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African-specific improvement of a polygenic hazard score for age at diagnosis of prostate cancer


1Department of Radiation Medicine and Applied Sciences, University of California San Diego, La Jolla, CA, USA
2Healthlytix, 4747 Executive Dr. Suite 820, San Diego, CA, USA
3Department of Family Medicine and Public Health, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA, USA
4The Institute of Cancer Research, London, SM2 5NG, UK
5Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, London, SW3 6JJ, UK
6Division of Population Health, Health Services Research and Primary Care, University
of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, UK
7 Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
8 http://www.icr.ac.uk/our-research/research-divisions/division-of-genetics-and-epidemiology/oncogenetics/research-projects/ukgpcs/ukgpcs-collaborators
9 Division of Population Health, Health Services Research and Primary Care, School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK, M139PT
10 SWOG Statistical Center, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, WA, USA
11 CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Hospital – Medical Center, San Antonio, TX, USA
12 Division of Epidemiology, Department of Medicine, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, 2525 West End Avenue, Suite 600, Nashville, TN 37232 USA.
13 International Epidemiology Institute, Rockville, MD 20850, USA
14 Division of Epidemiology, Department of Medicine, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, 2525 West End Avenue, Suite 800, Nashville, TN 37232 USA.
15 Division of Urologic Surgery, Brigham and Womens Hospital, 75 Francis Street, Boston, MA 02115, USA
16 Washington University School of Medicine, 660 S. Euclid Avenue, Campus Box 8242, St. Louis, MO 63110, USA
17 Sorbonne Universite, GRC n°5 , AP-HP, Tenon Hospital, 4 rue de la Chine, F-75020 Paris, France
18 CeRePP, Tenon Hospital, Paris, France.
19 Université Paris-Saclay, UVSQ, Inserm, CESP, Villejuif, France.
20 Department of Cancer Epidemiology, Moffitt Cancer Center, 12902 Magnolia Drive, Tampa, FL 33612, USA
21 School of Public Health, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, New Orleans, LA 70112, USA
22 Department of Epidemiology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA
23 Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,
Chapel Hill, NC, USA
24School of Public Health, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, New Orleans, LA, USA
25Department of Urology, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, Buffalo, NY, USA
26Epidemiology Branch, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Research Triangle Park, NC, USA
27Epigenetic and Stem Cell Biology Laboratory, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Research Triangle Park, NC
28Univ Rennes, Inserm, EHESP, Irset (Institut de recherche en santé, environnement et travail) - UMR_S 1085, Rennes, France
29CHU de Pointe-à-Pitre, Univ Antilles, Univ Rennes, Inserm, EHESP, Irset (Institut de recherche en santé, environnement et travail) - UMR_S 1085, Pointe-à-Pitre, France
30UMR Inserm 1134 Biologie Intégrée du Globule Rouge, INSERM/Université Paris Diderot - Université Sorbonne Paris Cité/INTS/Université des Antilles, Paris, France
31Department of Cell System and Anatomy and Mays Cancer Center, University of Texas Health San Antonio, San Antonio Texas
32Department of Medicine, Division of Oncology, Stanford Cancer Institute, Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford, 780 Welch Road, CA 94304-5769
33Department of Medicine and Urologic Surgery, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, 1211 Medical Center Drive, Nashville, TN 37232, USA
34Division of Epidemiology, Department of Preventive Medicine, The University of Tennessee Health Science Center, TN, USA
35Case Western Reserve University, Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences, Cleveland Institute for Computational Biology, 2103 Cornell Road, Wolstein Research Building, Suite 2530, Cleveland, OH, 44106 USA
36Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Department of Thoracic Surgery, 609 Oxford House, 1313 21st Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37232-4682 USA
37Case Western Reserve University, Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences, Cleveland Institute for Computational Biology, 2103 Cornell Road, Wolstein
Research Building, Suite 2527, Cleveland, OH, 44106 USA
38Uniformed Services University, 4301 Jones Bridge Rd, Bethesda, MD 20814, USA
39Center for Prostate Disease Research, 6720A Rockledge Drive, Suite 300, Bethesda, MD 20817, USA
40Epidemiology and Biostatistics Unit, Centre Armand-Frappier Santé Biotechnologie, Institut national de la recherche scientifique, 531 Boul. des Prairies, Laval, QC, Canada H7V 1B7
41Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, School of Public Health, University of Montreal, Montreal, QC, Canada
42The University of Miami School of Medicine, Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, 1120 NW 14th Street, CRB 1511, Miami, Florida 33136, USA
43Department of Family and Community Medicine, Meharry Medical College, 1005 Dr. DB Todd Jr. Blvd., Nashville, TN 37208 USA
44Center for Cancer Research and Cell Biology, Queen's University of Belfast, Belfast, UK
45NORMENT, KG Jebsen Centre, Oslo University Hospital and University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway
46Department of Radiology, University of California San Diego, La Jolla, CA, USA
47Institute of Cancer Research, Sutton, SW7 3RPm UK

* Additional members from the Prostate Cancer Association Group to Investigate Cancer Associated Alterations in the Genome consortium (PRACTICAL, http://practical.icr.ac.uk/) and associated funding are provided in the Appendix 1 and 2.

Corresponding Author:
Roshan Karunamuni, PhD
University of California, San Diego
Department of Radiation Medicine and Applied Sciences
3960 Health Sciences Dr, Mail Code 0865
Short title
African polygenic hazard score for prostate cancer

Keywords
Prostate cancer; health disparities; genome wide association study; polygenic risk; genomics; genotypic ancestry; African

Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Hazard ratio</td>
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<td>PHS</td>
<td>Polygenic hazard score</td>
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<td>PHS46</td>
<td>Previously published polygenic hazard score model using 46 SNPs</td>
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We identified three SNPs (rs76229939, rs74421890, and rs5013678), using cross-validation, that significantly improved performance of a previously published polygenic hazard model (PHS46) in men of African genetic ancestry. The performance of the novel PHS46+African score improved by as much as 79% after incorporation of rs76229939, rs74421890, and rs5013678. PHS46+African significantly improved association between polygenic risk with age at diagnosis of prostate cancer in Africans, a population generally under-served in genome-wide studies, to levels comparable with Europeans.
Abstract

Polygenic hazard score (PHS) models are associated with age at diagnosis of prostate cancer. Our model developed in Europeans (PHS46), showed reduced performance in men with African genetic ancestry. We used a cross-validated search to identify SNPs that might improve performance in this population. Anonymized genotypic data were obtained from the PRACTICAL consortium for 6,253 men with African genetic ancestry. Ten iterations of a ten-fold cross-validation search were conducted, to select SNPs that would be included in the final PHS46+African model. The coefficients of PHS46+African were estimated in a Cox proportional hazards framework using age at diagnosis as the dependent variable and PHS46, and selected SNPs as predictors. The performance of PHS46 and PHS46+African were compared using the same cross-validated approach. Three SNPs (rs76229939, rs74421890, and rs5013678) were selected for inclusion in PHS46+African. All three SNPs are located on chromosome 8q24. PHS46+African showed substantial improvements in all performance metrics measured, including a 75% increase in the relative hazard of those in the upper 20% compared to the bottom 20% (2.47 to 4.34) and a 20% reduction in the relative hazard of those in the bottom 20% compared to the middle 40% (0.65 to 0.53). In conclusion, we identified three SNPs that substantially improved the association of PHS46 with age at diagnosis of prostate cancer in men with African genetic ancestry to levels comparable to Europeans.
Introduction

Polygenic models can provide personalized estimates of the risk of developing prostate cancer. In the context of survival analysis, these models can provide insight into age at diagnosis of prostate cancer, and thus could be used to guide decisions on whether and when to offer screening. Studies of polygenic models have often included only individuals of European genetic ancestry, owing to greater availability of data from that population. As a consequence, these models have been tailored to identify and estimate coefficients of genetic common variants for that particular population, while potentially missing variants that may hold value in other populations. There is concern that using these European-focused models could actually exacerbate health disparities.

As an example, our group recently published on the performance of a polygenic hazard score (PHS) originally developed using a European dataset, in a multi-ethnic dataset consisting of individuals of European, African, and Asian genetic ancestry. The model (called here PHS46, referred to in the referenced manuscript as PHS2), includes 46 single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in its calculation and was strongly associated with age at diagnosis in all three genetic populations (p<10^{-16}). However, the hazard ratio for prostate cancer between individuals in the upper 20th percentile to those in the lower 20th percentile of PHS46 was approximately half as large for those with African genetic ancestry (2.6) as it was for those with European (5.6) or Asian (4.6)
ancestry. A similar pattern was observed for clinically significant prostate cancer and for death from prostate cancer.

In the current study, we attempt to bridge the apparent gap in model performance of PHS46 for individuals with African genetic ancestry. To this end, we used a machine learning approach to systematically search for SNPs that add statistical value to a base model of PHS46 among African men (PHS46+African). By including PHS46 as a covariate in our SNP search, we sought to identify those SNPs that may hold particular value for individuals with African genetic ancestry.

Material and Methods

Study dataset

We obtained genotype and phenotype data from the Prostate Cancer Association Group to Investigate Cancer Associated Alterations in the Genome (PRACTICAL) consortium for this study. Genotyping was performed using the OncoArray platform and had undergone quality assurance steps, as described previously. The study dataset contains no overlap with that used to estimate model coefficients of PHS46. It is a subset of another dataset wherein the performance discrepancy of PHS46 between different genotypic ancestries was first observed. All 46 SNPs of PHS46 were directly genotyped on the OncoArray platform.

The genotypic ancestry of each individual was also determined previously. In total, the African dataset consisted of data from 6,253 men with African genotypic ancestry. Missing SNP calls were replaced with the mean of the genotyped data for that
SNP in the African dataset. The percentage of individuals with missing SNP calls ranged from 0 to 5.9% across the SNPs, while the percentage of SNPs with missing calls ranged from 0.5% to 5.1% across the individuals. Individuals without prostate cancer were censored at age at last follow-up in the Cox proportional hazards models. A description of the PRACTICAL study groups that contributed data towards this analysis are described in Supplementary Table 1. PHS46 risk score for each individual in the African dataset was estimated as the sum of SNP allele counts (X) multiplied by their respective coefficients (β):

\[ PHS46 = \sum_{i=1}^{46} X_i \beta_i \]

**SNP-scan**

A multi-step approach was used to select SNPs, from those directly genotyped on the OncoArray platform, that would improve the performance of PHS46 in the African dataset. Training and testing sets were generated using 10 iterations of a 10-fold cross-validation structure resulting in 100 total permutations. For each permutation, a multivariable logistic regression model using case/control status as the dependent variable was estimated using each genotyped SNP in turn, adjusting for PHS46 and four principal components based on genetic ancestry, determined previously. SNPs with p-values less than 1x10^{-6} were considered for further analysis. In order of increasing p-value, each SNP was tested in a multiple Cox proportional hazards model, after adjusting for PHS46, four ancestral principal components, and previously selected
SNPs. The Cox model in the SNP-scan used age at diagnosis of prostate cancer as the dependent variable. If the p-value of the coefficient of the tested SNP was less than $1 \times 10^{-6}$, it was considered for the final model in that permutation. SNPs that reached this p-value threshold in more than 50% of the permutations were selected to construct the PHS46+African model, consisting of PHS46 and the newly identified SNPs.

Comparing performance between PHS46 and PHS46+African – Hazard Ratio

For each permutation of the previously described cross-validation structure, an PHS46+African Cox proportional hazards model was estimated in the training set using PHS46 and the selected SNPs as independent predictors. The PHS46+African risk score for each individual is then estimated using the corresponding PHS46 score, selected SNP allele counts ($Y$) and their respective coefficients ($\alpha$):

$$PHS46 + African = PHS46 + \sum_{i=1}^{SNPs} Y_i \alpha_i$$

The performance of the PHS46+African and PHS46 models was then determined in the cross-validation testing set, and the resulting hazard ratios (HR) were obtained, as previously described. For each model, the PHS risk scores within the cross-validation testing set are assigned to quantile groups identified using the corresponding training set control values. The hazard ratio between two quantile groups, such as those in the top 20% to those in the bottom 20%, is estimated as the exponential of the difference in mean PHS values for each group. In this calculation, the PHS values are linearly scaled by a sample-weight correction factor, to account for case-control sampling. Three
HR were calculated: HR80/20 (top 20% to bottom 20%), HR98/50 (top 2% to middle 40%) and HR20/50 (bottom 20% to middle 40%). The average HR across permutations for both PHS46+African and PHS46 are reported.

To allow for comparisons with previously published results, the performance metrics for PHS46 and PHS46+African were also estimated for age at diagnosis of clinically significant prostate cancer. When estimating performance for clinically significant prostate cancer, controls and non-clinically significant cancers were censored at age of last follow-up and age of diagnosis, respectively. The previously used criteria for clinically significant cancer were any of: Gleason score >=7, stage T3-T4, PSA concentration >= 10ng/mL, pelvic lymph nodal metastasis, or distant metastasis. Paired t-tests were used to test for statistically significant differences (α = 0.05) in HR between PHS46+African and PHS46.

Additionally, in each permutation, the performance of a Cox model consisting of PHS46 and SNPs that were considered in that permutation was also estimated. These results are provided within the Supplementary Table 2 and provide performance estimates that are not prone to information leakage from training to testing set.

Comparing performance between PHS46 and PHS46+African – C-index

In addition to the hazard ratio, the performances of PHS46 and PHS46+African were compared using Harrell’s c-index. For each permutation of the aforementioned cross-validation structure, the c-index of PHS46 and PHS46+African scores were estimated in the testing fold using the “coxph” function in the R “survival” package.
Paired t-tests were used to test for statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the two models.

**Characterization of PHS46+African**

Coefficients of the PHS46+African model, consisting of PHS46 and the SNPs selected in the SNP-scan, were estimated using 1000 bootstrapped samples of the African dataset.

**Clinical utility of PHS46+African**

As an example of the clinical utility of the PHS46+African risk score, the risk-equivalent age was estimated for those individuals in the upper 2 percentile of the distribution of PHS46+African risk scores. The risk-equivalent age, as defined previously\(^\text{12}\), is when an individual from a given PHS percentile has prostate cancer risk equivalent to the average 60-year-old man. The age-specific general cumulative incidence curve was generated using data from SEER*Explorer incidence rates by age at diagnosis, 2003-2017 for Black Americans\(^\text{13}\). The corresponding risk-adjusted incidence curve was estimated by multiplying the general cumulative incidence curve by the mean value of HR98/50 for PHS46+African obtained from the analysis of the age-of-diagnosis of prostate cancer. The risk-equivalent age was then calculated as the age at which the risk-adjusted cumulative incidence curve had the same value as the general cumulative incidence curve at age 60.
Results

Individual and OncoArray characteristics

In total, there were 3,013 men with (cases) and 3,240 men without (controls) prostate cancer in the African dataset. The mean [95% CI] ages of cases and controls were 62.4 [62.1, 62.7] and 61.8 [61.4, 62.1] years respectively. The OncoArray genotypic data, after the quality assurance process, included 444,323 SNPs.

Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP)-scan

Across the 100 permutations of the cross-validation iterations, a total of twelve SNPs were considered for final selection (Supplementary Table 3). Three SNPs were selected in more than 50% of the permutations and included in the final PHS46+African model. By cross-referencing the chromosomal positions against dbSNP\textsuperscript{14}, these variants were identified as rs76229939\textsuperscript{15}, rs74421890\textsuperscript{16}, and rs501367817. All three SNPs (Table 1) are located on chromosome 8q24, a region of the chromosome previously identified as containing common variants associated with prostate cancer\textsuperscript{18,19}. An examination of the R\textsuperscript{2} (Supplementary Table 4) showed little association, ranging from 0.0027 to 0.0057, among genotype data from the three SNPs in the African dataset.

Reference threshold (Supplementary Table 5) and mean (Supplementary Table 6) values for PHS46+African in the African dataset are presented in the Supplemental Data.
HR performance of PHS46+African

Figure 1 demonstrates the difference in HRs between PHS46+African and PHS46 within the African dataset using age at diagnosis of any prostate cancer (Supplementary Table 7). Overall, we observed an improvement in all the metrics calculated: a 75% increase in HR98/50 from 2.10 to 3.67; a 79% increase in HR80/20 from 2.47 to 4.42; and a 23% decrease in HR20/50 from 0.65 to 0.51. We also observed improvements in all performance metrics when using age at diagnosis of clinically significant prostate cancer: 103% increase in HR98/50 from 1.91 to 3.88, 113% improvement in HR80/20 from 2.21 to 4.71, and 29% improvement in HR20/50 from 0.70 to 0.50. All observed changes in HR were statistically significant (p < 1x10^{-16}).

C-index of PHS46+African

The mean c-indices of PHS46 and PHS46+African across the cross-validation folds were estimated as 0.55 and 0.58 (p < 1x10^{-16}), respectively.

Risk-equivalent age for PHS46+African

The risk-equivalent age for those individuals in the top 2 percentiles of the distribution of PHS46+African scores was estimated as 50 years old, suggesting that a man with a PHS46+African score in the top 2 percentile reached a prostate cancer detection risk equivalent to that of a standard 60-year-old roughly 10 years earlier, at an age of 50 years. The corresponding risk-equivalent age when using PHS46 scores was 54 years.
Discussion

Using a cross-validated search of a dataset made up entirely of men with African genetic ancestry, we were able to identify three SNPs that substantially improved the performance of PHS46 in this population to levels that are comparable to those observed in Europeans and Asians. Performance improvements were observed in hazard ratios tracking risk between PHS groups, concordance-indices tracking the overall utility of PHS as a continuous variable, and risk-equivalent age tracking the potential clinical utility of PHS. The three SNPs, rs76229939, rs74421890, and rs5013678, are all located on chromosome 8q24 – a region of the genome where variants have been associated with prostate cancer in both the general population and specifically in men with African genetic ancestry\textsuperscript{19,20}. Despite the relative proximity of the three SNPs on chromosome 8, their genetic data was not strongly associated in our dataset, suggesting that each SNP provides non-redundant information for an individual’s genetic score.

Each of the three SNPs have been previously identified in the literature to be associated with prostate cancer: rs76229939 is an intron variant of the prostate-cancer-associated transcript 2 (PCAT2) gene, while rs74421890 and rs5013678 are both non-coding transcript variants of the prostate-cancer-associated non-coding RNA 1 (PRNCR1) gene. The minor allele frequencies of rs76229939 and rs74421890 in Europeans, as reported by dbSNP\textsuperscript{14}, are approximately zero to three decimal places, which may explain why they were not selected in the original formulation of PHS46.
This study is not meant to be an exhaustive search for all possible SNPs that are associated with the age of diagnosis of prostate cancer in individuals with African genetic ancestry. Our study is also limited by the small number of available observations relative to those often found in many genome-wide association studies, which can have tens or hundreds of thousands of individuals. However, we were able to extract information that is likely robust by employing a cross-validated search for those SNPs that specifically add value to the performance of PHS46, and not simply independently associated with prostate cancer. Future analysis will include a more detailed analysis of the 8q24 region, including SNPs that are imputed using TOPMed reference panels. We also note that no SNP score, including PHS46 and PHS46+African, has been shown to discriminate men at risk of aggressive prostate cancer from those at risk of indolent prostate cancer. Finally, the performance metrics reported in this study may be biased by the leakage of information across cross-validated folds of the data when identifying those SNPs to include in the final African-PHS model. This bias is expected to be similar for all SNPs and should not have influenced selection of the three SNPs included in the final model over those not selected.

In conclusion, we identified three SNPs (rs76229939, rs74421890, and rs5013678) on 8q24 that substantially improved the performance of PHS46 in a dataset of men with African genetic ancestry. The addition of these SNPs to the polygenic risk score substantially improved its association with age at diagnosis of prostate cancer in Africans, to levels comparable with those found in Europeans.
Ethics Statement

All contributing studies were approved by the relevant ethics committees; written informed consent was obtained from the study participants\textsuperscript{21}. The present analyses used de-identified data from the PRACTICAL consortium and have been approved by the review board at the corresponding authors’ institution.
Conflict of Interest:

All authors declare no personal or financial conflicts of interest for the submitted work except as follows. CCF is a scientific consultant for CorTechs Labs, Inc. RE reports honorarium as a speaker for GU-ASCO meeting in San Francisco Jan 2016, support from Janssen, and honorarium as speaker for RMH-FR meeting Nov 2017. She reports honorarium as a speaker at the University of Chicago invited talk May 2018, and an educational honorarium by Bayer & Ipsen to attend GU Connect “Treatment sequencing for mCRPC patients within the changing landscape of mHSPC” at ESMO Barcelona, Sep 2019. She reports member of external Expert Committee on the Prostate Dx Advisory Panel. OAA received speaker’s honorarium from Lundbeck, and is a consultant for Healthlytix. AMD reports that he was a founder and holds equity in CorTechs Labs Inc., and serves on its Scientific Advisory Board. He is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of Human Longevity, Inc., and the Mohn Medical Imaging and Visualization Centre. He received funding through research grants from GE Healthcare to UCSD. The terms of these arrangements have been reviewed by and approved by UCSD in accordance with its conflict of interest policies. TMS reports honoraria, outside of the present work, from: University of Rochester, Varian Medical Systems, Multimodal Imaging Servcies Corporation; and WebMD. He reports research funding from NIH/NBIB, U.S. Department of Defense, Radiological Society of North America, American Society for Radiation Oncology, and Varian Medical Systems.
Data Availability Statement

The data used in this work were obtained from the Prostate Cancer Association Group to Investigate Cancer Associated Alterations in the Genome (PRACTICAL) consortium. Readers who are interested in accessing the data must first submit a proposal to the Data Access Committee. If the reader is not a member of the consortium, their concept form must be sponsored by a principal investigator (PI) of one of the PRACTICAL consortium member studies. If approved by the Data Access Committee, PIs within the consortium, each of whom retains ownership of their data submitted to the consortium, can then choose to participate in the specific proposal. In addition, portions of the data are available for request from dbGaP (database of Genotypes and Phenotypes) which is maintained by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI):


Anyone can apply to join the consortium. The eligibility requirements are listed here: http://practical.icr.ac.uk/blog/?page_id=9. Joining the consortium would not guarantee access, as a proposal for access would still be submitted to the Data Access Committee, but there would be no need for a separate member sponsor. Readers may find information about application by using the contact information below:

Rosalind Eeles
Principal Investigator for PRACTICAL
Professor of Oncogenetics
Institute of Cancer Research (ICR)
Sutton, UK
Email: PRACTICAL@icr.ac.uk
URL: http://practical.icr.ac.uk
Tel: ++44 (0)20 8722 4094
References


Table Legends

Table 1. Characteristics of PHS46+African SNPs. RS-ID, chromosome and base-pair position (based on version 37), effect and reference alleles, bootstrap-estimated beta, and effect allele frequencies in aggregated Africans from 1000 Genomes (referenced from dbSNP) of the three SNPs selected for addition to PHS46.
Figure Legends

Figure 1 Comparison between PHS46 and PHS46+African. Mean hazard ratio metrics plotted for PHS46 and PHS46+African models in the African dataset. Improvements were observed in all performance metrics investigated. Error bars represent 95% confidence interval.
Appendix 1. Members of the PRACTICAL Consortium


¹Center for Genetic Epidemiology, Department of Preventive Medicine, Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California/Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, Los Angeles, CA 90015, USA
²Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH 44106-7219, USA
³Seidman Cancer Center, University Hospitals, Cleveland, OH 44106, USA.
⁴Centre for Cancer Genetic Epidemiology, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, University of Cambridge, Strangeways Research Laboratory, Cambridge CB1 8RN, UK
⁵The Institute of Cancer Research, London, SM2 5NG, UK
⁶Centre for Cancer Epidemiology, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, University of Cambridge, Strangeways Research Laboratory, Cambridge, UK
University of Cambridge, Department of Clinical Neurosciences, Stroke Research Group, R3, Box 83, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Cambridge CB2 0QQ, UK

Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics, National Cancer Institute, NIH, Bethesda, Maryland, 20892, USA

Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Karolinska Institute, SE-171 77 Stockholm, Sweden

Behavioral and Epidemiology Research Group, Research Program, American Cancer Society, 250 Williams Street, Atlanta, GA 30303, USA

Australian Prostate Cancer Research Centre-Qld, Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation and School of Biomedical Sciences, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane QLD 4059, Australia

Translational Research Institute, Brisbane, Queensland 4102, Australia

Australian Prostate Cancer Research Centre-Qld, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane; Prostate Cancer Research Program, Monash University, Melbourne; Dame Roma Mitchell Cancer Centre, University of Adelaide, Adelaide; Chris O'Brien Lifehouse and

Translational Research Institute, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden

Department of Applied Health Research, University College London, London, WC1E 7HB, UK

Centre for Cancer Genetic Epidemiology, Department of Oncology, University of Cambridge, Strangeways Laboratory, Worts Causeway, Cambridge, CB1 8RN, UK

Institute of Biomedicine, Kiinamylynkatu 10, FI-20014 University of Turku, Finland

Department of Medical Genetics, Genomics, Laboratory Division, Turku University Hospital, PO Box 52, 20521 Turku, Finland

Division of Nutritional Epidemiology, Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institutet, SE-171 77 Stockholm, Sweden

Department of Surgical Sciences, Uppsala University, 75185 Uppsala, Sweden

Division of Cancer Sciences, University of Manchester, Manchester Academic Health
London, John Vane Science Centre, Charterhouse Square, London, EC1M 6BQ, UK
40Cancer Epidemiology Division, Cancer Council Victoria, 615 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, VIC 3004, Australia
41Centre for Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne, Grattan Street, Parkville, VIC 3010, Australia
42Precision Medicine, School of Clinical Sciences at Monash Health, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria 3168, Australia
43Fundación Pública Galega Medicina Xenómica, Santiago De Compostela, 15706, Spain.
44Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria de Santiago de Compostela, Santiago De Compostela, 15706, Spain.
45Centro de Investigación en Red de Enfermedades Raras (CIBERER), Spain
46ISGlobal, Barcelona, Spain
47IMIM (Hospital del Mar Medical Research Institute), Barcelona, Spain
48Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), Barcelona, Spain
49CIBER Epidemiología y Salud Pública (CIBERESP), Madrid, Spain
50Channing Division of Network Medicine, Department of Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA 02184, USA
51Division of Public Health Sciences, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, Washington, 98109-1024, USA
52Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195, USA
53International Hereditary Cancer Center, Department of Genetics and Pathology, Pomeranian Medical University, Szczecin, Poland
54Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, 2200 Copenhagen, Denmark
55Department of Clinical Biochemistry, Herlev and Gentofte Hospital, Copenhagen University Hospital, Herlev, 2200 Copenhagen, Denmark
56Division of Clinical Epidemiology and Aging Research, German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), D-69120, Heidelberg, Germany
German Cancer Consortium (DKTK), German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), D-69120 Heidelberg, Germany

Division of Preventive Oncology, German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) and National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT), Im Neuenheimer Feld 460, 69120 Heidelberg, Germany

Humangenetik Tuebingen, Paul-Ehrlich-Str 23, D-72076 Tuebingen, Germany

The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, Department of Genitourinary Medical Oncology, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030, USA

Department of Genetics, Portuguese Oncology Institute of Porto (IPO-Porto), Porto, Portugal

Biomedical Sciences Institute (ICBAS), University of Porto, Porto, Portugal

Department of Population Sciences, Beckman Research Institute of the City of Hope, 1500 East Duarte Road, Duarte, CA 91010, 626-256-HOPE (4673)

Ghent University, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Basic Medical Sciences, Proeftuinstraat 86, B-9000 Gent

Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Department of Urology, University of Washington, 1959 NE Pacific Street, Box 356510, Seattle, WA 98195, USA

Institute of Human Genetics, University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, D-20246 Hamburg, Germany

Molecular Medicine Center, Department of Medical Chemistry and Biochemistry, Medical University of Sofia, Sofia, 2 Zdrave Str., 1431 Sofia, Bulgaria

Department of Oncology, Cross Cancer Institute, University of Alberta, 11560 University Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 1Z2

Division of Radiation Oncology, Cross Cancer Institute, 11560 University Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 1Z2

Molecular Endocrinology Laboratory, Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine, KU Leuven, BE-3000, Belgium

Division of Cancer Sciences, Manchester Cancer Research Centre, Faculty of Biology,
Medicine and Health, Manchester Academic Health Science Centre, NiHR Manchester Biomedical Research Centre, Health Innovation Manchester, University of Manchester, M13 9WL
73 Genomic Medicine Group, Galician Foundation of Genomic Medicine, Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria de Santiago de Compostela (IDIS), Complexo Hospitalario Universitario de Santiago, Servicio Galego de Saúde, SERGAS, 15706, Santiago de Compostela, Spain
74 University of California San Diego, Moores Cancer Center, La Jolla, CA 92037, USA
75 Department of Urology, Erasmus University Medical Center, 3015 CE Rotterdam, The Netherlands
76 Clinical Gerontology Unit, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ, UK
77 Division of Epidemiology, Department of Internal Medicine, University of Utah School of Medicine, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA
78 George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Salt Lake City, Utah 84148, USA
79 The University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XH
80 Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905, USA
81 Program in Genetic Epidemiology and Statistical Genetics, Department of Epidemiology, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, MA, USA
82 Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Public Health, Imperial College London, SW7 2AZ, UK
Appendix 2. Funding sources for the PRACTICAL consortium

CRUK and PRACTICAL consortium

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Information of the PRACTICAL consortium can be found at [http://practical.icr.ac.uk/](http://practical.icr.ac.uk/)

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CPDR
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Table 1. Characteristics of PHS46+African SNPs. RS-ID, chromosome and base-pair position (based on version 37), effect and reference alleles, bootstrap-estimated beta, and effect allele frequencies in aggregated Africans from 1000Genomes (referenced from dbSNP) of the three SNPs selected for addition to PHS46.

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