Mucin 5B promoter polymorphism is associated with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis but not with development of lung fibrosis in systemic sclerosis or sarcoidosis

Submitted by Emmanuel Lemoine on Tue, 02/24/2015 - 15:46

Titre: Mucin 5B promoter polymorphism is associated with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis but not with development of lung fibrosis in systemic sclerosis or sarcoidosis

Type de publication: Article de revue


Editeur: BMJ Publishing Group

Type: Article scientifique dans une revue à comité de lecture

Année: 2013

Langue: Anglais

Date: 2013

Numéro: 5

Pagination: 436 - 41

Volume: 68

Titre de la revue: Thorax

ISSN: 1468-3296

Mots-clés: Adolescent [16], Adult [17], Aged [18], Aged, 80 and over [19], Bronchoalveolar Lavage Fluid/chemistry [20], Disease Progression [21], Female [22], Genetic Predisposition to Disease [23], Genotype [24], Humans [25], Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis/complications/genetics/physiopathology [26], Male [27], Middle Aged [28], Mucin-5B/genetics/metabolism [29], Polymorphism, Genetic [30], Promoter Regions, Genetic [31], Pulmonary Fibrosis/complications/genetics/physiopathology [32], Risk Factors [33], Sarcoidosis/complications/genetics [34], Scleroderma, Systemic/complications/genetics [35], Vital Capacity/genetics [36], Young Adult [37]
BACKGROUND: A polymorphism (rs35705950) 3 kb upstream of MUC5B, the gene encoding Mucin 5 subtype B, has been shown to be associated with familial and sporadic idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF). We set out to verify whether this variant is also a risk factor for fibrotic lung disease in other settings and to confirm the published findings in a UK Caucasian IPF population. METHODS: Caucasian UK healthy controls (n=416) and patients with IPF (n=110), sarcoidosis (n=180) and systemic sclerosis (SSc) (n=440) were genotyped to test for association. The SSc and sarcoidosis cohorts were subdivided according to the presence or absence of fibrotic lung disease. To assess correlation with disease progression, time to decline in forced vital capacity and/or lung carbon monoxide transfer factor was used in the IPF and SSc groups, while a persistent decline at 4 years since baseline was evaluated in patients with sarcoidosis. RESULTS: A significant association of the MUC5B promoter single nucleotide polymorphism with IPF (p=2.04 x 10^-17; OR 4.90, 95% CI 3.42 to 7.03) was confirmed in this UK population. The MUC5B variant was not a risk factor for lung fibrosis in patients with SSc or sarcoidosis and did not predict more rapidly progressive lung disease in any of the groups. Rather, a trend for a longer time to decline in forced vital capacity was observed in patients with IPF. CONCLUSIONS: We confirm the MUC5B variant association with IPF. We did not observe an association with lung fibrosis in the context of SSc or sarcoidosis, potentially highlighting fundamental differences in genetic susceptibility, although the limited subgroup numbers do not allow a definitive exclusion of an association.
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