Neuromyelitis optica is an HLA associated disease different from Multiple Sclerosis: a systematic review with meta-analysis

Marcos Papais Alvarenga¹,²,³, Luciana Ferreira do Carmo³, Claudia Cristina Ferreira Vasconcelos⁴, Marina Papais Alvarenga⁵, Helcio Alvarenga-Filho¹,³, Cleonice Alves de Melo Bento³, Carmen Lucia Antão Paiva³, Laura Leyva-Fernández⁶,⁵, Óscar Fernández⁶ & Regina Maria Papais-Alvarenga¹,²,³

Neuromyelitis Optica and Multiple Sclerosis are idiopathic inflammatory demyelinating diseases of the central nervous system that currently are considered distinct autoimmune diseases, so differences in genetic susceptibility would be expected. This study aimed to investigate the HLA association with Neuromyelitis Optica by a systematic review with meta-analysis. The STROBE instrument guided research paper assessments. Thirteen papers published between 2009 and 2020 were eligible. 568 Neuromyelitis Optica patients, 41.4% Asians, 32.4% Latin Americans and 26.2% Europeans were analyzed. Only alleles of the DRB1 locus were genotyped in all studies. Neuromyelitis Optica patients have 2.46 more chances of having the DRB1*03 allelic group than controls. Ethnicity can influence genetic susceptibility. The main HLA association with Neuromyelitis Optica was the DRB1*03:01 allele in Western populations and with the DPB1*05:01 allele in Asia. Differences in the Multiple Sclerosis and Neuromyelitis Optica genetic susceptibility was confirmed in Afro descendants. The DRB1*03 allelic group associated with Neuromyelitis Optica has also been described in other systemic autoimmune diseases.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and Neuromyelitis optica (NMO) are inflammatory and neurodegenerative diseases of the central nervous system, that preferentially affect young woman causing neurological dysfunctions and disability⁴. MS is the most frequent Idiopathic Inflammatory Demyelinating Diseases (IIDD), disseminated in time and space and a typical relapsing remitting clinical course. It has a peculiar geographical distribution, with a high prevalence in Caucasian of the Northern Hemisphere, and a very low prevalence in populations living in tropical regions⁵,⁶. NMO is a rare disease that occurs more frequently in Asians and Afro-descendants and is characterized, in most cases, by selective but not exclusive involvement of the optic nerve and spinal cord, also evolving with a relapsing remitting clinical course⁶.

It was not until the 90th decade that MS and NMO were recognized as distinct immune mediated diseases; NMO differs from MS in its demographic distribution, resonance magnetic images, morbidity, and pathogenesis⁵,⁶. Identifying a serum immunoglobulin G autoantibody class, the NMO-IgG, with high specificity.

¹Programa de Pós-Graduação em Neurologia, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), Rua Mariz e Barros 775, Rio de Janeiro, RJ 20270-004, Brazil. ²Departamento de Neurologia, Hospital Federal da Lagoa, Rua Jardim Botânico 501, Rio de Janeiro, RJ 22470-050, Brazil. ³Universidade Estácio de Sá (UNESA), Avenida Ayrton Senna, 2800, Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, RJ 22775-003, Brazil. ⁴Instituto de Investigación Biomédica de Málaga-IBIMA, UGCGeneecios, Hospital Regional Universitario de Málaga, Avenida de Carlos Haya sn, 29010 Málaga, Spain. ⁵Red Temática de Investigación Cooperativa: Red Española de Esclerosis Múltiple REEM (RD 16/0015/0010), Barcelona, Spain. ⁶Instituto de Investigación Biomédica de Málaga-IBIMA, Hospital Regional Universitario de Málaga, Avenida de Carlos Haya sn, 29010 Málaga, Spain. ²⁶email: regina_alvarenga@hotmail.com
for NMO, and not found in MS, strengthened the difference between these immune-mediated diseases. It has been shown that the NMO-IgG selectively binds to aquaporin-4 (AQP4), a water channel consisting of a transmembrane protein located at the terminal feet of the astrocytes in the blood–brain barrier. AQP4 is involved with the function and integrity of this barrier.6,9

NMO spectrum disorders (NMOSD) was coined to include all rare CNS syndromes where the NMO-IgG was found at different frequencies. The NMOSD comprises NMO and high-risk syndromes (HR-NMO) as bilateral or recurrent optic neuritis (BRON), longitudinally extensive transverse myelitis (LETM), ON or LETM with brainstem/encephalopathy or associated with other systemic autoimmune diseases and also Asian optic spinal Multiple Sclerosis (OSMS)10,11. Studies in Japan applying new laboratory techniques, identified the AQP4-IgG only in OSMS with longitudinally extensive spinal cord lesions (LESCLS), and since then, those cases are considered similar to NMO12,13. A new classification for NMOSD proposed by an international panel stratified the cases by the AQP4-Ab status (positive/unknown or negative) and considered OSMS with LESCLS similar to NMO14. A subset of NMO patients that were negative for AQP4-IgG showed positivity for antibodies against the myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein (MOG-IgG)15. Currently, NMO is defined as an astrocytopathy mediated by AQP4-IgG. MOG-IgG positive cases are related to a spectrum of demyelinating syndromes of the CNS denominated MOGADs16,17.

Although the etiology of the CNS's immune-mediated diseases remains unclear, the influence of environmental and genetic factors in the pathogenesis of MS is well recognized. The knowledge about the genetic bases of MS has been acquired in the last 40 years. The discovery of association between human leukocyte antigen (HLA) DRB1*15 allelic variants and MS, the identification of MS cluster in families, and the higher concordance rate in monozygotic twins (20–30%) than dizygotic twins (2–5%), and the high incidence in some ancestral groups irrespective of the geographic location, provided shreds of evidence to classify MS as a complex genetic disease, with moderate heritability, polygenic inheritance, and multifaceted gene-environment interaction16.

Considering that MS and NMO are distinct CNS immune-mediated diseases, differences in genetic susceptibility would be expected. Few data about the genetics of NMO are available. Familial aggregation is uncommon18,19, the occurrence in twins is exceptional20, but the major distribution of the disease in Asian and African descendants4 suggests a genetic influence.

In Japan, differences in genetic susceptibility between Asian and Western-type MS were described in the 1990s21,22. In Western countries, a possible difference between the HLA allelic profile of MS and NMO was made in a case study of six Canadian aborigines initially diagnosed with MS; however, further necropsy demonstrated NMO characteristics. Besides, one patient had HLA DRB1*15, and none of the patients had the HLA DQB1 type that were previously reported with high frequency among MS patients23.

The first case–control study investigating the HLA Class I and Class II DR, DQ, DP alleles in French Caucasians with NMO, MS, and Healthy Controls (HC) was published in 2009. An association of HLA Class II DRB1*03 allelic group with NMO was described, and the analysis of the distribution of HLA-DRB1 showed significant differences between the NMO and the MS groups24.

The main objective of this systematic review was to analyze studies investigating the HLA association with NMO. Another goal was to verify possible differences between the genetic susceptibility of NMO and MS which would favour the distinction between the CNS's immune demyelinating diseases.

Results
Eligible studies. The search strategy determined in the methodology and executed until March 31, 2020, identified 35 articles in the LILACS, SciELO, and PubMed databases. Papers found in more than one database were considered only once, thus totaling 32 articles. The PRISMA Statement flowchart of information is shown in Fig. 1. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 13 articles were selected for this review, as shown in Table 125–36. The eligible studies analyzed European Caucasians (France24, Spain27, Denmark29 and the Netherlands36), Mexico mestizos34, Afro Caribbean26, Afro Brazilians (Ribeirão Preto25, Rio de Janeiro33), White Brazilians (South Region35) and Asians (South China28, South Japan30, India31 and Israel32). There was agreement among the evaluators about the selection of articles.

Participants. Table 2 indicates the participants’ characteristics and the description of the genotyped HLA DR/DQ alleles. A total of 568 NMO patients were genotyped: 41.4% Asians, 32.4% Latin Americans and 26.2% European Caucasians. 502 cases full filled the NMO diagnostic criteria10, 54 had high-risk NMO syndromes, and 12 were classified as NMOSD31. The NMO-IgG was tested in 314 patients in seven studies, and 164 (52.2%) tested positive for this antibody. Other six studies selected 225 cases, which also tested positive for the antibody. Overall, 389 (68.5%) of the NMO patients were positive for NMO-IgG.

HC groups, composed of persons showing no demyelinating disease, varied from 28 to 5514 participants from the same geographic region. The susceptibility for MS was analyzed in eight eligible studies that described the frequency and association of the HLA DRB1 alleles, for comparison, among the MS groups ranging from 29 to 300 MS patients24–27,29,31,33. One study also analyzed the HLA association with MOG-IgG disorders and NMO for comparison36.

The number of alleles genotyped in the DRB1 locus varied from 7 to 30, 6–12 in DQA1 locus, and 5–19 in DQB1 locus. Five studies used a high-resolution technique for typing HLA alleles in all studied loci.

HLA association with NMO. The case–control studies’ results comparing the allelic frequency of the DRB1*03 allele group in NMO with local controls are shown in Table 3.

In Europe, the association of DRB1*03 allele group in NMO was found in France24 (NMO-22.02% vs controls-11.0%, p=0.02) and in the Netherlands36 (NMO-51.2% vs controls-27.6%, p=0.02).
In Latin America, DRB1*03 allelic group were associated with NMO in Caribbean Islands (NMO—26.2% vs controls—13%, \( p_{CB} = 0.045 \)), in Ribeirão Preto city (São Paulo, Brazil) (NMO—24.1% vs controls 8.9%, \( p^{RF} = 0.0401 \)), in Mexico (NMO vs 14% vs controls 5%, \( p = 0.03 \)) and in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) (NMO—41.5% vs controls 22.2%, \( p^{RF} = 0.007 \)).

In Asia, an association of the DRB1*03 allelic group with NMO was found in India (NMO 11% vs controls 2%, \( p = 0.00009 \)).

A meta-analysis with the results of the thirteen studies that investigated the association of the DRB1*03:01 allele with NMO is summarized at the forest plot (Fig. 2), indicating that patients with NMO are 2.46 times more likely to have the DRB1*03 allele group than controls (95% CI 2.01—3.01).

Table 4 describes the results of case controls studies showing the association of the HLA class II alleles (others than DRB1*03 allele group) and HLA class I alleles.

The DPB1*05:01 allele was associated with NMO in China (NMO—90.0% vs controls—55.61%, \( p^{B} = 0.018 \)) and in Japan (NMO—85.7% vs controls—65.4%, \( p = 0.0074 \)).

Although with low allele frequency, other HLA class I and II alleles were also associated with NMO as shown in Table 4. Most of these alleles were identified at the DRB1 locus: DRB1*16:02 (China, Japan and South Brazil), DRB1*01:02 (Rio de Janeiro), DRB1*10 (Mexico), and DRB1*04:05 (South Brazil).

The association of class I HLA A*01 and B*08 with the NMO has only been described in Caucasians from the Netherlands.

**HLA susceptibility in other CNS immune mediated diseases.** Eight of the 13 case-controls studies eligible for this review also investigated the frequency of DRB1 alleles in MS patients and Controls. An associa-
tion with the *HLA DRB1*15 allele group was found in Caucasians from France, and Denmark, Latin Americans from the Caribbean, Brazil (SP and RJ), and Asians from India showed at Table 5.

Only one study investigated the genetic susceptibility of MOGAD in Dutch patients. No association was found with HLA alleles class I or class II.

**Comparison between the NMO genetic susceptibility versus MS.** The frequency of the *DRB1* alleles associated with MS or NMO was compared in eight populations as shown at Table 5 and illustrated in Fig. 3. Two studies showed a significant difference between the frequency of the *DRB1*03 allele group and the *DRB1*15:01 allele (Ribeirão Preto (SP))—*DRB1*03: 24.07%—NMO vs 8.62%—MS, *p*= 0.0254; *DRB1*15: 3.7%—NMO vs 37.9%—MS, *p* ≤ 0.0001 and Rio de Janeiro—*DRB1*03:01 allele is associated with NMO regardless of the NMO-IgG status in Brazilian patients from Rio de Janeiro.

The *HLA DRB1*03 allele was associated with NMO of the NMO-IgG status in Brazilian patients.

**Discussion**

The scientific evidence brought by the medical literature in this systematic review confirms that NMO is an associated HLA disease, thus classified because it occurs more frequently in individuals expressing certain *DRB1* or *DPB1* alleles. Evidence of the relationship between the HLA system and the genetic susceptibility has led to numerous studies concerning autoimmune etiopathogenesis.

The HLA complex maps to the short arm of chromosome 6 and provides instructions for making a group of related proteins known as HLA antigens. The human MHC is divided into three regions. The class I region contains the classical *HLA-A*, *HLA-B*, and *HLA-C* genes that encode the heavy chains of these class I molecules, expressed on the surface of most nucleated cells. The class II region contains *HLA-DR*, *HLA-DQ*, and *HLA-DP* genes, each encoding groups of antigens whose expression is limited to antigen-presenting cells (APC): B-lymphocytes, dendritic cells, monocytes, macrophages, endothelial cells, and activated T-lymphocytes. Class I molecules identify cells that are changed, bind to endogenous antigens in the target cells, and present the processed peptides from these antigens to CD8+ T cells (cytotoxic/suppressive), so the changed target cells can be killed by these lymphocytes. Class II molecules on the APC bind to extracellular exogenous proteins, and process and present them to CD4+ T lymphocytes (helper/inducer), initiating an immune response. The Class III region contains loci responsible for 21-hydroxylase, complement components, hormones, MIC molecules, and other signaling molecules such as tumor necrosis factors (TNFs) and heat shock proteins, and is not considered a part of the HLA complex. Nevertheless, it is located within the HLA region, and subject to similar genetic control mechanisms to the HLA genes. As most of the genes located in the MHC complex encode molecules that have...
| Studies       | NMO/NMOSD                                                                 | Genotyped HLA alleles at the DR and DQ loci                                                                 |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|              | Studies subjects NMO/NMOSD Methodology and frequency of NMO-IgG/AQP-4 Ab positivity Analysis method DRB1 locus DQA1 locus DQB1 locus |
|              | 45 (39 NMO, 2 RON, 4 LETM)                                               | IIF 24/45–53.3% (18/39 NMO, 6/6 NMOSD tested)                                                             | High resolution 9 alleles 01, 03, 04, 07, 08–9, 10, 11, 12, 13–14, 15, 16 | 7 alleles 01:01, 01:02, 01:03–04, 02:01, 03:01, 04:01, 05:01 | 10 alleles 02:01, 03:01, 03:02, 03:03–04, 04:02, 05:02, 05:03–02, 06:02, 06:01–03, 06:04 |
| France       | 161 310                                                                  | Low resolution 13 alleles 01, 03, 04, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 | 15 alleles 01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 | 10 alleles 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 |
| Brazil (SP)  | 29 28                                                                    | IIF 100%                                                                                                 | Medium resolution 13 alleles 01, 03, 04, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 | 10 alleles 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 |
| French West  | 163 150                                                                  | Not specified technique 13/29–44.8% (29/42 tested)                                                          | Medium resolution 15 alleles 01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 | 10 alleles 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 |
| India        | 30 93                                                                    | IIF 100%                                                                                                 | High resolution 26 alleles 01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 | 10 alleles 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 |
| Japan        | 41 (35 NMO, 5 BRON, 1 LETM)                                               | IIF and CBA 16/22–72.7%                                                                                  | Medium and high Resolution 13 alleles 01, 03, 04, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 | 6 alleles 01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 |
| South China  | 53 93                                                                    | IFF 100%                                                                                                 | Medium resolution 13 alleles 01, 03, 04, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 | 10 alleles 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 |
| Denmark      | 42 200                                                                   | IIF and CBA 16/22–72.7%                                                                                  | Medium and high Resolution 13 alleles 01, 03, 04, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 | 6 alleles 01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 |
| Japan        | 77 (65 NMO) 12 NMOSD                                                      | CBA 100%                                                                                                 | High resolution 28 alleles 01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 | 10 alleles 01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 |
| India        | 93 (61 NMO, 20 RON, 11 LETM, 1 RTD)                                       | CBA 44/93–47.3%                                                                                          | Low and high resolution 10 alleles 01, 03, 04, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 01, 15, 02 | 19 alleles 02:01, 02:02, 03:01, 03:02, 03:03, 03:04, 03:05, 03:10, 04:02, 05:01, 05:02, 05:03, 06:01, 06:02, 06:03, 06:04, 06:09, 06:10 |
| Israel       | 35 74                                                                    | ELISA and CBA 17/35–48.57%                                                                               | Low and High resolution 23 alleles 01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 01, 15, 02 | 19 alleles 02:01, 02:02, 03:01, 03:02, 03:03, 03:04, 03:05, 03:10, 04:02, 05:01, 05:02, 05:03, 06:01, 06:02, 06:03, 06:04, 06:09, 06:10 |
a high polymorphism, but low frequency of recombination, the allelic variation between them can make them good markers associated with either protection or susceptibility.17

The discovery of the association between HLA allelic variants and susceptibility to MS was brought by studies conducted in Denmark in the 1970s18. It has been suggested that individuals could develop MS if they inherited certain HLA alleles that would make them vulnerable to environmental stimuli, initiating a chain of immunological events that would attack the myelin sheath. More than 500 studies worldwide using genotyping techniques confirmed a strong association of MS with the DRB1*15:01, DQA1*01:02 and DQB1*06:02 haplotype.17,38

This systematic review analyzed 13 case–control studies published from 2009 to 2020 that investigated the HLA association with NMO in populations with different ethnic background. Genotyping, with low, medium, or high resolution, was the method used in all eligible studies in the laboratory investigation of HLA class I alleles (A and B) and HLA class II alleles (DRB1, DQA1, DQB1, and DPB1). Only alleles of the DRB1 locus were genotyped in all studies. All studies genotyped alleles of the DRB1 locus ranging from seven to 30, the number of alleles investigated (Table 2).

The DRB1*03/*03:01 were the most frequently found allelic group and allele, respectively in NMO groups with marked differences according to the ethnic background (Table 3). The allelic frequency (2n) of the DRB1*03 or its subtype *03:01 varied from 10 to 26.2% and the phenotypic frequency (n) varied from 2 to 51.2%. The allelic frequency in Western populations was 14% in Mexican Mestizos, 16.7% in South Brazil, 20.0% in Rio de Janeiro, 21.3% in Brazilian mulattos from São Paulo to 26.2% in Afro Caribbean from West French Islands. The phenotypic frequency (n) was 41.5% in Rio de Janeiro, 47.6% in Afro Caribbean and 51.2% in Netherlands, what means that in Dutch, most NMO patients carried alleles of the DRB1*03 allele group.

The lowest frequencies of the HLA-DRB1*03/HLA-DRB1*03:01 allele, was found in Asian populations. In Muslim Arabs from Israel19, the allelic frequency (2n) was 10% (like NMO and HC), and in India20, it was 11%. The phenotypic frequency (n) was 2% in South Japan21 (2.6%) and 23% in China22 (23.3%).

To compare the DRB1*03 allele group’s association, we used a meta-analysis based on the OR and the confidence interval (95% CI) described in the thirteen studies. The general evaluation showed heterogeneity of the OR among the studies of only 3.3% (I² = 3.28%; p = 0.41). The forest plot (Fig. 2) shows the summary measure of OR equal to 2.46 (95% CI 2.01–3.01). That is, patients with NMO are 2.46 times more likely to have the DRB1*03 allele group than controls. In the West, studies are not heterogeneous (I² = 0.00%; p = 0.92), with the measure of

### Table 2. Subjects collected data and genotyped HLA Class II alleles. NMO NeuromyelitisOptica, NMOSD NeuromyelitisOpticaSpectrum Disorders, MS Multiple Sclerosis, IgG Immunoglobulin G, AQP-4 Aquaporin-4, HLA Human LeukocyteAntigen, RON RecurrentOpticNeuritis, BRON Bilateral RecurrentOptic Neuritis, LETM Longitudinal ExtensiveTransverseMyelitis, SP São Paulo, RJ Rio de Janeiro, IIF indirectimmunofluorescenceassay, CBA cell-based assay, ELISA enzyme-linkedimmunosorbentassay. Data not described.

| Studies                | NMO | MS  | Controls | Methodology and frequency of NMO- IgG/AQP-4 Ab positivity | Analysis method resolution | DRB1 locus | DQA1 locus | DQB1 locus |
|------------------------|-----|-----|----------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Brazil (RJ)33          | 65  | 94  | 100      | IIF 25/49–51% (49/65 NMO tested)                         | High resolution          | 30 alleles | *01:01, *01:02, *03:01, *04:01, *04:02, *04:03, *04:04, *04:05, *07:01, *08:01, *08:02, *08:03, *08:04, *09:01, *10:01, *11:01, *11:02, *11:03, *11:04, *12:01, *13:01, *13:02, *13:03, *14:01, *14:02, *15:01, *15:02, *15:03, *16:01, *16:02 | 12 alleles | *01:01, *01:02, *03:01, *03:02, *04:01, *04:03, *05:01/3/5, *06:01 | 16 alleles |
| Mexico34               | 35  | 99  | Not specified technique 100% | Medium resolution | 13 alleles | *01, *03, *04, *07, *08, *09, *10, *11, *12, *13, *14, *15, *16 | 7 alleles | *03:01, *04:05, *10:01, *16:02, *01:01, *07:01, *03:02 | 6 alleles |
| South Brazil35         | 15  | 252 | IIF 100% | High resolution | 7 alleles | *03:01, *04:05, *10:01, *16:02, *01:01, *07:01, *03:02 | 17 alleles | *01, *03, *04, *07, *08, *09, *10, *11, *12, *13, *14, *15, *16, DR18, DRB3, DRB4, DRB5 | 7 alleles |
| Netherlands36          | 41  | 5.514 | CBA 100% | Medium resolution | 17 alleles | *01, *03, *04, *07, *08, *09, *10, *11, *12, *13, *14, *15, *16, DR18, DRB3, DRB4, DRB5 | 7 alleles | *2, *4, *5, *6, DQ7, DQ8, DQ9 | 7 alleles |

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-80535-3
Studies | HLA DRB1 | NMO | Controls | OR | CI | p value | Allelic frequency (2n) or Phenotypic frequency (n) | AQP-4 Ab (+) | AQP-4 Ab (-) | OR | CI | p value
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
France (2n) | "03 | 22 | 11 | 2.32 | 1.32–4.04 | 0.02 | 27 | 16 | 3.08 | 1.52–6.27 | 0.01 | 1.56 | 0.67–3.63 | p^2 NS
Brazil (SP) (2n) | "03 | 24.1 | 8.9 | 3.23 | 1.07–9.82 | 0.04 | 26.9 | 25 | 2.46 | 0.82–6.61 | p^2 NS | 2.22 | 0.81–5.58 | p^2 NS
French West Indies (2n) | "03 | 26.2 | 13 | 2.4 | 1.31–4.28 | 0.045 | 13 | 9 | 1.26 | 0.69–2.34 | p^2 NS | 5.71 | 1.85–17.34 | p^2 NS
Spain (2n) | "03 | 20.4 | 10.9 | 2.10 | 0.95–4.64 | p^2 NS | 24 | 16 | 1.79 | 0.89–3.62 | p^2 NS | 1.05 | 0.39–2.8 | p^2 NS
South China (n) | "03:01 | 23.3 | 13.2 | b | Not specified | p^2 NS | 24 | 16 | 1.79 | 0.89–3.62 | p^2 NS | 1.05 | 0.39–2.8 | p^2 NS
Denmark (2n) | "03 | 21 | 15 | 1.48 | 0.81–2.7 | p^2 NS | 24 | 16 | 1.79 | 0.89–3.62 | p^2 NS | 1.05 | 0.39–2.8 | p^2 NS
Japan (n) | "03:01 | 2.6 | 0.5 | b | Not specified | p^2 NS | 24 | 16 | 1.79 | 0.89–3.62 | p^2 NS | 1.05 | 0.39–2.8 | p^2 NS
India (2n) | "03 | 11 | 2 | 5.69 | 2.39–13.5 | 0.009 | 13 | b | 9.23 | 2.62–32.46 | p^2 0.009 | b | b | b | b | b | b | b | b
Israel (2n) | "03:01 | 10 | 10.1 | b | Not specified | p^2 NS | 8.82 | 9.38 | b | b | p^2 NS | b | b | p^2 NS | b | b | b | b | b | b | b | b
Brazil (RJ) (n) | "03:01 | 41.5 | 22 | 2.52 | 1.27–4.99 | 0.007 | 44 | 50 | 2.79 | 1.11–6.99 | p^2 0.026 | 3.54 | 1.4–8.98 | p^2 0.006
Mexico (2n) | "03 | 14 | 5 | 2.8 | 1.05–7.6 | p^2 0.03 | 0.007 | 9 | 16 | 0.59 | 0.26–1.33 | p^2 14.01
South Brazil (2n) | "03:01 | 16.7 | 56 | 3.4 | 1.21–9.55 | p^2 NS | 24 | 16 | 1.79 | 0.89–3.62 | p^2 NS | 1.05 | 0.39–2.8 | p^2 NS
Netherlands (n) | "03 | 51.2 | 27.6 | 2.75 | 1.5–5.04 | p^2 0.02 | 0.007 | 30 | 61 | 0.49 | 0.26–0.92 | p^2 3.99

Table 3. Case–control studies that investigated the association of HLA DRB1*03 allelic group and DRB1*03:01 allele in NMO groups. NMO, Neuromyelitis Optica; IgG, Immunoglobulin G; AQP-4, Aquaporin-4; OR, Odds Ratio; CI, Confidence Interval; p^C, p corrected by Fisher's exact test; p^B, p corrected by Bonferroni method; p^Y, p corrected by Yates method; p^S corrected by Sidak method; SP, São Paulo; RJ, Rio de Janeiro. a After stratification for AQP4 positivity no significant differences were observed between NMO subgroups and controls. b Data not described.

OR equal to 2.38 (95% CI 1.90–2.97), but in Asia the result of the meta-analysis showed a heterogeneity of 67% (I^2 = 66.91%; p = 0.0073). The results of the case–control studies comparing the allelic frequency of the DRB1*03 allele group in NMO with local controls also varied according to the ethnic background. In Caucasian populations, the association of DRB1*03 allelic group in NMO, firstly described in French Caucasians, was only confirmed in the Netherlands (NMO: 51.2% vs controls: 27.6%, p^2 = 0.007). In Spain, Denmark, and in the southern region of Brazil (where 80% of the participants are of European ancestry), such association has not been demonstrated. However, in Latin American populations, with a high admixed genetic background, DRB1*03 allelic group was associated with NMO in Afro Caribbean populations (NMO: 26.2% vs controls: 13%, p^2 = 0.045), in Mulattoes from Ribeirão Preto, (NMO: 24.1% vs controls: 8.9%, p^2 = 0.001), and in Mestizos of Mexico (NMO: 14% vs controls: 5%, p = 0.03). Furthermore, in Rio de Janeiro, where 70% of the population are Afro descendants, the DRB1*03:01 allele was associated with NMO (NMO: 41.5% vs controls: 22.2%, p^2 = 0.007).

In Asia, despite the low frequency of DRB1*03 allele group, an association with NMO was confirmed in India (NMO 11% vs controls 2%, p = 0.00009). However, no association with this allele and NMO was found in either Muslim Arabs from Israel or in patients from Japan or China.

The strongest association with NMO in Asians was identified with the DPB1*05:01 allele in China (NMO—90.0% vs controls—55.61%, p^2 = 0.018) and in Japan (NMO—85.7% vs controls—65.4%, p = 0.0074) confirming initial studies in Japanese patients with OSMS. No association was found in Caucasians from Western Countries (France and South Brazil) with DPB1*05:01 allele and NMO. There are no published data on the association of alleles of the DP locus in NMO patients with African ancestry.

The ethnicity can influence genetic susceptibility. The frequencies of DPB1*05:01 allele group in NMO stratified according to the NMO-IgG status (positive or negative) was also investigated in five studies (Table 3). In French Caucasians, the DRB1*03 allelic group was associated only with the NMO IgG-positive subgroup. A combined analysis in cases from Spain and France would be helpful to better understand the genetic mechanisms underlying the disease.
Figure 2. Meta-analysis: association of DRB1*03 allelic group with NMO. Comparison of DRB1*03 allele group association using meta-analysis based on the OR and the confidence interval (95% CI) described in the thirteen studies. The forest plot shows the summary measure of OR equal to 2.46 (95% CI 2.01–3.01). That is, patients with neuromyelitis optica are 2.46 times more likely to have the DRB1*03 allele group than controls. In the West, studies are not heterogeneous (I² = 0.00%; p = 0.92), with the measure of OR equal to 2.38 (95% CI 1.90–2.97), but in Asia the result of the meta-analysis showed a heterogeneity of 67% (I² = 66.91%; p = 0.02).

Table 4. Case control studies showing association with NMO of HLA class II alleles (other than DRB1*03 allele group) and HLA class I alleles. NMO, Neuromyelitis Optica; OR, Odds Ratio; CI, Confidence Interval; p<sub>F</sub>, p corrected by Fisher's exact test; p<sub>B</sub>, p corrected by Bonferroni method; p<sub>Y</sub>, p corrected by Yates method; p<sub>S</sub>, corrected by Sidak method; SP, São Paulo; RJ, Rio de Janeiro.

(NMO-AQP4 positive—25% vs controls—10.81%, OR = 2.74, CI 1.58–4.77, p<sub>B</sub> ≤ 0.0008) confirmed the French results. In India<sup>31</sup>, the DRB1*03 allele group's association only persisted after stratification for AQP4 positivity. However, in Rio de Janeiro<sup>33</sup>, the DRB1*03:01 allele was associated with NMO regardless of the NMO-IgG
Studies & Allelic frequency (2n) % & MS vs controls & OR & CI & p value & Allelic frequency (2n) % & MS vs controls & OR & CI & p value  

| Studies       | France24 | 27  | 12   | 2.79 | 2.01–3.89 | *p* < 0.0008 | Brazil (RJ)33 | 33  | 15.4 | 4.5  | 4.397 | 1.88–10.30  | *p* < 0.0004 | India31 | 31  | 21   | 13  | 1.62 | 1.01–2.67 | *p* NS |
|---------------|----------|-----|------|------|-----------|--------------|---------------|-----|------|------|------|------------|-------------|---------|-----|------|------|------|------------|-------------|---------|-----|------|------|------|------------|-------------|---------|-----|------|------|------|----------|
|               | Brazil (SP)25 | 37.9 | 12.5 | 4.28 | 1.65–11.10 | *p* 0.0024 |               |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |
|               | French West Indies26 | 24.8 | 13   | 2.21 | 1.45–3.36 | *p* < 0.0015 |               |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |
|               | Spain30 | 18.6 | 12.5 | 1.61 | 1.12–2.32 | *p* NS       |               |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |
|               | China22 | 22.6 | 21.5 | 1.17 | 1.01–2.75 | *p* NS       |               |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |
|               | Denmark29 | 35  | 17   | 2.61 | 1.56–4.41 | *p* 0.0027   |               |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |
|               | India31 | 21  | 13   | 1.62 | 1.01–2.67 | *p* 0.003    |               |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |
|               | Brazil (RJ)33 | 15.4 | 4.5  | 4.397 | 1.88–10.31 | *p* 0.001    |               |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |              |         |     |      |      |      |            |

**Table 5.** Susceptibility in MS and comparison of NMO and MS groups regarding frequency of DRB1*15 and DRB1*03 allelic groups. MS, Multiple Sclerosis; NMO, Neuromyelitis Optica; OR, Odds Ratio; CI, Confidence Interval; *p*, *p* corrected by Fisher's exact test; #p, *p* corrected by Bonferroni method; NS, not significant. *Data not described.*

Status. Identification of the NMO-IgG antibody represented a milestone in the knowledge of NMO and related diseases. However, the detection of this antibody showed to be variable according to the population and the laboratory method used. The frequency of NMO-IgG ranged from 44.8 to 72.7% in the studies reviewed here. In the absence of a biological marker, the subgroup NMO IgG-negative may unduly include cases of classic MS, cases of spinal optic MS and cases of MOGAD, so the results on genetic susceptibility in these series need to be interpreted carefully.

The second goal was to verify possible differences between the genetic susceptibility of NMO and other immune-mediated diseases of the CNS.

Eight studies selected for this review, while focusing primarily on the HLA association with NMO, also looked at MS's genetic susceptibility (data shown in Table 5). The strongest association of the DRB1*15 allelic group with MS worldwide was confirmed in six of the eight studies (Caucasians from France24 and Denmark29, Latin Americans from the Caribbean26, Brazil-SP25 and Brazil-RJ33 and Asians from India31). The DRB1*15 allelic group was not associated with MS in Spanish Caucasians30 and Asians from South China28.

Differences in the frequency of the DRB1*15 allelic group (MS) and the DRB1*03 allelic group (associated with NMO) were investigated in these eight populations, as illustrated in Fig. 3. In Non-Caucasian populations from Caribbean Islands26 and India31, a significant difference was found in the frequency of the HLA DRB1*15:01 DRB1*03 but no significant HLA association was found in MOG-IgG–seropositive patients. Only one study in the Dutch population with European ancestry36 investigated HLA class I and class II alleles in NMO/SD and MOGAD diseases. The susceptibility for NMO was strongly associated with the HLA-A*01, B*08, and DRB1*03 but no significant HLA association was found in MOG-IgG–seropositive patients.

Lincoln et al.40 investigating the epistatic effect between the DQA1, DRB1 and DQB1 alleles and their association with MS drew attention to the possibility that the HLA-associated diseases are more haplotypal than allelic. DR/DQ haplotypes in NMO, MS, and controls were only investigated in the population of Rio de Janeiro35 (data shown in Table 6). Among 29 haplotypes, eight were associated with either NMO or MS. The DRB1*03:01-DQA1*05:01/3:5–DQB1*02:01 was the most frequent haplotype (20%) associated with NMO. The haplotype DRB1*15:01–DQA1*01:02-DQB1*06:02 was associated with MS. Therefore, the significant difference in the NMO and MS groups confirmed haplotypal differences in the genetic susceptibility.

Genetic interactions of the DRB1*03:01–DQA1*05:01/3:5–DQB1*02:01 haplotype and DRB1 alleles have been described in systemic autoimmune diseases and in organ-specific immune-mediated diseases with the involvement of autoantibodies against extra and intracellular antigens. Some of these diseases occur more frequently in patients with NMO than in the general population44.
Data from five series of NMO patients here reviewed corroborate these data. Other autoimmune diseases occurred in 6.1%33, 14.6%29, 18.2%27–26.735–33.3%24. Overall, 23 autoimmune diseases were identified, the most frequent being Hashimoto`s thyroiditis (n = 7), Sjögren Syndrome (SS) (n = 4), Diabetes Mellitus Type 1 (T1DM) (n = 3), myasthenia gravis (n = 2), rheumatoid arthritis (RA) (n = 2), anti-phospholipid antibody syndrome (n = 2), ulcerative colitis (n = 1), celiac disease (n = 1) and Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) (n = 1). Two cases of cancer in association with NMO were also described (lung and breast).

Genetic factors have been suggested to explain the association between systemic autoimmune diseases and NMO. One possibility would be the HLA genes related to humoral immunity are involved in the regulation of autoimmune functions in those immune-mediated diseases. The DRB1*03:01–DQA1*05:01/3/5–DQB1*02:01 haplotype is associated with T1DM42, SLE, SS31,44. The DRB1*03 allele group is associated with SLE, Autoimmune
### Table 6. Haplotypes identified in association with NMO and MS, and comparison of NMO and MS groups.

| Haplotypes | Allelic frequency (2n) | NMO vs controls | MS vs controls | NMO vs MS |
|------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
|            | DRB1 | DQA1 | DQB1 | NMO | Control | MS | OR | CI | p<sub>f</sub> | OR | CI | p<sub>f</sub> | OR | CI | p<sub>f</sub> |
| *01:02     | *01:01     | *05:01      | 3.1   | 0   | 0.5     | 1.03 | 1.001–1.06 | 0.02 | 1.005 | 0.995–1.02 | 0.49 | 5.94 | 0.66–53.7 | 0.16 |
| *03:01     | *05:01/3/5 | *02:01      | 20    | 11  | 6.4     | 0.57 | 0.15–2.18 | 0.54 | 2.23  | 0.93–5.35 | 0.07 | 0.25  | 0.07–0.89 | 0.02 |
| *04:01     | *03:01     | *03:02      | 2.3   | 4   | 8.5     | 5.63 | 1.15–27.6 | 0.03 | 0.53  | 0.05–5.89 | 1.00 | 10.64 | 1.29–87.6 | 0.009 |
| *10:01     | *01:04/5   | *05:01      | 5.4   | 1   | 0.5     | 0.44 | 0.17–11.2 | 0.08 | 0.40  | 0.17–0.93 | 0.03 | 1.09  | 0.37–3.22 | 0.88 |
| *11:01     | *03:01     | *03:01      | 4.6   | 10  | 4.3     | 3.11 | 0.28–36.4 | 0.56 | 7.696 | 0.94–63.2 | 0.03 | 0.40  | 0.08–1.98 | 0.32 |
| *13:03     | *03:01     | *05:01/3/5  | 1.5   | 0.5 | 3.7     | 1.57 | 0.15–2.18 | 0.54 | 4.38  | 1.95–9.84 | 0.00 | 0.13  | 0.04–0.44 | 0.01 |

### Polyglanulard Syndrome, and Graves' Disease. The DQB1*04:02 allele is associated with primary biliary cirrhosis, with T1DM and juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Lichen planus, RA, and ovarian cancer are associated with DRB1*10 and invasive squamous cell cancer of the cervix with DRB1*10:01:34. The DRB1*04:05 allele has also been associated with other autoimmune diseases in the Asian population. Although less frequent, research has linked autoimmune diseases to HLA class I, such as T1DM, primary SS, and, more often, optic neuritis. As shown in this review, the DRB1*03 allelic group was associated with NMO in different populations.

Other shreds of evidence link NMO with other autoimmune diseases. Acute events of optic neuritis and transverse myelitis in SLE and SSs raised the following question: would they occur due to a genetic influence on the autoimmunity shared between these diseases? Would they be complications of rheumatic diseases affecting the CNS? In SLE, inflammation damages the lungs, kidneys and CNS membranes, which express the AQP4 protein. Autoantibodies typically associated with SLE bind to DNA and RNA proteins, ribosomal proteins, and phospholipids. NMO-IgG antibodies have been detected in the serum of patients with SS or SLE and concomitant NMO/SSD, but not in the serum of patients with SLE or SS who do not have NMO spectrum diseases. Based on these data, Pittock et al. suggested that the occurrence of SLE/SS or autoantibodies in association with diseases of the NMO spectrum combined with seropositivity for the NMO-IgG antibody indicates that there is an association of these diseases. For this reason, they were included among the NMO spectrum syndromes.

One GWAS study analyzing exclusively NMO genetic risk factors in Caucasians showed an association with the DRB1*03:01–DQA1*05:01/3/5–DQB1*02:01 haplotype and the class I, HLA-B*08:01 and HLA-C*07:01 alleles in NMO subgroup positive for the NMO-IgG. Additionally, a reduced copy number variation (CNV) in the region of complement component C4 deletions could be the functional driver of the NMO association and call the attention that the same C4 CNV and DRB1*03:01–DQA1*05:01/3/5–DQB1*02:01 haplotype were risk factors for SLE.

### Limitations. We have identified some limitations in these studies, such as the low number of NMO cases analyzed in each study (ten studies with 45 or fewer NMO patients). This is explained by the fact that NMO is a rare disease and only recognized as a different condition from MS by specific diagnostic criteria after 1999. Furthermore, another limitation was the low resolution of the genotyping technique since it was limited, in most studies, only to the typing of DRB1*03 allelic group, without specification of its subtypes; as well as the small number of studies genotyping DR/DQ alleles to identify the haplotypes associated with NMO.

Finally, the genetic susceptibility of the NMO group negative for AQP4-Ab needs to be analyzed with caution because optic spinal disease could be related to Asian type MS, Conventional Multiple Sclerosis, or MOG-IgG related disorders.

### Conclusions

NMO is an HLA associated disease.

- Patients with NMO are 2.46 times more likely to have the DRB1*03 allelic group than controls.
- Alleles of the DRB1*03 group, specifically the DRB1*03:01, conferred genetic susceptibility to NMO in most of Latin Americans, in half of the Caucasians and in one-quarter of the Asians. In Far East Asian, the genetic susceptibility for NMO is associated with the DPB1*05:01 allele.
- Most of the studies confirmed the DRB1*03 allele group's association with NMO positive for the NMO-IgG antibody.

The genetic susceptibility for NMO differed from MS in Latin American populations with a high ethnic African background.

In the Netherlands, the DRB1*03:01 allele was associated with NMO, but no HLA association was found with MOGAD. Those findings bring new evidence that NMO, MS and MOGAD are different immune-mediated CNS conditions.

It is recommended that new studies with a greater number of patients analyzed by the four-digit HLA DR/DQ alleles immunophenotyping technique be performed in different populations to increase knowledge about genetic susceptibility in NMO.
Methods

Selection of the articles. A systematic review of the literature was carried out by a search in the MEDLINE (Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online) via PubMed's updated version interface, LILACS (Scientific and Technical Literature of Latin America and the Caribbean) via VHL (Virtual Health Library) and SCIELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online) electronic databases. The search for publications in any of the three languages, English, Spanish or Portuguese was done by two independent evaluators (LFC and HAF). The period for inclusion was 2009 to March 31, 2020. The search strategy used the combined MeSH terms “Neuromyelitis Optica” and “HLA antigens”, and the combined text words Neuromyelitis Optica and HLA association studies.

Studies considered for this review: case–control studies (association studies) analyzing genetic susceptibility through genotyping of HLA genes in human subjects with NMO according to international diagnostic criteria5,10,14 and only publications in English, Spanish, or Portuguese languages. Case reports, reviews, publications not related to the review’s objectives, and publications in other languages were excluded. Articles identified in more than one database were considered only once. The papers which fulfilled the eligibility criteria were included in the qualitative and quantitative analyzes.

Outcomes. The primary outcome was the association of the HLA alleles with NMO. Secondary outcomes were a comparison of the genetic susceptibility in NMO and MS.

Study quality evaluation. The selected articles were submitted to the STROBE evaluation method (Strengthening the Notification of Observational Studies in Epidemiology), for case–control studies59. Two evaluators (LFC and HAF) addressed the questions, with a maximum score of 22, equivalent to the number of items presented in the STROBE instrument. We regarded studies that scored “15–22” as high quality, those that scored “7–14” as moderate quality, and those that scored “0–7” as low quality (Supplementary Table S1).

This review employed the guidelines indicated in the MOOSE (Meta-analysis Of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) and PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and meta-analyses) Consensus Statements60,61.

Statistical analysis. Several comparisons were noted in the included studies; NMO vs controls, NMO vs controls stratified by the NMO-IgG/AQP4-IgG status; NMO vs MS and NMO vs MOGAD. The statistical analysis applied allelic frequencies expressing number of alleles (2n) or phenotypic frequencies (n) indicating the number of participants carrying specific allele. Frequencies of HLA alleles were compared using the chi-square test (p) and corrected by Fisher’s exact test (pC), Bonferroni (pB), or Sidak (pS) methods. The level of significance was <0.05. OR with 95% confidence interval (CI) was calculated for each comparison. A meta-analysis by mixed-effects models was performed using the metaphor library (2010)62 of software R version 3.3.2 (2016). To evaluate the studies’ heterogeneity, the I² statistics of Higgins and Green63 were used. The forest plot chart was used to present the results.

Received: 15 June 2020; Accepted: 22 December 2020
Published online: 08 January 2021

References
1. Kawachi, I. & Lassmann, H. Neurodegeneration in multiple sclerosis and neuromyelitis optica. J. Neurol. Neurosurg. Psychiatry 88, 137–145 (2017).
2. Thompson, A. J. et al. Diagnosis of multiple sclerosis: 2017 revisions of the McDonald criteria. Lancet Neurol. 17, 162–173 (2018).
3. Brown, P. Atlas of Multiple Sclerosis 2013: A growing global problem with widespread inequity. Lancet Neurol. 83, 1022–1024. (2014).
4. Hor, J. Y. et al. Prevalence of neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorder in the multi-ethnic Penang Island, Malaysia, and a review of worldwide prevalence. Multiple Sclerosis Relat. Disord. 19, 20–24 (2018).
5. Wingerchuk, D. M., Hogancamp, W. F., O’Brien, P. C. & Weinshenker, B. G. The clinical course of neuromyelitis optica (Devic’s syndrome). Neurology 53, 1107–1107 (1999).
6. Mandell, R. N., Davis, L. E., Jeffery, D. R. & Kornfeld, M. Devic’s neuromyelitis optica: A clinicopathological study of 8 patients. Ann. Neurol. 34, 162–168 (1993).
7. Luchinetti, C. F. et al. A role for humoral mechanisms in the pathogenesis of Devic’s neuromyelitis optica. Brain 125, 1450–1461 (2002).
8. Lennon, V. A. et al. A serum autoantibody marker of neuromyelitis optica: Distinction from multiple sclerosis. Lancet 364, 2106–2112 (2004).
9. Lennon, V. A., Keyser, T. J., Pittcock, S. J., Verkman, A. S. & Hinson, S. R. IgG marker of optic-spinal multiple sclerosis binds to the aquaporin-4 water channel. J. Exp. Med. 202, 473–477 (2005).
10. Wingerchuk, D. M., Lennon, V. A., Pittcock, S. J., Luchinetti, C. F. & Weinshenker, B. G. Revised diagnostic criteria for neuromyelitis optica. Neurology 66, 1485–1489 (2006).
11. Wingerchuk, D. M., Lennon, V. A., Luchinetti, C. F., Pittcock, S. J. & Weisshenker, B. G. The spectrum of neuromyelitis optica. Lancet Neurol. 6, 805–815 (2007).
12. Tanaka, K. et al. Anti-aquaporin 4 antibody in selected Japanese multiple sclerosis patients with long spinal cord lesions. Multiple Sclerosis J. 13, 850–855 (2007).
13. Nakaishi, I. et al. Two subtypes of optic-spinal form of multiple sclerosis in Japan: clinical and laboratory features. J. Neurol. 254, 488–492 (2007).
14. Wingerchuk, D. M. et al. International consensus diagnostic criteria for neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorders. Neurology 85, 177–189 (2015).
15. Mader, S. et al. Complement activating antibodies to myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein in neuromyelitis optica and related disorders. J. Neuroinflamm. 8, 184 (2011).
16. Tanaka, S. et al. Clinical and immunological differences between MOG associated disease and anti AQP4 antibody-positive neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorders: Blood–brain barrier breakdown and peripheral plasmablasts. Multiple Sclerosis Relat. Disord. 41, 102005 (2020).
17. Canto, E. & Oksenberg, J. R. Multiple sclerosis genetics. Multiple Sclerosis J. 24, 75–79 (2018).
18. Mattiello, M. et al. Familial neuromyelitis optica. Neurology 75, 310–315 (2010).
19. Papais-Alvarenga, R. M. et al. Familial forms of multiple sclerosis and neuromyelitis optica at an MS center in Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil. J. Neuroimmunol. Sci. 356, 196–201 (2015).
20. Cabrera-Gómez, I. et al. Neuromyelitis optica and multiple sclerosis in sisters. Multiple Sclerosis J. 15, 269–271 (2009).
21. Kira, J. I. et al. Western versus Asian types of multiple sclerosis: Immunogenetically and clinically distinct disorders. Ann. Neurol. 40, 569–574 (1996).
22. Yamashita, K. et al. HLA-DPB1*0501-associated optocochlear multiple sclerosis: Clinical, neuroimaging and immunogenetic studies. Eur. J. Neurol. 122, 1689–1696 (1999).
23. Mirsattari, S. M. et al. Aboriginals with multiple sclerosis: HLA types and predominance of neuromyelitis optica. Neurology 56, 317–323 (2001).
24. Zéphir, H. et al. Is neuromyelitis optica associated with human leukocyte antigen? Multiple Sclerosis J. 15, 571–579 (2009).
25. Brum, D. C. et al. HLA-DRB association in neuromyelitis optica is different from that observed in multiple sclerosis. Multiple Sclerosis J. 16, 21–29 (2010).
26. Deschamps, R. et al. Different HLA class II (DRB1 and DQB1) alleles determine either susceptibility or resistance to NMO and multiple sclerosis among the French Afro-Caribbean population. Multiple Sclerosis J. 17, 24–31 (2011).
27. Blanco Morgado, Y. et al. HLA-DRB en pacientes caucásicos con neuromielitis óptica. Revista de Neurología 53, 146 (2011).
28. Wang, H. et al. HLA-DPB1*0501 is associated with susceptibility to anti-aquaporin-4 antibodies positive neuromyelitis optica in Southern Han Chinese. J. Neuroimmunol. 233, 181–184 (2011).
29. Asgari, N., Nielsen, C., Stenager, E., Kyvik, K. & Lillevang, S. HLA, PTPN22 and PD-1 associations as markers of autoimmunity in neuromyelitis optica. Multiple Sclerosis J. 18, 23–30 (2012).
30. Yoshimura, S. et al. Distinct genetic and infectious profiles in Japanese neuromyelitis optica patients comparing to anti-aquaporin 4 antibody status. J. Neurol. Neurosurg. Psychiatry 84, 29–34 (2013).
31. Pandit, L., Malli, C., D’Cunha, A. & Mustafa, S. Human leukocyte antigen association with neuromyelitis optica in a south Indian population. Multiple Sclerosis J. 21, 1217–1218 (2015).
32. Brill, L. et al. Increased occurrence of anti-AQP4 seropositivity and unique HLA Class II associations with neuromyelitis optica (NMO), among Muslim Arabs in Israel. J. Neuroimmunol. 293, 65–70 (2016).
33. Alvarenga, M. P. et al. The HLA DRB1*03:01 allele is associated with NMO regardless of the NMO-IgG status in Brazilian patients from Rio de Janeiro. J. Neuroimmunol. 310, 1–7 (2017).
34. Alonso, V. R. et al. Neuromyelitis optica (NMO IgG+) and genetic susceptibility, potential ethnic influences. Agents Med. Chem. 18, 4–17 (2018).
35. Kay, C. S. K., Scola, R. H., Arndt, R. C., Lorenzoni, P. J. & Werneck, L. C. HLA-alleles class I and II associated with genetic susceptibility to neuromyelitis optica in Brazilian patients. Arq. Neuropsiquiatr. 77, 239–247 (2019).
36. Braustens, A. L. et al. HLA association in MOG-IgG- and AQP4-IgG-related disorders of the CNS in the Dutch population. Neurol Neuroimmunol Neuroinflamm. 7, e0720 (2020).
37. Shankarkumar, U. The Human Leucocyte Antigen (HLA) system. Int. J. Human Genet. 4, 91–103 (2004).
38. Jersild, C., Sveigaard, A. & Fog, T. HLA-antigens and multiple sclerosis. Lancet 299, 1240–1241 (1972).
39. The International Multiple Sclerosis Genetics Consortium (IMSGC). Evidence for polygenic susceptibility to multiple sclerosis—The shape of things to come. Am. J. Human Genet. 86, 621–625 (2010).
40. Lincoln, M. R. et al. Epistasis among HLA-DRB1, HLA-DQA1, and HLA-DQB1 loci determines multiple sclerosis susceptibility. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. 106, 7542–7549 (2009).
41. Wingerchuk, D. M. & Weinshenker, B. G. The emerging relationship between neuromyelitis optica and systemic rheumatologic autoimmune disease. Multiple Sclerosis J. 18, 5–10 (2012).
42. Simmonds, M. & Gough, S. The HLA region and autoimmune disease: Associations and mechanisms of action. Curr. Genom. 8, 453–465 (2007).
43. Graham, R. R. et al. Specific combinations of HLA-DR2 and DR3 class II haplotypes contribute graded risk for disease susceptibility and autoantibodies in human SLE. Eur. J. Hum. Genet. 15, 823–830 (2007).
44. Morris, D. L. et al. Unraveling multiple MHC gene associations with systemic lupus erythematosus: Model choice indicates a role for HLA alleles and non-HLA genes in Europeans. Am. J. Human Genet. 91, 778–793 (2012).
45. Hunt, P. J. et al. Histocompatibility leukocyte antigen antibodies and closely linked immunomodulatory genes in autoimmune thyroid disease. Clin. Endocrinol. 55, 491–499 (2001).
46. Dittmar, M., Ide, M., Wurm, M. & Kahaly, G. J. Early onset of polyglandular failure is associated with HLA-DRB1*03. Eur. J. Endocrinol. 159, 55–60 (2008).
47. Macel, L. M. Z., Rodrigues, S. S., Dibbern, R. S., Navarro, P. A. A. & Donadi, E. A. Association of the HLA-DRB1*0301 and HLA-DQA1*0501 alleles with Graves’ disease in a population representing the gene contribution from several ethnic backgrounds. Thyroid 11, 31–35 (2001).
48. Erlich, H. et al. HLA DR-DQ haplotypes and genotypes and type 1 diabetes risk: Analysis of the type 1 diabetes genetics consortium families. Diabetes 57, 1084–1092 (2008).
49. Säiö, H. et al. HLA susceptibility to juvenile idiopathic arthritis: A study of affected sibpairs in an isolated finnish population. J. Rheumatol. 31, 2281–2285 (2004).
50. Underhill, J. et al. Susceptibility to primary biliary cirrhosis is associated with the HLA-DR8-DQB1*0402 haplotype. Hepatology 16, 1404–1408 (1992).
51. Nakamura, Y. et al. Latitude and HLA-DRB1*04:05 independently influence disease severity in Japanese multiple sclerosis: A cross-sectional study. J. Neuroinflamm. 13, 239 (2016).
52. Yanaginamachi, M. et al. Association of HLA-A*02:06 and HLA-DRB1*04:05 with clinical subtypes of juvenile idiopathic arthritis. J. Hum. Genet. 56, 196–199 (2011).
53. Mbwune, E. et al. HLA-A*24 is an independent predictor of 5-year progression to diabetes in autoantibody-positive first-degree relatives of type 1 diabetic patients. Diabetes 62, 1345–1350 (2013).
54. Amaraugarcia, A. A. et al. Optic neuritis, multiple sclerosis and human leukocyte antigen: Results of a 4-year follow-up study. Eur. J. Neurol. 12, 25–30 (2005).
55. Loiseau, P. et al. HLA class I and II are both associated with the genetic predisposition to primary Sjögren syndrome. Hum. Immunol. 62, 725–731 (2001).
56. Graber, D. J., Levy, M., Kerr, D. & Wade, W. F. Neuromyelitis optica Central nervous system pathogenesis and aquaporin 4. J. Neuroinflamm. 5, 22 (2008).
57. Pittcock, S. J. et al. Neuromyelitis optica and non–organ–specific autoimmunity. Arch. Neurol. 65, 78–83 (2008).
58. Estrada, K. et al. A whole-genome sequence study identifies genetic risk factors for neuromyelitis optica. Nat. Commun. 9, 1929 (2018).
59. von Elm, E. et al. The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) statement: Guidelines for reporting observational studies. *PLoS Med.* 4, e296 (2007).
60. Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J. & Altman, D. G. Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: The PRISMA statement. *PLoS Med.* 6, e1000097 (2009).
61. Stroup, D. F. Meta-analysis of observational studies in epidemiology. A proposal for reporting. *JAMA* 283, 2008 (2000).
62. Viechtbauer, W. Conducting meta-analyses in R with the metafor. *J. Stat. Softw.* 36, 1–48 (2010).
63. Higgins, J. P. T. *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* (Wiley, New York, 2019). https://doi.org/10.1002/978110036604.

**Author contributions**
M.A., L.F.C., and R.A. co-wrote the manuscript body and prepared the figures and tables; the eligible studies were chosen by L.F.C. and H.A.F.; the statistical analysis was prepared by C.V.; C.B., C.P., L.L.-F. and O.F. contributed to the manuscript writing by providing the critical revision of the paper. All authors read and accepted the final version.

**Funding**
This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior—Brasil (CAPES)—Finance Code 001.

**Competing interests**
The authors declare no competing interests.

**Additional information**
Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-80535-3.

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to R.M.P.-A.

Reprints and permissions information is available at www.nature.com/reprints.

Publisher’s note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

© The Author(s) 2021