Research article

The association between genetic variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 and the development of sporadic colorectal cancer in the Danish population

Lise Lotte Christensen*1, Bo E Madsen2, Friedrik P Wikman1, Carsten Wiuf2, Karen Koed3, Anne Tjønneland4, Anja Olsen4, Ann-Christine Syvänen5, Claus L Andersen1 and Torben F Ørntoft1

Address: 1Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory, Department of Clinical Biochemistry, Aarhus University Hospital, Skejby, Denmark, 2Bioinformatics Research Center (BiRC), University of Aarhus, Denmark, 3Faculty of Medical Laboratory Technology, University College Jutland, Aarhus, Denmark, 4Danish Cancer Society, Institute of Cancer Epidemiology, Copenhagen, Denmark and 5Department of Medical Sciences, Uppsala University Hospital, Sweden

Email: Lise Lotte Christensen* - liselotte.christensen@ki.au.dk; Bo E Madsen - eskerod@birc.au.dk; Friedrik P Wikman - fpw@ki.au.dk; Carsten Wiuf - wiuf@ki.au.dk; Karen Koed - kako@jcvu.dk; Anne Tjønneland - annet@cancer.dk; Anja Olsen - anja@cancer.dk; Ann-Christine Syvänen - ann-christine.syvanen@medsci.uu.se; Claus L Andersen - cla@ki.au.dk; Torben F Ørntoft - orntoft@ki.au.dk

* Corresponding author

Abstract

Background: Mutations in the mismatch repair genes hMLH1 and hMSH2 predispose to hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer (HNPPCC). Genetic screening of more than 350 Danish patients with colorectal cancer (CRC) has led to the identification of several new genetic variants (e.g. missense, silent and non-coding) in hMLH1 and hMSH2. The aim of the present study was to investigate the frequency of these variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 in Danish patients with sporadic colorectal cancer and in the healthy background population. The purpose was to reveal if any of the common variants lead to increased susceptibility to colorectal cancer.

Methods: Associations between genetic variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 and sporadic colorectal cancer were evaluated using a case-cohort design. The genotyping was performed on DNA isolated from blood from the 380 cases with sporadic colorectal cancer and a sub-cohort of 770 individuals. The DNA samples were analyzed using Single Base Extension (SBE) Tag-arrays. A Bonferroni corrected Fisher exact test was used to test for association between the genotypes of each variant and colorectal cancer. Linkage disequilibrium (LD) was investigated using HaploView (v3.31).

Results: Heterozygous and homozygous changes were detected in 13 of 35 analyzed variants. Two variants showed a borderline association with colorectal cancer, whereas the remaining variants demonstrated no association. Furthermore, the genomic regions covering hMLH1 and hMSH2 displayed high linkage disequilibrium in the Danish population. Twenty-two variants were neither detected in the cases with sporadic colorectal cancer nor in the sub-cohort. Some of these rare variants have been classified either as pathogenic mutations or as neutral variants in other populations and some are unclassified Danish variants.

Conclusion: None of the variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 analyzed in the present study were highly associated with colorectal cancer in the Danish population. High linkage disequilibrium in the
Background

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is a common malignant disease in the western world. The lifetime risk is about 5% and rising [1]. In 2003, approximately 3,600 new cases where registered by the Danish Cancer Registry equivalent to 10% of the total number of malignant cancer cases in Denmark, making CRC the third most common cancer in the country [2].

A twin study has demonstrated that up to 35% of the CRCs can be explained by inherited susceptibility [3]. However, only approximately 5% of the CRCs are explained by well defined hereditary syndromes displaying a Mendelian inheritance pattern. The most common form of hereditary CRC is hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer (HNPCC) [4,5]. Diagnosis of HNPCC is based on kindred analysis using the Amsterdam II criteria [6]. In the major part of the HNPCC families the disease is caused by loss of function pathogenic mutations such as nonsense, frameshift and non-coding mutations affecting splice sites identified mainly in three genes i.e. hMLH1, hMSH2 and hMSH6 [7].

A part from the clearly pathogenic mutations genetic screening has also revealed numerous missense, silent and non-coding variants of unknown significance in hMLH1, hMSH2 and hMSH6. Ideally, segregation studies should be conducted to reveal the pathogenicity of a given variant. However, such analyses are often not feasible due to limited family sizes and unavailability of clinical specimens. Consequently, different evaluation methods have been used, especially for the missense variants, to be able to distinguish neutral variants from disease-causing mutations. Functional analyses of individual missense variants have been carried out using different in vitro assays e.g. [8-13]. The functional studies have revealed both loss of function mutations that are most likely pathogenic [8-13] and variants with reduced activity [8-11]. Apart from non-coding mutations affecting the classical splice sites at intron/exon junctions, missense changes as well as silent changes in hMLH1 and hMSH2 have also been shown to alter pre-mRNA splicing and thereby causing exon skipping [14,15]. Functional analyses are laborious and therefore in silico methods available on the internet (e.g. SIFT, PolyPhen and PMUT) have been used to identify variants that should be selected for further functional analysis [16].

In silico predictions and in vitro functional analyses provide an idea of which variants are pathogenic. However, population studies are needed to reveal the in vivo pathogenicity of the individual variants. At present, very few population studies have dealt with the association of common variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 with susceptibility to sporadic CRC [17-19].

The present study describes a population based analysis of the frequency of variants of unknown significance in hMLH1 and hMSH2 in Danish patients with sporadic CRC and in a sub-cohort of controls. Some of the variants have been described in other studies, and some are, to our knowledge, new variants unique to the Danish population. We have analyzed the allele frequencies of 29 variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 to reveal whether they cause increased susceptibility to sporadic CRC in the Danish population or whether they are private variants/mutations found only in the families where they were originally identified. In addition to the 29 variants identified in Danish individuals, six variants identified in other Caucasian populations were also investigated.

Methods

Subjects/cohort

The subjects were selected from the Danish Diet, Cancer and Health (DCH) study, which is an ongoing prospective follow-up study [20]. In all 57,053 men and women born in Denmark, living in the greater Copenhagen or Aarhus areas, aged 50–64, and with no previous cancer diagnosis at the time of enrolment, were included in the study. The participants were recruited during the years 1993–1997. At the time of enrolment, biological material from blood, urine, nails and fat tissue was sampled and stored in liquid nitrogen at -150°C. Among the cohort members 380 cases with CRC diagnosed between 1994 and 2004 were identified in the files of the Danish Cancer Registry. A sub-cohort of 770 controls (including 10 cases) was selected randomly from the cohort. The characteristics of the cohort are shown in Table 1. General protocols concerning the Diet, Cancer and Health study have been evaluated and approved by the Regional Scientific Committees on Human Studies in Copenhagen and Aarhus (journal number: H-KF-01-345/93) and the Danish Data Protection Agency. A protocol regarding the present study has been submitted and approved by the mentioned committees as a supplement to the initial protocols.
The optimal annealing temperature (Ta) was set to ~50°C, the GC content to ~40% and the primer Tm difference to ≤1. The single base extension (SBE) primers contained 5’ 20-bp ‘tag’ sequences that were from the Affymetrix GeneChip® Tag Collection. The gene specific part of the SBE primers had a Tm of ~50–60°C (calculated using PrimerExpress 2.0)(Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA). The tagged SBE primers were tested for major hairpin loop formation using Oligo6. All variants were typed using SBE-primers for both DNA strands. The primers were synthesized by DNA Technology (Aarhus, Denmark). The multiplex PCR primer and the SBE primer sequences are available on request.

**Multiplex PCR**

The multiplex PCR amplification was performed with 6–9 primer pairs per reaction. Twenty ng of genomic DNA with 0.5 μl Accuprime™ DNA polymerase (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA), 1× Accuprime™ Buffer I, and 0.08–1 μM primers was amplified in 25 μl volumes using the following PCR conditions: 1 cycle of 95°C for 10 min; 13 cycles of 95°C for 30 sec., 67°C (-1°C/cycle) for 45 sec. and 72°C for 45 sec.; 20 cycles of 95°C for 30 sec., 55°C for 45 sec. and 72°C for 45 sec.; 1 cycle of 72°C for 10 min. A subset of the multiplex PCR products were analysed on a 2100 Bioanalyzer (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA) to test the performance of the multiplex PCR. The multiplex PCR products from each sample were pooled for further analysis.

**Single Base Extension (SBE) reaction**

The pooled PCR products from each sample were treated with Exonuclease I and shrimp alkaline phosphatase and used for template in the SBE reaction (mini-sequencing) as described by Lindross et al. [23]. The fluorescent labelled ddNTP were Cyanine 5 (Cy5)-ddCTP, TAMRA-ddATP and R110-ddGTP (PerkinElmer Life and Analytical Sciences, Inc, Wellesley, Ma).

**Preparation of microarrays**

‘Anti-tag’ oligonucleotides complimentary to the ‘tag’ sequences of the SBE primers modified with NH2 groups in their 3’ ends, and containing a 3’-spacer of 15 T residues were coupled covalently to CodeLink Activated Slides (Amersham Biosciences, Uppsala, Sweden) according to manufacturer instructions. The only exception was that the ‘anti-tag’ oligonucleotides were dissolved in 150 mM sodium carbonate buffer, pH 8.5 with 1 mM betaine at a concentration of 20 μM. The oligonucleotides were printed onto the slides using a VersArray ChipWriter (Bio-Rad, Hercules, CA) with 3 Stealth Micro Spotting Pins (TeleChem International Inc., Sunnyvale, CA). Each slide consists of 75 sub-arrays with 13 × 12 spots in each subarray. The spots were 130–150 M in diameter and the centre-to-centre distance between two spots was 200 μM. The ‘anti-tag’ oligonucleotides were printed in duplicates in each sub-array. The spot quality was tested after each series of microarray preparation using a Cy3 labelled random oligonucleotide hybridizing to all spots on the slide.

**DNA samples**

DNA was extracted from frozen leukocytes as described previously [21].

**Table 1: Characteristics of the cohort**

| Cases (n = 380) | Sub-cohort (n = 770) |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Sex (Number (%)) |                       |
| Men            | 213 (56%)            |
| Women          | 167 (44%)            |
| Age* (Years (sd)) |                      |
| Men            | 58.4 (4.1)           |
| Women          | 58.5 (4.5)           |
| Time observed (Years (sd)) |        |
| Men            | - 6.6 (1.2)          |
| Women          | - 6.6 (1.0)          |

*Age at inclusion into the cohort given as mean (sd) in years

Another cohort named familial CRC consisting of 285 CRC cases was also included in the study. The majority of the variants were initially identified in this cohort. Some variants were found only in one family whereas others were identified in several families in the cohort. The cohort consists of individuals from HNPCC families (based on the Amsterdam II criteria) or individuals from families not fulfilling the Amsterdam II criteria, but with a clear familial accumulation of CRC. The presence of other clearly pathogenic mutations in the hMLH1, hMSH2 and hMSH6 has been excluded by sequencing. All individuals in the cohort of familiar CRC have been consulted by a clinical geneticist and informed consent was obtained from all individuals in the cohort. Detailed information on each individual family in this cohort is not available.

**Variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2**

Initially, 47 variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 were included in the study. Forty-one of the variants have previously been identified either in Danish HNPPC patients (i.e. fulfilling the Amsterdam II criteria) or in patients not fulfilling the Amsterdam II criteria but with a familial accumulation of CRC. Six variants have been identified in other Caucasian populations. Of the initial 47 selected variants, 12 variants were excluded either due to troubles regarding the primer design or lack of amplification product in the multiplex PCR. The remaining 35 analyzed variants are listed in Table 2.

**Genotyping using Single Base Extension (SBE)-tag arrays**

**Primer design**

The multiplex PCR primers were designed using Oligo 6 [22]. The PCR products were between 100 and 450 bp. The optimal annealing temperature (Ta) was set to ~50°C, the GC content to ~40% and the primer Tm difference to ≤1. The single base extension (SBE) primers contained 5’ 20-bp ‘tag’ sequences that were from the
independent on the 'anti-tag' sequence. The printed slides were stored at room temperature until use.

**Hybridization of the SBE reaction products**

The slides printed with 'anti-tags' were pre-heated to 42 °C in a custom-made aluminium reaction rack with a re-usable silicon rubber grid placed on the slides to form 75 separate reaction chambers on each slide [24]. The hybridization mixtures, containing the SBE reaction products in 6.5 × SSC were added to each reaction chamber on the pre-heated slide. The hybridization time was 2.5 hours at 42 °C followed by a brief rinse with 4 × SSC at room temperature. Subsequently, the slides were washed twice for 5 min. in 2 × SSC, 0.1% SDS (42 °C) and twice for 1 min. in 0.2 × SSC (room temperature). Finally, the slides were spin dried for 3 min. at 800 rpm.

**Signal detection**

The signal detection was performed mainly as described by Lindroos et al. [23]. The fluorescence signals were detected with a ScanArray 4000XL instrument and the ScanArray Express software (PerkinElmer Life and Analytical Sciences, Inc, Wellesley, Ma). The four excitation lasers were: blue Argon, 488 nm; Green HeNe, 543.8 nm; Yellow HeNe, 594 nm and Red HeNe 632.8 nm. The laser power was kept constant at 90%, whereas the photo-multiplier tube (PMT) varied between fluorophores. A typical setting for the PMT gain was 65, 75, 65 and 70% for the

| Id  | Variant | Amino acid change          | Identified in the present study | Phylogeny | Pathogenic status | References |
|-----|---------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------|
| MLH1| c.307-29 C>A | Intronc                      | +                               | -         | -                 | -          |
|     | c.350 C>T  | p.Thr117Met                  | -                               | Conserved | Pathogen          | [11,50]    |
|     | c.453+79 A>G | Intronc                     | -                               | -         | -                 | -          |
|     | c.545+43 C>G | Intronc                     | +                               | -         | -                 | -          |
|     | c.655 A>G  | p.Val219Ile                  | +                               | Ile other species | Neutral          | [11,40,51] |
|     | c.790+10 A>G | Intronc                     | -                               | -         | -                 | -          |
|     | c.884+39 G>A | Intronc                     | -                               | -         | -                 | -          |
|     | c.884+83_84 Ins T | Intronc                    | -                               | -         | -                 | -          |
|     | c.1217 G>A  | p.Ser406Asn                 | +                               | Non-conserved | Neutral          | [11,41,52] |
|     | c.1379 A>C  | p.Glu460Ala                  | -                               | Non-conserved | -                 | -          |
|     | c.1558+11 G>A | Intronc                     | -                               | -         | Neutral           | [53]       |
|     | c.1558+14 G>A | Intronc                     | +                               | -         | Neutral           | [40]       |
|     | c.1668-19 A>G | Intronc                     | -                               | -         | Neutral           | [40]       |
|     | c.1689 A>G  | p.Ile563Met                  | -                               | Non-conserved | -                 | -          |
|     | c.1732-12 A>T | Intronc                     | -                               | -         | Pathogen          | [54]       |
|     | c.1852_1853 AA>GC | p.Lys618Ala                  | +                               | Non-conserved | Neutral/Pathogen | [9,11,45,46,48] |
|     | c.1942 C>T  | p.Pro648Ser                  | -                               | Conserved | Pathogen          | [9,45,55]  |
|     | c.1959 G>T  | p.Leu653Leu                  | +                               | -         | Neutral           | [42]       |
|     | c.2152 C>T  | p.His718Tyr                  | -                               | Conserved | Neutral           | [11,56]    |
| MSH2| c.-118 T>C  | promoter                     | +                               | -         | -                 | -          |
|     | c.131 C>T  | p.Thr44Met                   | -                               | Conserved | Pathogen          | [55]       |
|     | c.134 C>T  | p.Ala45Val                   | -                               | Val other species | Neutral          | [55]       |
|     | c.212-23 A>C | Intronc                     | -                               | -         | -                 | -          |
|     | c.287 G>A  | p.Arg96His                   | -                               | Non-conserved | Neutral          | [57,58]    |
|     | c.329 A>G  | p.Lys110Arg                  | -                               | Non-conserved | Neutral          | [57]       |
|     | c.380 A>G  | p.Asn127Ser                  | -                               | Conserved | Neutral/Pathogen  | [48,59]    |
|     | c.560 T>G  | p.Leu187Arg                  | -                               | Conserved | Neutral/Pathogen  | [60]       |
|     | c.956 G>A  | p.Gly322Asp                  | +                               | Conserved | Neutral           | [51,61]    |
|     | c.1511-9 A>T | Intronc                     | +                               | -         | -                 | -          |
|     | c.1786_1788 del AAT | p.Asn596del                 | -                               | Non-conserved | Pathogen          | [62,63]    |
|     | c.2006-6 T>C/G | Intronc                     | -                               | -         | Neutral           | [64]       |
|     | c.2062 A>G  | p.Met688Val                  | -                               | Conserved | -                 | -          |
|     | c.2139 G>C  | p.Gly713Gly                  | -                               | -         | Neutral           | [57,65]    |
|     | c.2500 G>A  | p.Ala834Thr                  | -                               | Non-conserved | Neutral          | [10,66]    |
|     | c.2542 G>T  | p.Ala848Ser                  | -                               | Conserved | -                 | -          |

* identified in CRC families from other Caucasian populations than the Danish
fluorophores Cy5-ddCTP, TAMRA-ddUTP, Texas Red*-5-ddATP and R110-ddGTP, respectively.

Statistics

Association tests

A Bonferroni corrected Fisher exact test was used to test for association between the genotypes of each SNP and the familiar CRC cohort and the cohort of sporadic CRC, respectively. Fifteen tests were made for single marker associations, in the cohort of familiar CRC, yielding a Bonferroni corrected significance level of 0.05/15 = 0.0033. Likewise the Bonferroni corrected p-value of the cohort of sporadic cases was 0.05/13 = 0.0038. A Bonferroni corrected Monte Carlo (MC) Fisher exact test was used to test for association between each pair of SNPs, and sporadic or familiar CRC. One hundred thousand permutations were used for each test. Missing data were handled by omitting persons with missing data in the genotype counts; e.g. all individuals with missing data in either variant id 26 or variant id 27 were omitted when calculating the genotype frequencies of that specific SNP-pair.

Power calculations

The power was calculated by applying the Fisher exact test to 10000 independent simulated cases with the given odds ratio and frequency of the disease causing genotype. In that case the power is the proportion of the simulations that reach a p-value lower than 0.05/15 = 0.0033.

Test for Hardy-Weinberg proportions

Each variant was tested for deviation from Hardy-Weinberg proportions in the sub-cohort, using the exact test described by Wigginton et al. [25]. The used significance level was 0.01.

Linkage disequilibrium

Linkage disequilibrium (LD) was investigated using Hapl.ioView (v. 3.31), [26] and genome build NCBI35 for information track.

In silico analysis

In silico prediction of the functional consequence of the missense variants was performed using SIFT (Sorting Intolerant From Tolerant) [27], Polyphen [28] and PMUT [29]. Mis-splicing was analysed using SNAP (SNP Annotation Platform) [30]. The alignments of MSH2 or MLH1 polypeptides used in the phylogenetic analysis of the missense variants was performed using ClustalW [31].

Results

Performance of the Single Base Extension-tag arrays

Single base extension (SBE)-tag arrays is a well described method for analysing single nucleotide polymorphisms [23]. Initially, 47 variants were included in the study. However, 12 variants either failed the initial primer design or they did not perform well in the multiplex PCR reaction. The accuracy of the SBE-tag array in the genotyping of the remaining 35 variants was tested using samples with known genotypes. All tested samples were correctly genotyped (data not shown). A total of 31 of 35 variants performed very well in the assay, i.e. more than 70% of the samples had positive call (data not shown).

Frequency of variants in the three analysed cohorts

We have identified the frequency of 35 variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 in a well defined cohort of 770 individuals representative of the Danish population. In addition, the frequency of the variants was also identified in 380 cases with sporadic CRC and in 285 individuals with familiar CRC. The analyzed variants were initially identified in the familiar CRC cohort and the cohort was included in the study to elucidate whether a common variant could explain the elevated cancer susceptibility in these families.

The characteristics of the cohort of sporadic CRC cases and the sub-cohort are shown in Table 1. Thirteen out of 35 variants were polymorphic in the cohort of sporadic CRC cases and/or in the sub-cohorts (Tables 2 and 3). Ten of these variants were detected with a frequency ≥1% in the sub-cohort and are therefore relatively common in the Danish population. The remaining three variants were present with a frequency <1% (Table 3). None of the analyzed variants deviated significantly from the Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium. Out of the 13 identified variants 9 were non-coding or silent variants and 3 were non-conserved missense changes and one was a conserved missense change (Table 2). The frequency of 11/13 variants did not differ significantly between any of the three analyzed cohorts neither individually (Table 4) nor as pairs (data not shown). The frequency of one variant; hMSH2 c.-118 T>C differed significantly between the sporadic CRC cases and the sub-cohort with a borderline significant p-value of 0.0037 (significance level: 0.05/13 = 0.0038). One previous study has demonstrated a slight difference between the frequencies of this variant in HNPCC cases and controls (p-value of 0.034) [32], whereas another study detected no difference [33]. In addition, it has also been shown that the variant does not change the promoter activity of the hMSH2 promoter in vitro and it is therefore most likely not involved in increased susceptibility to CRC [32]. The frequency of the variant hMLH1 c.1668-19 A>G differed between the familial CRC cases and the sub-cohort with a borderline significant p-value of 0.0044 (significance level: 0.05/15 = 0.0033). This variant is an intronic variant which has never been characterized neither in vivo nor in vitro. In silico analyses using SNAP (a SNP Annotations Platform) [30] demonstrated that the presence of this variant results in the elimination of an Exon Splicing Enhancer (ESE) (SRp40) and the introduction of a new ESE (SRp55) (data not shown).
However, in vitro analysis must be performed to reveal if these changes result in an aberrant splice pattern.

Twenty-two of the variants analysed in the present study were neither detected in the sporadic cases nor in the sub-cohort (Tables 2 and 3). Among those were the six variants originally identified in other Caucasian populations i.e. hMLH1 c.1558+11 G>A and MSH2 c.287 G>A, c.329 A>G, c.380 A>G, c.2006-6 T>C/G and c.2139 G>T (see Table 2 for references). The remaining 16 variants, which have all been identified in Danish individuals with a familiar accumulation of CRC, are therefore very rare variants in the Danish population. Some of these rare variants have been classified either as neutral variants (e.g. hMLH1 c.2152 C>T and MSH2 c.2500 G>A) or pathogenic mutations (e.g. hMLH1 c.350 C>T, and MSH2 c.131 C>T) in Danish HNPCC families and/or HNPCC families from other populations (see Table 2 for references). To our knowledge, some of the rare variants have never been described previously neither in the Danish population nor in other populations (Table 2). These variants are most likely private variants found only in the families where they were originally identified. Four of the rare unclassified variants are missense variants changing either non-conserved amino acids i.e. hMLH1 c.1379 A>C and c.1689 A>G or conserved amino acids i.e. MSH2 c.2062 A>G and c.2542 G>T.

Table 3: Genotype frequencies of the variants in the analyzed cohorts

| Id | Variant       | Sporadic cases | Familiar CRC cohort | Sub-cohort |
|----|---------------|----------------|---------------------|------------|
|    | MLH1          | HoWt | He | HoMut | HoWt | He | HoMut | HoWt | He | HoMut |
| 23 | c.307-29 C>A  | 0.994 | 0.006 | 0.000 | 0.990 | 0.010 | 0.000 | 0.990 | 0.010 | 0.000 |
| 24 | c.350 C>T     | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.997 | 0.003 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 25 | c.453+79 A>G  | 0.276 | 0.482 | 0.242 | na    | na   | na   | 0.297 | 0.465 | 0.238 |
| 26 | c.545+43 C>G  | 0.997 | 0.003 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 27 | c.655 A>G     | 0.451 | 0.448 | 0.101 | 0.492 | 0.427 | 0.081 | 0.472 | 0.425 | 0.102 |
| 28 | c.790+10 A>G  | 0.994 | 0.006 | 0.000 | na    | na   | na   | 0.991 | 0.009 | 0.000 |
| 29 | c.884+39 G>A  | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.997 | 0.003 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 30 | c.884+83_84 ins T | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 31 | c.1217 G>A    | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 32 | c.1558+11 G>A | 0.997 | 0.027 | 0.000 | 0.919 | 0.081 | 0.000 | 0.928 | 0.072 | 0.000 |
| 33 | c.1732-2 A>T  | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.997 | 0.003 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 34 | c.1852_1853 AA>G/GC | 0.994 | 0.006 | 0.000 | 0.990 | 0.010 | 0.000 | 0.984 | 0.016 | 0.000 |
| 35 | c.1942 C>T    | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.997 | 0.003 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 36 | c.2152 C>T    | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.994 | 0.006 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |

* identified in CRC families from other populations than the Danish
§ na: not analyzed

Variants that where polymorphic in sporadic CRC cohort or in the sub-cohort are in bold.

not shown). However, in vitro analysis must be performed to reveal if these changes result in an aberrant splice pattern.
Linkage disequilibrium

Linkage disequilibrium (LD) analyses of the genomic regions covering \( hMLH1 \) and \( hMSH2 \) demonstrated high LD in the genomic regions covering the two genes. LD plots of the sub-cohort in the genomic regions covering the two genes are shown in Figures 1A and 1B. The nine polymorphic variants in \( hMLH1 \) in the sub-cohort are scattered along the whole genomic region of the gene. Only three polymorphic variants were identified in \( hMSH2 \). Two of these variants demonstrated high LD. They are positioned widely apart and thus cover a large area of the genomic region of \( hMSH2 \). The low LD of the third polymorphic variant in \( hMSH2 \) might be due to the low minor allele frequency of the variant. The high LD in the genomic regions covering the two genes indicates that common genetic variants in \( hMLH1 \) and \( hMSH2 \) in general are not involved in the development of sporadic CRC in the Danish population.

In silico characterization of the variants

In silico functional characterization of the included missense variants was performed using SIFT [27], PolyPhen [28] and PMUT [29]. Nine of the missense mutations had previously been characterized at the functional level using different in vitro assays (references in Table 5). To test the accuracy of the in silico functional predictions we compared the results of the in silico analyses with the results of the in vitro functional analyses (Table 5). Concordance between predictions of all the in silico algorithms and the results of the in vitro functional analyses were found for 3/9 missense variants i.e. MLH1 p.Val219Ile, p.Ser406Asn and p.Pro648Ser. None of the in silico algorithms were more accurate in their predictions than the others when compared to the results of the in vitro functional analysis. The predictions of the SIFT and PolyPhen algorithms were frequently similar and often differed from the prediction made by PMUT. The above results demonstrate the importance of the use of in vitro functional analysis for the characterization of missense variants identified in individuals with hereditary CRC such as HNPCC.

Table 4: The \( p \)-values of marginal Fisher’s exact tests between groups

| Id  | Variant | Sporadic-Sub-cohort | Familiar-Sub-cohort | Sporadic-familiar | All      |
|-----|---------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------|
| 23  | c.307-29 C>A | 0.7259              | 1.0000              | 0.6673           | 0.8632  |
| 25  | c.453+79 A>G | 0.7908              | -                   | -                | -       |
| 24  | c.350 C>T | 0.2988              | -                   | -                | -       |
| 26  | c.545+43 C>G | 0.3263              | 1.000               | 1.000            | 0.4741  |
| 27  | c.655 A>G | 0.7715              | 0.5619              | 0.4869           | 0.7489  |
| 28  | c.790+10 A>G | 1.0000              | -                   | -                | -       |
| 29  | C884+39G>A | 0.2943              | -                   | -                | -       |
| 85  | c.1217 G>A | 0.0044              | 0.5359              | 0.4858           | 0.4833  |
| 31  | c.1379 A>C | -                   | 0.1880              | -                | -       |
| 32  | c.1558+14 G>A | 1.0000              | 0.6063              | 0.7685           | 0.8722  |
| 37  | c.1668-19 A>G | 0.5382              | -                   | -                | -       |
| 33  | c.1732-2 A>T | -                   | -                   | -                | -       |
| 34  | c.1852,1853 AA>GC | 0.2408              | 0.5672              | 0.6760           | 0.3569  |
| 100 | c.1942 C>T | -                   | -                   | -                | -       |
| 35  | c.1959 G>T | 0.2473              | 1.0000              | 0.3642           | 0.4493  |
| 36  | c.2152 C>T | -                   | -                   | -                | -       |

| Id  | Variant | Sporadic-Sub-cohort | Familiar-Sub-cohort | Sporadic-familiar | All      |
|-----|---------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------|
| 89  | c.-118 T>C | -                   | -                   | -                | -       |
| 41  | c.965 G>A | 0.0958              | 0.7314              | 0.0796           | 0.1617  |

The Bonferroni corrected \( p \)-value of sporadic versus sub-cohort is 0.05/13 = 0.0038
The Bonferroni corrected \( p \)-value of familiar-versus sub-cohort is 0.05/15 = 0.0033
Polymorphic variants with borderline significant \( p \)-values are in bold
indicate that at least the two missense variants in MSH2 might be disease causing mutations. However, further functional analyses are needed before any final conclusions can be drawn.

The putative role of all 35 variants in pre-mRNA splicing was analyzed using SNAP [30]. These analyses showed that several of the variants potentially either abolish or introduce Exon Splicing Enhancers (ESEs)(data not shown).

Discussion

Identification of missense, silent and non-coding variants in genes involved in hereditary diseases always raises the intriguing question whether these variants are the disease causing mutations in the family/families where they are identified. Alternatively, they may be common variants causing a slight increase in sporadic disease susceptibility in the general population or simple neutral variants that are not involved in disease development. Missense, silent and non-coding variants are identified frequently in MMR genes (e.g. hMLH1 and hMSH2) in families fulfilling the Amsterdam II criteria. Functional analyses have shown that some of the missense variants identified in hMLH1 and hMSH2 result in reduced MMR activity and it has therefore been suggested that the decreased efficiency of DNA MMR could lead to increased cancer susceptibility [8-11].

In the present study, we have used a case-cohort design to elucidate the possible association between 35 variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2, either individually or as pairs, and the risk of sporadic CRC in the Danish population. The Danish Diet, Cancer and Health (DCH) cohort is large, population based and genetically homogeneous [20]. The sub-cohort used in the comparisons was selected randomly from the same cohort that gave rise to the cases with sporadic CRC; selection bias is thus unlikely. The cases and the individuals in the sub-cohort have been in the study equally long time and have approximately the same mean age (Table 1). We estimated that our study would be able to detect a disease susceptibility locus with an odds ratio (OR) of 2.5 with a power of 0.82, if the frequency of the disease causing genotype is 0.05, and a
power of 0.77 if the OR is 2.0 and the disease causing genotype has a frequency of 0.1. Consequently, common disease causing alleles of moderate effect would most likely not be missed in the present study. To our knowledge, the frequencies of a large number of hMLH1 and hMSH2 variants and their association with sporadic CRC have never been analyzed in a large well defined Caucasian population. A previously published case-control study have dem-

Table 5: *In silico* functional characterization of the missense variants

| Id | Variant       | PMUT   | SIFT  | PolyPhen | Phylogeny       | Activity in functional assays                  | References |
|----|---------------|--------|-------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------|
| 24 | p.Thr117Met   | Neutral| Not tolerated | Possible damaging | Conserved | Aberrant | [11,12] |
| 27 | p.Val219Ile   | Neutral| Tolerated    | Benign | Ile other species | Normal | [11,12] |
| 31 | p.Glu460Ala   | Pathogen| Tolerated    | Benign | Non-conserved | NA | - |
| 101| p.Ile563Met   | Neutral| Tolerated    | Possible damaging | Non-conserved | NA | - |
| 34 | p.Lys618Ala   | Pathogen| Not tolerated | Possible damaging | Non-conserved | Normal/aberrant | [9,11,45–47] |
| 100| p.Pro648Ser   | Pathogen| Not tolerated | Probably damaging | Conserved | Normal (aberrant protein stability) | [9,67] |
| 36 | p.His718Tyr   | Neutral| Not tolerated | Probably damaging | Conserved | Normal | [11] |

MSH2

| Id | Variant       | PMUT   | SIFT  | PolyPhen | Phylogeny       | Activity in functional assays                  | References |
|----|---------------|--------|-------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------|
| 89 | p.Thr44Met    | Neutral| Not tolerated | Possible damaging | Conserved | NA | - |
| 87 | p.Ala45Val    | Neutral| Tolerated    | Benign | Val other species | NA | - |
| 90 | p.Arg96His    | Pathogen| Tolerated    | Probably damaging | Non-conserved | NA | - |
| 91 | p.Lys110Arg   | Neutral| Tolerated    | Benign | Non-conserved | NA | - |
| 92 | p.Asn127Ser   | Neutral| Not tolerated | Probably damaging | Conserved | NA | - |
| 93 | p.Leu187Arg   | Neutral| Tolerated    | Benign | Probably damaging | Conserved | NA | - |
| 41 | p.Gly322Asp   | Neutral| Not tolerated | Benign | Conserved | Slightly reduced | [8,44] |
| 96 | p.Met688Val   | Neutral| Not tolerated | Probably damaging | Conserved | NA | - |
| 50 | p.Ala834Thr   | Pathogen| Tolerated    | Possible damaging | Non-conserved | Normal | [10] |
| 51 | p.Ala848Ser   | Neutral| Not tolerated | Possible damaging | Conserved | NA | - |

NA, not available

Danish variants that have not been described previously are in bold

Figure 2

**Phylogeny of the MSH2 Met688Val and Ala848Ser variants.** Multiple sequence alignment of the hMSH2 polypeptide sequence and orthologues from other species were generated using the ClustalW algorithm [31]. The following polypeptide sequences were used in the alignment: P43246 (Human; *Homo sapiens*), CAA57049 (Mouse; *Mus musculus*), S53609 (Frog; *Xenopus laevis*), XP 426110 (Chicken; *Gallus gallus*) and CAB42554 (Maize; *Zea mays*).
onstrated no association between MMR gene variants and the susceptibility to sporadic ovarian cancer [36]. In addition, previous association studies performed in Chinese and Korean populations did not find any association between variants in MMR genes and sporadic CRC [17,18]. The MLH1 c.415 G>C (p.Asp132His) variant has been shown to be associated with susceptibility to sporadic CRC in an Israeli population, although the CRCs associated with the variant usually are not MSI [19]. However, the p.Asp132His variant was present but not associated with sporadic CRC in a Chinese population [17]. Furthermore, the variant was not detected in a population of more 1,100 Americans with HNPCC-related cancers [37]. The p.Asp132His variant was not polymorphic in the Danish cohort of familiar CRC analyzed in the present study (data not shown). The frequency of the variant was not analyzed in the cohort of cases with sporadic CRC nor in the sub-cohort. However, due to high LD in the genomic region of hMLH1 this variant, if present in the Danish population, is most likely not associated with sporadic CRC.

Thirteen variants were polymorphic in the present study. The majority of the polymorphic variants (i.e. 9/13) were silent or present in non-coding regions. This corresponds with common variants being more abundant in introns and other regions than in coding regions [38]. Three of polymorphic variants i.e. MLH1 p.Val219Ile, p.Ser406Asn and p.Lys618 Ala changed non-conserved amino acids and one i.e. MSH2 p.Gly322Asp changed a conserved amino acid. Furthermore, two polymorphic variants i.e. hMSH2 c.-118 T>C and hMLH1 c.1668-19 A>G demonstrated borderline significant p-values i.e. 0.0037 (significance level: 0.05/13 = 0.0038) and 0.0044 (significance level: 0.05/15 = 0.0033), respectively. It has been stated that the conventional threshold for declaration of statistical evidence of association (i.e. a p-value of $5 \times 10^{-5}$) is not sufficient to detect gene-disease interactions. Consequently, it has been suggested to lower the threshold to $5 \times 10^{-5}$ [39]. The borderline significant p-values and the previously published functional analysis of one of the variants suggest that hMSH2 c.-118 T>C and hMLH1 c.1668-19 A>G are not associated with increased susceptibility to neither sporadic nor familiar CRC in the Danish population. The remaining polymorphic variants were not associated with CRC in the analyzed cohorts, neither individually nor as pairs, and they are hence neutral variants in the Danish population. Some of these variants i.e. hMLH1 c.655 A>G (p.Val219Ile), c.1217G>A (p.Ser406Asn), c.1558 +14 G>A and hMSH2 c.1959G>T (p.Leu653Leu) have been characterized as neutral variants in other studies as well [40-42]. In vitro functional analysis have also demonstrated that the variants MLH1 p.Val219Ile and p.Ser406Asn exhibit wild-type activity [8,11,12]. The hMSH2 variant c.965G>A (p.Gly322Asp) has previously been classified as a neutral variant [43]. This variant changes a conserved amino acid and functional analysis in yeast has shown that it has a slightly reduced MMR activity [8,44]. In the present study, the frequency of the c.965 G>A variant was higher in the cohort of individuals with familiar CRC compared to the sub-cohort although this was not statistically significant (Tables 3 and 4). Results regarding the MLH1 p.Lys618Ala variants have so far been contradictory. Functional analyses have identified this variant both as a pathogenic mutation and as a neutral variant [9,11,45-47]. Raevaara et al. used four different assays to evaluate the pathogenic status [9]. In all four assays the p.Lys618Val variant functioned like wt MLH1. In addition, p.Lys618Ala has been identified in one healthy control in a previous study [48]. The identification of the p.Lys618Ala variant in controls in the present study further support, that this variant is not a disease causing mutation involved in HNPCC or HNPCC-related cancers. In addition, the frequencies of the variant in the cohorts analyzed in the present study did not differ significantly and therefore p.Lys618Ala does not increase susceptibility to sporadic CRC in the Danish population. In conclusion none of the polymorphic variants in the present study are highly associated with CRC in the Danish population.

Linkage disequilibrium (LD) analysis showed high LD in the genomic regions covering hMLH1 and most of the genomic region covering hMSH2 in the Danish population. We therefore conclude that common variants in the two genes in general are not associated with susceptibility to sporadic CRC in a Danish population.

The age of the cohort of cases with sporadic CRC is relatively young (mean ~58 years) compared to the mean age of onset of colorectal CRC in the general Danish population (mean ~70 years) [49]. Consequently, the results obtained in the present study do not rule out that variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 might be associated with sporadic colorectal cancer at an older age. However, generally cancers reflecting an inherited susceptibility seem to occur in a relatively young age.

Using in silico analysis several of the analyzed variants were predicted to either abolish or introduce ESEs (data not shown). It has, however, been shown that only a minor fraction of the variants predicted to change ESEs in hMLH1 and hMSH2 using in silico analysis do indeed change the pre-mRNA splice pattern in vivo [14,15]. In the study by Auclair et al., only ESEs at or close to 5' splice sites were found to cause aberrant splicing. None of the variants analysed in the present study affected 5' splice sites. Nevertheless, no final conclusions regarding splicing can be drawn from the in silico analyses.
Twenty two variants were not detected in the sporadic CRC cases and in the sub-cohort. Among those were the six variants originally identified more or less frequently in other populations (Table 2). All except one variant (c.380 A>G, p.Asn127Ser) performed very well in the SBE-tag array assay. This rules out that failure in detecting the variants caused their absence in the present cohorts. Consequently, these six variants are not polymorphic in the Danish population. The remaining variants were rare variants in the Danish population. They were only detected in individuals with familiar CRC and some of them have been classified as pathogenic mutations or neutral variants in other populations (see Table 2 for references). 

Four rare missense variants i.e. hMLH1 c.1379 A>G (p.Glu460Ala) and c.1689 A>G (p.Ile563Met) and, hMSH2 c.2062 A>G (p.Met688Val) and c.2542 G>T (p.Ala848Ser) were unclassified and have to our knowledge never been described previously neither in the Danish population nor in other populations. Other disease causing mutations have been identified in the families harbouring the two hMLH1 variants changing non-conserved amino acids i.e. p.Glu460Ala and p.Ile563Met (unpublished results) consequently, these variants are most likely neutral and not involved in HNPPCC. However, no other disease causing mutations have been identified in the families harbouring the hMSH2 variants changing conserved amino acids i.e. p.Met688Val and p.Ala848Ser variants. Further characterization of these variants such as functional studies and segregations analysis are needed before any final conclusion can be drawn regarding their pathogenicity.

In conclusion, high penetrance cancer susceptibility genes involved in hereditary syndromes have rarely emerged as definitive low-penetrance genes as a result of common variants increasing disease susceptibility [19]. The results shown in the present study demonstrate that the high penetrance HNPPC genes hMLH1 and hMSH2 also do not appear to be low penetrance genes involved in sporadic CRC in the Danish population.

Conclusion

More than half of the analysed variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 were not polymorphic in the analysed cohort. The position of some of these rare variants in conserved regions of hMSH2 might indicate an association to the development of colorectal cancer in the families where they were identified originally. This hypothesis needs to be investigated further, using segregation and functional analysis. None of the polymorphic variants were highly associated with CRC in the Danish population. In addition, we demonstrated high LD in the genomic regions covering the two genes. Consequently, we conclude that common genetic variants in hMLH1 and hMSH2 in general are not involved in the development of sporadic CRC in the Danish population.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors’ contributions

LLC: Participated in the design of the study, carried out the genotyping using SBE-tag arrays and coordinated and drafted the manuscript. BEM: Carried out the statistical analyses and assisted in drafting the manuscript. FPW: Participated in the design of the study and assisted in drafting the manuscript. CW: Carried out the statistical analyses and assisted in drafting the manuscript. KK: Participated in the design of the study and the set-up of the SBE-tag arrays. AT: Responsible for the Danish Diet, Cancer and Health study. AO: Participating in the Danish Diet, Cancer and Health study. A–CS: Designed the SBE-tag arrays. CLA: Participated in the design of the study and assisted in drafting the manuscript. TFØ: Participated in the design of the study and assisted in drafting the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Acknowledgements

We are especially grateful to Gitte Høj for skilful technical assistance. This study was supported by grants from The Danish Cancer Society, Dansk Kræftforsknings Fond, A.P. Møller and hustru Chastine Mc Kinney Møllers Fond, Beckett-Fonden, Eva & Henry Frænkels Mindefond, Helga og Peter Kornings Fond and Th. Maigaards Etd. Fru Lilly Benthine Lunds Fond.

References

1. Boyle P, Langman JS: ABC of colorectal cancer: Epidemiology. BMJ 2000, 321:805-808.
2. Health NB: Cancer Incidence in Denmark 2000. 2006.
3. Lichtenstein P, Holm NV, Verkasalo PK, Illioud A, Kaprio J, Koskenvuo M, Pukkala E, Skytthe A, Hemminki K: Environmental and heritable factors in the causation of cancer-analyses of cohorts of twins from Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. N Engl J Med 2000, 343:78-85.
4. Weitz J, Koch M, Debus J, Holter T, Galle PR, Buchler MW: Colorectal cancer. Lancet 2005, 365:153-165.
5. Garber JE, Offit K: Hereditary Cancer Predisposition Syndromes. J Clin Oncol 2005, 23:276-292.
6. Vasen HF, Watson P, Mecklin JP, Lynch HT: New clinical criteria for hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer (HNPPC, Lynch syndrome) proposed by the International Collaborative group on HNPPC. Gastroenterology 1999, 116:1453-1456.
7. Peitomaki P: Lynch syndrome genes. Fam Cancer 2005, 4:227-232.
8. Ellison AR, Lofing J, Bitter GA: Functional analysis of human MLH1 and MSH2 missense variants and hybrid human-yeast MLH1 proteins in Saccharomyces cerevisiae. Hum Mol Genet 2001, 10:1889-1900.
9. Raevaara TE, Korhonen MK, Lohi H, Hampel H, Lynch E, Lonnqvist KE, Holinski-Feder E, Sutter C, McKinnon W, Duraisamy S: Functional Significance and Clinical Phenotype of Nontruncating Mismatch Repair Variants of MLH1. Gastroenterology 2005, 129:537-549.
10. Ollila S, Sarantaus L, Kariola R, Chan P, Hampel H, Holinski-Feder E, Macrae F, Kohonen-Corish M, Gerdes AM, Peitomaki P: Pathogenicity of MSH2 Missense Mutations Is Typically Associated With Impaired Repair Capability of the Mutated Protein. Gastroenterology 2006, 131:1408-1417.
11. Kondo E, Suzuki H, Horii A, Fukushima S: A Yeast Two-Hybrid Assay Provides a Simple Way to Evaluate the Vast Majority
of hMLH1 Germ-Line Mutations. Cancer Res 2003, 63:3302-3308.
21. Trojci, Zeuzem S, Randolph, A, Hemmerle, C, Bieler, A, Raedel, J, Plott, G, Jiricny, J, Marra, G. Functional analysis of hMLH1 variants and HNPCC-related mutations using a human expression system. Gastroenterology 2002, 122:211-219.
22. Birger, A, Trojci, J, Raedel, J, Plott, G, Zeuzem S. Transient mismatch repair gene transfer for functional analysis of genetic hMLR1 and hMSH2 variants. Gut 2002, 51:677-684.
23. Auclair, J, Busine MP, Navarro, C, Ruano C, Montmain G, Desseigne F, Saurin JC, Lasset C, Bonadonna V, Giraud S, Puisieux A, Wang Q. Systematic mRNA analysis for the effect of MLH1 and MSH2 tumor size and silent mutations on aberrant splicing. Hum Mutat 2006, 27:145-154.
24. Lastella, P, Surdo NC, Resta N, Guanti G, Stella A: In silico and in vivo splicing analysis of MLH1 and MSH2 missense mutations shows exon- and tissue-specific effects. BMC Genomics 2006, 7:110.
25. Ng PC, Henikoff S: Predicting the effects of amino acid substitutions on protein function. Annu Rev Genomics Hum Genet 2006, 7:61-80.
26. Mei Q, Yan HL, Ding FX, Xue G, Huang J, Wang YZ, Sun SH: Single-nucleotide and polymorphisms of normal mismatch repair genes in healthy Chinese individuals and sporadic colorectal cancer patients. Cancer Genet Cytogenet 2006, 171:17-23.
27. Kim JC, Roh SA, Koo KH, Ka IH, Kim HC, Yu CS, Lee KH, Kim JS, Lee HI, Bodmer WF: Genotyping possible polymorphic variants of human mismatch repair genes in healthy Korean individuals and sporadic colorectal cancer patients. Fam Cancer 2004, 3:129-137.
28. Lipkin SM, Roketz LS, Renners G, Yang W, Chen PC, Renners G, Yang W, Chen PC, Hacia J, Hunt N, Shin B, Fodor S, Kokoris M, Greenkon J, Kecorin J, Lynch EL, Macrae F, Hogdall E, Hogdall C, McGuire V, Whitemore AS, Easton DF, Ponder BA, Kjaer SK, Pharoah PD, Gaythar SA: Common variants in mismatch repair genes and risk of invasive ovarian cancer. Cancer Genet Cytogenet 2006, 25:2235-2242.
29. Shin BY, Chen H, Roketz LS, Paxton L, Peet DJ, nton-Culver H, Renners G, Mutch DG, Goodfellow PJ, Gruber SB, Lipkin SM: Low allele frequency of MLH1 D132H in American colorectal and endometrial cancer patients. Dis Colon Rectum 2005, 48:1723-1727.
30. Bocciari BA, Punigli M, Choi JY, Jiang R, Sun XJ, Stephens JC: SNP and haplotype variation in the human genome. Mutation Research/Fundamental and Molecular Mechanisms of Mutagenesis 2003, 526:53-61.
31. Colouhan HM, McKeigue PM, Davey Smith G: Problems of reporting genetic associations with complex outcomes. The Lancet 2003, 361:865-872.
32. Tannergard P, Lipford JR, Kolodner R, Frodin JE, Nordenskjold M, Lindblom A: Mutation screening in the hMLH1 gene in Swedish hereditary nonpolyposis colon cancer families. Cancer Res 2004, 64:263-265.
33. Wu Y, Nystrom-Lahti M, Oising J, Looman MW, Peltomaki P, Aalonen LA, de la CA, Hofstra RM, Buys CH: MSH2 and hMLH1 mutations in sporadic replication error-positive colorectal carcinoma as assessed by two-dimensional DNA electrophoresis. Gastroenterology 1997, 125:269-278.
34. Liu T, Wahlberg S, Rubio C, Holmgren E, Gronberg H, Lindblom A: DGGE screening of mutations in mismatch repair genes (hMSH2 and hMLH1) in 34 Swedish families with colorectal cancer. Cancer Genet Cytogenet 1999, 114:131-135.
35. Pastinen T, Raitio M, Lindroos K, Tainola P, Peltonen L, Saarinen JC, Lasset C, Bonadonna V, Giraud S, Puisieux A, Wang Q, Saurin JC, Lasset C, Bonadonna V, Giraud S, Puisieux A, Wang Q. Systematic analysis of the human genome. Hum Mutat 2006, 35:432-43.
36. Miler SA, Dykes DD, Polesky HY: A simple salting out procedure for extracting DNA from human nucleated cells. Nucleic Acids Res 1988, 16:1215.
37. Oligo 6 [http://www.oligo.net/oligo.htm].
38. Lindroos K, Sigurdsson S, Johansson K, Ronnblom L, Syvanen AC: Multiplex SNP genotyping in pooled DNA samples by a four-color microarray system. Nucleic Acids Res 2002, 30:3670.
39. Pastinen T, Raitio M, Lindroos K, Tainola P, Peltonen L, Syvanen AC: A system for specific, high-throughput genotyping by allele-specific primer extension on microarrays. Genome Res 2000, 10:131-132.
40. Wigginton JE, Cutler DJ, Abecasis GR: A note on exact tests of Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium. Am J Hum Genet 2005, 76:887-893.
41. Barrett JC, Fry B, Maller J, Daly MJ: Haploview: analysis and visualization of LD and haplotype maps. Bioinformatics 2005, 21:263-265.
42. Ng PC, Henikoff S: SIFT: Predicting amino acid changes that affect protein function. Nucleic Acids Res 2003, 31:382-384.
43. Ramensky V, Bork P, Sunyaev S: Human non-synonymous SNPs: impacts on functionally important residues. Nucleic Acids Res 2002, 30:318-321.
44. Ferrer-Costa C, Gelpi JL, Zamakoua L, Farragio I, de la Cruz X, Orozco M: PMUT: a web-based tool for the annotation of pathogenic mutations on proteins. Bioinformatics 2005, 21:3176-3178.
45. Li S, Ma L, Yang H, Yang S, Hu Y, Bolondi L, Wang J: Snap: an integrated SNP annotation platform. Nucleic Acids Res 2007, 35:D707-D710.
46. ClustalW 2008 [http://www.ebi.ac.uk/Tools/clustalw2/index.html].
47. Iwashashi Y, Itto E, Yanagisawa Y, Akiyama Y, Yuasa T, Onodera T, Maruyama K: Promoter analysis of the human mismatch repair gene hMSH2. Genie 1998, 213:141-147.
48. Shin KH, Shin JH, Kim JH, Park JG: Mutational analysis of promoters of mismatch repair genes hMSH2 and hMLH1 in hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer and early onset colorectal cancer patients: identification of three novel germ-line mutations in promoter of the hMSH2 gene. Cancer Res 2002, 62:38-42.
49. Pang Q, Prolla TA, Liskay RM: Functional domains of the Saccharomyces cerevisiae Mlh1p and Pms1p DNA mismatch repair proteins and their relevance to human hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer-associated mutations. Mol Cell Biol 1997, 17:4465-4473.
50. Park JG, Kim DW, Hong CW, Nam BH, Shin YK, Hong SH, Kim J, Lim SB, Aronson M, Bissaga ML, Brown GJ, Burn J, Chow E, Kim Conrad P, Douglas F, Dunlop M, Ford J, Greblant MS, Heikki J, Heinmann K, Lynch EL, Macrae F, McKinnon WC, Moselein G, Rossi BM, Rozen P, Scoffield L, Vaccaro C, Vasen H, Velthuisen M, Viel A, Wijnen J: Genetic Line Mutations of Mismatch Repair Genes in Hereditary Nonpolyposis Colorectal Cancer Patients with Small Bowel Cancer: International Society for Gastrointestinal Hereditary Tumours Collaborative Study. Clin Cancer Res 2006, 12:3389-3393.
51. Song H, Ramsu SJ, Quaye L, Diaccioo RA, Tyrer J, Lomas E, Shadforth D, Hogdall E, Hogdall C, McGuire V, Whitemore AS, Easton DF, Ponder BA, Kjaer SK, Pharoah PD, Gaythar SA: Common variants in mismatch repair genes and risk of invasive ovarian cancer. Carcinogenesis 2006, 27:2235-2242.
52. Plotz P, Andrzejak P, Douglas F, Dunlop M, Podlennikov A, Leslie-Curw M, Egypto-Culver H, Rentner H, Mutch DG, Goodfellow PJ, Gruber SB, Lipkin SM: Low allele frequency of MLH1 D132H in American colorectal and endometrial cancer patients. Dis Colon Rectum 2005, 48:1723-1727.
53. Hallenborn SA, Pungliya M, Choi JY, Jiang R, Sun XJ, Stephens JC: SNP and haplotype variation in the human genome. Mutation Research/Fundamental and Molecular Mechanisms of Mutagenesis 2003, 526:53-61.
54. Colouhan HM, McKeigue PM, Davey Smith G: Problems of reporting genetic associations with complex outcomes. The Lancet 2003, 361:865-872.
Vogelstein B, Kinzler KW: Analysis of mismatch repair genes in hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer patients. Nat Med 1996, 2:165-4.

51. Cederquist K, Emanuelsson M, Goransson I, Holinski-Feder E, Muller-Koch Y, Golovleva I, Gronberg H: Mutation analysis of the MLH1, MSH2 and MSH6 genes in patients with double primary cancers of the colorectum and the endometrium: a population-based study in northern Sweden. Int J Cancer 2004, 109:370-376.

52. Cunningham JM, Kim CY, Christensen ER, Tester DJ, Parc Y, Burgart LJ, Halling KC, McDonnell SK, Schaid DJ, Walsh VC, Kubly V, Nelson H, Michels VV, Thibodeau SN: The frequency of hereditary defect in mismatch repair in a prospective series of unselected colorectal carcinomas. Am J Hum Genet 2001, 69:780-790.

53. Hutter P, Couturier A, Scott RJ, Alday P, ozier-Blanchet C, Cachet F, Antonarakis SE, Joris F, Gaudin M, D'Amato L, Buerstedde JM: Complex genetic predisposition to cancer in an extended HNPCC family with an ancestral hMLH1 mutation. J Med Genet 1996, 33:636-640.

54. Wijnen J, van der Horst KH, van der BM, van Leeuwen-Cornelisse I, Nagenast F, Meijers-Heijboer EJ, Lindhout D, Griffioen G, Cats A, Kleibeuker J, Varesco L, Bertario L, Bisgaard ML, Mohr J, Kolodner R, Fodde R: Majority of hMLH1 mutations responsible for hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer cluster at the exonic region 15-16. J Hum Genet 1996, 51:300-307.

55. Bisgaard ML, Jager AC, Myrhøj T, Bernstein I, Nielsen FC: Hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer (HNPCC): phenotypetype-genotype correlation between patients with and without identified mutation. Hum Mutat 2002, 20:20-27.

56. Weber TK, Chin HM, Rodriguez-Bigas M, Keitz B, Gilligan R, O'Malley L, Urf E, Diba N, Pazzik J, Percepepe A, Evans DG, Miyaki M, Yuen ST, Radice P, Mahler ER, Wright FA, de La CA: Recurrent germline mutation in hMLH1 arises frequently de novo. J Med Genet 2000, 37:46-52.

57. Wijnen J, Vasen H, Khan PM, Menko FH, Van Der KH, van der BM, van Leeuwen-Cornelisse I, Nagenast F, Meijers-Heijboer EJ, Lindhout D, Griffioen G, Cats A, Kleibeuker J, Varesco L, Bertario L, Bisgaard ML, Mohr J, Kolodner R, Fodde R: Seven new mutations in hMSH2, an HNPCC gene, identified by denaturing gradient-gel electrophoresis. J Hum Genet 1995, 51:1060-1066.

58. Tanyi M, Olasz J, Lukacs G, Csuka O, Toth L, Szentirmay Z, Ress Z, Barza Z, Tanyi JL, Damjanovich L: Pedigree and genetic analysis of a new mutation carrier patient suffering from hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer. World J Gastroenterol 2006, 12:1192-1197.

59. Peel DJ, Ziegas A, Fox EA, Gildes M, Laham B, Clements E, Kolodner RD, nton-Culver H: Characterization of Hereditary Nonpolyposis Colorectal Cancer Families From a Population-Based Series of Cases. J Natl Cancer Inst 2000, 92:1517-1522.

60. Liu B, Nicolaides NC, Markowitz S, Willson JK, Parsons RE, Jen J, Papadopoulos N, Peltomaki P, de LA CA, Hamilton SR, ...: Mismatch repair gene defects in sporadic colorectal cancers with microsatellite instability. Nat Genet 1999, 21:48-55.

61. van der Horst KH, van der BM, van Leeuwen-Cornelisse I, Nagenast F, Meijers-Heijboer EJ, Lindhout D, Griffioen G, Cats A, Kleibeuker JH, Varesco L, Bertario L, Bisgaard ML, Mohr J, Kolodner R, Fodde R: Majory of hMLH1 mutations responsible for hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer cluster at the exonic region 15-16. J Hum Genet 1996, 51:300-307.

62. Mary JL, Bishop T, Kolodner R, Lipford JR, Kane M, Weber W, Torhorst J, Muller H, Spycher M, Scott RJ: MUTational analysis of the hMSH2 gene reveals a three base pair deletion in a family predisposed to colorectal cancer development. Hum Mol Genet 1994, 3:2067-2069.

63. Rapa RS, Katballe N, Wikman FP, Jager AC, Bernstein I, Ormtoft T, Schwartz M, Nielsen FC, Bisgaard ML: Presymptomatic diagnosis using a deletion of a single codon in families with hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer. Mutat Res 2005, 570:89-96.

64. Wijnen J, van der Horst KH, van der BM, van Leeuwen-Cornelisse I, Nagenast F, Meijers-Heijboer EJ, Lindhout D, Griffioen G, Cats A, Kleibeuker JH, Varesco L, Bertario L, Bisgaard ML, Mohr J, Kolodner R, Fodde R: Seven new mutations in hMSH2, an HNPCC gene, identified by denaturing gradient-gel electrophoresis. J Hum Genet 1995, 51:1060-1066.

65. Weaber TK, Chin HM, Rodriguez-Bigas M, Keitz B, Gilligan R, O'Malley L, Urf E, Diba N, Pazzik J, Percepepe A, Evans DG, Miyaki M, Yuen ST, Radice P, Mahler ER, Wright FA, de La CA: Recurrent germline mutation in hMLH1 arises frequently de novo. J Med Genet 2000, 37:46-52.

66. Wijnen J, van der Horst KH, van der BM, van Leeuwen-Cornelisse I, Nagenast F, Meijers-Heijboer EJ, Lindhout D, Griffioen G, Cats A, Kleibeuker JH, Varesco L, Bertario L, Bisgaard ML, Mohr J, Kolodner R, Fodde R: Seven new mutations in hMSH2, an HNPCC gene, identified by denaturing gradient-gel electrophoresis. J Hum Genet 1995, 51:1060-1066.

67. Raevaara TE, Gerdes AM, Lonningquist KE, Tybjaerg-Hansen A, bdel-Rahman WM, Kariola R, Peltomaki P, Nystrom-Lahti M: HNPCC mutation MLH1 P648S makes the functional protein unstable, and homozogosity predisposes to mild neurofibromatosi type 1. Genes Chromosomes Cancer 2004, 40:261-265.

Pre-publication history

The pre-publication history for this paper can be accessed here:

http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2350/9/52/prepub

Publish with BioMed Central and every scientist can read your work free of charge.

"BioMed Central will be the most significant development for disseminating the results of biomedical research in our lifetime." Sir Paul Nurse, Cancer Research UK

Your research papers will be:
- available free of charge to the entire biomedical community
- peer reviewed and published immediately upon acceptance
- cited in PubMed and archived on PubMed Central
- yours — you keep the copyright

Submit your manuscript here:
http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/publishing_adv.asp

BioMedcentral