

ARTICLE

A sequence variant on 17q21 is associated with age at onset and severity of asthma

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A sequence variant (rs7216389-T) near the *ORMDL3* gene on chromosome 17q21 was recently found to be associated with childhood asthma. We sought to evaluate the effect of rs7216389-T on asthma subphenotypes and its correlation with expression levels of neighboring genes. The association of rs7216389-T with asthma was replicated in six European and one Asian study cohort ($N=4917$ cases $N=34\,589$ controls). In addition, we found that the association of rs7216389-T was confined to cases with early onset of asthma, particularly in early childhood (age: 0–5 years $OR=1.51$, $P=6.89 \cdot 10^{-9}$) and adolescence (age: 14–17 years $OR=1.71$, $P=5.47 \cdot 10^{-9}$). A weaker association was observed for onset between 6 and 13 years of age ($OR=1.17$, $P=0.035$), but none for adult-onset asthma ($OR=1.07$, $P=0.12$). Cases were further stratified by sex, asthma severity and atopy status. An association with greater asthma severity was observed among early-onset asthma cases ($P=0.0012$), but no association with sex or atopy status was observed among the asthma cases. An association between sequence variants and the expression of genes in the 17q21 region was assessed in white blood cell RNA samples collected from Icelandic individuals ($n=743$). rs7216389 associated with the expression of *GSDMB* and *ORMDL3* genes. However, other sequence variants showing a weaker association with asthma compared with that of rs7216389 were more strongly associated with the expression of both genes. Thus, the contribution of rs7216389-T to the development of asthma is unlikely to operate only through an impact on the expression of *ORMDL3* or *GSDMB* genes.

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INTRODUCTION

Multiple environmental and hereditary factors affect the development of asthma.^{1–3} More than 200 genes have been reported to harbor sequence variants that associate with asthma or related phenotypes, but few have been robustly replicated.^{4,5} In a recent genome-wide association study of asthma, the sequence variant rs7216389-T on chromosome 17q21 was shown to associate with the risk of childhood asthma.⁶ rs7216389 is located in an intron of the *GSDMB* gene (encoding the gasdermin-like protein), but its association with asthma was originally linked to the expression of the nearby *ORMDL3* gene

(encoding the ORM1-like 3 protein). Subsequent reports have provided further support for the association of this 17q21 locus with childhood^{7–11} and persistent asthma,¹² but the mechanisms underlying this effect remain unclear.

Asthma is a heterogeneous disease with respect to age at onset, clinical presentation, disease progression and therapeutic response.³ To investigate the phenotype–genotype relationship of the sequence variant at 17q21 with asthma, we genotyped tagging SNPs at this locus (including rs7216389) in samples obtained from Iceland, Australia, The Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom and Korea with

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information on age at onset, sex, asthma severity and atopy status. We also examined the correlation of those SNPs with the expression of genes in the region around rs7216389 in white blood cells of an Icelandic sample set.

METHODS

Study samples

The samples used in this study consisted of case-control sample sets obtained from Iceland, Germany, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Australia and Korea, and a familial sample set from Germany (Table 1). Informed consent was obtained locally from all participants and all studies were approved by the local ethics committees. The individual sample sets have been described in detail elsewhere^{13–24} (see also brief cohort descriptions in Supplementary text).

For all sample sets, a diagnosis of asthma based on patient symptoms and clinical testing was given by a physician at each local clinical center on the basis of international and national asthma guidelines. Atopy status (defined by at least one positive response to allergens) as determined by skin prick testing was available for all samples, except the UK set. Asthma severity was available in the Icelandic, Australian and UK sample sets. In the Icelandic cases, asthma severity was assessed using criteria from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI)²⁵ and GINA guidelines.²⁶ In addition, patient charts were reviewed specifically for frequency of daytime and nocturnal symptoms and impact on daily activities, asthma-related health-care use (use of emergency care, hospitalizations and physician office visits), medication use (dose of inhaled corticosteroids) and use of add-on medications such as long- and short-acting β -agonists, systemic corticosteroids, theophylline and leukotriene antagonists. The criteria used to assess asthma severity in the Australian sample set were described previously.¹⁷ Briefly, the clinical parameters used for severity scoring included lung function (% predicted FEV₁), use of oral corticosteroids, daily inhaled corticosteroid dose, weekly frequency of use of rescue medication, weekly frequency of daytime symptoms, weekly frequency of nighttime waking because of asthma, unplanned visits to a general practitioner and hospital admissions for asthma in the preceding 12 months. On the basis of national²⁷ and NHLBI guidelines,²⁵ patients were classified as mild, moderate or severe for each criterion and the most common classification was used as a measure of asthma severity. For the UK cohort, severity assessment was based on the British Thoracic Society guidelines.²⁸ Steps 1–2 were considered as mild, step 3 was as considered moderate and steps 4–5 were considered as severe asthma.

Information on age at onset of asthma and sex was available for all sample sets, except for the Germany I set. Early onset was defined as the onset of asthma at or under 18 years of age, and adult onset was defined as the onset at or over 19 years of age in all study sample sets. In Iceland, the age at onset was assessed with a questionnaire using the question 'How old were you when you had your first asthma-attack?' For the Australian and UK sample sets, the age at

onset was assessed with questionnaires and a subsequent interview using the question 'How old were you when you were diagnosed with asthma?' For the Korean and Dutch sample sets, the age at onset was assessed with a questionnaire using the question 'How old were you when you first experienced asthma symptoms?' For the Germany II sample set, the age at onset was assessed with a parental interview asking for the age at occurrence of wheezing.

Total serum IgE levels were measured by UniCAP FEIA (Pharmacia Upjohn, Uppsala, Sweden).

Genotyping

All genotyping procedures of SNPs in the 17q21 region were carried out at deCODE Genetics using Hap300 bead-array (Illumina Inc., San Diego, CA, USA), TaqMan (Applied Biosystems Inc., Cheshire, UK) or Centaurus platforms (NanoGen Inc., San Diego, CA, USA). In Iceland, 1192 asthma patients and 30 237 controls were genotyped with the Illumina 300K chip. An additional 456 Icelandic asthma patients and 661 Icelandic controls and all non-Icelandic samples were genotyped using either single SNP TaqMan or Centaurus platforms. The SNPs used in the 17q21 region on the Illumina 300K chip passed quality filters (yield >95%, minor allele frequency >0.01, no distortion of Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium (HWE) in the controls ($P > 1.0 \times 10^{-3}$)). All samples had call rates above 98%. The quality of TaqMan or Centaurus SNP assays was evaluated by genotyping each assay in the CEU HapMap samples and comparing the results with the publicly released HapMap data. Assays with >1.5% mismatch rate were not used. Supplementary Table 2 contains allele frequencies and HWE P -values for the different sample sets.

Expression analysis

Expression levels for genes in the 17q21 region and correlation with the genotype status of 15 SNPs in the region were assessed with Human 25K chip array (Agilent Technologies Inc.) as part of a separate study in Iceland²⁹ (expression data available as GEO data set GSE7695 and GPL3991). The collection of white blood cell samples ($N=743$), mRNA isolation and expression profiling have been described previously.²⁹ Expression was quantified as mean logarithm ($\log_{10}$) expression ratio (MLR), that is, expression ratios compared with background-corrected intensity values.²⁹ The array expression data were validated by performing TaqMan gene expression assays for *IKZF3* (encoding the IKAROS family zinc-finger 3 protein), *GDSM1* (encoding the gasdermin 1 protein), *ZBP2* (encoding the zona pelliculada-binding protein 2), *GSDMB* and *ORMDL3* genes using cDNA derived from the same white blood cell RNA samples from individuals tested on the Agilent chip. TaqMan assays for *ZBP2* and *GDSM1* did not yield any product in white blood cells or other cDNA source tested (data not shown). TaqMan gene expression assays were also performed on mRNA from Epstein-Barr Virus

Table 1 Study populations

	Iceland	Australia	The Netherlands	Korea	United Kingdom	Germany I	Germany II
Recruitment phenotype	Asthma	Asthma	Asthma	Asthma	Asthma	Childhood/adolescent asthma	Childhood asthma
Study design	Case-control	Case-control	Case-control	Case-control	Case-control	Case-control	Affected Sib-pairs
<i>N</i> cases/controls	1648/30 898	647/564	221/1564	1387/558	292/241	307/560	415/204 ^a
Male/female ^b	475/1173	244/403	136/85	588/799	116/176	198/109	240/175
<i>N</i> age at onset ^b							
Early/adult/unknown ^c	617/744/287	370/226/51	156/57/8	211/1176/0	138/60/94	307/0/0	415/0/0
<i>N</i> atopy ^b							
Atopic/nonatopic/unknown	890/697/61	539/106/2	181/31/9	829/541/17	NA ^e	277/30/0	319/96/0
Log ₁₀ total serum IgE ^{b,d}	1.7 ± 0.7	2.0 ± 0.6	2.0 ± 0.6	2.2 ± 0.6	NA	2.4 ± 0.6	2.3 ± 0.7
<i>N</i> severity score ^b							
Mild/moderate/severe/unknown	547/537/118/446	336/233/78/0	NA	NA	28/73/65/126	NA	NA

^aAn estimate of the number of untransmitted parental alleles were used as control alleles.

^bVariables related to cases only.

^cEarly onset—at or younger than 18 years of age; adult onset—at 19 years of age or older.

^dMean ± s.d.

^eNot available.

(EBV)-transformed B lymphocytes³⁰ from Icelandic prostate cancer patients ($N=186$) and from peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) isolated from Icelandic patients with asthma ($N=182$).³¹ cDNA was synthesized using the high-capacity cDNA reverse transcriptase kit (Applied Biosystems Inc.). TaqMan expression assays were performed with the TaqMan Universal PCR Master Mix (Applied Biosystems Inc.), using PCR primers from Eurofins mwg operon (Ebersberg, Germany) and MGB TaqMan probes (Applied Biosystems Inc.) (for primer and probe sequences, see Supplementary Table 1).

Statistical analysis

To replicate the previously reported association of chromosome 17q21 SNPs with asthma, we tested their association with asthma within each population. We then explored whether the strength of association depended on the age at onset of asthma by breaking the sample sets into children, adults with early onset and adults with adult onset (Table 2). We further studied the effect of age at onset by testing the association within 2-year age bins (Figure 1). On the basis of the results of the age-stratified analysis, subsequent testing was performed separately within early- and adult-onset groups. We then examined whether the association with asthma depended on sex, asthma severity, atopy status and IgE levels.

For association analysis, we used standard likelihood ratio statistics, implemented in the NEMO software,³² to calculate two-sided P -values and allele-specific ORs for each individual allele, assuming a multiplicative model (the two alleles are independent, or in HWE, within the population of affected individuals). Allele frequencies were estimated by maximum likelihood and calculated directly for the observed data, and tests of differences between cases and controls were performed using a generalized likelihood ratio test.³²

The sib-pairs from the Germany II sample set were analyzed assuming Mendelian inheritance under the null hypothesis. Under alternative transmission, probabilities were defined by the multiplicative risk model and allele frequencies. Untransmitted parental alleles were used as controls. The number of untransmitted parental genotypes corresponds to having genotyped 204 control individuals on an average.

A test for severity among cases was conducted by logistic regression, treating allele counts as the response variable and the severity class as an explanatory variable, encoding the severity classes as 0 (mild), 1 (moderate) and 2 (severe).

Results obtained from multiple groups were combined using a Mantel-Haenszel model³³ that allows for analysis incorporating disparate frequencies for alleles and genotypes for different populations, but assuming the same relative risks. Tests of heterogeneity were conducted by assuming that the allele frequencies were the same in all groups under the null hypothesis, but that each group had a different allele frequency under the alternative hypothesis.

The correlation between the expression ratios (MLR)²⁹ for the genes analyzed and genotypes of each of the SNPs in the locus was tested by regressing MLRs against the SNPs' allele count after adjustment for age and sex.

Multiple logistic regression was used to test the association of SNPs with asthma, conditional on another SNP's association with asthma. Similarly, multiple linear regression was used to test the association of an SNP with quantitative expression levels, conditional on another SNP's association with the expression levels.

RESULTS

Disease association

We replicated the previously reported association of allele T of rs7216389 with asthma⁶ in 1648 Icelandic asthma cases and 30 898 Icelandic controls (OR (95%CI)=1.23 (1.14–1.33), $P=1.56 \times 10^{-7}$). The effect in Iceland was weaker than the previously reported ORs of 1.45⁶ and 1.50⁸ in asthmatic patients of European descent. Previous studies were predominantly conducted in pediatric cohorts, whereas in the Icelandic sample set, the cases are adults.^{6,11} We therefore assessed the strength of the association with rs7216389-T stratified on age at onset of asthma, dividing the cases into early onset (before or at 18 years of age $n=617$) and adult onset (at or after 19 years of age $n=744$). Early-onset cases showed a substantially stronger association (OR (95%CI)=1.44 (1.28–1.63)) than did adult-onset cases (OR (95%CI)=1.11 (0.99–1.23)) (Table 2).

Table 2 Association of the T allele of rs7216389 with asthma

Study group	All asthma			Children			Adults, early onset ^a			Adult onset ^b		
	na/nc	P-value	OR (95% CI)	na/nc	P-value	OR (95% CI)	na/nc	P-value	OR (95% CI)	na/nc	P-value	OR (95% CI)
Iceland	1648/30 898	1.6×10^{-7}	1.23 (1.14, 1.33)				617/30 898	1.4×10^{-9}	1.44 (1.28, 1.63)	744/30 898	0.064	1.11 (0.99, 1.23)
Australia	647/564	0.44	1.07 (0.90, 1.27)				370/564	0.016	1.26 (1.04, 1.52)	226/564	0.22	0.87 (0.70, 1.08)
The Netherlands	221/1564	0.0073	1.32 (1.08, 1.61)				156/1564	0.0081	1.37 (1.09, 1.73)	57/1564	0.55	1.12 (0.77, 1.63)
Korea	1387/558	0.14	1.13 (0.96, 1.33)				211/558	0.0049	1.49 (1.13, 1.96)	1176/558	0.35	1.08 (0.92, 1.28)
United Kingdom	292/241	0.064	1.26 (0.99, 1.61)	57/241	0.76	1.06 (0.71, 1.60)	81/241	0.07	1.39 (0.97, 1.99)	60/241	0.63	1.10 (0.74, 1.65)
Germany I	307/560	0.014	1.28 (1.05, 1.56)	307/560	0.014	1.28 (1.05, 1.56)						
Germany II	415/204d	0.0034	1.43 (1.12, 1.81)	415/204 ^e	0.0034	1.43 (1.12, 1.81)						
Combined non-Icelandic	3269/3691	2.7×10^{-6}	1.21 (1.18, 1.31)	779/1005	0.00029	1.30 (1.13, 1.50)	818/2927	1.6×10^{-6}	1.35 (1.19, 1.52)	1519/2927	0.74	1.02 (0.91, 1.15)
Combined all	4917/34 589	2.0×10^{-12}	1.22 (1.15, 1.29)	779/1005	0.00029	1.30 (1.13, 1.50)	1435/33 825	1.5×10^{-14}	1.40 (1.28, 1.52)	2263/33 825	0.11	1.07 (0.99, 1.16)

Shown are the number of cases (na) and controls (nc), the OR with a 95% CI, and two-sided P -value in comparison with controls for the individual and the combined study populations using a Mantel-Haenszel model. P -values for heterogeneity between effect size in sample groups were > 0.05 in the combined non-Icelandic and combined all analysis.

^aOnset of asthma at or younger than 18 years of age.

^bOnset of asthma at 19 years of age or older.

^cAn estimate of the number of untransmitted parental alleles were used as control alleles.

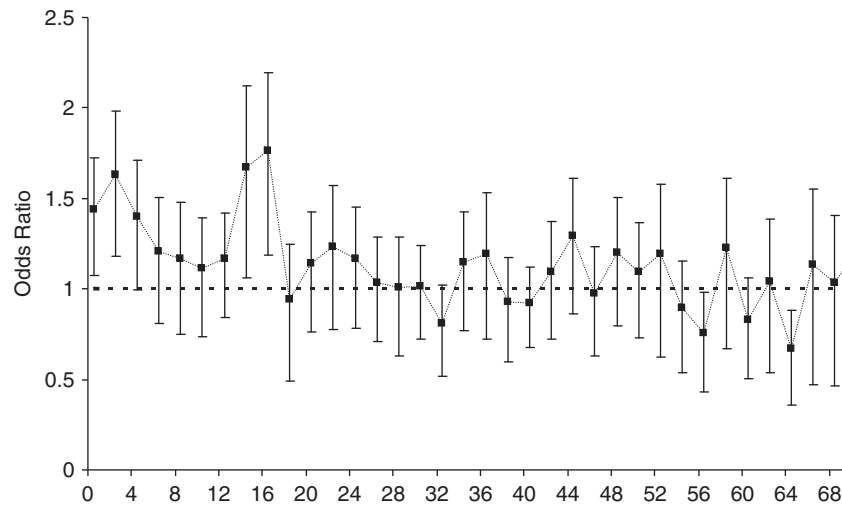


Figure 1 Association with rs7216389-T stratified by age at onset of asthma. Cases were stratified by age at onset, and association with rs7216389-T was assessed for each age bin (0–1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–7 years and so on). Cases with onset at 70 years or older were pooled into one single bin (70+). The OR and 95% CI for the mean age of each bin for the combined sample set (Iceland, Australia, United Kingdom, Korea and Germany II) are plotted.

Table 3 Association results for the T allele of rs7216389 with early onset of asthma stratified by severity^a

Study group	N control	N cases	Mild	N cases	Moderate	N cases	Severe	P-value
			OR (95% CI)		OR (95% CI)		OR (95% CI)	
Iceland	30 898	200	1.37 (1.12, 1.67)	196	1.52 (1.25, 1.86)	27	2.86 (1.64, 4.98)	0.052
Australia	564	181	1.14 (0.90, 1.45)	138	1.28 (0.98, 1.67)	51	1.69 (1.12, 2.55)	0.099
UK	241	18	1.40 (0.71, 2.77)	35	1.61 (0.97, 2.67)	25	1.56 (0.87, 2.81)	0.47
Combined	31 703	399	1.28 (1.10, 1.48)	369	1.45 (1.24, 1.68)	103	1.91 (1.43, 2.55)	0.0012

Shown are the number (N) of controls and cases, the OR with a 95% CI and two-sided P-value for regressing the severity status on rs7216389-T allele counts for the individual studies and the combined study populations.

^aOnset of asthma at or younger than 18 years of age. P-values for heterogeneity between effect size in sample groups were 0.47, 0.54 and 0.24 for mild, moderate and severe asthma, respectively, in the combined analysis.

We then assessed the association of rs7216389-T with asthma, stratified by age at onset, in six additional sets of asthma patients: Australian, Dutch and Korean sample sets consisting of adult asthma cases, a UK sample set consisting of both adult and child asthma cases and two German sample sets of childhood asthma cases (Table 1). As in Iceland, the association of rs7216389-T with asthma was confined to the early-onset cases (OR (95%CI)=1.33 (1.21–1.46) for early-onset asthma compared with OR (95%CI)=1.02 (0.91–1.15) for adult-onset asthma) (Table 2, Supplementary Table 3). The effect of rs7216389-T in samples consisting of childhood asthma cases (OR (95%CI)=1.30 (1.13–1.50)) was similar to that seen for adult cases with early-onset asthma (OR (95%CI)=1.35 (1.19–1.52)).

Information on age at onset of asthma in years was available for Iceland, the United Kingdom, Germany II, Australia and Korea. To increase the resolution of the effect of age at onset of asthma, we further assessed the association with rs7216389-T by grouping cases into 2-year bins (0–1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–7 years and so on, up to over 70 years). Nominally significantly increased risk was observed for the age bins 0–1, 2–3, 4–5, 14–15 and 16–17 years (Figure 1, Supplementary Table 4). Subsequent analysis of larger bins (0–5, 6–13, 14–17 years) within the early-onset-of-asthma group showed strong association for the intervals 0–5 and 14–17 years at onset (OR (95%CI)=1.51 (1.31–1.73), $P=6.89 \cdot 10^{-9}$ and OR (95%CI)=1.71 (1.39–2.11),

$P=5.47 \cdot 10^{-9}$, respectively), whereas a weaker association was observed in the age interval 6–13 years (OR (95%CI)=1.17 (1.01–1.35), $P=0.035$). The Dutch and Germany I samples were only classified as early or late onset and were therefore not included in the higher-resolution age at onset analysis.

Given that the strength of association with rs7216389-T was primarily observed in early-onset cases, we further examined whether rs7216389-T associated with sex, asthma severity, atopy status and serum IgE levels within early- and adult-onset cases. Asthma severity scoring was available for the Icelandic, Australian and UK cases. In the combined analysis of the early-onset cases, rs7216389-T correlated positively with asthma severity ($P=0.0012$, Table 3), with the effect in the same direction for all three groups, although not significant in the UK sample set. No association with severity was observed among adult-onset asthma cases ($P=0.75$, Supplementary Table 6). No association was observed with IgE ($P=0.35$) or atopy status ($P=0.55$) (Supplementary Table 5), and no difference was observed between male and female cases ($P=0.60$).

Restricting the analysis to early-onset asthma cases, we then looked for signals not accounted for by rs7216389-T. For this purpose, association with 14 additional SNPs was assessed in the Icelandic, Australian, UK and German samples, in which each marker was tested by conditioning on the observed association with each of the other

markers (Supplementary Table 7). None of the markers remained significant after adjusting for the association with rs7216389-T and accounting for the number of SNPs tested.

Correlation between 17q21 sequence variants and gene expression levels

The SNP rs7216389 is located within the *GSDMB* gene (Supplementary Figure 1). We assessed the association of rs7216389 with gene expression levels by probes representing 29 refseq genes and 3 mRNA sequences located 540 kb upstream and downstream of rs7216389 in white blood cell RNA obtained from Icelandic individuals ($N=743$).²⁹ The strongest association of rs7216389 was seen with the expression of *GSDMB* and *ORMDL3* genes ($P=2.3 \cdot 10^{-38}$ and $P=8.8 \cdot 10^{-58}$, respectively, Table 4 and Supplementary Table 8). The expression of *GSDMB* and *ORMDL3* is correlated in white blood cells (observed correlation $r=0.71$; Supplementary Figure 2). We verified the association of rs7216389 with expression levels by RT-PCR TaqMan assays for *GSDMB* and *ORMDL3* on the same RNA used for array experiments and subsequently in additional RNA samples as well, which were derived from PBMCs ($N=182$) and EBV-transformed B-lymphocytes ($N=186$) (data not shown). Finally, we assessed whether sequence variants other than rs7216389 associated more strongly with the expression of *ORMDL3* and *GSDMB* genes. After adjusting for the effect of rs7216389 and correcting for multiple testing, 11 of the 14 markers tested remained significantly associated with *ORMDL3* expression levels, whereas 9 markers remained significantly associated with *GSDMB* levels ($P < 0.0036=0.05/14$, Table 4).

DISCUSSION

This study confirms the previously reported genome-wide association of a sequence variant at 17q21 with asthma. We also show, using a large sample including six sets of European and one of East-Asian

ancestry, that the variant is predominantly a risk factor for early-onset asthma, whereas its association with adult-onset asthma is absent. The risk associated with rs7216389-T was significant at 0–5 years and 14–17 years of age at the onset of asthma. The original discovery⁶ and subsequent studies^{7–10} reported that the 17q21 locus is primarily associated with pediatric asthma. In this study, we confirm and further extend these findings by showing that association is not only confined to cases with onset in early childhood but also to cases with onset in adolescence.

Asthma is a phenotypically heterogeneous disease, with great variation in symptom severity and frequency and in the age at onset. One of the strengths of this multicenter study is that it includes both child and adult asthma cases with early or adult onset with variable disease severity, allowing for assessment of the risk contributed by the 17q21 variant in multiple asthma subphenotypes. The bimodal pattern of association with rs7216389-T with respect to age at onset in all sample sets combined, as also observed for individual sample sets (data not shown), suggests that the 17q21 locus not only confers increased risk for developing asthma in early childhood as has been reported,⁸ but also presents a substantial risk for onset of asthma in adolescence.

In this study, all cases were diagnosed by a physician using standardized international and national criteria. Although it cannot be excluded that ascertainment criteria influenced the results, we observed a consistent association of rs7216389-T with early-onset asthma in all samples sets, but not with adult-onset asthma in any sample set. It is unlikely that recall bias or differences in ascertainment would result in the bimodal pattern observed. Self-reported year of asthma onset by adults was accurate in cases with a clinical diagnosis of asthma followed up after 10 years³⁴ and in the longitudinal European Community Respiratory Health Survey.³⁵ High concordance for reported age at onset with a self-administered questionnaire

Table 4 Association with early onset asthma and the expression of the *ORMDL3* and *GSDMB* genes in white blood cells ($N=743$) for 15 markers at 17q21, both unadjusted and adjusted for the effect of rs7216389-T

SNP	Allele	Position ^a	OR	Association with early onset asthma		Association with <i>ORMDL3</i> expression		Association with <i>GSDMB</i> expression	
				P-value		P-value		P-value	
				Unadjusted	rs7216389 adj.	Unadjusted	rs7216389 adj.	Unadjusted	rs7216389 adj.
rs2941504	A	35 084 426	1.29	$1.2 \cdot 10^{-8}$	0.032	$3.6 \cdot 10^{-21}$	0.66	$1.2 \cdot 10^{-11}$	0.31
rs907091	T	35 175 268	1.34	$1.7 \cdot 10^{-12}$	0.47	$2.6 \cdot 10^{-60}$	$3.4 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$1.4 \cdot 10^{-42}$	$8.3 \cdot 10^{-6}$
rs907092	G	35 175 785	1.34	$1.7 \cdot 10^{-12}$	0.18	$5 \cdot 10^{-63}$	$1.5 \cdot 10^{-10}$	$5.1 \cdot 10^{-36}$	0.0012
rs9303277	C	35 229 995	1.37	$2.8 \cdot 10^{-14}$	0.09	$8.3 \cdot 10^{-61}$	$2.1 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$1.1 \cdot 10^{-41}$	$6.1 \cdot 10^{-5}$
rs3816470	T	35 239 327	1.37	$4.3 \cdot 10^{-14}$	0.031	$1.3 \cdot 10^{-58}$	$3.5 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$2.4 \cdot 10^{-42}$	$4.7 \cdot 10^{-6}$
rs11557467	G	35 282 160	1.35	$3.1 \cdot 10^{-13}$	0.45	$5.4 \cdot 10^{-62}$	$5.8 \cdot 10^{-6}$	$1.5 \cdot 10^{-42}$	$1.2 \cdot 10^{-5}$
rs8067378	A	35 304 874	1.35	$4.6 \cdot 10^{-13}$	0.72	$5.4 \cdot 10^{-62}$	$5.8 \cdot 10^{-6}$	$1.5 \cdot 10^{-42}$	$1.2 \cdot 10^{-5}$
rs2305480	C	35 315 722	1.36	$1.3 \cdot 10^{-13}$	0.12	$9.1 \cdot 10^{-65}$	$2.3 \cdot 10^{-10}$	$5.5 \cdot 10^{-37}$	0.0030
rs2305479	G	35 315 743	1.37	$1.7 \cdot 10^{-14}$	0.11	$7.7 \cdot 10^{-61}$	0.00016	$6.8 \cdot 10^{-43}$	$1.8 \cdot 10^{-6}$
rs2290400	A	35 319 766	1.38	$6.7 \cdot 10^{-15}$	0.018	$1.2 \cdot 10^{-60}$	0.00029	$1.3 \cdot 10^{-41}$	$5.6 \cdot 10^{-5}$
rs7216389	T	35 323 475	1.36	$5.1 \cdot 10^{-14}$	—	$8.8 \cdot 10^{-58}$	—	$2.3 \cdot 10^{-38}$	—
rs4795405	C	35 341 943	1.37	$6.6 \cdot 10^{-14}$	0.018	$5.8 \cdot 10^{-60}$	$1.8 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$1.2 \cdot 10^{-33}$	0.016
rs1007654	G	35 364 880	1.32	$6.9 \cdot 10^{-10}$	0.040	$1.3 \cdot 10^{-28}$	0.1031	$9.4 \cdot 10^{-16}$	0.84
rs3902025	A	35 372 780	1.32	$1.0 \cdot 10^{-10}$	0.050	$8.6 \cdot 10^{-39}$	0.00030	$5.5 \cdot 10^{-22}$	0.15
rs3894194	T	35 375 519	1.32	$3.9 \cdot 10^{-11}$	0.078	$8.9 \cdot 10^{-34}$	0.03775	$5.4 \cdot 10^{-20}$	0.59

The calculated association for early onset asthma is obtained by combining the study populations (Iceland, Australia, UK, Germany I and Germany II) using a Mantel-Haenszel model. Log-transformed expression levels of *ORMDL3* and *GSDMB* were corrected for age and sex. Correlation between MLR and allele count was performed treating the corrected log expression level as the response variable and the allele as the explanatory variable for each of the 15 markers. Shown are the OR and two-sided *P*-values, unadjusted and adjusted when the association is tested conditional on the observed association to SNP rs7216389.

^aBase pair position March 2006 human reference sequence (NCBI Build 36).

and face-to-face interview was also noted in the Epidemiological Study on Genetics and Environment of Asthma.⁸ Imperfect recall may dilute the age bins in which the 17q21 variant has an effect, but is unlikely to shift these ages from early childhood to adolescence. The same would apply for differences in ascertainment for age at onset. Most individuals diagnosed with asthma in the first two decades of life have had recurrent wheezing episodes in early childhood,^{36,37} suggesting that the disease process may start years before diagnosis. Thus, cases with onset in adolescence may have had asthma-related symptoms such as bronchial hyperresponsiveness or wheezing episodes during childhood, or alternatively, changes in environmental exposure during adolescence could trigger asthma onset in susceptible individuals. The adolescent period is associated with changes in social behavior, such as initiation of smoking. Bouzigon *et al*⁸ reported that 17q21 variants were associated with substantially increased risk for asthma in children exposed to environmental smoke, and regular smoking has been associated with increased risk of new-onset asthma in adolescents.³⁸ Our study was neither sufficiently powered nor detailed enough with respect to information on smoking initiation and duration to examine the relation of smoking pattern and risk for asthma associated with rs7216389-T in 14-to-17-year-old subjects.

rs7216389-T correlated with asthma severity in early onset in the three sample sets analyzed, but not with adult-onset cases. This is in line with results obtained from two recent studies that reported an association of the rs7216389 T/T homozygote state with more frequent asthma exacerbations^{7,11} and hospitalizations.¹¹ Asthma severity is a complex composite phenotype³⁹ based on the frequency and severity of asthma symptoms, as well as on lung function and treatment response.^{25,26} Most asthma patients with mild-to-moderate asthma can adequately control symptoms with standard therapies, but an estimated 5–10% of patients with severe asthma are largely unresponsive to typical therapies, including corticosteroids.⁴⁰ Disease severity contributes to a large portion of morbidity in asthma.⁴¹ Our demonstration that rs7216389-T associates with severity in early-onset asthma could contribute to an earlier identification of individuals at high risk of developing severe asthma, allowing for more appropriate therapy at an earlier stage. Moffatt *et al*⁶ demonstrated that rs7216389 correlates with the expression of *ORMDL3*, and suggested that rs7216389-T confers the risk of asthma by affecting the expression of the *ORMDL3* gene. We confirmed the association of rs7216389-T with expression levels of *ORMDL3*, and extended this observation to its association with the expression of the *GSDMB* gene, in which rs7216389 is located. We also found that the expression of these genes is highly correlated, suggesting that they may be coregulated. Several sequence variants at 17q21 associating with asthma affect expression levels of both *GSDMB* and *ORMDL3*. We showed that the variants with the strongest association with asthma were different from those that were most strongly associated with the expression of *ORMDL3* or *GSDMB*. Furthermore, we observed a significant residual association for many markers with expression levels of *ORMDL3* or *GSDMB* after adjusting for the effect of rs7216389. This shows that an alteration of the expression levels of either of these genes is unlikely to constitute the sole mechanism by which 17q21 sequence variants contribute to asthma susceptibility.

Given the relatively strong LD at this locus, we examined key SNPs tagging the region for association with early-onset asthma. However, after adjusting for the effect of rs7216389-T, association with other markers was nonsignificant. Two recent studies found no significant association of rs7216389-T with asthma in African-American patients,^{10,42} which, given the difference in LD structure in European and African Americans, suggests that rs7216389-T is not the causal

variant itself and that the causal variant is in lower LD with rs7216389-T in African Americans. Recently, other SNPs highly correlated with rs7216389 were found to be associated with Crohn's disease (rs2872507)⁴³ and type I diabetes (rs2290400),⁴⁴ indicating that sequence variants at the 17q21 locus may be involved in mechanisms regulating immune responses. Further studies focusing on both gene and protein expression in relevant tissues and/or appropriate asthma models with extended phenotypic and genetic refinement are warranted to elucidate the precise mechanisms by which the 17q21 sequence variation contributes to asthma.

In summary, in addition to robustly replicating sequence variants that associate with asthma at the 17q21 locus, our data demonstrate that they confer a different risk of development of asthma at early age compared with onset at adult age in cases of European and Asian ancestry. The 17q21 locus associated with disease severity among early-onset but not adult-onset cases. We further show that the sequence variants showing the strongest association with asthma are different from those best associated with the expression of *ORMDL3* or *GSDMB*. This suggests that the contribution of this locus to asthma susceptibility is unlikely to operate only through the expression of *ORMDL3* or *GSDMB* genes, and that other mechanisms, or genes, contribute to the association.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Supplementary Information accompanies the paper on European Journal of Human Genetics website (<http://www.nature.com/ejhg>)

Supplementary Material

Study Populations

Iceland: Patients of both sexes aged 18-75 years who attended an outpatient clinic of asthma specialists at the National University Hospital of Iceland and the Iceland Medical Center (Laeknasetrid) during the years 1977 to 2007 were recruited to the study. Asthma diagnosis was based on a combination of both respiratory symptoms and evidence of airway reversibility in accordance with guidelines from the American Thoracic Society and by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI)¹. Asthma patients with a smoking history of greater than 20 pack-years or with a co-existing diagnosis of COPD were excluded from this study. Atopy status was determined by assessing skin-prick test reactivity (wheal size > 3mm or >50% of the histamine control) to 12 common aeroallergens (Greer Laboratories, Lenoir, NC, USA), and/or with specific serum IgE levels with UniCAP Phadiotop (Pharmacia Upjohn, Uppsala, Sweden) or RAST (Pharmacia Upjohn). Total serum IgE levels were measured by UniCAP FEIA (Pharmacia Upjohn). Asthma severity, graded as mild, moderate or severe, was assessed by applying the clinical criteria from the NHLBI¹ and GINA guidelines². Additionally, patient charts were reviewed specifically for frequency of daytime and nocturnal symptoms and impact on daily activities, asthma related health care use (use of emergency care, hospitalizations and office visits), medication use (dose of inhaled corticosteroids (mild < 500 µg, moderate 500 – 1000 µg, severe > 1000 µg) and utilization of add-on medications such as long- and short acting Beta Agonists, systemic corticosteroids, theophylline and leukotriene antagonists. Pulmonary function testing, including baseline level as well FEV₁ (Forced Expiratory Volume in 1 second) over time was used to assess asthma severity.

All patients provided informed consent, donated blood samples, and completed a thorough European Community Respiratory Health Survey based medical questionnaire³ with demographic details, including question on age at onset of asthma “How old were you when you had your first asthma attack?”, and smoking history. The 30,898 controls (41% males; mean age 61 years, SD = 21) used in this study consisted of individuals from other ongoing genome-wide association studies at deCODE. The study was approved by the National Bioethics Committee of Iceland and the Icelandic Data Protection Authority.

Australia: The Australian case–control population has been described elsewhere⁴. Briefly, unrelated patients between 18 and 89 years of age with physician diagnosed asthma were recruited into the study. All subjects completed a comprehensive questionnaire and underwent clinical testing including assessment of lung function by spirometry and atopic status by skin prick testing. Atopy was defined as having a wheal reaction to allergen extract >3 mm to at least one of five common aeroallergens. Total serum IgE levels were measured by UniCAP FEIA (Pharmacia Upjohn). Age at onset was assessed by a standard questionnaire for patients that asked when they first developed symptoms and when were they given a diagnosis of asthma by their doctor. The latter time point was used to determine age when asthma commenced. All patients had a face to face checking of their questionnaire to ensure any anomalies in the patient responses could be dealt with at the time they were filled out. The criteria used to assess asthma severity in the Australian cohort have been previously described⁴. Clinical parameters used for severity scoring included, lung function (% predicted FEV₁), use of oral corticosteroids in the last 12 months, daily inhaled corticosteroid (beclomethasone equivalent) dose, weekly frequency of use of

rescue medication, weekly frequency of daytime symptoms, weekly frequency of nighttime waking due to asthma, unplanned visits to a general practitioner in the last 12 months, and hospital admissions for asthma in the last 12 months. Based on national⁵ and NHLBI guidelines¹, patients were classified as having mild, moderate, or severe asthma for each criterion and the most common classification was used as a measure of asthma severity. The control subjects had no history of asthma and did not undergo clinical testing. All participants gave written informed consent. The study protocol was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Western Australia.

The Netherlands: The Dutch cases have been previously described^{6,7}. Briefly asthma patients of European ancestry were initially studied between 1962 and 1975. At the time of recruitment and initial testing, all patients had asthma symptoms, were hyperresponsive to histamine (PC20 histamine <32 mg/ml), and were younger than 45 years of age. Between 1990 and 1999, patients were invited for follow-up tests: including pulmonary function, bronchial responsiveness to histamine, and total and specific serum IgE and skin tests to 16 common aero allergens^{6,7}. Participants were asked in advance to discontinue asthma or allergy medication, therapy with oral corticosteroids was however continued. The standardized British Medical Council questionnaire was used to assess the onset of symptoms of asthma (wheeze, dyspnea, asthma attacks) and patients were stratified accordingly as having early onset asthma (at age 18 or younger) or adult onset asthma (age 19 or older).

The recruitment started in 1965 with a follow-up of over 25 years. Surveys were performed every 3 years, in which information was collected on respiratory

symptoms, smoking status, FEV₁, and allergy skin tests, as described⁸. Controls were derived from Vlagtwedde/Vlaardingen cohort study, which is a general population-based cohort of adult subjects of European ancestry in the Netherlands. The Medical Ethics Committee of the University Medical Center Groningen approved the studies, and all participants provided informed consent.

Korea: The Korean case-control sample has been described elsewhere⁹. Briefly, the Korean case-control samples were recruited from the Genome Research Center for Allergy and Respiratory Diseases at Soonchunhyang University, Bucheon, and Seoul Hospital in Korea. All patients were diagnosed by a physician and met the definition of asthma set forth in the GINA guidelines². All patients had a history of dyspnea and wheezing during the previous 12 months plus one of the following: 1) >15% increase in FEV₁ or >12% increase plus 200 ml following inhalation of a short-acting bronchodilator, 2) <10 mg/ml PC20 methacholine, and 3) >20% increase in FEV₁ following 2 weeks of treatment with inhaled steroids and long-acting bronchodilators. The onset of asthma was defined by the time of appearance of typical symptoms of asthma (dyspnea and/or chronic cough and wheezing). The normal subjects were recruited from the spouses of the patients (n = 479) and from members of the general population (n= 79) who answered negatively to a screening questionnaire for respiratory symptoms¹⁰ (2) and had an FEV₁ >75% of the predicted value, PC20 methacholine >10 mg/ml, and normal findings on a simple chest radiogram. Twenty-four common inhalant allergens (e.g., dust mites [*Dermatophagoides farinae* and *D. pteronyssinus*], cat fur, dog fur, cockroaches, grasses, trees, and ragweed pollen) were used for a skin prick test. Total IgE was measured using the CAP system (Pharmacia Diagnostics, Uppsala, Sweden). Atopy

was defined as having a wheal reaction to an allergen equal to or greater than to histamine or 3 mm in diameter. The subjects and study protocols were approved by the Institutional Review Board of Soonchunhyang University Hospital.

United Kingdom: Asthmatic subjects and controls were selected from the Nottingham area from 3 study cohorts recruited over the period 1995-2008. Controls were selected from a large random population aged 18-65 (see ref¹¹ for full details). The controls had no history of asthma and had a negative methacholine challenge test. Childhood asthma cases (n=57) were included by using index cases from the Nottingham sib pair asthma study¹² and additional adult asthma cases were recruited from an ongoing study of asthma severity (N=141). Atopy was defined as the presence of 1 or more positive skin tests to common allergens (>2mm over control). Age at onset was assessed in participants in the severity study (all adults) by questionnaire with the question “How old were you when you were diagnosed with asthma?”. Severity assessment was based on British Thoracic Society guidelines¹³. Steps 1-2 was considered as mild, step 3 was considered as moderate and step 4-5 was considered as severe asthma. All subjects were of European ancestry. Local ethical committee approval was obtained for all 3 studies.

Germany I: The German case-control population consisted of children (aged 5-18 years) with suspected asthma recruited from the southwestern part of Germany between July 2000 and January 2005¹⁴. The probands were characterized at the Centre of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Freiburg, Germany. The diagnosis of asthma was based on a history of respiratory symptoms, the use of anti-asthmatic medication

and the presence of bronchial hyperresponsiveness (defined as a fall of at least 15% in baseline FEV₁ after either inhalation of ≤ 8 mg/ml histamine or ≤ 6 minutes of exercise provocation). Participants were asked in advance to discontinue any asthma or allergy medication before the clinical testing. Atopy status was determined by skin prick tests to 17 common allergens. Measurement of total serum IgE was carried out by using an enzyme allergosorbent test (Phadezym; Pharmacia, Uppsala, Sweden). The control sample consisted of subjects (aged 19-40 years) randomly chosen from the same area in the southwestern part of Germany and children recruited from clinics at the Centre of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Freiburg, Germany. No medical history was taken, and no medical testing was performed on the adult controls whereas the pediatric controls had no previous history of asthma, recurrent wheezing, atopic dermatitis or atopy. Approval was granted by the Ethical Commission of the University of Freiburg. A statement of informed consent was signed by all participants or signed by their parents in the case of children. Part of the Freiburg study population was included in the replication phase in the study by Moffatt et al ¹⁵.

Germany II: The German sib-pair study consisted of two hundred and one families of at least two children with confirmed clinical asthma. Phenotyping was carried out by trained staff from more than 20 clinical centers using the procedure as described previously^{16,17}. Age at onset was determined by interview of parents to cases. Parents were asked for age at diagnosis, occurrence of wheezing and occurrence of first wheezing episodes, the latter was used as age at onset of asthma. Atopy status was determined by skin prick test for 12 common aero allergens. Specific IgE was measured with 15 RAST assays using the CAP System RAST FEIA (Pharmacia Upjohn). Total serum IgE levels were measured by UniCAP FEIA (Pharmacia

Upjohn). The ethics commission of "Nordrhein-Westfalen" approved all study methods and informed consent was obtained from all parents and children.

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Supplementary figure legends

Supplementary figure 1. LD pattern, recombination rates, genes and association with early onset asthma for SNPs at 17q21

The pair-wise correlation structure in a 300 kb interval (31.1 – 35.4 Mb, NCBI B36) on chromosome 17. The upper plot shows pair-wise D' for 147 common SNPs (with $MAF > 5\%$) from the HapMap (v22) CEU dataset. The lower plot shows the corresponding r^2 values. *B*) Estimated recombination rates (saRR) in cM / Mb from the HapMap Phase II data¹⁸. *C*) Location of known genes in the region. The vertical bars indicate the location of exons within the genes. *D*) Schematic view of the association with early onset asthma in the Icelandic, Australian, British and two German samples combined. SNPs located in exons are indicated with red dots, while other SNPs are indicated with blue dots.

Supplementary figure 2. Comparison of the expression of the *ORMDL3* and *GSDMB* genes

Pair-wise correlation of log transformed expression levels corrected for age and sex for the *ORMDL3* and *GSDMB* in 703 whole blood RNA sample.

Supplemental table 1: Primers and probes for TaqMan® expression assays.

Primer name	SEQ ID
ORMDL3 NM_139280e2-3F	5'-TCGTCTGGACCCTCACCAA-3'
ORMDL3 NM_139280e2-3R	5'-TTCACCGTGTGCAGGAAGATATA-3'
ORMDL3 NM_139280e2-3 Probe	6FAM-5'-TCATTCAACAACATGGGCAT-3'
IKZF3 NM_012481e2-3F	CAAACAAATGCGGAAGTGA AAA
IKZF3 NM_012481e2-3R	CATTCAAAACCGCTGCACTTT
IKZF3 NM_012481e2-3 Probe	6FAM-CAGGAGCAGTCTGTGC
GSDMLcomF	5'-CAAGTGGTTAGATGAACTGGATTCTG-3'
GSDMLcomR	5'-CAACTCTCCCGTTGAGTCTACATTATC-3'
GSDML Probe	6FAM-5'-GCTCCAAGGTCAAAAG-3'
GSDM1e11-12F	5'-AAAAGATCCTACCCGTGCAGCTA-3'
GSDM1e11-12R	5'-TATCCAGCAGGAAGTTCTGTTCCA-3'
GSDM1e11-12 Probe	6FAM-5'-CTGGTGGAGAGCACG-3'
ZPBP2 NM_198844e5-6F	5'-CAGAACATGGCCTCATACATGA-3'
ZPBP2 NM_198844e5-6R	5'-CACCCCGGCGCAAA-3'
ZPBP2 NM_198844e5-6 Probe	6FAM-5'-ATAGCATTTCAAGTTAATCC-3'

Supplementary table 2. Position, allele frequency and HWE P values for markers and populations genotyped

			The													
			Iceland		UK		Australia		Germany I		Germany II		Netherlands		Korea	
SNP	bp	Allele	Freq ^b	P ^c	Freq	P	Freq	P	Freq	P	Freq	P	Freq	P	Freq	P
	position ^a															
rs2941504	35084426	A	0.28	0.004	0.3	0.328	0.34	0.124	0.25	0.028	0.28	0.945				
rs907091	35175268	T	0.45	0.46	0.47	0.532	0.49	0.735	0.49	0.236	0.49	0.649				
rs907092	35175785	G	0.5	0.944	0.50	0.746	0.52	0.153	0.54	0.60	0.57	0.309				
rs9303277	35229995	C	0.44	0.3	0.48	0.563	0.48	0.518	0.48	0.506	0.48	0.664				
rs3816470	35239327	T	0.43	0.969	0.42	0.732	0.46	0.714	0.46	0.299	0.44	0.521				
rs11557467	35282160	G	0.45	0.38	0.48	0.481	0.49	0.867	0.5	0.521	0.49	0.778				
rs8067378	35304874	A	0.45	0.322	0.47	0.578	0.48	0.68	0.5	0.437	0.49	0.611				
rs2305480	35315722	T	0.49	0.953	0.5	0.796	0.47	0.79	0.45	0.667	0.44	0.356				
rs2305479	35315743	G	0.46	0.678	0.47	0.799	0.50	0.86	0.51	0.905	0.51	0.226				
rs2290400	35319766	A	0.45	0.328	0.47	0.552	0.49	0.919	0.5	0.966	0.49	0.544	0.48	0.161		
rs7216389	35323475	T	0.45	0.159	0.46	0.522	0.49	0.978	0.5	0.797	0.49	0.552	0.48	0.014	0.75	0.067
rs4795405	35341943	T	0.47	0.742	0.47	0.384	0.45	0.659	0.45	0.514	0.44	0.514	0.44	0.062		
rs1007654	35364880	A	0.39	0.381	0.4	0.704	0.39	0.377	0.37	0.922	0.35	0.193				
rs3894194	35375519	T	0.44	0.604	0.42	0.039	0.45	0.68	0.44	0.847	0.45	0.233				
rs3902025	35372780	C	0.45	0.306	0.46	0.272	0.45	0.348	0.45	0.205	0.41	0.159				

a) NCBI build 36 b) Frequency in controls for allele associated with risk for asthma c) HWE P values for the controls in each population.

Supplementary table 3. Association of the T allele of rs7216389 with early onset asthma.

Study group	Early onset			
	N case/N control	P	OR (95% CI)	P ^a
<i>Iceland</i>	617/30,898	1.4·10 ⁻⁹	1.44 (1.28, 1.63)	
<i>Australia</i>	370/564	0.016	1.26 (1.04, 1.52)	
<i>The Netherlands</i>	156/1,564	0.0081	1.37 (1.09, 1.73)	
<i>Korea</i>	211/558	0.0049	1.49 (1.13, 1.96)	
<i>UK</i>	138/241	0.15	1.25 (0.93, 1.67)	
<i>Germany I</i>	307/560	0.014	1.28 (1.05, 1.56)	
<i>Germany II</i>	415/204	0.0034	1.43 (1.12, 1.81)	
<i>Combined non-Icelandic</i>	1,597/3691	2.2·10 ⁻⁹	1.33 (1.21, 1.46)	0.89
<i>Combined all</i>	2,214/34,589	3.0·10 ⁻¹⁷	1.37 (1.28, 1.48)	0.84

Association for T allele of rs7216389 stratified on age at onset of asthma for each individual sample set and after combining the study populations using a Mantel-Haenszel model. Shown are the number (N) of controls and cases , the OR with a 95% CI and two-sided P value in comparison to controls. ^a*P* value for heterogeneity between effect size in sample groups

Supplementary table 4. Association of the T allele of rs7216389 with asthma stratified by age at onset

Bin ^a	N	OR	CI 95%	P	P ^b heterogeneity
0-1	315	1.44	1.149-1.795	0.0015	0.32
2-3	233	1.63	1.278-2.078	8.20·10 ⁻⁵	0.4
4-5	199	1.4	1.086-1.804	0.0094	0.3
6-7	141	1.21	0.908-1.604	0.2	0.75
8-9	109	1.17	0.858-1.587	0.32	0.52
10-11	120	1.11	0.831-1.485	0.48	0.55
12-13	143	1.16	0.911-1.490	0.22	0.53
14-15	102	1.67	1.225-2.286	0.0012	0.098
16-17	124	1.76	1.328-2.338	8.76·10 ⁻⁵	0.54
18-19	61	0.94	0.637-1.397	0.77	0.86
20-21	113	1.14	0.854-1.518	0.38	0.79
22-23	101	1.24	0.899-1.695	0.19	0.8
24-25	141	1.16	0.878-1.545	0.29	0.62
26-27	138	1.04	0.788-1.363	0.8	0.57
28-29	95	1.01	0.734-1.394	0.95	0.57
30-31	160	1.01	0.787-1.306	0.92	0.2
32-33	115	0.81	0.596-1.102	0.18	0.013
34-35	125	1.15	0.865-1.520	0.34	0.5
36-37	104	1.19	0.856-1.665	0.3	0.97
38-39	110	0.93	0.686-1.261	0.64	0.087

40-41	165	0.92	0.728-1.173	0.52	0.62
42-43	133	1.09	0.818-1.464	0.54	0.65
44-45	138	1.29	0.971-1.718	0.079	0.24
46-47	125	0.98	0.722-1.325	0.89	0.61
48-49	116	1.2	0.896-1.606	0.22	0.035
50-51	134	1.09	0.819-1.460	0.54	0.81
52-53	78	1.19	0.806-1.765	0.38	0.85
54-55	96	0.90	0.640-1.254	0.52	0.85
56-57	88	0.75	0.527-1.077	0.12	0.19
58-59	94	1.23	0.844-1.783	0.28	0.2
60-61	98	0.83	0.598-1.155	0.27	0.28
62-63	74	1.04	0.703-1.550	0.83	0.96
64-65	75	0.67	0.455-0.979	0.039	0.25
66-67	54	1.13	0.715-1.799	0.59	0.91
68-69	60	1.03	0.665-1.607	0.88	0.98
70 and over	84	1.17	0.810-1.687	0.4	0.99
0-5	747	1.51	1.31-1.73	6.89·10 ⁻⁹	0.31
6-13	513	1.17	1.01-1.35	0.035	0.58
14-17	226	1.71	1.39-2.11	5.47·10 ⁻⁹	0.13
18+	2875	1.07	0.98-1.16	0.12	0.13

Association with rs7216389 and asthma after binning cases according to age at onset in the combined study population (Iceland, Australia, UK, GermanyII and Korea) using a Mantel-Haenszel model. Shown is the number (N) of cases, the OR with a 95% CI, and two-sided *P* value in comparison to controls. ^aAge at onset. ^b*P* value for heterogeneity in the effect between sample groups.

Supplementary table 5: Association of rs7216389-T stratified by atopy status and quantitative trait test for effect on log10 total serum IgE levels for early onset cases.

Study group	Atopy			Non-atopic			Serum IgE		
	N control	N cases	OR (95% CI)	N cases	OR (95% CI)	P value	N cases	Effect (95% CI)	P value
<i>Iceland</i>	30,898	443	1.42 (1.25, 1.62)	157	1.48 (1.18, 1.84)	0.77	438	-0.04 (-0.13, 0.05)	0.41
<i>Australia</i>	564	324	1.32 (1.08, 1.60)	23	0.74 (0.41, 1.34)	0.069	258	-0.02 (-0.12, 0.09)	0.75
<i>The Netherlands</i>	1,564	136	1.51 (1.17, 1.94)	14	0.82 (0.39, 1.73)	0.13	149	0.18 (0.05, 0.31)	0.0079
<i>Korea</i>	558	172	1.86 (1.37, 2.54)	38	0.76 (0.46, 1.28)	0.0038	211	0.11 (-0.04, 0.26)	0.16
<i>Germany I</i>	559	277	1.22 (0.99, 1.50)	30	1.85 (1.08, 3.19)	0.16	189	0.00 (-0.11, 0.11)	0.99
<i>Gemany II</i>	204 ^a	319	1.42 (1.09, 1.85)	96	1.74 (1.09, 2.79)	0.45	402	0.02 (-0.08, 0.11)	0.73
<i>Combined</i>	34,347	1,668	1.40 (1.29, 1.52)	357	1.33 (1.12, 1.56)	0.55	1,458	0.02 (-0.02, 0.07)	0.35

Included are the results for each phenotype after combining the study populations using a Mantel-Haenszel model. Shown are the number (N) of controls and cases, the OR with a 95% CI and two-sided *P* value compared to controls ^aAn estimate of the number of un-transmitted parental alleles used as control alleles. *P* value for heterogeneity between effect size in sample groups was 0.33 for atopic and 0.02 for non-atopic asthma, respectively. Total serum IgE values (log10 tranformed) were tested with logistic regression treating the allele count as the response variable and IgE levels as an explanatory variable. Shown is number (N) of samples analyzed , estimated effect per allele, OR and 95%CI, and two-sided P-value.

Supplementary table 6. Association of the T allele of rs7216389 with adult onset asthma stratified by severity.

Sample	N	Mild		Moderate		Severe		P value
		N	OR (95% CI)	N	OR (95% CI)	N	OR (95% CI)	
	control	cases		cases		cases		
<i>Iceland</i>	30,898	242	1.12 (0.94, 1.35)	298	1.02 (0.87, 1.20)	76	1.34 (0.25, 7.16)	0.71
<i>Australia</i>	564	115	0.74 (0.56, 0.98)	88	1.25 (0.91, 1.72)	22	0.54 (0.08, 3.60)	0.48
<i>UK</i>	241	10	2.09 (0.84, 5.20)	38	1.07 (0.66, 1.73)	10	0.75 (0.30, 1.87)	0.11
<i>Combined</i>	33,026	457	1.02 (0.88, 1.18)	424	1.07 (0.93, 1.23)	108	1.07 (0.82, 1.40)	0.75

Association results for the T allele of rs7216389 with adult onset asthma stratified by severity. Also included are the results for each phenotype after combining the study populations using a Mantel-Haenszel model. Shown are the number (N) of controls and cases , the OR with a 95% CI and two-sided *P* value in comparison to controls for the severity status. *P* values for heterogeneity between effect sizes in sample groups were 0.016, 0.53 and 0.02 for mild moderate and severe asthma, respectively, in the combined analysis.

Supplementary table 7. Conditional association analysis between markers at 17q21.

			unadjusted	rs294504	rs907091	rs907092	rs9303277	rs3816470	rs11557467	rs8067378	rs2305480	rs2305479	rs2290400	rs7216389	rs4795405	rs10071654	rs3902025	rs3894194
SNP	Position ^a	OR	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
rs2941504	35,084,426	1.29	1.2·10 ⁻⁸	-	0.055	0.014	0.098	0.047	0.055	0.046	0.013	0.065	0.081	0.032	0.0055	1.7·10 ⁻⁵	4.0·10 ⁻⁵	9.3·10 ⁻⁴
rs907091	35,175,268	1.34	1.7·10 ⁻¹²	2.8·10 ⁻⁶	-	0.053	0.14	0.76	0.69	0.46	0.057	0.98	0.53	0.47	0.040	6.1·10 ⁻⁶	1.7·10 ⁻⁵	1.9·10 ⁻⁴
rs907092	35,175,785	1.34	1.7·10 ⁻¹²	3.5·10 ⁻⁶	0.21	-	0.43	0.34	0.22	0.12	0.58	0.35	0.44	0.18	0.35	5.7·10 ⁻⁵	2.7·10 ⁻⁴	7.5·10 ⁻⁵
rs9303277	35,229,995	1.37	2.8·10 ⁻¹⁴	2.1·10 ⁻⁷	0.0037	0.0048	-	0.65	0.19	0.015	0.010	0.29	0.92	0.09	0.0091	6.3·10 ⁻⁷	1.5·10 ⁻⁶	2.2·10 ⁻⁵
rs3816470	35,239,327	1.37	4.3·10 ⁻¹⁴	3.1·10 ⁻⁸	0.0048	7.9·10 ⁻⁴	0.078	-	0.016	0.0042	0.0023	0.066	0.20	0.031	0.0026	3.7·10 ⁻⁷	1.8·10 ⁻⁶	6.7·10 ⁻⁶
rs11557467	35,282,160	1.35	3.1·10 ⁻¹³	7.1·10 ⁻⁷	0.11	0.015	0.93	0.95	-	0.11	0.061	0.76	0.33	0.45	0.041	3.8·10 ⁻⁶	1.7·10 ⁻⁵	1.1·10 ⁻⁴
rs8067378	35,304,874	1.35	4.6·10 ⁻¹³	1.8·10 ⁻⁶	0.31	0.032	0.47	0.63	0.62	-	0.094	0.58	0.076	0.72	0.063	8.8·10 ⁻⁶	5.2·10 ⁻⁵	2.0·10 ⁻⁴
rs2305480	35,315,722	1.36	1.3·10 ⁻¹³	2.2·10 ⁻⁷	0.015	0.037	0.12	0.095	0.068	0.026	-	0.31	0.47	0.12	0.39	2.7·10 ⁻⁵	1.6·10 ⁻⁴	3.4·10 ⁻⁵
rs2305479	35,315,743	1.37	1.7·10 ⁻¹⁴	1.0·10 ⁻⁷	0.0089	0.0013	0.14	0.15	0.030	0.0088	0.016	-	0.18	0.11	0.015	9.1·10 ⁻⁷	6.8·10 ⁻⁶	2.8·10 ⁻⁵
rs2290400	35,319,766	1.38	6.7·10 ⁻¹⁵	2.1·10 ⁻⁸	0.0010	4.6·10 ⁻⁴	0.024	0.058	0.0030	2.5·10 ⁻⁴	0.0051	0.0083	-	0.018	0.0063	3.4·10 ⁻⁷	2.1·10 ⁻⁶	7.5·10 ⁻⁶
rs7216389	35,323,475	1.36	5.1·10 ⁻¹⁴	1.8·10 ⁻⁷	0.021	0.0024	0.14	0.16	0.099	0.037	0.029	0.93	0.54	-	0.053	3.5·10 ⁻⁶	1.4·10 ⁻⁵	5.4·10 ⁻⁵
rs4795405	35,341,943	1.37	6.6·10 ⁻¹⁴	2.1·10 ⁻⁸	0.0014	0.0025	0.0098	0.0087	0.0070	0.0023	0.030	0.035	0.047	0.018	-	1.3·10 ⁻⁵	7.7·10 ⁻⁵	1.8·10 ⁻⁵
rs1007654	35,364,880	1.32	6.9·10 ⁻¹⁰	2.7·10 ⁻⁶	0.0064	0.013	0.018	0.019	0.013	0.010	0.062	0.040	0.053	0.040	0.25	-	0.19	0.016
rs3902025	35,372,780	1.32	1.0·10 ⁻¹⁰	1.5·10 ⁻⁶	0.012	0.029	0.027	0.031	0.016	0.014	0.099	0.057	0.079	0.050	0.48	0.042	-	0.026
rs3894194	35,375,519	1.32	3.9·10 ⁻¹¹	2.0·10 ⁻⁵	0.018	0.0028	0.052	0.046	0.031	0.023	0.010	0.10	0.15	0.078	0.061	0.0025	0.016	-

Association between early onset asthma and fifteen SNPs on C17q21. The association is calculated for the combined case-control groups from Iceland, Australia, UK, GermanyI and GermanyII and for each SNP the association is tested conditional on the observed association to each of the other SNPs. Shown is the OR with a 95% CI and two-sided *P* value in comparison to controls before and after adjustment. ^a Basepair position March 2006 human reference sequence (NCBI Build 36.1)

Supplementary table 8. Association of fifteen SNPs at the 17q21 locus with RNA expression in white blood cells (N=743).

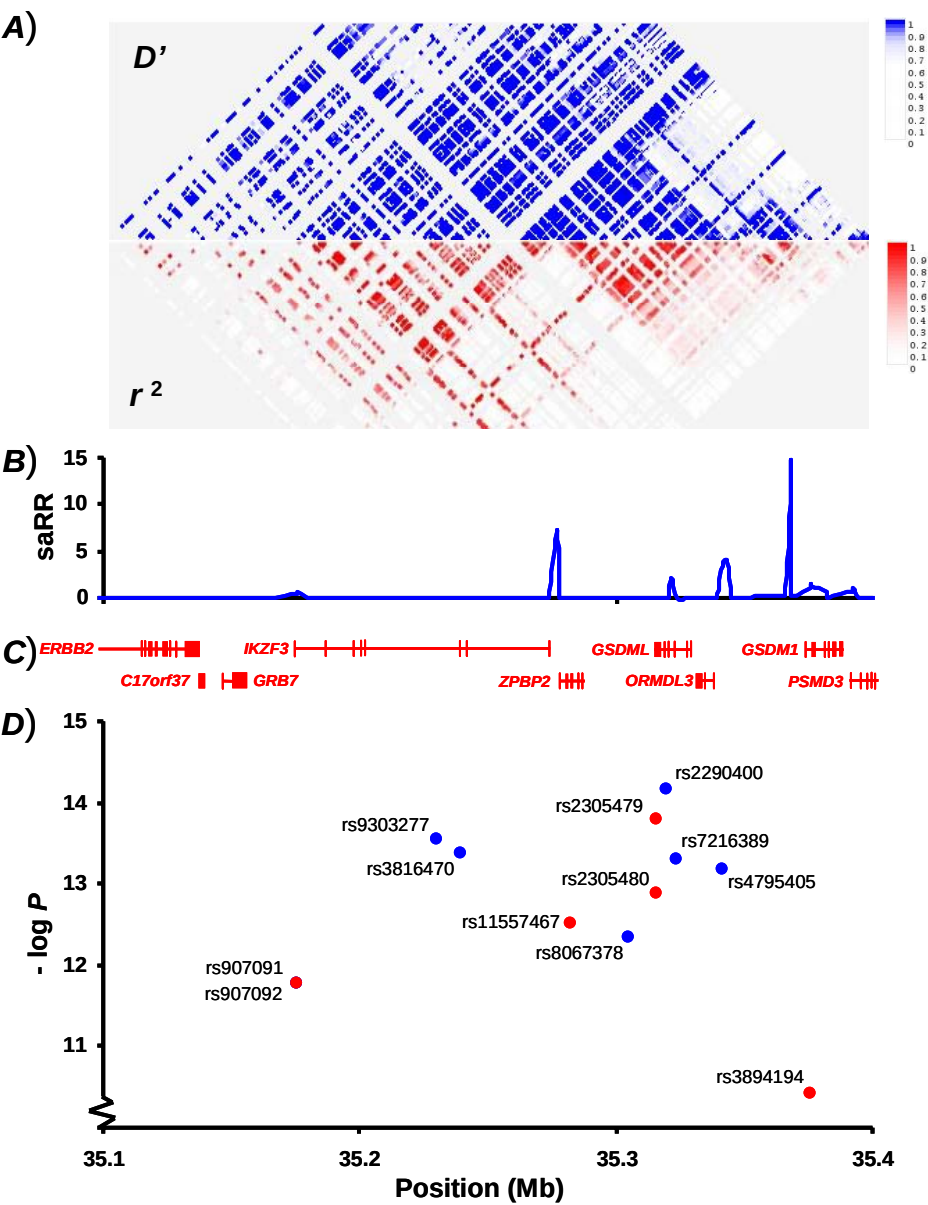
Symbol/ RNA	rs2941504	rs907091	rs907092	rs9303277	rs3816470	rs11557467	rs8067378	rs2305480	rs2305479	rs2290400	rs7216389	rs4795405	rs1007654	rs3902025	rs3894194
MED1	0.19	0.26	0.49	0.28	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.46	0.22	0.22	0.14	0.60	0.46	0.77	0.54
MED1	0.56	0.51	0.51	0.56	0.39	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.43	0.49	0.39	0.63	0.14	0.32	0.71
CRKRS	0.10	0.049	0.19	0.070	0.036	0.057	0.057	0.18	0.037	0.049	0.0096	0.24	0.17	0.22	0.28
NEUROD2	0.43	1.0	0.71	0.92	1.0	0.85	0.85	0.76	0.90	0.85	0.74	0.96	0.62	0.77	0.95
PPP1R1B	0.53	0.18	0.11	0.21	0.090	0.21	0.21	0.13	0.21	0.25	0.38	0.33	0.58	0.13	0.038
STARD3	0.049	0.13	0.13	0.11	0.093	0.13	0.13	0.23	0.26	0.25	0.41	0.60	0.82	0.96	0.26
TCAP	0.21	0.40	0.33	0.36	0.47	0.39	0.39	0.30	0.37	0.35	0.29	0.43	0.38	0.36	0.81
PNMT	0.11	0.013	0.019	0.013	0.020	0.017	0.017	0.028	0.022	0.024	0.040	0.075	0.068	0.17	0.22
PERL1D	0.00029	0.0071	0.24	0.0061	0.0048	0.014	0.014	0.48	0.029	0.032	0.089	0.80	0.79	0.24	0.43
ERBB2	0.026	0.030	0.077	0.026	0.041	0.061	0.061	0.072	0.030	0.038	0.11	0.28	0.22	0.95	0.12
C17orf37	0.0031	0.0053	0.25	0.0068	0.0020	0.0088	0.0088	0.29	0.0044	0.0057	0.0044	0.40	0.33	0.79	0.11
GRB7	0.087	0.42	0.43	0.40	0.15	0.40	0.40	0.42	0.40	0.39	0.42	0.91	0.32	0.84	0.66
AK128436*	0.0016	$1.3 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$1.4 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$4.1 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$2.6 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$1.6 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$1.6 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$1.5 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$2.0 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$3.6 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$1.0 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$1.6 \cdot 10^{-7}$	$5.1 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$3.0 \cdot 10^{-8}$	$6.0 \cdot 10^{-6}$
BC012267*	0.31	0.042	0.0074	0.049	0.019	0.035	0.035	0.011	0.066	0.080	0.11	0.068	0.056	0.0093	0.31
IKZF3	0.11	0.012	0.22	0.016	0.012	0.010	0.010	0.21	0.012	0.022	0.024	0.36	0.90	0.57	0.59
IKZF3	0.076	0.055	0.077	0.076	0.046	0.047	0.047	0.063	0.043	0.058	0.025	0.079	0.028	0.19	0.63
ZBPB2	0.0025	$6.6 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$4.8 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$9.5 \cdot 10^{-6}$	0.00056	$1.5 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$1.5 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$9.4 \cdot 10^{-5}$	0.00016	$2.8 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$2.1 \cdot 10^{-5}$	0.00026	$6.0 \cdot 10^{-5}$	0.00017	$9.5 \cdot 10^{-6}$
GSDML	$1.2 \cdot 10^{-11}$	$1.4 \cdot 10^{-43}$	$5.1 \cdot 10^{-36}$	$1.1 \cdot 10^{-41}$	$2.4 \cdot 10^{-42}$	$1.5 \cdot 10^{-42}$	$1.5 \cdot 10^{-42}$	$5.5 \cdot 10^{-37}$	$6.8 \cdot 10^{-43}$	$1.3 \cdot 10^{-41}$	$2.3 \cdot 10^{-38}$	$1.2 \cdot 10^{-33}$	$9.4 \cdot 10^{-16}$	$5.5 \cdot 10^{-22}$	$5.4 \cdot 10^{-20}$
ORMDL3	$3.7 \cdot 10^{-21}$	$2.6 \cdot 10^{-60}$	$5.0 \cdot 10^{-63}$	$8.3 \cdot 10^{-61}$	$1.3 \cdot 10^{-58}$	$5.4 \cdot 10^{-62}$	$5.4 \cdot 10^{-62}$	$9.1 \cdot 10^{-65}$	$7.7 \cdot 10^{-61}$	$1.2 \cdot 10^{-60}$	$8.8 \cdot 10^{-58}$	$5.9 \cdot 10^{-60}$	$1.3 \cdot 10^{-28}$	$8.5 \cdot 10^{-39}$	$8.9 \cdot 10^{-34}$
ORMDL3	$4.0 \cdot 10^{-19}$	$5.3 \cdot 10^{-62}$	$3.9 \cdot 10^{-65}$	$7.0 \cdot 10^{-62}$	$8.1 \cdot 10^{-62}$	$4.2 \cdot 10^{-63}$	$4.2 \cdot 10^{-63}$	$8.5 \cdot 10^{-66}$	$1.1 \cdot 10^{-62}$	$3.3 \cdot 10^{-62}$	$3.9 \cdot 10^{-59}$	$1.3 \cdot 10^{-59}$	$5.3 \cdot 10^{-29}$	$3.6 \cdot 10^{-40}$	$2.1 \cdot 10^{-33}$
GSDMB	0.16	0.0047	$5.9 \cdot 10^{-14}$	0.0048	0.0026	0.0044	0.0044	$4.2 \cdot 10^{-14}$	0.0060	0.0048	0.0015	$4.9 \cdot 10^{-14}$	$2.4 \cdot 10^{-19}$	$1.0 \cdot 10^{-17}$	$1.8 \cdot 10^{-5}$
PSMD3	0.33	0.67	0.81	0.77	0.82	0.74	0.74	0.67	0.70	0.73	0.34	0.97	0.31	0.89	0.56

CSF3	0.50	0.78	0.25	0.80	0.72	0.80	0.80	0.20	0.69	0.69	0.78	0.39	0.23	0.15	0.65
MED24	0.96	0.35	0.19	0.41	0.15	0.49	0.49	0.23	0.38	0.45	0.59	0.52	0.22	0.23	0.93
NR1D1	0.35	0.055	0.020	0.050	0.017	0.057	0.057	0.030	0.074	0.072	0.089	0.12	0.17	0.14	0.21
THRA	0.84	0.27	0.059	0.33	0.17	0.32	0.32	0.072	0.30	0.35	0.40	0.26	0.20	0.084	0.41
MSL-1	0.70	0.20	0.24	0.16	0.35	0.22	0.22	0.34	0.34	0.32	0.47	0.36	0.85	0.98	0.87
CASC3	0.026	0.00052	0.0015	0.00083	0.00041	0.00058	0.00058	0.0019	0.00067	0.00085	8.1·10 ⁻⁰⁵	0.0056	0.0057	0.0042	0.0042
RAPGEFL1	0.45	0.59	0.80	0.69	0.19	0.57	0.57	1.0	0.39	0.45	0.31	0.72	0.39	0.83	0.94
WIPF2	0.18	0.12	0.091	0.14	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.066	0.074	0.086	0.045	0.14	0.013	0.050	0.33
WIPF2	0.66	0.75	0.93	0.84	0.84	0.79	0.79	0.98	0.64	0.67	0.36	0.61	0.77	0.39	0.71
CDC6	0.11	0.38	0.45	0.40	0.48	0.45	0.45	0.57	0.57	0.60	0.45	0.23	0.75	0.88	0.66
RARA	0.64	0.018	0.0058	0.025	0.0048	0.024	0.024	0.0037	0.010	0.014	0.012	0.046	0.0062	0.013	0.17
GJD3	0.18	0.36	0.27	0.36	0.25	0.34	0.34	0.35	0.45	0.44	0.50	0.40	0.73	0.50	0.42
AK098252*	0.62	0.29	0.015	0.26	0.23	0.35	0.35	0.031	0.44	0.40	0.52	0.083	0.10	0.027	0.29
TOP2A	0.49	0.71	0.83	0.77	0.53	0.69	0.69	0.62	0.51	0.55	0.55	0.88	0.42	0.71	0.63
IGFBP4	0.25	0.17	0.22	0.19	0.059	0.19	0.19	0.37	0.26	0.25	0.20	0.32	0.65	0.45	0.71

Log transformed expression levels for the genes were corrected for age and sex. Correlation between MLR and allele count was performed

treating the corrected log expression level as the response variable and the allele as the explanatory variable for each of the 15 markers. *RNA

probe, no gene symbol assigned



Whole blood, cor=0.71

