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MC1R variants in childhood and adolescent melanoma: a retrospective pooled analysis of a multicentre cohort

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### Authors

Pellegrini, Cristina  
Botta, Francesca  
Massi, Daniela  
[et al.](#)

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Correspondence: Sara Raimondi, PhD, Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, IEO, European Institute of Oncology IRCCS, Via Ripamonti 435, 20141 Milan, Italy, Tel: +39 02 94372711, sara.raimondi@ieo.it.

\*equally contributed to the work

Authors' contribution

Literature search: Cristina Pellegrini, Sara Raimondi

Figures: Francesca Botta

Study design: Sara Raimondi, Sara Gandini, Patrick Maisonneuve, Peter A. Kanetsky, Jose Carlos García-Borrón, Hongmei Nan, Maria Teresa Landi, Julian Little, Julia Newton-Bishop, Francesco Sera, Maria Concetta Fargnoli

Histopathological review: Daniela Massi, Fabio Facchetti

Data collection: Marie-Françoise Avril, Florence Demenais, Brigitte Bressac-de Paillerets, Veronica Hoiom, Anne E. Cust, Hoda Anton-Culver, Stephen B. Gruber, Richard P. Gallagher, Loraine Marrett, Roberto Zanetti, Terence Dwyer, Nancy E. Thomas, Colin B. Begg, Marianne Berwick, Susana Puig, Miriam Potrony Mateu, Eduardo Nagore, Paola Ghiorzo, Chiara Menin, Ausilia Maria Manganoni, Monica Rodolfo, Sonia Brugnara, Emanuela Passoni, Lidija Kandolf Sekulovic, Federica Baldini, Gabriella Guida, Alex Stratigos, Fezal Ozdemir, Fabrizio Ayala, Ricardo Fernandez-de-Misa, Pietro Quaglino, Gloria Ribas, Antonella Romanini, Emilia Migliano, Ignazio Stanganelli, Peter A. Kanetsky, Maria Antonietta Pizzichetta, Maria Concetta Fargnoli

Data analysis: Francesca Botta, Sara Raimondi

Data interpretation: Cristina Pellegrini, Daniela Massi, Sara Gandini, Peter A. Kanetsky, Maria Teresa Landi, Julian Little, Maria Concetta Fargnoli, Sara Raimondi

Molecular analysis of *MC1R* gene for new samples: Cristina Pellegrini, Claudia Martorelli Writing paper: Cristina Pellegrini, Francesca Botta, Claudia Martorelli

M-SKIP study group

Principal Investigator: Sara Raimondi (IEO, European Institute of Oncology IRCCS, Milan, Italy); Advisory Committee members: Philippe Autier (International Prevention Research Institute, Lyon, France), Maria Concetta Fargnoli (University of L'Aquila, Italy), José C. García-Borrón (University of Murcia, Spain), Jiali Han (Indiana University, Indianapolis, IN, USA), Peter A. Kanetsky (Department of Cancer Epidemiology, H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute, Tampa, FL, USA), Maria Teresa Landi (National Cancer Institute, NIH, Bethesda, MD, USA), Julian Little (University of Ottawa, Canada), Julia Newton-Bishop (University of Leeds, UK), Francesco Sera (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK); Consultants: Saverio Caini (ISPO, Florence, Italy), Sara Gandini and Patrick Maisonneuve (IEO, European Institute of Oncology IRCCS, Milan, Italy); Participant Investigators: Albert Hofman, Manfred Kayser, Fan Liu, Tamar Nijsten and Andre G. Uitterlinden (Erasmus MC University Medical Center, Rotterdam, The Netherlands), Rajiv Kumar (German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg, Germany), Tim Bishop and Faye Elliott (University of Leeds, UK), Eduardo Nagore (Instituto Valenciano de Oncología, Valencia, Spain), DeAnn Lazovich (Division of Epidemiology and Community Health, University of Minnesota, MN, USA), David Polsky (New York University School of Medicine, New York, NY, USA), Johan Hansson and Veronica Hoiom (Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden), Paola Ghiorzo and Lorenza Pastorino (University of Genoa, Italy), Nelleke A. Gruis and Jan Nico Bouwes Bavinck (Leiden University Medical Center, The Netherlands), Ricardo Fernandez-de-Misa (Hospital Universitario Nuestra Señora de Candelaria, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain), Paula Aguilera, Celia Badenas, Cristina Carrera, Pol Gimenez-Xavier, Josep Malveyh, Miriam Potrony, Susana Puig, Joan Anton Puig-Butille, Gemma Tell-Marti (Hospital Clinic, IDIBAPS and CIBERER, Barcelona, Spain), Terence Dwyer (Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, Victoria, Australia), Leigh Blizzard and Jennifer Cochrane (Menzies Institute for Medical Research, Hobart, Australia), Wojciech Branicki (Institute of Forensic Research, Krakow, Poland), Tadeusz Debniak (Pomeranian Medical University, Polabska, Poland), Niels Morling and Peter Johansen (University of Copenhagen, Denmark), Susan Mayne, Allen Bale, Brenda Cartmel and Leah Ferrucci (Yale School of Public Health and Medicine, New Haven, CT, USA), Ruth Pfeiffer (National Cancer Institute, NIH, Bethesda, MD, USA), Giuseppe Palmieri (Istituto di Chimica Biomolecolare, CNR, Sassari, Italy), Gloria Ribas (Fundación Investigación Clínica de Valencia Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria- INCLIVA, Spain), Chiara Menin (Veneto Institute of Oncology IOV-IRCCS, Padua, Italy), Alexandros Stratigos and Katerina Kypreou (University of Athens, Andreas Sygros Hospital, Athens, Greece), Anne Bowcock, Lynn Cornelius and M. Laurin Council (Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO, USA), Tomonori Motokawa (POLA Chemical Industries, Yokohama, Japan), Sumiko Anno (Shibaura Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan), Per Helsing and Per Arne Andresen (Oslo University Hospital, Norway), Gabriella Guida (University of Bari, Bari, Italy), Stefania Guida (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Modelfna, Italy), Terence H. Wong (University of Edinburgh, UK), and the GEM Study Group.

GEM Study Group

Coordinating Center, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York, NY, USA: Marianne Berwick (PI, currently at the University of New Mexico), Colin Begg (Co-PI), Irene Orlow (Co-Investigator), Urvi Mujumdar (Project Coordinator), Amanda Hummer (Biostatistician), Klaus Busam (Dermatopathologist), Pampa Roy (Laboratory Technician), Rebecca Canchola (Laboratory Technician), Brian Clas (Laboratory Technician), Javier Cotignola (Laboratory Technician), Yvette Monroe (Interviewer). Study Centers: The University of Sydney and The Cancer Council New South Wales, Sydney (Australia): Bruce Armstrong (PI), Anne Kricker (co-PI), Melisa Litchfield (Study Coordinator). Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania, Hobart (Australia): Terence Dwyer (PI), Paul Tucker (Dermatopathologist), Nicola Stephens (Study Coordinator). British Columbia Cancer Agency, Vancouver (Canada): Richard Gallagher (PI), Teresa Switzer (Coordinator). Cancer Care Ontario, Toronto (Canada): Loraine Marrett (PI), Beth Theis (Co-Investigator), Lynn From (Dermatopathologist), Noori Chowdhury (Coordinator), Louise Vanasse (Coordinator), Mark Purdue (Research Officer). David Northrup (Manager for CATI). Centro per la Prevenzione Oncologia Torino, Piemonte (Italy): Roberto Zanetti (PI), Stefano Rosso (Data Manager), Carlotta Sacerdote (Coordinator). University of California, Irvine (USA): Hoda Anton-Culver (PI), Nancy Leighton (Coordinator), Maureen Gildea (Data Manager). University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (USA): Stephen Gruber (PI), Joe Bonner (Data Manager), Joanne Jeter (Coordinator). New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, Trenton (USA): Judith Klotz (PI), Homer Wilcox (Co-PI), Helen Weiss (Coordinator). University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (USA): Robert Millikan (PI), Nancy Thomas (Co-Investigator), Dianne Mattingly (Coordinator), Jon Player (Laboratory Technician), Chiu-Kit Tse (Data Analyst). University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (USA): Timothy Rebbeck (PI), Peter

# **MC1R variants in childhood and adolescent melanoma: A pooled-analysis from a large worldwide multicenter cohort of patients**

*A full list of authors and affiliations appears at the end of the article.*

## **Abstract**

**Background:** Germline variants in *MC1R* may increase risk of childhood/adolescent melanoma, but a clear conclusion is challenging because of the limited number of studies and cases. We evaluated the association of *MC1R* variants and childhood/adolescent melanoma in a large study comparing the prevalence of *MC1R* variants of childhood/adolescent melanoma patients to that among adult melanoma cases and unaffected controls.

**Methods:** Phenotypic and genetic data on 233 childhood/adolescent (< 20 years) and 932 adult melanoma patients, and 932 unaffected controls, were gathered through the M-SKIP Project, the Italian Melanoma Intergroup and European centers. We calculated odds ratios (OR) for childhood/adolescent melanoma associated with *MC1R* variants by multivariable logistic regression. Subgroup analysis was done for children aged < 18 and < 14 years.

**Findings:** Children and adolescents had a higher odds of carrying *MC1R* variants than adults (OR:1.54; 95% CI:1.02-2.33), also when analysis was restricted to cases < 18 years (OR: 1.80; 95% CI:1.6-3.7). All the investigated variants except R160W showed a higher frequency in childhood/adolescent melanoma compared to adult melanoma, with significant results for V60L (OR:1.60; 95% CI:1.05-2.44) and D294H (OR:2.15; 95% CI:1.05-4.40). Compared to unaffected

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Kanetsky (Co-Investigator), Amy Walker (Laboratory Technician), Saarene Panossian (Laboratory Technician). Consultants: Harvey Mohrenweiser, University of California, Irvine, Irvine, CA (USA); Richard Setlow, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, NY (USA).

### MI study group

Daniela Massi (University of Florence, Italy), Paola Ghorzo and Lorenza Pastorino (University of Genoa, Italy), Chiara Menin (Veneto Institute of Oncology, IOV-IRCCS, Padua, Italy), Mauro Alaibac (University of Padua, Italy), Ausilia Maria Manganoni, Fabio Facchetti (University of Brescia, Italy), Monica Rodolfo, Andrea Ferrari, Barbara Valeri (Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori, Milan, Italy), Maria Concetta Fagnoli, Cristina Pellegrini (University of L'Aquila, Italy), Sonia Brugnara, Mariacristina Sicher, Daniela Mangiola (S. Chiara Hospital, Trento, Italy), Emanuela Passoni, Gianluca Nazzaro (Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda, Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Milan, Italy), Federica Baldini, Giulio Tosti, Sara Gandini, Giovanni Mazzarol (IEO, European Institute of Oncology IRCCS, Milan, Italy), Gabriella Guida, Stefania Guida, Giuseppe Giudice (Università degli Studi di Bari "Aldo Moro", Bari, Italy), Fabrizio Ayala (National Cancer Institute, "Fondazione G. Pascale"-IRCCS, Naples, Italy), Pietro Quaglino, Simone Ribero, Chiara Astrua (University of Torino, Turin, Italy), Antonella Romanini (Azienda Ospedaliero Universitaria Santa Chiara, Pisa, Italy), Emilia Migliano (San Gallicano Dermatological Institute, IRCCS, Rome, Italy), Ignazio Stanganelli, Laura Mazzoni (IRCCS-IRST Scientific Institute of Romagna for the Study and Treatment of Cancer, Meldola and University of Parma, Italy), Maria Antonietta Pizzichetta (CRO Aviano National Cancer Institute, Italy).

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### Conflict of interest statement

Authors have no conflicts of interest

### Ethics Committee approval

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controls, childhood/adolescent melanoma patients had significantly higher frequencies of any *MC1R* variants.

**Interpretation:** Our pooled-analysis of childhood/adolescent patients with *MC1R* genetic data revealed that *MC1R* *r* variants were more prevalent in childhood/adolescent compared to adult melanoma especially in children < 18 years. Our findings support the role of *MC1R* in childhood/adolescent melanoma susceptibility with a potential clinical relevance in developing early melanoma detection and preventive strategies.

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## Introduction

Cutaneous Melanoma (CM) mainly occurs in patients of adult age and is rare in the pediatric population, with only 2% of all CM cases diagnosed in patients younger than 20 years.<sup>1-4</sup> In the childhood/adolescent population, the majority of CM are diagnosed among adolescents and only 8% occur in infancy and childhood.<sup>5,6</sup>

Differences exist in clinical aspects, histopathological features and disease staging comparing childhood/adolescent CM to adult CM.<sup>2,7-8</sup> CM in childhood is often amelanotic, shows broad histopathological variability and may present with histologic uncertainty and ambiguous atypical characteristics that do not allow a definite malignant or benign classification.<sup>4,9</sup> Children with CM present at a more advanced stage of disease with thicker lesions and higher rates of lymph node metastasis than their adult counterparts, leading to a worse prognosis.<sup>4,9</sup> However, published studies report discordant data on survival rates.<sup>5,10</sup>

It has long been debated whether adult and childhood/adolescent melanomas share a similar pathogenesis. Major risk factors for pediatric CM are giant congenital melanocytic nevi and hereditary conditions including xeroderma pigmentosum, immunodeficiency, and albinism.<sup>11</sup> Other known risk factors common to pediatric and adult melanoma are family history of melanoma, dysplastic nevus syndrome, elevated number of acquired melanocytic nevi, red hair, sun-sensitive phenotype, and UV exposure.<sup>12-13</sup>

It is uncertain whether childhood/adolescent CM differs from adult CM with regard to genetic predisposition. Pediatric CM is mostly sporadic, while adolescent CM is sometimes observed in melanoma-prone families. In general, there is a higher proportion of germline mutation carriers among young cancer patients,<sup>14</sup> but whether this tendency holds true for CM is unclear due to the rarity of childhood/adolescent CM. Based on the few available studies, childhood/adolescent patients have only rarely been found to carry germline mutations in the two high-penetrance melanoma genes, *CDKN2A* and *CDK4*<sup>12,15-21</sup> that are known to be significantly associated to melanoma only in a familial and not in a sporadic context.

The *MC1R* (melanocortin-1 receptor) gene is a key determinant of human pigmentation.<sup>22</sup> *MC1R* is highly polymorphic in the general population and specific variants were defined as “R” (D84E, R142H, R151C, I155T, R160W, D294H) or ‘r’ (V60L, V92M, R163Q) alleles according to the strength of association with the red hair color (RHC) phenotype.<sup>23</sup> Extensive *in vitro* and *in vivo* evidence showed that both R and r alleles produce

hypomorphic proteins with compromised activity compared with native MC1R function.<sup>22</sup> The R alleles are reported to have major impact on pigmentation and UV-sensitivity.<sup>22,23</sup> In contrast, r variants confer normal or slightly impaired MC1R activity resulting in a low strength association with the fair skin phenotype.<sup>23</sup>

Natural variation at *MC1R* is an established risk factor for CM across multiple populations worldwide.<sup>24</sup> Risk of CM is higher for carriers of *MC1R* variant than for wild-type individuals, with the strongest association among carriers of R alleles and multiple variants.<sup>24</sup> *MC1R* variants confer a significant increased risk in darkly pigmented individuals, highlighting the impact of *MC1R* through non-pigmentary pathways.<sup>25,26</sup> Moreover, *MC1R* genotype is associated with phenotypic characteristics of melanoma<sup>27</sup> and melanocytic nevi<sup>28</sup> and seems to influence the somatic mutational load in adult CM.<sup>29</sup>

Childhood/adolescent CM patients have an elevated prevalence of *MC1R* variants, but the limited number of available studies coupled to the small number of cases per study makes challenging to draw clear conclusions.<sup>18–20</sup>

To help elucidate the role of *MC1R* in childhood/adolescent CM and to better understand the genetic and clinical diversity of childhood/adolescent and adult CM with potential clinical impact in terms of early melanoma detection and preventive strategies, we assessed these tumors in a large multicenter pooled dataset established from the Melanocortin 1 receptor SKin cancer and Phenotypic characteristics (M-SKIP) Project, the Italian Melanoma Intergroup (IMI) and other European groups. The endpoints of our study were: (1) to compare the prevalence of *MC1R* variants between childhood/adolescent cases and unaffected controls with a case-control study design and (2) between childhood/adolescent and adult CM patients using a case-case study design.

## Material and Methods

### Study population

Our analysis included children and adolescents diagnosed with sporadic single-primary CM at age < 20 years, adult cases with sporadic single-primary CM at age ≥ 35 years and unaffected adult controls. Since age is a continuous variable and an exact age cut-off between adolescents and adults would not be expected, we excluded melanoma cases diagnosed in the age range 21–34 years to avoid a possible overlap between categories and thus enable comparison between groups with distinct clinical and genetic characteristics.

Because of the known challenges in diagnosing pediatric melanoma<sup>30–32</sup> and to decrease misdiagnosis, participating investigators were asked to provide the original histopathological reports and representative glass slides for central review. Only patients for whom the original histopathological report was available were eligible. In addition, we restricted the study to cases with complete *MC1R* genotyping. We excluded familial melanoma cases, cases with a history of cancer at any site other than non-melanoma skin cancer, atypical spitzoid neoplasms/MELanocytic Tumors of Uncertain Malignant Potential, ocular and mucosal melanomas.

Detailed information on recruitment is reported in the Appendix, pp 1-2. Ethics Committee approval was obtained at each institution in which new blood samples were drawn. For each childhood/adolescent CM case, four adult CM cases and four controls were randomly selected from the same parent study that gave rise to the childhood/adolescent case. When this was not possible, adult cases and controls were selected from a study that was conducted in the nearest geographical proximity to the parent study of the childhood/adolescent case (Appendix, pp 1-2 and Appendix, pp 5-6). A geographical representation of the recruitment area of childhood/adolescent cases, adult cases and controls is shown in Figure 1.

Overall, we retrospectively collected data on 367 childhood/adolescent cases, 8,582 adult CM cases, and 5,770 controls (Figure 1). For 59 childhood/adolescent patients, information on *MC1R* was not available either because of patients' death (N=2) or refusal to participate in the study (N=57). Among the remaining 308 patients, 75 had no original histopathological report available, leaving 233 children/adolescent cases for inclusion in the statistical analysis. For the selected 932 adult cases, 474 arose from the same parent study as the childhood/adolescent case and 458 came from a geographically close study population. For the selected 932 controls, 354 arose from the same parent study as the childhood/adolescent cases and 578 came from a geographically close study population.

### Molecular analysis

For 135 childhood/adolescent patients from M-SKIP and 48 from IMI/European centers, *MC1R* sequencing had already been performed in study-specific laboratories (Appendix, pp 5-6). For the remaining 50 childhood/adolescent patients from IMI/European centers who provided new blood or saliva samples, *MC1R* genotyping was centralized at the University of L'Aquila and performed as previously described.<sup>33</sup>

### Statistical analysis

A complete description of the statistical analysis is presented in the Appendix, pp. 2-4. Briefly, the associations between risk factors and childhood/adolescent melanoma were analyzed by logistic regression in comparison with two reference groups, (1) adult cases and (2) unaffected controls, with adjustment for study/geographical location.

The frequency of any *MC1R* variants among children/adolescents was compared to that among adults and controls by logistic regression with adjustment for study/geographical location. These comparisons were repeated for any *MC1R* R variant, any r variant, a score calculated by summing across the *MC1R* alleles giving a value of 1 to "r" and 2 to "R" variants, as previously proposed,<sup>34</sup> and for each of the nine most prevalent *MC1R* variants and of any rare *MC1R* variants (presence/absence). We then used multivariable unconditional logistic regression models to calculate the odds ratio (OR) for *MC1R* variants after adjusting for study/geographical location and other covariables (as available), including sex, melanoma body site, histopathological subtype, hair color, and skin type. Sensitivity analysis with multivariable conditional logistic regression models was also performed.

The primary analysis compared the entire sample of childhood/adolescent cases to controls and adult cases. In order to take into account the possible misdiagnosis in childhood/adolescent cases, we repeated the primary analysis including only the subgroup of

childhood/adolescent patients with CM diagnosis confirmed after central slide review; and then we calculated a modified ORs, applying the method proposed by Green<sup>35</sup> that incorporates adjustment based on the predictive value of a positive test.

Sensitivity analysis on the subgroup of childhood/adolescent and adult cases arising from the same parental study, and after the exclusion of patients without confirmed diagnosis were also conducted. Subgroup analyses were done according to age at diagnosis of childhood/adolescent cases.

Generally, p-values <0.05 were considered statistically significant. However, we also calculated False Discovery Rate (FDR) corrected p-values to take into account multiple comparisons.

### Role of the funding source

No sponsor had role in study design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, or writing of the report.

### Results

Table 1 report populations' characteristics. Briefly, median age (interquartile range) was 18 years (15-19) in the children/adolescent case group, 55 years (45-67) in the adult case group and 50 years (43-59) in the control group. Among childhood/adolescent cases, 52 (22%) were aged 14 years, 96 (41%) between 15 and 18 and 85 (37%) >18. The total count of common melanocytic nevi was higher among childhood/adolescent patients [30 (range 15-64)] than among either adult patients [25 (10-45)] ( $P=0.0007$ ) or controls [21 (5-30),  $P<0.0001$ ]. A higher proportion (43%) of children/adolescents cases had atypical melanocytic nevi than did adult cases (32%) and controls (9%) ( $P=0.01$  and  $P<0.0001$ , respectively). Five percent and 11% of melanomas occurred on the upper limbs and 34% and 29% on the lower limbs in children/adolescents and adults, respectively ( $P=0.04$ ). A spitzoid melanomas was identified in 13 (7%) childhood/adolescent cases compared to 2 (0%) adult cases; 21 (11%) children/adolescents had other specified types of melanoma compared with 8 (1%) adult cases ( $P<0.0001$ ). Children/adolescents less frequently (36%) had blue eyes compared to adults (50%;  $P=0.01$ ) or controls (47%,  $P<0.0001$ ), and they were less likely (15%) to have solar lentigines than adults (75%,  $P<0.0001$ ) and controls (68%,  $P<0.0001$ ).

Table 2 shows frequencies of any *MC1R* variants, any R variants, any r variants, *MC1R* score and any of the nine most prevalent *MC1R* variants in 233 childhood/adolescent cases, 932 adult cases and 932 controls. In univariable analysis, no significant differences were observed in frequency of *MC1R* variants between childhood/adolescent and adult cases. However, childhood/adolescent cases had significantly higher frequency of any variants, R variants, r variants and *MC1R* score than unaffected controls, confirming the role of *MC1R* in melanoma susceptibility. Eight rare *MC1R* variants were found in childhood/adolescent patients: 86insA (N=2), V51A, T95M, V122M, R151H, A218T, F258L, K278E, (N=1 each). No association was found between childhood/adolescent melanoma and any *MC1R* rare variant (data not shown).

Among the 233 childhood/adolescent cases, representative histopathological slides of the tumor were available for 85 patients and were centrally reviewed for quality control by one dermatopathologist (D.M.). The group of 85 patients had similar clinico-pathological characteristics compared to the 148 for whom glass slides were not reviewed (Appendix p 7). The original diagnosis of melanoma was confirmed in 64/85 (75%) cases. The remaining slides from 21/85 (25%) cases were deemed as not being representative or difficult to interpret for technical reasons, or were reclassified as atypical melanocytic nevi, atypical junctional melanocytic proliferations, pagetoid melanocytosis overlying congenital nevi, or ambiguous atypical melanocytic proliferations with spitzoid features. In the latter cases, serial unstained slides or paraffin blocks were not available and so additional immunohistochemical and/or molecular analyses which would have clarified interpretation were precluded. Such doubtful cases were independently reviewed by a second dermatopathologist (F.F.); the conflicting discrepancy with the original diagnosis remained unresolved. The median Breslow thickness (interquartile range) was 1.00 mm (0.50-1.90) for the 64 cases with a confirmed diagnosis and 0.45 mm (0.10-0.75) for the 21 cases in which the original diagnosis was not confirmed ( $P=0.0005$ , Appendix p 8). No other clinico-pathological features differed between the two groups (Appendix p 8).

The frequencies of *MC1R* variants in the subgroup of 64 children/adolescents with a confirmed diagnosis after histopathological review, 254 adults, and 254 controls are shown in Table 2 and are similar to those reported for the primary analysis (Table 2).

The OR (95%CI) for the 233 children/adolescent CM cases and 932 adult CM cases (OR all patients), for the subgroup of 64 children/adolescent CM cases with a confirmed diagnosis after review and 256 adult CM cases (OR confirmed diagnosis) and after correction by the estimated outcome misclassification rate (corrected OR) are shown in Figures 2 and 3. We found that children/adolescent melanoma had a significantly higher odds of carrying any *r* variants compared to adult cases (OR: 1.54; 95%CI: 1.02-2.33, FDR-corrected  $P=0.17$ , Figure 2). Concerning specific *MC1R* variants, we found a positive association for all *MC1R* variants with childhood/adolescent melanoma, except for the R160W variant (Figure 3). A statistically significant association for V60L and D294H variants (OR: 1.60; 95%CI: 1.05-2.44, FDR-corrected  $P=0.17$ , and OR: 2.15; 95%CI: 1.05-4.40, FDR-corrected  $P=0.17$ ) was found in the primary analysis and after correction for possible misdiagnosis. Similar results were obtained in sensitivity analysis with conditional logistic regression models (Appendix p 8) and by excluding the 21 children/adolescents without centrally confirmed diagnosis (Appendix p 9). Finally, when we repeated the primary analysis on the subgroup of childhood/adolescent and adult cases arising from the same parental study, we obtained even stronger associations for carriers of any *MC1R* variant (OR: 2.04 95% CI: 1.19-3.50), *r* variants (OR: 2.61 95% CI: 1.43-4.73), V60L (OR: 2.67 95% CI: (1.44-4.95) and D294H variants (OR: 3.12 95% CI: 1.08-9.03) (Appendix p 11).

Table 3 lists OR (95%CI) calculated for childhood/adolescent cases  $\geq 18$  and  $\geq 14$  years of age. A statistically significant higher frequency of *r* variants was observed in cases  $\geq 18$  years of age compared to adults (OR: 1.80; 95%CI: 1.6-3.07, FDR-corrected  $P=0.61$ ). The corresponding OR for cases  $\geq 14$  years was even higher, but did not reach statistical significance because of the small number of subjects.



Appendix pp 12-13 show the ORs (95%CI) obtained for the case-control analysis comparing childhood/adolescent melanoma patients with controls. Regarding OR obtained from the primary analysis, we found a significantly higher risk of childhood/adolescent melanoma for carriers of any *MC1R*, R, r and the most common *MC1R* V60L, V92M, R151C, R163Q and D294H variants. Results remained statistically significant after correction for multiple comparison except for the V92M variant (FDR-corrected  $P=0.07$ ).

## Discussion

Our pooled-analysis showed that *MC1R* variants are a genetic risk factor for childhood/adolescent CM and that the frequency of *r* variants is elevated in this young case group compared to adult CM cases. The impact of *r* alleles was confirmed in analyses limited to individuals < 18 years and was even stronger for children < 14 years, although this difference was not statistically significant. The *MC1R* V60L and D294H variants showed the most robust association with melanoma in childhood and adolescence, even after correction for possible misdiagnosis.

Childhood/adolescent melanoma has been reported to occur most commonly in whites and in females.<sup>2,10,13</sup> In line with two previous studies, we found that childhood/adolescent melanoma patients are characterized by a fairer phenotype compared to healthy controls,<sup>12,13</sup> including traits such as red hair and skin type. In contrast, when compared to location-matched adult cases, childhood/adolescent patients presented with more darkly pigmented characteristics such as brown eyes, skin type III-IV and a lower prevalence of freckles. Consistent with the majority of published studies, our childhood/adolescent patients showed a high number of melanocytic nevi, both common and atypical, and developed melanomas mainly on the lower extremities and the trunk.<sup>2,11,36</sup> Childhood/adolescent melanoma was more commonly diagnosed as nodular melanoma compared to the adult counterpart. Spitzoid melanomas were more frequently identified in childhood/adolescent patients, while LMM were only seen in adulthood.

The impact of *MC1R* alleles in childhood/adolescent melanoma was investigated in small series of patients.<sup>18-20</sup> *MC1R* variants were identified in 12/21 (57%) patients, with a higher frequency of *r* compared to *R* allele by Daniotti et al. (2009).<sup>19</sup> More recently, two case series reported *MC1R* variants in 10/23 patients (43%)<sup>18</sup> and in 4/6 patients (67%).<sup>20</sup> In our pooled-analysis, *MC1R* variants were detected in 75% of childhood/adolescent patients. Overall, multivariable analysis suggested that childhood/adolescent cases had greater odds to carry any *MC1R* variant and a significantly greater odds to carry *r* variants compared to adult cases. Interestingly, the odds of carrying *r* alleles increased in subgroup analysis limited to adolescents < 18 years old, and was stronger still (although not statistically significant) among cases < 14 years old, suggesting a higher prevalence of the *MC1R* variants in childhood melanoma.

Our findings demonstrate a stronger role of *MC1R* *r* variants in childhood/adolescent than in adult melanoma, suggesting the involvement of biological pathways other than pigmentation and UV-sensitivity such as antioxidant defenses, DNA repair and cell proliferation.<sup>22,24,37</sup> indeed, *MC1R* signaling is crucial for melanocyte key processes<sup>38</sup>, as suggested by the

findings of Baron et al (2014), demonstrating that *MC1R* variants combined with *HERC2/OCA2* alleles determine the number of nevi >2 mm in sunburned kids.<sup>39</sup>

Herein the *MC1R* variants V60L and D294H showed significantly higher prevalence in childhood/adolescent compared to adult melanoma. The role of V60L in adult melanoma is controversial and the magnitude of risk varies across populations.<sup>40</sup> A positive association of V60L with melanoma has been reported in the Mediterranean area, where this variant is the most frequent,<sup>40</sup> The D294H variant is common in individuals with the RHC phenotype. The association of D294H with melanoma risk demonstrates heterogeneity between Northern versus Southern European populations, where individuals who are more darkly pigmented are at higher risk of melanoma associated with D294H than Northern populations.<sup>41</sup>

To the best of our knowledge, our series of childhood/adolescent melanoma patients is the largest worldwide multicenter cohort published so far with available *MC1R* genetic data. The large number of childhood/adolescent and comparable adult melanoma patients provide powerful estimates of the association between *MC1R* variants and childhood/adolescent melanoma within different populations. A further strength of our study was centralized data quality control and statistical analysis that provided consistency across the numerous parent studies in defining and adjusting for important covariates. Histopathological centralized review of one third of the subjects allowed us to calculate association estimates in a subset of children/adolescents with a histologically confirmed diagnosis and was helpful to calculate corrected risk estimates taking into account the issue of misdiagnosis.

Childhood/adolescent melanoma patients represent a heterogeneous group, including neonates, children and adolescents, with a variety of distinct presentations.<sup>9</sup> Childhood melanoma may indeed differ from adolescent melanoma and both may differ from adult melanoma.<sup>4</sup> To further address heterogeneity between melanomas developed at different ages, we performed a stratified analysis for patients 14 and 18 years. Our non-significant findings among cases 14 years may have resulted from decreased power related to the small sample size (N=59) of this group, while a separate multivariable analysis limited to children 10 years of age was not possible due to the limited number of patients (N=23). In our childhood/adolescent sample we had more darkly pigmented cases from Southern European compared to Northern European origin, which may have resulted in relatively high frequencies of *r* variants, more common in Southern than in Northern Europe.<sup>42</sup> However, because childhood/adolescent cases were compared with adult cases and controls from the same geographical areas, we do not believe this affected our results. Indeed, sensitivity analysis conducted in the subgroup of childhood/adolescent cases with adult cases sampled from the same parent study provided similar results. A centralized review of all melanomas would be desirable, but unfortunately it was not feasible due to the retrospective nature of the study. In order to limit disease misclassification, we excluded from the analysis patients whose histopathological reports were not available. We also provided risk estimates corrected for our observed misclassification rate among patients with histopathological centralized review, a group that was representative of the entire cohort of childhood/adolescent patients. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this correction could not be able to provide an exact estimate of the associations as in a sample with only centrally confirmed

diagnosed cases, and a certain imprecision of estimates could therefore not be ruled out. Because our cohort did not include familial melanoma patients and the major susceptibility genes are rarely mutated in childhood/adolescent cases,<sup>12,15,17,20</sup> we did not analyze *CDKN2A* and *CDK4* in our patients. It is possible that other major melanoma predisposition genes may influence the risk of disease in children/adolescents, but lack of genetic data on these genes, such as the *BAP1* gene prevented the analysis of possible gene–gene interactions. Finally, although we performed a relatively high number of statistical tests, we allowed unadjusted *P*-values to guide the interpretation of our results. Given the exploratory rather than confirmatory nature of this study, we believe that our approach of describing the tests of significance we performed, as advised by Perneger (1998),<sup>43</sup> is appropriate. However, to directly address the issue of multiple testing, we also present FDR-corrected *P*-values.

In conclusion, our pooled analysis showed that natural variation at *MC1R* is a genetic risk factor for childhood/adolescent CM as well as for adult CM. A major role of *MC1R* variants, mainly *r* alleles, was suggested in childhood/adolescent compared to adult melanoma, possibly through a pigmentation-independent pathway. In addition, we observed a stronger effect of the *r* alleles when the analysis was restricted to melanoma patients aged less than 18 years.

## Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

## Authors

Cristina Pellegrini, PhD<sup>1,\*</sup>, Francesca Botta, MSc<sup>2,3,\*</sup>, Daniela Massi, MD<sup>4</sup>, Claudia Martorelli, PhD<sup>1</sup>, Fabio Facchetti, MD<sup>5</sup>, Sara Gandini, PhD<sup>6</sup>, Patrick Maisonneuve, Eng<sup>2</sup>, Marie-Françoise Avril, MD<sup>7</sup>, Florence Demenais, MD<sup>8</sup>, Brigitte Bressac-de Paillerets, PhD<sup>9</sup>, Veronica Hoiom, PhD<sup>10</sup>, Anne E. Cust, MD<sup>11</sup>, Hoda Anton-Culver, MD<sup>12</sup>, Stephen B. Gruber, MD<sup>13</sup>, Richard P. Gallagher, MD<sup>14</sup>, Loraine Marrett, PhD<sup>15</sup>, Roberto Zanetti, MD<sup>16</sup>, Terence Dwyer, MD<sup>17</sup>, Nancy E. Thomas, MD<sup>18</sup>, Colin B. Begg, PhD<sup>19</sup>, Marianne Berwick, PhD<sup>20</sup>, Susana Puig, MD<sup>21</sup>, Miriam Potrony, PhD<sup>21</sup>, Eduardo Nagore, MD<sup>22</sup>, Paola Ghorzo, PhD<sup>23</sup>, Chiara Menin, MD<sup>24</sup>, Ausilia Maria Manganoni, MD<sup>25</sup>, Monica Rodolfo, MSc<sup>26</sup>, Sonia Brugnara, MD<sup>27</sup>, Emanuela Passoni, MD<sup>28</sup>, Lidija Kandolf Sekulovic, MD<sup>29</sup>, Federica Baldini, MD<sup>30</sup>, Gabriella Guida, PhD<sup>31</sup>, Alexandras Stratigos, MD<sup>32</sup>, Fezal Ozdemir, MD<sup>33</sup>, Fabrizio Ayala, MD<sup>34</sup>, Ricardo Fernandez-de-Misa, PhD<sup>35</sup>, Pietro Quaglino, MD<sup>36</sup>, Gloria Ribas, PhD<sup>37</sup>, Antonella Romanini, MD<sup>38</sup>, Emilia Migliano, MD<sup>39</sup>, Ignazio Stanganelli, MD<sup>40</sup>, Peter A. Kanetsky, PhD<sup>41</sup>, Maria Antonietta Pizzichetta, MD<sup>42</sup>, Jose Carlos García-Borrón, PhD<sup>43</sup>, Hongmei Nan, MD<sup>44</sup>, Maria Teresa Landi, PhD<sup>45</sup>, Julian Little, PhD<sup>46</sup>, Julia Newton-Bishop, PhD<sup>47</sup>, Francesco Sera, MSc<sup>48</sup>, Maria Concetta Fargnoli, MD<sup>1</sup>, Sara Raimondi, PhD<sup>6</sup> **IMI Study Group, the GEM Study Group and the M-SKIP Study Group**

## Affiliations

<sup>1</sup>Department of Dermatology, Department of Biotechnological and Applied Clinical Sciences, University of L'Aquila, L'Aquila, Italy

<sup>2</sup>Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, IEO, European Institute of Oncology IRCCS, Milan, Italy

<sup>3</sup>Department of Statistics and Quantitative Methods, Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy

<sup>4</sup>Division of Pathological Anatomy, Department of Surgery and Translational Medicine, University of Florence, Florence, Italy

<sup>5</sup>Pathology Section, Department of Molecular and Translational Medicine, University of Brescia, Spedali Civili Brescia, Italy

<sup>6</sup>Molecular and Pharmaco-Epidemiology Unit, Department of Molecular Oncology, IEO, European Institute of Oncology IRCCS, Milan, Italy

<sup>7</sup>APHP, Dermatology Department, Hôpital Cochin, and Paris Descartes University Paris, France

<sup>8</sup>Genetic Variation and Human Diseases Unit (UMR-946), Institut National de la Sante et de la Recherche Médicale (INSERM), Paris, France

<sup>9</sup>Gustave Roussy, Université Paris-Saclay, Département de Biopathologie and INSERM U1186, Villejuif, F-94805, France

<sup>10</sup>Department of Oncology and Pathology, Cancer Center, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>11</sup>Sydney School of Public Health and Melanoma Institute Australia, The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

<sup>12</sup>Department of Epidemiology, University of California, Irvine, CA, USA

<sup>13</sup>USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

<sup>14</sup>British Columbia Cancer and Department of Dermatology and Skin Science, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

<sup>15</sup>Cancer Care Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

<sup>16</sup>Piedmont Cancer Registry, Centre for Epidemiology and Prevention in Oncology in Piedmont, Turin, Italy

<sup>17</sup>George Institute for Global Health, Nuffield Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

<sup>18</sup>Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

- <sup>19</sup>Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York, NY, USA
- <sup>20</sup>Department of Internal Medicine, University of New Mexico Cancer Center, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, USA
- <sup>21</sup>Melanoma Unit, Dermatology Department, Hospital Clinic Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, Institut d'Investigacions Biomediques August Pi I Sunyer (IDIBAPS) Spain & CIBER de Enfermedades Raras, Barcelona, Spain
- <sup>22</sup>Department of Dermatology, Instituto Valenciano de Oncologia, Valencia, Spain
- <sup>23</sup>Department of Internal Medicine and Medical Specialties, University of Genoa and Ospedale Policlinico San Martino, Genoa, Italy
- <sup>24</sup>Diagnostic Immunology and Molecular Oncology Unit, Veneto Institute of Oncology, IOV-IRCCS, Padua, Italy
- <sup>25</sup>Department of Dermatology, Spedali Civili di Brescia, University of Brescia, Brescia, Italy
- <sup>26</sup>Department of Research, Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori, Milan, Italy
- <sup>27</sup>Oncology Unit, S. Chiara Hospital, Trento, Italy
- <sup>28</sup>Department of pathophysiology and transplantation, University of Milan, Foundation IRCCS Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Milan, Italy
- <sup>29</sup>Department of Dermatology, Faculty of Medicine, Military Medical Academy, Belgrade, Serbia
- <sup>30</sup>Division of Melanoma, Sarcoma and Rare Cancer, IEO, European Institute of Oncology IRCCS, Milan, Italy
- <sup>31</sup>Department of Basic Medical Sciences, Neurosciences and Sense Organs; University of Bari "A. Moro", Italy
- <sup>32</sup>1st Department of Dermatology, Andreas Sygros Hospital, Medical School, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
- <sup>33</sup>Department of Dermatology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ege (Aegean), Bornova Izmir, Turkey
- <sup>34</sup>Melanoma Unit, Cancer Immunotherapy and Innovative Therapies. Istituto Nazionale Tumori - IRCCS - Fondazione G. Pascale, Napoli, Italia
- <sup>35</sup>Sevicio de Dermatologia, Hospital Universitario Nuestra Senora de Candelaria, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain
- <sup>36</sup>Dermatologic Clinic, Dept Medical Sciences, University of Torino, Turin, Italy
- <sup>37</sup>Dptd. Oncologia medica y hematologia, Fundación Investigación Clínico de Valencia Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria- INCLIVA, Valencia, Spain

- <sup>38</sup>US Ambulatori Melanomi, Sarcomi e Tumori Rari, UO Oncologia Medica 1, Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria Santa Chiara, Pisa, Italy
- <sup>39</sup>Plastic Surgery, San Gallicano Dermatological Institute, IRCCS, Rome, Italy
- <sup>40</sup>Skin Cancer Unit, IRCCS-IRST Scientific Institute of Romagna for the Study and Treatment of Cancer, Meldola and University of Parma, Italy
- <sup>41</sup>Department of Cancer Epidemiology, H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute, Tampa, FL, USA
- <sup>42</sup>Division of Oncology B, CRO Aviano National Cancer Institute, Aviano, Italy
- <sup>43</sup>Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Immunology, University of Murcia and IMIB-Arixaca, Murcia, Spain
- <sup>44</sup>Department of Epidemiology, Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health, Melvin & Bren Simon Cancer Center, Indiana University, Indianapolis, IN, USA
- <sup>45</sup>Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics, National Cancer Institute, NIH, Bethesda, MD, USA
- <sup>46</sup>School of Epidemiology and Public Health, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada
- <sup>47</sup>Section of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Institute of Cancer and Pathology, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK
- <sup>48</sup>Department of Public Health, Environments and Society, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK

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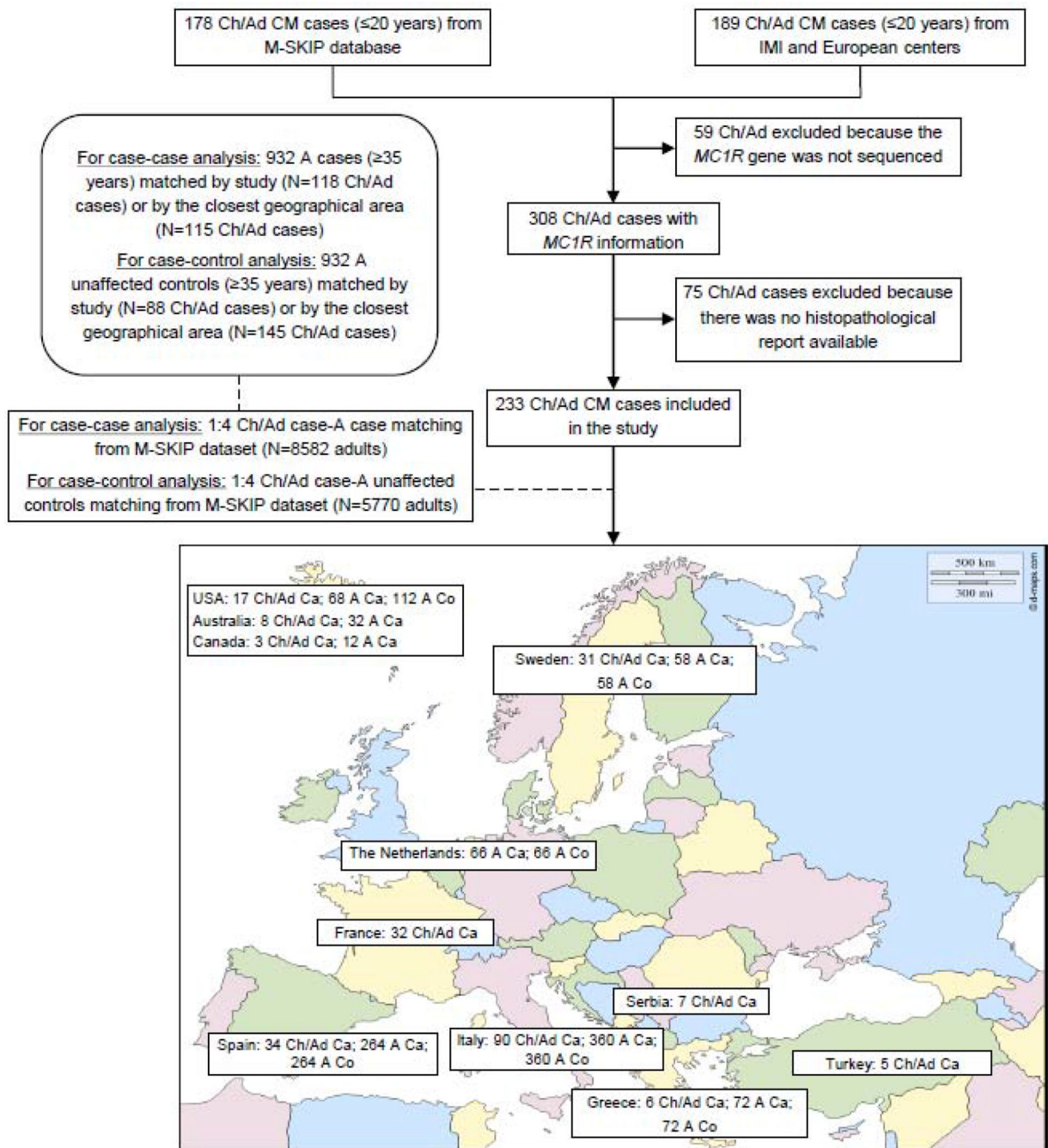
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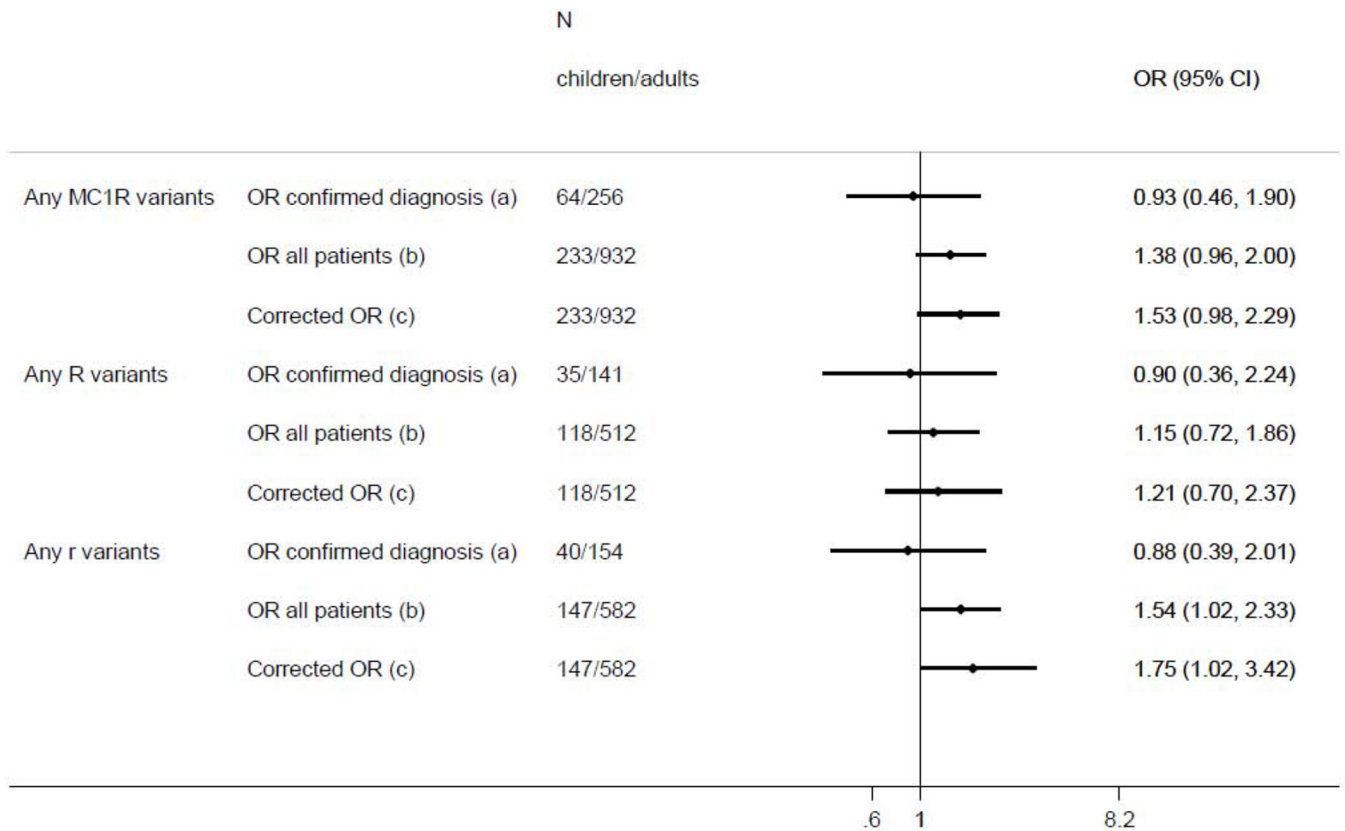
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**Figure 1. Flow chart of melanoma cases included in the analysis and their geographical area of recruitment.**

A, adult melanoma patients; Ch/Ad, children/adolescents melanoma patients; CM, cutaneous melanoma; Co, unaffected controls; *MC1R*, melanocortin-1 receptor gene.

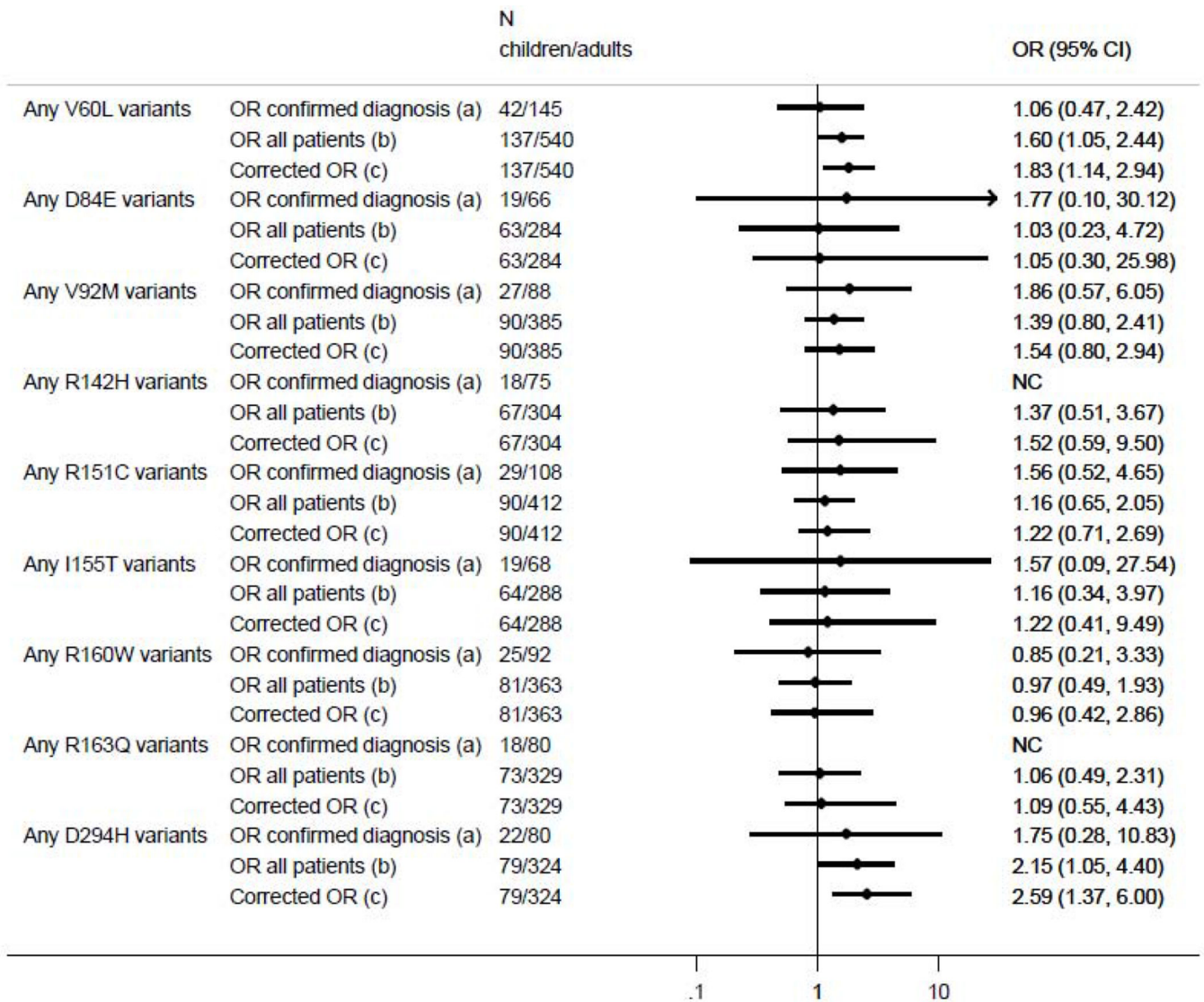


**Figure 2. Covariable-adjusted OR (95%CI) for the association between any *MC1R* variants, R and r variants and childhood/adolescent melanoma compared to adulthood melanoma.**

All the OR were adjusted by sex, matching stratum variable, melanoma body site and histopathological subtype, hair color and skin type. For each OR, the comparison groups included childhood/adolescent patients frequency matched 4:1 with adult cases by study/geographical area. The reference category for OR were *MC1R* wild-type (WT) subjects. Number of children/adolescents and adults reported here are the total number of subjects included in each analysis, independently by *MC1R* status. Note that for the analysis on any R variant vs WT, subjects carrying only r variants were excluded, and vice versa for the analysis on any r variant vs WT.

<sup>a</sup>OR calculated on the subgroup of subjects with confirmed diagnosis of melanoma after centralized pathological review of glass slides. <sup>b</sup>OR calculated on the whole sample of N=233 childhood/adolescent cases. <sup>c</sup>OR corrected by probability of misdiagnosis combining information from OR(a) and OR(b) as previously suggested.<sup>35</sup>

*MC1R*, melanocortin-1 receptor; CI, Confidence Intervals; OR, Odds Ratio. R variants include the D84E, R142H, R151C, I155T, R160W, D294H and other rare variants classified as R according to the algorithm proposed by Davies et al (2012);<sup>34</sup> r variants include the V60L, V92M, R163Q and other rare variants classified as r according to the algorithm proposed by Davies et al (2012).<sup>34</sup>



**Figure 3. Covariable-adjusted OR (95%CI) for the association between the nine most prevalent *MC1R* variants and childhood/adolescent melanoma compared to adulthood melanoma.**

All the OR were adjusted by sex, matching stratum variable, cancer body site and histological type, hair color and skin type. For each OR, the comparison groups included childhood/adolescent patients frequency matched 4:1 with adult cases by study/geographical area. The reference category for OR were *MC1R* wild-type (WT) subjects. Number of children/adolescents and adults reported here are the total number of subjects included in each analysis, independently by *MC1R* status. Note that for the analysis on each variant vs WT, subjects carrying only other *MC1R* variants were excluded.

<sup>a</sup>OR calculated on the subgroup of subjects with confirmed diagnosis of melanoma after centralized pathological review of glass slides. <sup>b</sup>OR calculated on the whole sample of N=233 childhood/adolescent cases. <sup>c</sup>OR corrected by probability of misdiagnosis combining information from OR(a) and OR(b) as previously suggested.<sup>35</sup>

*MC1R*, melanocortin-1 receptor; CI, Confidence Intervals; NC, not calculable; OR, Odds Ratio. R variants include the D84E, R142H, R151C, I155T, R160W, D294H and other rare

variants classified as R according to the algorithm proposed by Davies et al (2012); r variants include the V60L, V92M, R163Q and other rare variants classified as r according to the algorithm proposed by Davies et al (2012).<sup>34</sup>

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**Table 1.**

Descriptive characteristics of study population

	Children/adolescent cases (N=233)	Adult cases (N=932)	p-value <sup>a</sup>	Adult controls (N=932)	p-value <sup>a</sup>
Sex (N, %)			<b>0.03</b>		<b>0.0003</b>
Males	95 (41)	456 (49)		500 (54)	
Females	138 (59)	475 (51)		426 (46)	
Breslow thickness (mm; median, IQR)	0.93 (0.50-2.10)	1.00 (0.50-2.40)	0.16	-	-
Common melanocytic nevi (count; median, IQR)	30 (15-64)	25 (10-45)	<b>0.0007</b>	21 (5-30)	<b>&lt;0.0001</b>
Any atypical melanocytic nevi (N, %)	49 (43)	165 (30)	<b>0.01</b>	46 (9)	<b>&lt;0.0001</b>
Melanoma body site (N, %)			<b>0.037</b>		-
Head/neck	27 (12)	127 (16)		-	
Trunk	91 (41)	313 (39)		-	
Upper limbs	11 (5)	90 (11)		-	
Lower limbs	75 (34)	236 (29)		-	
NOC <sup>b</sup>	18 (8)	42 (5)		-	
Histopathological subtype (N, %)			<b>&lt;0.0001</b>		-
LMM	0 (0)	50 (7)		-	
NM	33 (17)	127 (18)		-	
SSM	124 (63)	493 (69)		-	
ALM	7 (3)	39 (5)		-	
Spitzoid	13 (7)	2 (0)		-	
Others <sup>c</sup>	21 (11)	8 (1)		-	
Hair color (N, %)			0.73		<b>0.0003</b>
Red	14 (7)	55 (6)		24 (3)	
Blonde	60 (28)	216 (24)		129 (18)	
Brown	139 (65)	609 (68)		535 (76)	
NOC <sup>b</sup>	0 (0)	15 (2)		21 (3)	
Eye color (N, %)			<b>0.01</b>		<b>&lt;0.0001</b>
Blue	65 (36)	420 (50)		330 (47)	
Brown	77 (42)	314 (37)		364 (51)	
Black	2 (1)	2 (0)		5 (1)	
Green, gray, hazel	5 (3)	0 (0)		0 (0)	
NOC <sup>b</sup>	32 (18)	109 (13)		10 (1)	
Skin type (N, %)			0.67		<b>0.015</b>
I	16 (8)	59 (7)		26 (4)	
II	68 (33)	320 (36)		191 (28)	
III	94 (44)	400 (45)		378 (55)	
IV	32 (15)	59 (13)		87 (13)	
Any solar lentigines (N, %)	15 (15)	321 (75)	<b>&lt;0.0001</b>	203 (68)	<b>&lt;0.0001</b>

ALM: Acral lentiginous melanoma. IQR: interquartile range; LMM: Lentigo maligna melanoma; NM: Nodular melanoma; SSM: Superficial spreading melanoma

Note: significant p-values are in bold

<sup>a</sup>Logistic regression model, adjusted by matching stratum variable;

<sup>b</sup>NOC, not otherwise classifiable. This group includes patients with doubtful or mixed information, thus, not classifiable.

<sup>c</sup>Among children/adolescents: N=4 nevoid, N=3 epithelioid, N=1 desmoplastic, N=13 others not specified; among adults: N=5 epithelioid, N=1 nevoid, N=1 desmoplastic, N=1 others not specified

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Table 2.

Association between *MC1R* variants and childhood/adolescent melanoma in the whole group of studied cases (N=233) and in the subgroup of cases with a confirmed melanoma diagnosis after centralized slide review (N=64). For each group of children/adolescents, study/geographical frequency matched adult cases and unaffected controls were used as comparison groups.

	All studied children/adolescent cases				Children/adolescent cases with centralized confirmed melanoma diagnosis					
	N=233 children/adolescent cases (%)	N=932 adult cases (%)	p-value <sup>a</sup>	N=932 adult controls (%)	p-value <sup>a</sup>	N=64 children/adolescents cases (%)	N=256 adult cases (%)	p-value <sup>a</sup>	N=256 adult controls (%)	p-value <sup>a</sup>
Any <i>MC1R</i> variants	173 (75)	662 (71)	0.33	550 (59)	<0.0001	46 (72)	193 (75)	0.56	145 (57)	0.03
Any R variants	86 (37)	350 (38)	0.86	238 (26)	0.0006	24 (37)	102 (40)	0.73	58 (23)	0.016
Any r variants	115 (49)	420 (45)	0.24	370 (40)	0.008	29 (45)	115 (45)	0.95	102 (40)	0.43
Score			0.85		<0.0001			0.38		0.003
0	60 (26)	270 (29)		382 (41)		18 (28)	63 (25)		111 (43)	
1	71 (31)	260 (28)		261 (28)		16 (25)	70 (27)		77 (30)	
2	64 (27)	227 (24)		201 (22)		20 (31)	72 (28)		47 (19)	
3	28 (12)	106 (11)		57 (6)		7 (11)	24 (9)		15 (6)	
4	10 (4)	69 (8)		31 (3)		3 (5)	27 (11)		6 (2)	
Any V60L variants	77 (33)	270 (29)	0.22	251 (27)	0.06	24 (37)	82 (32)	0.40	70 (27)	0.11
Any D84E variants	3 (1)	14 (2)	0.81	7 (1)	0.43	1 (2)	3 (1)	0.80	1 (0)	0.32
Any V92M variants	30 (13)	115 (12)	0.82	115 (12)	0.83	9 (14)	25 (10)	0.32	29 (11)	0.55
Any R142H variants	7 (3)	34 (4)	0.63	22 (2)	0.57	0 (0)	12 (5)	0.98	11 (4)	0.98
Any R151C variants	30 (13)	142 (15)	0.36	91 (10)	0.17	11 (17)	45 (18)	0.94	23 (9)	0.06
Any I155T variants	4 (2)	18 (2)	0.83	15 (2)	0.91	1 (2)	5 (2)	0.84	2 (1)	0.57
Any R160W variants	21 (9)	93 (10)	0.66	63 (7)	0.23	7 (11)	29 (11)	0.92	15 (6)	0.16
Any R163Q variants	13 (6)	59 (3)	0.67	34 (4)	0.18	0 (0)	17 (7)	0.97	7 (3)	0.98
Any D294H variants	19 (8)	54 (6)	0.18	37 (4)	0.009	4 (6)	17 (7)	0.91	8 (3)	0.25

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Note: significant p-values are in bold

<sup>4</sup>Logistic regression model, adjusted by matching stratum variable;

*MC1R*, melanocortin-1 receptor.

R variants include D84E, R142H, R151C, I155T, R160W, D294H and other rare variants classified as R according to the algorithm proposed by Davies et al (2012).<sup>34</sup>

r variants include V60L, V92M, R163Q and other rare variants classified as r according to the algorithm proposed by Davies et al (2012).<sup>34</sup>



**Table 3.**

## Subgroup analysis by age at diagnosis

	Children/adolescent cases 18 years (N=148)		Children/adolescent cases 14 years (N=52)	
	N children-adolescent/ N adult cases	OR <sup>a</sup> (95% CI)	N children-adolescent/ N adult cases	OR <sup>a</sup> (95% CI)
Any variants	148/592	1.45 (0.89; 2.34)	52/208	1.86 (0.69; 5.03)
Any R variants	73/330	0.99 (0.52; 1.89)	27/115	1.63 (0.42; 6.36)
Any r variants	98/374	<b>1.80 (1.06; 3.07)</b>	35/142	2.27 (0.76; 6.83)
Any V60L variants	88/357	1.59 (0.91; 2.76)	31/136	2.27 (0.76; 6.80)
Any D84E variants	43/192	0.97 (0.13; 6.99)	15/73	Not calculated
Any V92M variants	61/253	1.62 (0.79; 3.33)	18/93	0.95 (0.11; 7.97)
Any R142H variants	45/201	1.32 (0.34; 5.13)	13/80	Not calculated
Any R151C variants	56/277	0.82 (0.38; 1.80)	18/97	0.61 (0.10; 3.88)
Any I155T variants	43/192	1.13 (0.17; 7.64)	15/71	Not calculated
Any R160W variants	55/234	1.08 (0.45; 2.58)	21/87	3.57 (0.62; 20.52)
Any R163Q variants	51/219	1.61 (0.61; 4.22)	16/84	0.68 (0.03; 14.81)
Any D294H variants	52/272	1.47 (0.58; 3.70)	14/86	Not calculated

MC1R, melanocortin-1 receptor; CI, Confidence Intervals; OR, Odds Ratio. R variants include the D84E, R142H, R151C, I155T, R160W, D294H and other rare variants classified as R according to the algorithm proposed by Davies et al (2012); r variants include the V60L, V92M, R163Q and other rare variants classified as r according to the algorithm proposed by Davies et al (2012).<sup>34</sup>

Significant p-values are in bold.

<sup>a</sup>ORs adjusted by, sex, matching stratum variable, melanoma body site and histological subtype, and skin type. Hair color was not included because of more than 30% of missing data for these groups of patients. For each OR, the comparison group included 4:1 frequency matched adult cases by study/geographical area. The reference category for OR were *MC1R* wild-type (WT) subjects. Number of children and adults reported here are the total number of subjects included in each analysis, independently by *MC1R* status. Note that for the analysis on each variant vs WT, subjects carrying only other *MC1R* variants were excluded.