Genes for Freckles

To the Editor:

In their paper, reporting the mapping of a gene associated with a freckling phenotype (ephiledes) to 4q32–q34, Zhang and co-authors (Zhang et al, 2004) refer to work from Bastiaens (Bastiaens et al, 2001) reporting an association between melanocortin 1 receptor (MC1R) variants and freckles. Furthermore, they draw a distinction between the work of Bastiaens and their own, stating many of the patients in the former study had other associated phenotypes such as skin cancer. I write to point out that, prior to Bastiaens’ work, we had reported an association between MC1R and freckles in a group that was free from ascertainment bias due to skin cancer (Flanagan et al, 2000). Other workers have subsequently confirmed this relation (Duffy et al, 2004). There would appear—not surprisingly given the nature of the trait—to be more than one gene involved.

On a different note, Zhang and colleagues state that freckles are “cosmetically disfiguring”. Humanity has many faces, and in the parts of the world I am more familiar with, freckles are much sought after. My own anecdotal observations suggest freckles are increasingly common in the images of beauty projected by some cosmetic companies.

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Reference


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