Validation of Genome-Wide Prostate Cancer Associations in Men of African Descent


Abstract

Background: Genome-wide association studies (GWAS) have identified numerous prostate cancer susceptibility alleles, but these loci have been identified primarily in men of European descent. There is limited information about the role of these loci in men of African descent.

Methods: We identified 7,788 prostate cancer cases and controls with genotype data for 47 GWAS-identified loci.

Results: We identified significant associations for SNP rs10486567 at JAZF1, rs10993994 at MSMB, rs12418451 and rs7931342 at 11q13, and rs5945572 and rs5945619 at NUDT10/11. These associations were in the same direction and of similar magnitude as those reported in men of European descent. Significance was attained at all reported prostate cancer susceptibility regions at chromosome 8q24, including associations reaching genome-wide significance in region 2.

Conclusion: We have validated in men of African descent the associations at some, but not all, prostate cancer susceptibility loci originally identified in European descent populations. This may be due to the heterogeneity in genetic etiology or in the pattern of genetic variation across populations.

environmental exposures, lifestyle, behavior, screening, and cancer treatment all influence the disparity between men of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

A number of recent genome-wide association studies (GWAS) have identified numerous prostate cancer susceptibility loci including CTBP2 (chr. 10q26), EHPB1 (chr. 2p15), HNF1B (chr. 17q12), IGF2/IGF2A/INS (chr. 11p15), ITGA6 (chr. 2p31), KLK2/3 (chr. 19q13), LMTK2 (chr. 7q21), MSMB (chr. 10q11), NXKX3.1 (chr. 8p21), NUDT10/11 (chr. Xp11.22), PDLIM5 (chr. 6q25), TET2 (chr. 2q24), THADA (chr. 2p21), TTLL1/BIK/MCAT/PACSIN2 (chr. 22q13), as well as loci on chromosome 1q13, 17q12, 17q24, and multiple regions at chromosome 8q24 (1–17). These loci were discovered primarily in European descent men (EDM), with the exception being the prostate cancer susceptibility loci on chromosome 8q24, which were identified by linkage and admixture mapping (15, 18). Studies suggest that some genetic variants confer risk across populations but with different magnitudes of the risk in different populations, or they may only confer risk in one population but not in others (11, 19). Because the prevalence of prostate cancer and the allele frequencies differ between EDM and African descent men (ADM), it is important to estimate the effects of these GWAS risk variants originally identified in EDM on ADM before generalization of the GWAS associations in ADM. Three recent studies have attempted to validate associations between some of the loci listed above and prostate cancer in ADM. Xu et al. (20) studied 868 cases and 878 controls and validated the loci at 8q24 (P = 0.034 – 2 x 10^-5) and 3p12 (P = 0.029). Waters et al. (19) studied 860 cases and 575 controls and validated KLK2/3 (19q13.33) and NUDT10/11 (Xp11.22). Finally, Hooker et al. (21) validated 8q24 (P = 1 x 10^-4), 11q13.2 (P = 0.009), HNF1B/TCF2 (17q12; P = 0.008), KLK2/3 (19q13.33; P = 0.04), and NUDT11 (Xp11.22; P = 0.05) in 454 cases and 301 controls. The validated loci were not consistent across these studies, perhaps due to relatively small sample sizes in each study. To confirm associations at previously identified prostate cancer susceptibility loci in ADM, we obtained data from 7,788 ADM from 19 centers in the United States and the United Kingdom for pooled analyses of GWAS-identified loci and prostate cancer.

**Methods**

**Study sample**

The sample studied here consisted of 4,040 cases and 3,748 controls ascertained from 19 centers (Supplementary Table 1). A detailed description of each center’s study is presented in Appendix 1 and a summary of the study methods is presented in Supplementary Table 5. These studies include the Prostate Cancer Genetics Studies (CaP Genes) at the University of California (22), Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (FHCRC) Prostate Cancer Studies (23, 24), The Prostate Risk Assessment Program (PRAP) at Fox Chase Cancer Center (25), The Flint Men’s Health Study (FMHS; refs. 26, 27), Gene-Environment Interaction in Prostate Cancer (GECAP) Study at Henry Ford Hospital (28), Los Angeles County Study (LACS; ref. 29), Prostate Cancer Clinical Outcome Study (PC2OS) at the University of Louisville (30), MD Anderson Cancer Center (31), The Multiethnic Cohort Study (MEC; ref. 32), Moffitt Cancer Center Study (33), NCI Prostate Tissue Study (NCIPTS), University of Pennsylvania Study of Cancer Outcomes, Risk, and Ethnicity (SCORE; ref. 34), University of Texas San Antonio Center for Biomarkers of Risk for Prostate Cancer (SABOR), University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (35, 36), San Francisco Bay Area Prostate Cancer Study (SFBAPCS; ref. 37), United Kingdom Genetic Prostate Cancer Study (UKGPCS), Wake University Consortium including participants from the Johns Hopkins University, Wake Forest University, and Washington University (20). Two of these studies, SFBAPCS and UKGPCS, have contributed only to case–case analyses of disease aggressiveness because only cases were available from these 2 studies. Single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) were chosen if they were implicated in previous GWAS studies (1–3, 38), in follow-up fine-mapping studies (5–7, 39, 40), or associated with disease aggressiveness (4, 41). Available SNPs in all regions of 8q24, some of which were initially identified through linkage and admixture mapping in ADM and confirmed in GWAS studies, were also included (10, 11, 14–16, 42).

Genotype data were excluded if they were found to have genotyping failure rates greater than 5% within each study center or if they deviated significantly from Hardy–Weinberg proportions. We set a threshold of P < 0.001 based on multiple-test adjustment for the number of SNPs tested (family-wise error rate P = 0.05 divided by 50 SNPs equals to P = 0.001). SNPs were included in the present analysis if we obtained at least 1,000 genotypes in cases and controls from the contributing centers by October 2009. A summary of the data contributed by each center by SNP is summarized in Supplementary Table 6.

**Statistical methods**

Departure from Hardy–Weinberg equilibrium was assessed for each SNP in control subjects of the combined study populations using the chi-square goodness-of-fit Test. Any SNP that showed departure from Hardy–Weinberg equilibrium with P < 0.001 in controls was excluded from subsequent analyses. Unconditional logistic regression models were used to estimate odds ratios (OR) and 95% CIs to measure the association between individual SNP genotypes and prostate cancer risk or disease aggressiveness defined as Gleason score ≤7 versus 7+ or tumor stage T1/T2 versus T3/T4. Analyses were undertaken using an additive mode of inheritance, adjusting for age and study centers (results shown in Table 1 and Supplementary Tables 2–4).

Subgroup analyses were also carried out to estimate whether African ancestry affected the reported
associations. This analysis included a subset of study centers for which estimated percentage of African ancestry was available (Supplemental Table 5). Centers used different ancestry informative marker (AIM) panels (Supplemental Table 5). These AIMs were obtained from the original genotyping methods used in each center, and were comparable on the basis of several measures of marker informativeness (FST, FIC, and δ). The statistical methods used to estimate ancestry proportion, STRUCTURE and ANCESTRYMAP, have used same hierarchical model and probabilistic measures and would result in similar/high correlated measurements. In addition, we analyzed data stratifying by center to adjust for potential confounding by ancestry proportion within each participating study and to minimize the influence of varying informativeness of AIM panels.

These studies include nested case–control studies from within cohorts, matched and unmatched case–control studies, as well as case-only series. To address the potential study heterogeneity, age-adjusted ORs and 95% CIs for SNPs were estimated for each study population separately, and forest plots were generated for independent SNPs with P values < 0.05 (Supplementary Fig. 1). Potential heterogeneity in the association of SNPs with prostate cancer among study populations was examined by Bre- slow–Day homogeneity test. All statistical analyses were performed using SAS 9.2 and PLINK (43). An LD heat map (Fig. 1) was generated on the basis of HapMap YRI data using Haploview (44). Inferences were made using 2-sided hypothesis testing with a P value < 0.05. Because this is a validation study, we did not correct for multiple hypothesis tests.

Results

We were able to validate some, but not all, prostate cancer GWAS loci (Table 1 for SNPs outside of 8q24 regions, and Supplementary Table 2 and Figure 1 for SNPs located within 8q24). Most associations reported here were in the same direction and with an equal or smaller magnitude than those originally reported in EDM. However, a number of associations reported here were not in the same direction as those reported in EDM (i.e., CTBP2, 11q13, and 22q13; Table 1), suggesting that these alleles are not consistent with prostate cancer risk in ADM. A number of loci that were implicated in EDM have not been associated with prostate cancer risk in ADM. Although we were unable to mutually adjust for the effects of multiple SNPs in a single locus for the majority of loci, after mutually adjusting for multiple SNPs at 11q13, both SNP rs7931342 (OR = 1.0; 94% CI: 0.93–1.18) became non-significant. As the sample size for this last analysis is smaller than for the overall sample (i.e., n = 2,013 vs. n = 3,954 or 4,463), we were not able to unambiguously determine which SNP contributed independently to the association signal seen at this locus. After mutual adjustment, the point estimates for rs7931342 changed from 1.15 to 1.0 and rs10896449 changed from 1.12 to 1.18. These results suggest that rs10896449 or other SNPs in tight LD with rs10896449 maybe the SNP that contributes to the association signal at 11q13 locus. Multiple independent loci on chromosome 8q24 have been identified as playing a role in prostate cancer etiology. We were able to validate the association of each of these regions at 8q24 (Fig. 1 and Supplementary Table 2). We had statistically significant evidence at the genome-wide association level for associations with regions 2 (rs13254738, rs6983561, and rs16901979), and statistically significant associations in region 1 (rs10086908), region 3 (rs6983267 and rs7000448), region 4 (rs7008482), and the region centromeric to region 2 (rs10086908). We also removed data that had been included in previous studies (19, 20, 45) of loci at 8q24. Significant associations remained for Regions 2 (block 2), 3 (block 4), 4 (centromeric to block 1), and the region
centromeric to Region 2 (block 1). However, the marginal associations in region 1 (block 5) were no longer significant after the data from the published reports were excluded.

Because we have studied an admixed population of ADM, we also investigated potential bias due to population stratification by comparing the association results with or without adjusting for percentage of non-African ancestry estimated from AIMs. Ancestry adjustment analyses were undertaken in 8 of the 19 centers for which AIMs data were available (Supplementary Table 3). We observed significant differences in the proportion of African ancestry across centers ($\chi^2$, Kruskal–Wallis = 339.6; $P < 0.0001$). However, these differences may reflect...
### Table 1. Results of associations at prostate cancer GWAS loci in men of African descent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chr</th>
<th>Locus</th>
<th>SNP</th>
<th>Position, bp</th>
<th>Risk allele</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Risk allele frequency</th>
<th>aOR (95% CI)</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>OR in EDM</th>
<th>RA Fin EDM</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Controls</td>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>Controls</td>
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<td>2,538</td>
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<td>0.87</td>
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<td>0.87</td>
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<td>876</td>
<td>0.12</td>
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<td>541</td>
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<tr>
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<td>539</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.87 (0.58–1.31)</td>
<td>0.509</td>
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<td>535</td>
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<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.99 (0.83–1.19)</td>
<td>0.929</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>0.94</td>
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<td>1.08 (1.00–1.18)</td>
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<td>875</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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<td>1.03 (0.90–1.18)</td>
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<td>2,680</td>
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<td>1.07 (0.99–1.18)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1,235</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>1.11 (1.02–1.20)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>1.09 (1.00–1.18)</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviation:** MAF, minor allele frequency.

*aOR: per allele OR adjusting for age and study centers.

bOR (per allele OR) in EDM were estimated from: (a) estimations in the original publications whenever they are available (1,2,5,6,7,8,9,19), (b) recalculations based on number of genotype counts in cases and controls when available (4), (c) Specifically for SNPs reported in Thomas et al. (3), ORs for heterozygous carriers were used as a proxy for aORs when OR for homozygous carriers were higher than OR for heterozygous carriers. For SNPs, rs4072111 and rs4782726, increases in prostate cancer risk were only seen in homozygous carriers. Therefore, the square root of OR in homozygous carriers were used as estimates.
not only known geographic differences in ADM admixture (46), but also the different ancestry marker panels and methods used to estimate the ancestry proportions across centers (Supplementary Table 5). Therefore, we have performed all analyses with adjustment for center effects to reduce the impact of different ancestry marker panels and methods used across centers. Among those centers with ancestry marker data, inclusion of percent non-African ancestry did not substantially change the associations or inferences for any locus compared with models adjusted only for age and center.

We also evaluated the effect of the GWAS SNPs studied here on prostate cancer aggressiveness by repeating the analysis with stratification by clinical (TNM) stage and histologic (Gleason) grade (Supplementary Table 4). For SNPs that showed a significant association in the comparisons of both high grade/stage against controls and low grade/stage against controls, there were no statistically significant differences between high- and low-grade/stage cases. A number of loci were associated with disease aggressiveness, but in no instance was there an evidence for statistically significant differences in the associations by disease aggressiveness after correction for multiple testing (Supplementary Table 4).

We also evaluated whether there was evidence for first-order interactions between any of the loci identified as having a statistically significant main effect on risk of prostate cancer (Table 1). Using an additive (per-allele) model adjusted for age and study center, we considered interactions only among SNPs not in LD. The most significant interaction identified was between 2 SNPs on chromosome 8q24: rs10086908 (centromeric to Region 2) and rs6983267 (Region 3; nominal P value = 0.021). However, after correction for multiple testing using the false discovery rate (FDR), this interaction was no longer significant (FDR P value = 0.42). No other P values for interaction reached statistical significance.

Finally, we evaluated whether there was evidence for heterogeneity in associations across centers by generating forest plots of the individual center OR estimates (Supplementary Fig. 1). With very few exceptions, the associations that reached any level of significance showed remarkable consistency in the direction of the risk estimates. There was no statistically significant heterogeneity in effects across centers (P > 0.05 for all SNPs).

Discussion

A number of recent reports have modeled the role of genomic markers on prostate cancer susceptibility (1–9). We have validated a number of these loci, including 8q24, JAZF1, MSMB, 11q13, and NUDT10/11. In general, the point estimates of risk at these loci in our current pooled analysis of 19 studies suggest that the effects of these loci in ADM are similar to those in EDM. We also observed no statistically significant heterogeneity of effects across studies (Supplementary Fig. 1). A number of loci were not validated in our analysis, despite reaching genome-wide significance in GWAS of EDM. This discrepancy may be explained in a number of ways. First, the present study may not have been powered to identify very small effects of these loci. However, for a number of loci, we estimated ORs < 1.0 with 95% CIs that do not overlap the OR estimates originally reported in EDM. The effects of most remaining nonsignificant associations were obtained with OR < 1.05, which are lower than those estimated in EDM. If the effects of these alleles are in fact smaller in magnitude in ADM than those reported in EDM, the present study may not have been able to detect these effects. Second, allele frequencies in EDM and ADM differ at many of the loci studied here (Table 1), as do patterns of linkage disequilibrium by ethnicity (47). These differences also may affect the ability to detect significant effects at some loci in ADM, where they may have been detectable in EDM. However, the reverse situation is also possible (Table 1). Finally, if none of these limitations applies, it is possible that the loci not validated in the present study confer susceptibility only in EDM, but not ADM. Although it is unlikely that there are substantial biological differences in prostate cancer etiology between EDM and ADM, interactions of environmental exposures, prostate cancer screening, and other nongenetic risk factors may influence the penetrance of these alleles that may manifest in different risk profiles.

One of the more consistent associations identified to date is that of rs10993994 at MSMB (10q11; refs. 2, 3), which is confirmed as a prostate cancer susceptibility locus in ADM in this study. MSMB is a microseminoprotein beta gene that encodes PSP94, a nonglycosylated, cysteine-rich protein that is a member of the immunoglobulin-binding factor family synthesized by epithelial cells in the prostate and secreted into seminal plasma (3). Although the exact function of PSP94 is not well established, it is postulated to be involved in growth regulation, gene expression, and apoptosis in prostate cancer cells (2). PSP94 and its binding protein in serum, PSPBP, are potential serum markers for both prostate cancer risk and aggressiveness (48, 49), unlike the current prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening which mainly detects the presence of prostate cancer (48). The effect of rs10993994 in MSMB gene expression has been investigated in functional studies (5, 40). The prostate cancer risk–associated T allele of the rs10993994 SNP had only 13% of the promoter activity compared with the C allele, and treatment with increasing concentrations of the synthetic androgen R1881 resulted in a dose-dependent increase in promoter activity of the C, but not the T allele of the this SNP. In addition, tumor cell lines with a CC or CT genotype revealed a high level of MSMB gene expression compared with cell lines with a TT genotype. These findings were specific to the alleles of rs10993994 and not from other SNPs in the proximal promoter of MSMB. The significant association found in rs10993994 and lack of association found in 2 other MSMB SNPs included in our study also suggests the potential of rs10993994 as the causal SNP.
Further fine-mapping studies that take advantage of the shorter LD pattern in ADM would serve to augment this hypothesis.

JAZF1 ("juxtaposed with another zinc finger protein 1") was identified by the Cancer Genetic Markers of Susceptibility (CGEMS) study as associated with prostate cancer case–control status (3). This same group has undertaken fine mapping at this locus and confirmed that the original GWAS association with rs10486567 (the SNP validated in ADM here) is likely to be the marker responsible for the association signal at this locus (50). Because rs10486567 lies in intron 2 of JAZF1 and is not known to alter any apparent splicing or expression of this gene, the functional significance of this association has yet to be determined. JAZF1 has been associated with somatic fusion proteins in endometrial tumors (51–54), but no other genomic associations have been found.

Two previous studies (19, 21) suggested that NUDT10/11 was associated with prostate cancer in ADM. One study of ADM, not included in the present data, also reported that SNPs at 11q13 were associated with prostate cancer in ADM (21). The marginal association between these 2 loci and prostate cancer in this study is suggestive of validation with GWAS associations in European descent populations, but additional data may be required to fully validate these associations in ADM.

We have also validated the previously reported associations of multiple regions of chromosome 8q24 and prostate cancer in ADM. Originally identified by admixture mapping methods and GWAS (18), this locus has been shown to be composed of a number of independent prostate cancer susceptibility regions (11, 42, 55, 56). Multiple regions have been validated in our study, with the strongest association signals seen in regions 2 and 3, and our findings are consistent with the fine mapping of the admixture scan (11). The association signals seen in regions 1, 4, and a region centromeric to region 2 are much weaker compared with those in regions 2 and 3.

Finally, a number of other loci did not reach statistical significance in any analysis, and in fact provided no evidence for association with prostate cancer in ADM. These included many loci that reached genome-wide levels of significance in EA but had P value > 0.2 (and many with P > 0.9) in ADM (Table 1). These include associations that were reported by 2 studies of ADM that are included in the present analysis, but did not reach statistical significance in the current combined data set, including KLK2/3 and HNF1B/TCF2 (19, 20).

It is possible that a number of these statistically non-significant associations were underpowered in the present sample, especially those based on loci with lower minor allele frequencies. However, the adjusted OR estimates in ADM were often substantially lower than those reported in EA men (Table 1). Indeed, some risk estimates in ADM that had been estimated to be OR > 1 were estimated in ADM to be OR < 1, suggesting no evidence for a comparable association in between the 2 groups.

There are a number of possible explanations for these findings. First, the loci identified in GWAS studies of EDM populations could represent false-positive associations that cannot be replicated in ADM. Given the large sample sizes in replication studies and strong \( P \) values associated with these loci in previous reports, this is an unlikely scenario. Second, there may be real heterogeneity in prostate cancer etiology that may be reflected by differences in allele frequency (i.e., ability to detect associations) or differences in the context in which these alleles are acting in EDM versus ADM due to differences in environmental exposures, lifestyle, or other effect modifiers not measured in studies to date. The present data do not allow us to address whether prostate cancer in ADM is less strongly influenced by genes relative to other factors than in EDM. However, the present results should be considered in future studies that may attempt to address this hypothesis. Third, the causal variants may not have been identified and genotyped yet, and the causal variants may be different in EDM and ADM. This question cannot be resolved by the data presented here and will require additional fine-mapping studies as well as ADM-specific GWAS studies in which existing GWAS loci may be validated and new loci may be identified.

Despite the validation of some prostate cancer loci in ADM, there was no strong evidence that these loci had different effects on advanced (e.g., high stage or grade) disease compared with less advanced disease (e.g., low stage or grade). This may, in part, be due to the limited power to detect significant differences between men with more versus less aggressive disease features. In some cases, there were suggestions that some SNPs were associated with more aggressive disease, including a number of SNPs at Chr. 8q24 (rs6981122, rs7000448, rs16901896) as well as others such as rs7904463 (Chr. 10) and rs9545572 (Chr. X). In these cases, there is a suggestion of stronger associations in more versus less aggressive disease in a case–control study design, but there were no statistically significant differences observed between more and less aggressive cases in a case–case comparison. Similarly, there were a number of loci for which the association was stronger for less advanced disease compared with more advanced disease. These included the associations for rs9623117 at 22q13, MSMB and JAZF1 SNPs, for which the overall significant association among all cases combined (Table 1) appeared to exist only in cases with less aggressive features (Supplementary Table 4). Our results in ADM are consistent with the report by Kader et al. (57) that showed the majority of currently identified GWAS risk-associated SNPs could not differentiate aggressive from less aggressive diseases in EDM. However, contrary to the significant finding in this report showing that SNPs in KLK2/3 and MSMB, both related to serum PSA levels, were associated with less aggressive disease; our null finding in KLK2/3 and MSMB implies that PSA screening may not introduce the same degree of bias in cancer detection in ADM as seen in EDM.
In studying an admixed population of ADM men, there is a concern for potential bias due to confounding by ethnicity (i.e., population stratification). To address the potential that there is bias in the risk estimates, we undertook a subset analysis of those centers that had genotyped ancestry markers and estimated the proportion of African ancestry. We observed no substantial bias in the estimates of association for any SNP. In fact, compared with associations adjusted only for age and center, the odds ratios for 7 of 47 (15%) of associations adjusted for age, center, and percent non-African ancestry changed by 5% or more: of these estimates moved away from the null hypothesis whereas 4 of these estimates changed toward the null. These empirical data suggest that the potential for bias due to population stratification is not large, and that the direction of this bias may not always be away from the null hypothesis. None of these SNPs was significantly associated with the probability of having prostate cancer before or after adjustment for ancestry, so the consideration of ancestry did not change any inferences based on our results. Limitations of the approach used here include the use of different sets of markers and approaches to estimating African ancestry in only a subset of the available studies. However, our data provide no evidence for substantial bias due to population stratification in associations of GWAS SNPs in prostate cancer etiology.

In conclusion, we have validated in ADM, the associations of some, but not all, prostate cancer susceptibility loci originally identified in non-African descent populations. The finding that the genetic etiology of prostate cancer may be different in ADM and EDM suggests that studies that take advantage of the shorter LD blocks in ADM or more complete resequencing efforts will facilitate identification of causal variants in verified risk loci.

Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed.

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