Genome-wide association study of lung function decline in adults with and without asthma. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2012;129(5):1218–1228.

International Journal of General Medicine

Publish your work in this journal

The International Journal of General Medicine is an international, peer-reviewed open-access journal that focuses on general and internal medicine, pathogenesis, epidemiology, diagnosis, monitoring and treatment protocols. The journal is characterized by the rapid reporting of reviews, original research and clinical studies across all disease areas.

Submit your manuscript here: <http://www.dovepress.com/international-journal-of-general-medicine-journal>

A key focus is the elucidation of disease processes and management protocols resulting in improved outcomes for the patient. The manuscript management system is completely online and includes a very quick and fair peer-review system. Visit <http://www.dovepress.com/testimonials.php> to read real quotes from published authors.

Dovepress