

Published in final edited form as:

Nat Genet. 2014 April ; 46(4): 357–363. doi:10.1038/ng.2915.

Loss-of-function mutations in *SLC30A8* protect against type 2 diabetes

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

Abstract

Loss-of-function mutations protective against human disease provide *in vivo* validation of therapeutic targets^{1,2,3}, yet none are described for type 2 diabetes (T2D). Through sequencing or genotyping ~150,000 individuals across five ethnicities, we identified 12 rare protein-truncating variants in *SLC30A8*, which encodes an islet zinc transporter (ZnT8)⁴ and harbors a common variant (p.Trp325Arg) associated with T2D risk, glucose, and proinsulin levels^{5–7}. Collectively,

* Authors for correspondence: David Altshuler, MD, PhD, Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT, 7 Cambridge Center, Cambridge, MA 02445 USA, T: (617) 730-5977, altshuler@molbio.mgh.harvard.edu. Kári Stefánsson, deCODE genetics, Sturlugata 8, 101, Reykjavik, Iceland., T: 354-570-1989, kstefans@decode.is.

Accession codes: *SLC30A8*: NM_173851²⁰, protein NP_776250²⁰

Author Contributions:

This manuscript describes an analysis spanning four initially distinct sequencing studies: a collaborative project among Pfizer/MGH/Broad/Lund entitled “Towards Therapeutic Targets for Type 2 Diabetes and Myocardial Infarction in the Background of Type 2 Diabetes” (PMBL), an effort by deCODE genetics to use whole genome sequencing and imputation to identify and genotype over 35 million variants in up to 370,000 Icelanders²³, the Genetics of Type 2 Diabetes (GoT2D) project, and the Type 2 Diabetes Genetic Exploration by Next-generation sequencing in multi-Ethnic Samples (T2D-GENES) project; as well as four additional genotyping efforts. The overall study bringing together data from these efforts was coordinated by JF and DA, with final analysis combining data from all variants performed by JF. The manuscript was written by JF, DA, and KS, and all authors reviewed, edited, and approved the manuscript.

Author contributions specific to the sequencing or genotyping studies are as follows:

Pfizer/MGH/Broad/Lund

Study design: BFV, FB, SP, NPB, DRC, TR, LG, SK, and DA

Clinical investigation and sample management: TForsen, BI, TTuomi, LG, and JKravic

Sequencing, genotyping, and data processing: NPB, TFennell, SG; performed at the Broad Institute

Analysis: JF (p.Arg138X), AVS (p.Trp325Arg)

Functional studies: NLB, SBRJ, ZD (cellular models), FVS, HS, DAD (screen for carrier autoantibodies)

Leadership and management: NPB, AMR, JBrosnan, JKT, SK, TR, LG, DRC, DA

deCODE

Clinical investigation and sample management: ABH, RB

Sequencing, genotyping, and data processing: GT, VS, PS, GM, DFG, AK; performed at deCODE genetics

Analysis: GT, VS, PS, GM, DFG, AK

Leadership and management: AK, UT, KS

T2D-GENES/Go-T2D

Clinical investigation and sample management: GA, JBlangero, DWB, JC, YSC, RD, BG, CH, JKooner, ML, TM, JYL, EST, YYT, JGW

Sequencing and data processing: NPB, YF, TFennell, SG; performed at the Broad Institute

Analysis: JF (*SLC30A8*), PF, APM, TTeslovich (exome-wide)

Leadership and management: MIM, MB, DA

HUNT2 sample management, genotyping, analysis, and leadership: KH, AMolven, SJ, PRN

Danish sample management, genotyping, analysis, and leadership: NG, RRM, MEJ, CC, IB, AL, TJ, TH, OP

PIVUS/ULSAM sample management, genotyping, analysis, and leadership: AMahajan, CML, LL, EI, APM

Finnish sample management, genotyping, analysis, and leadership: CF, HMS, ML, KLM, RR, VSalomaa, JT, MB

GT, VS, PS, GM, DFG, AK, UT, and KS are employed by deCODE genetics/Amgen, Inc. SP, AMR, JBrosnan, JKT, TR, and DRC are employees of Pfizer, Inc. FB is a former employee of Pfizer, Inc. and retains shares in the company.

All other authors declare no competing financial interests.

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

protein-truncating variant carriers had 65% reduced T2D risk ($p=1.7\times 10^{-6}$), and non-diabetic Icelandic carriers of a frameshift variant (p.Lys34SerfsX50) demonstrated reduced glucose levels (-0.17 s.d., $p=4.6\times 10^{-4}$). The two most common protein-truncating variants (p.Arg138X and p.Lys34SerfsX50) individually associate with T2D protection and encode unstable ZnT8 proteins. Previous functional study of *SLC30A8* suggested reduced zinc transport increases T2D risk^{8,9}, yet phenotypic heterogeneity was observed in rodent *Slc30a8* knockouts^{10–15}. Contrastingly, loss-of-function mutations in humans provide strong evidence that *SLC30A8* haploinsufficiency protects against T2D, proposing ZnT8 inhibition as a therapeutic strategy in T2D prevention.

Genome-wide association studies (GWAS) have identified 65 genomic loci associated with T2D risk⁷, highlighting previously unidentified pathological pathways. Translation into novel therapeutic targets¹⁶ requires identification of causal mutations and genes, as well as the directional relationship between protein activity and disease risk¹⁷. Toward this end, loss-of-function (LoF) mutations that protect against disease (without adverse phenotypes) are among the most useful findings from human genetics, suggesting targets that, upon inhibition, may prevent disease in the general population.

To identify T2D-protective LoF variants, in 2009 we sequenced exons of 115 genes near T2D GWAS signals (Supplementary Tables 1–2, Supplementary Fig. 1) in 758 individuals from Finland or Sweden (modeling previous studies¹⁸). To increase power, we selected individuals at the extremes of T2D risk: 352 young and lean T2D cases and 406 elderly and obese euglycemic controls¹⁹ (Supplementary Table 3). In total, 1,768 non-synonymous variants were identified (1,683 single nucleotide variants [SNVs] and 85 indels), 1,474 (83%) with minor allele frequency (MAF) $<1\%$ and 1,108 (63%) observed in only one individual. We found no evidence of association with T2D when testing individual variants or a burden of rare variants within genes (Supplementary Fig. 2). Genotyping 71 select SNVs (with nominally significant association or predicted to impact protein structure) in 11,288 additional individuals also yielded results consistent with the null distribution (Supplementary Fig. 3)

To increase power to detect association, we used the Illumina Human Exome Array to further genotype a subset of SNVs in 21,096 Finnish or Swedish individuals (10,534 with diabetes and 10,562 without, a superset of the individuals genotyped for the 71 SNVs, Supplementary Table 4). Analysis focused on variants with clear functional interpretation: nonsense, frameshift, or splice site mutations predicted to cause protein truncation (Supplementary Table 5). Six such variants identified via the sequencing were present on the Exome Array.

Of these variants, only a nonsense SNV (c.412C>T, p.Arg138X) in *SLC30A8* (transcript accession number NM_173851²⁰) showed nominally significant association with T2D (OR=0.46, $p=0.012$, Supplementary Table 6). A second *SLC30A8* nonsense variant (c.456G>A, p.Trp152X) was observed in one control (Supplementary Table 5) from sequencing, but was absent from the Exome Array. As a further experiment, we genotyped p.Arg138X in 26,566 additional European individuals (8,210 cases and 18,356 controls; Supplementary Table 7): although only 16 heterozygotes were observed (two cases and 14 controls), the association with T2D risk was directionally consistent (OR=0.56, $p>0.05$).

Based on the combined data, heterozygosity for p.Arg138X was estimated to yield a 53% reduction in T2D risk ($p=0.0067$, $N=48,115$).

SLC30A8 encodes an islet zinc transporter ZnT8 (NP_776250²⁰), which is necessary for zinc flux into β -cell insulin-secretory granules⁴ and subsequent insulin crystallization^{10,12}. Upon co-secretion with insulin, zinc also fulfills auto- and paracrine signaling roles²¹. A previously-identified common *SLC30A8* missense variant (rs13266634; c.973T>A, p.Trp325Arg) associates with T2D risk^{7,22}, glucose⁵, and proinsulin⁶, at significance levels beyond genome-wide thresholds.

Cellular characterization has suggested that the risk-increasing allele of p.Trp325Arg reduces ZnT8 zinc transport activity^{8,9}. In *Slc30a8* knockout mice, however, the phenotype varies with gender and genetic background: observations range from no effect on insulin secretion or glucose homeostasis, to modest hyperglycemia on a high fat diet^{8–15}. Furthermore, a recent β -cell-specific *Slc30a8* knockout proposes a multi-organ effect on the resultant mouse phenotype, with circulating zinc shown to influence hepatic insulin clearance²¹. Thus, the directional relationship between perturbed ZnT8 function and whole organism phenotype is uncertain despite much genetic and biological data.

Because the observed protective association between p.Arg138X and T2D risk was statistically modest, we sought additional evidence. Unfortunately, the near absence of p.Arg138X outside Western Finland limited ability to further characterize its effect in other populations (Supplementary Figs 4–5). We thus sought to identify a wider spectrum of protein-truncating variants in *SLC30A8*, through investigation of the catalog of 35 million variants collected by deCODE genetics through whole-genome sequencing²³. The p.Arg138X variant was not observed in this dataset. However, an independent protein-truncating variant was observed at 0.17% frequency: a deletion (c.101_107del, p.Lys34SerfsX50; Supplementary Figs 6–7) predicted to cause a frameshift and loss of all six transmembrane domains in the islet specific transcript (NM_173851) of *SLC30A8*⁴.

Heterozygosity for p.Lys34SerfsX50 was associated with 80% reduced T2D risk, with two observations in 2,953 T2D cases (0.03%) versus 248 observations in 67,919 controls (0.18%, OR=0.18, $p=0.004$; Supplementary Tables 8–9). Based on the ancestral relationship between Norway and Iceland, we genotyped the variant in 5,714 Norwegians (Supplementary Table 8) and observed zero carriers in 1,645 cases versus three carriers in 4,069 controls. Combining the evidence for p.Lys34SerfsX50 and p.Arg138X strengthened the association between *SLC30A8* protein-truncating variants and reduced T2D risk (combined OR=0.32, $p=2.4\times 10^{-4}$).

Both rare *SLC30A8* variants are bioinformatically predicted to cause ZnT8 truncation and consequently impact activity. To test this prediction, we assessed over-expressed, V5-tagged ZnT8 variants (Trp325, Arg325, X138 [as well as Arg138X], and Ser34fsX50.) in HeLa cells²⁰ (Fig. 1a). Despite similar RNA transcript levels for all variants (Supplementary Fig. 8), only Trp325- and Arg325-ZnT8 proteins were easily detectable in cells⁸, with Arg138X, X138-, and Ser34fsX50-ZnT8 present at low to undetectable levels (Fig. 1bc). Similar results were obtained using antibodies against the native protein or the V5-tag, via Western

blot (Fig. 1b) and immunofluorescence (Fig. 1c), and in HeLa as well as Ins1 rat insulinoma cells (Fig. 1d). Co-expression of X138- or Ser34fsX50-ZnT8 with Trp325-ZnT8 did not decrease expression of the full-length allele, nor rescue expression of either truncating variant (Supplementary Fig. 9).

We hypothesized that decreased expression of these two mutants might be due to protein instability and/or enhanced degradation. Following treatment with chloroquine or MG132 (lysosomal and proteasomal inhibitors respectively²⁴), higher X138- and Ser34fsX50-ZnT8 expression was detected via immunofluorescence (but remained undetectable via Western blot; Fig. 1e, Supplementary Fig. 10). These results are consistent with (but do not prove) instability and subsequent degradation of these truncated proteins²⁵. Through additional experiments (data not shown), we observed zinc transport in cells expressing Arg325- and Trp325-ZnT8 but not X138- or Ser34fsX50-ZnT8 (expected given the low levels of mutant protein). Further experiments are needed to assess the *in vivo* impact of these variants, including susceptibility to nonsense-mediated decay and potential dominant negative effects on protein oligomerization.

These genetic and functional data suggest *SLC30A8* haploinsufficiency reduces T2D risk. However, confidence would be further increased through observation of multiple, additional, putative LoF variants demonstrating protective effects. As part of the T2D-GENES and GoT2D consortia, we sequenced *SLC30A8* exons in 12,294 individuals spanning multiple ethnicities (Supplementary Table 10). Nine additional protein-truncating variants were identified – two frameshift indels and two nonsense, four splice site, and one initiator codon SNV – in 23 heterozygous individuals from African American, East Asian, and South Asian ancestries (Supplementary Data Set 1). p.Arg138X was seen in three additional carriers (one case and two controls); p.Lys34SerfsX50 was not observed.

In aggregate, carriers of these additional variants exhibited 60% reduced T2D risk (four case versus 18 control observations, OR=0.38, p=0.0025), with similar effects and statistical significance observed upon analysis of only frameshift or nonsense variant carriers (two case versus 13 control observations, OR=0.37, p=0.0027). Combining all data from sequencing and genotyping in 149,134 subjects, heterozygosity for any of the 12 protein-truncating variants was associated with 65% reduced T2D risk (OR=0.34, p=1.7×10⁻⁶), a statistically significant association even after correction for ~20,000 genes in the human genome (Table 1).

We investigated potential confounding factors for the observed protective association. We first assessed whether the p.Trp325Arg haplotypic background might influence results. While p.Lys34SerfsX50 and p.Met50Ile variants were isolated to the protective common variant haplotype, the remaining variants (including p.Arg138X) were observed on the risk common variant haplotype. Thus, independent protective protein-truncating variants were observed on opposite p.Trp325Arg haplotypic backgrounds. Second, we tested for a survivor effect, where rare variant carriers with diabetes would die at a younger age. However, (a) carrier ages did not significantly differ from non-carrier ages for either p.Arg138X (69.6±8.4 versus 65.5±11.0 for cases [p>0.1], 46.4±15.7 versus 50.3±15.5 for controls [p>0.1]) or p.Lys34SerfsX50 (70.5±4.5 versus 65.6±13.8 for cases [p>0.1],

48.5±20.1 versus 50.0±23.2 for controls [$p>0.1$]), and (b) p.Lys34SerfsX50 association attained equivalent significance even when analysis was restricted to age-matched controls. Finally, we acknowledged the noted challenges to control for population stratification in rare variant association studies²⁶. We had insufficient data to perform a family-based transmission disequilibrium test (pedigree information was only available for Icelanders, with three carrier parents all transmitting the risk allele to affected children). However, the consistent association of multiple independent protein-truncating variants across multiple cohorts and ancestries argues against population stratification as entirely responsible for the protective association.

These data thus provide compelling evidence that mutations inactivating one copy of *SLC30A8* reduce T2D risk in humans. In addition to T2D risk, the common *SLC30A8* variant (p.Trp325Arg) is associated with proinsulin and fasting plasma glucose levels at genome-wide significance^{5,6}, as well as 2-hr glucose levels post-oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) at nominal significance (Supplementary Table 11)²⁷. We asked whether rare protein-truncating *SLC30A8* variants also affected T2D-related phenotypes, particularly glycemic traits that might be indicative of altered islet function.

Among traits analyzed (Supplementary Table 12), the strongest association was observed in Iceland between p.Lys34SerfsX50 and random (non-fasting) glucose: non-diabetic carriers of the protective allele had lower glucose ($\beta=-0.17$ s.d.; $N=182$ carriers; $p=4.6\times 10^{-4}$), with a consistent effect seen in three Norwegian carriers ($\beta=-0.3$ s.d., $p>0.1$). Glucose was lower at one hour in the small number of p.Lys34SerfsX50 carriers characterized by OGTT ($\beta=-0.73$ s.d.; $N=4$ carriers; $p=0.05$). We did not observe a significant difference in fasting glucose or insulin, although the directions of effect were consistent with the above: lower for fasting glucose (average $\beta=-0.10$ s.d.; $N=146$ carriers; $p>0.1$) and higher for fasting insulin ($\beta=0.24$ s.d.; $N=52$ carriers; $p=0.09$). The co-directionality of glucose levels and T2D risk parallels the pattern observed for p.Trp325Arg, where the T2D-protective allele also associates with lower glucose (Supplementary Table 9), providing further evidence against a survivor effect or population stratification as driving the protective association.

In summary, we identified 12 rare, predicted protein-truncating *SLC30A8* variants (Fig. 2). Carriers of these variants had 65% reduced T2D risk at a level of significance adequate to correct for ~20,000 genes in the human genome ($p=1.7\times 10^{-6}$). Non-diabetic Icelandic carriers of p.Lys34SerfsX50 also demonstrated lower glucose levels ($\beta=-0.17$ s.d., $p=4.6\times 10^{-4}$). Notably, initial sequencing of 115 genes in 758 extreme individuals produced only two observations of p.Arg138X, without significant evidence of association of low-frequency or rare variants individually or in aggregate for any of the sequenced genes. Rather, establishing the association of *SLC30A8* protein-truncating variants with T2D protection at levels of exome-wide significance (correction for 20,000 genes) required genotyping ~150,000 individuals spanning multiple ethnicities. Detecting similar effects in genes without prior evidence of association may require analysis at a similar or larger scale, for not only T2D but also other complex traits.

Previous modeling of the relationship between ZnT8 activity and T2D risk centered on p.Trp325Arg, where mildly attenuated zinc transport is concomitant with increased T2D

risk⁸, and *Slc30a8* knockout mice, where phenotypic heterogeneity is observed^{13,15}. We find a clear and consistent association between putative *SLC30A8* LoF variants and T2D risk, across multiple ethnic backgrounds, demonstrating convincingly that a 50% reduction in gene dosage protects against T2D in humans. These data reject the model that *SLC30A8* LoF is associated with as little as a 1.2-fold increase in T2D risk (similar to that for the common p.Trp325Arg variant) at significance of $p \approx 10^{-9}$. Phenotypic interrogation of human mutation carriers is needed to determine the physiological mechanism behind this protective association and establish the effects of *SLC30A8* haploinsufficiency in the pancreas and other tissues²¹.

The observed human genetics data present several implications for *SLC30A8* function in T2D pathophysiology. The identification of multiple disease-associated protein-altering variants in *SLC30A8* unambiguously (albeit unsurprisingly) documents *SLC30A8* as the causal gene behind GWAS association signals. The observation that protein-truncating variants protect against T2D defines the directional relationship between *SLC30A8* activity and T2D risk in humans. The expanded *SLC30A8* allelic series offers a more functionally-informative catalog of variation versus p.Trp325Arg alone, enabling future experiments investigating potential mechanisms. Although significant work is required to understand how reduced *SLC30A8* activity lowers T2D risk, the current observations motivate experiments to test ZnT8 inhibition in T2D treatment in human populations.

Methods

Sequencing and genotyping

Individuals were selected for initial sequencing from several population-based cohorts from Finland and Sweden. A custom hybrid selection array was used to target genes, which were sequenced on an Illumina HiSeq 2000. Additional individuals from these same cohorts, as well as other cohorts drawn from different European populations, were genotyped for the *SLC30A8* nonsense SNV p.Arg138X through the Illumina HumanExome v1.1 array. All sequenced individuals were also genotyped, with data showing 100% concordance.

Icelandic individuals were genotyped for the frameshift p.Lys34SerfsX50 variant using a combination of whole-genome sequencing and imputation (either direct imputation based on chip-genotyping, or through familial-based imputation). Sanger sequencing was used to confirm carriers. Norwegian individuals were genotyped with a fragment-length-based method using differentially-labeled fluorescent primers, with Sanger sequencing again used to confirm carriers. Further *SLC30A8* sequencing (aimed at identifying further rare variant carriers) was performed as part of a whole-exome sequencing experiment, with the Agilent SureSelect Human All Exon platform used to capture exons and an Illumina HiSeq 2000 used for sequencing.

These studies were performed using protocols approved by the ethics committees of Helsinki University Hospital, Finland and Lund University, the Data Protection Commission of Iceland and the National Bioethics Committee of Iceland, the Regional Committee for Research Ethics and the Norwegian Data Inspectorate, and the Massachusetts Institute of

Technology Institutional Review Board, as well as with informed consent from all participants.

Association analysis

Association analysis was performed separately for three groups of variants: p.Arg138X, p.Lys34SerfsX50, and the remaining variants. For p.Arg138X, association analysis was separate for each analyzed cohort, and used a linear mixed model so as to account for sample structure including population stratification and genetic relatedness. Results were combined via a fixed-effects meta-analysis. For p.Lys34SerfsX50, association analysis was performed in Iceland using logistic regression, with controls matched to cases based on how informative the imputed genotypes were, and in Norway using a simple logistic regression with significance calculated via the score statistic. For the remaining variants, all individuals were analyzed jointly via a collapsing method, treating carriers of any variant indistinguishably, and regressing phenotype on the presence of any variant, with a linear mixed model used to account for sample structure. The resulting three association statistics were combined via a random-effects meta-analysis to obtain combined estimates of effect size and statistical significance.

For further details, see Supplementary Information.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

Authors

Jason Flannick^{1,2,3}, Gudmar Thorleifsson⁴, Nicola L. Beer^{1,5}, Suzanne B. R. Jacobs¹, Niels Grarup⁶, Noël P. Burt¹, Anubha Mahajan⁷, Christian Fuchsberger⁸, Gil Atzmon^{9,10}, Rafn Benediktsson¹¹, John Blangero¹², Don W. Bowden^{13,14,15,16}, Ivan Brandslund^{17,18}, Julia Brosnan¹⁹, Frank Burslem²⁰, John Chambers^{21,22,23}, Yoon Shin Cho²⁴, Cramer Christensen²⁵, Desirée A. Douglas²⁶, Ravindranath Duggirala¹², Zachary Dymek¹, Yossi Farjoun¹, Timothy Fennell¹, Pierre Fontanillas¹, Tom Forsén^{27,28}, Stacey Gabriel¹, Benjamin Glaser^{29,30}, Daniel F. Gudbjartsson⁴, Craig Hanis³¹, Torben Hansen^{6,32}, Astradur B. Hreidarsson¹¹, Kristian Hveem³³, Erik Ingelsson^{7,34}, Bo Isomaa^{35,36}, Stefan Johansson^{37,38,39}, Torben Jørgensen^{40,41,42}, Marit Eika Jørgensen⁴³, Sekar Kathiresan^{1,44,45,46}, Augustine Kong⁴, Jaspal Kooner^{22,23,47}, Jasmina Kravic⁴⁸, Markku Laakso⁴⁹, Jong-Young Lee⁵⁰, Lars Lind⁵¹, Cecilia M Lindgren^{1,7}, Allan Linneberg^{40,41,52}, Gisli Masson⁴, Thomas Meitinger⁵³, Karen L Mohlke⁵⁴, Anders Molven^{37,55,56}, Andrew P. Morris^{7,57}, Shobha Potluri⁵⁸, Rainer Rauramaa^{59,60}, Rasmus Ribel-Madsen⁶, Ann-Marie Richard¹⁹, Tim Rolph¹⁹, Veikko Salomaa⁶¹, Ayellet V. Segrè^{1,2}, Hanna Skärstrand²⁶, Valgerdur Steinthorsdottir⁴, Heather M. Stringham⁸, Patrick Sulem⁴, E Shyong Tai^{62,63,64}, Yik Ying Teo^{62,65,66,67,68}, Tanya Teslovich⁸, Unnur Thorsteinsdottir^{4,69}, Jeff K. Trimmer¹⁹, Tiinamaija Tuomi^{35,70}, Jaakko Tuomilehto^{71,72,73}, Fariba Vaziri-Sani²⁶, Benjamin F. Voight^{1,74,75}, James G. Wilson⁷⁶, Michael Boehnke⁸, Mark I. McCarthy^{7,77,78}, Pål R. Njølstad^{1,37,79}, Oluf

Pedersen⁶, the Go-T2D consortium⁸⁰, the T2D-GENES consortium⁸¹, Leif Groop^{48,82}, David R. Cox⁵⁸, Kari Stefansson^{4,69,*}, and David Altshuler^{1,2,3,44,45,83,84,*}

Affiliations

¹Program in Medical and Population Genetics, Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT, Cambridge, MA, USA ²Department of Molecular Biology, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, USA ³Diabetes Unit, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, USA ⁴deCODE genetics/Amgen, Inc., Reykjavik, Iceland ⁵Oxford Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology, and Metabolism, University of Oxford, Oxford, U.K ⁶The Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark ⁷Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK ⁸Center for Statistical Genetics, Department of Biostatistics, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA ⁹Department of Medicine, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY, USA ¹⁰Department of Genetics, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY, USA ¹¹Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism, Landspítali-University Hospital, Reykjavik, Iceland ¹²Department of Genetics, Texas Biomedical Research Institute, San Antonio, Texas, USA ¹³Center for Genomics and Personalized Medicine Research, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA ¹⁴Center for Diabetes Research, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA ¹⁵Department of Biochemistry, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA ¹⁶Department of Internal Medicine, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA ¹⁷Department of Clinical Biochemistry, Vejle Hospital, Vejle, Denmark ¹⁸Institute of Regional Health Research, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark ¹⁹Cardiovascular & Metabolic Diseases Research Unit, Pfizer Inc., Cambridge, MA, USA ²⁰Cardiovascular and Metabolic Diseases Practice, Prescient Life Sciences, London, UK ²¹Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Imperial College London, London, UK ²²Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London, UK ²³Ealing Hospital National Health Service (NHS) Trust, Middlesex, UK ²⁴Department of Biomedical Science, Hallym University, Chuncheon, Gangwon-do, Korea ²⁵Department of Internal Medicine and Endocrinology, Vejle Hospital, Vejle, Denmark ²⁶Department of Clinical Sciences, Unit of Diabetes and Celiac Diseases, Lund University, Malmö, Sweden ²⁷University of Helsinki, Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care, Finland ²⁸Vaasa Health Care Centre, Diabetes Care Unit, Vaasa, Finland ²⁹Endocrinology and Metabolism Service, Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center, Jerusalem, Israel ³⁰Israel Diabetes Research Group (IDRG), Israel ³¹Human Genetics Center, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Houston, TX, USA ³²Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark ³³Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Levanger, Norway ³⁴Molecular Epidemiology and Science for Life Laboratory, Department of Medical Sciences, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden ³⁵Folkhalsan Research Centre, Helsinki, Finland ³⁶The Department of Social

Services and Health Care, Jakobstad, Finland ³⁷KG Jebsen Center for Diabetes Research, Department of Clinical Science, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway ³⁸Center for Medical Genetics and Molecular Medicine, Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway ³⁹Department of Biomedicine, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway ⁴⁰Research Centre for Prevention and Health, Glostrup University Hospital, Glostrup, Denmark ⁴¹Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark ⁴²Faculty of Medicine, University of Aalborg, Aalborg, Denmark ⁴³Steno Diabetes Center, Gentofte, Denmark ⁴⁴Center for Human Genetic Research, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, USA ⁴⁵Cardiovascular Research Center, Cardiology Division, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, USA ⁴⁶Department of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA ⁴⁷National Heart and Lung Institute (NHLI), Imperial College London, Hammersmith Hospital, London, UK ⁴⁸Department of Clinical Sciences, Diabetes and Endocrinology, Lund University and Lund University Diabetes Centre, Malmö, Sweden ⁴⁹Department of Medicine, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio Campus and Kuopio University Hospital, Kuopio, Finland ⁵⁰Center for Genome Science, National Institute of Health, Osong Health Technology Administration Complex, Chungcheongbuk-do, Cheongwon-gun, Gangoe-myeon, Yeonje-ri, Korea ⁵¹Department of Medical Sciences, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden ⁵²Department of Clinical Experimental Research, Glostrup University Hospital, Glostrup, Denmark ⁵³Institute of Human Genetics, Technical University Munich, Munich, Germany ⁵⁴Department of Genetics, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA ⁵⁵The Gade Laboratory for Pathology, Department of Clinical Medicine, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway ⁵⁶Department of Pathology, Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway ⁵⁷Department of Biostatistics, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK ⁵⁸Applied Quantitative Genotherapeutics, Pfizer Inc., South San Francisco, CA, USA ⁵⁹Kuopio Research Institute of Exercise Medicine, Kuopio, Finland ⁶⁰Department of Clinical Physiology and Nuclear Medicine, Kuopio University Hospital, Kuopio, Finland ⁶¹THL-National Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland ⁶²Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore, National University Health System, Singapore, Singapore ⁶³Department of Medicine, National University of Singapore, National University Health System, Singapore, Singapore ⁶⁴Duke-National University of Singapore Graduate Medical School, Singapore, Singapore ⁶⁵Centre for Molecular Epidemiology, National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore ⁶⁶Genome Institute of Singapore, Agency for Science, Technology and Research, Singapore, Singapore ⁶⁷Graduate School for Integrative Science and Engineering, National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore ⁶⁸Department of Statistics and Applied Probability, National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore ⁶⁹Faculty of Medicine, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland ⁷⁰Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland ⁷¹Centre for Vascular Prevention, Danube-University Krems, Krems, Austria ⁷²Diabetes Prevention Unit, National Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland ⁷³King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia ⁷⁴Department of

Pharmacology, The University of Pennsylvania - Perelman School of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA, USA ⁷⁵Department of Genetics, The University of Pennsylvania - Perelman School of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA, USA ⁷⁶Department of Physiology and Biophysics, University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson, MS, USA ⁷⁷Oxford Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology, and Metabolism, Churchill Hospital, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK ⁷⁸Oxford NIHR Biomedical Research Centre, Churchill Hospital, Oxford, UK ⁷⁹Department of Pediatrics, Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway ⁸⁰The Go-T2D Consortium; Full lists of members and affiliations are provided in the Supplementary Note ⁸¹The T2D-GENES Consortium; Full lists of members and affiliations are provided in the Supplementary Note ⁸²Finnish Institute for Molecular Medicine (FIMM), Helsinki University, Helsinki, Finland ⁸³Department of Genetics, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA ⁸⁴Department of Biology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA

Acknowledgments

This manuscript is dedicated to the memory of David R. Cox, our dear friend and colleague, who was relentlessly supportive of this work – and more generally the use of human genetics to improve human health. He is missed, but his legacy goes on.

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of all ~150,000 participants from the various population studies that contributed to this work.

Funding information

JF was supported in part by NIH Training Grant 5-T32-GM007748-33. DA was supported by funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (2006087). NLB was supported by a Fulbright Diabetes UK Fellowship (BDA 11/0004348).

This work was supported in part by funding to the Broad Institute (principal investigator, DA) from Pfizer Inc. Funding for the GoT2D and T2D-GENES studies was provided by grants 5U01DK085526 (Multiethnic Study of Type 2 Diabetes Genes), DK088389 (Low-Pass Sequencing and High-Density SNP Genotyping for Type 2 Diabetes), and U54HG003067 (Large Scale Sequencing and Analysis of Genomes), as well as NIH U01's DK085501, DK085524, DK085545, and DK085584. The Malmö Preventive Project and the Scania Diabetes Registry were supported by grants from the Swedish Research Council (Dnr 521-2010-3490 to LG and Dnr 349-2006-237 to the Lund University Diabetes Centre) as well as by an ERC grant (GENETARGET T2D, GA269045) and two EU grants (ENGAGE [2007-201413] and CEED3 [2008-223211]) to LG. The Botnia study was supported by funding from Sigrid Juselius Foundation and Folkhälsan Research Foundation. PRN was funded by the European Research Council (AdG 293574), Research Council of Norway (197064/V50), KG Jebsen Foundation, University of Bergen, Western Norway Health Authority, EASD Sabbatical Leave Programme and Innovest. The Danish studies were supported by the Lundbeck Foundation (The Lundbeck Foundation Centre for Applied Medical Genomics in Personalised Disease Prediction, Prevention and Care [LuCamp], www.lucamp.org) and The Danish Council for Independent Research. The Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research is an independent Research Center at the University of Copenhagen partially funded by an unrestricted donation from the Novo Nordisk Foundation (www.metabol.ku.dk). The PIVUS/ULSAM cohort was supported by Wellcome Trust Grants WT098017, WT064890, WT090532, Uppsala University, Uppsala University Hospital, the Swedish Research Council and the Swedish Heart-Lung Foundation. The METSIM study was supported by the Academy of Finland (contract 124243), the Finnish Heart Foundation, the Finnish Diabetes Foundation, Tekes (contract 1510/31/06), the Commission of the European Community (HEALTH-F2-2007-201681) and R01DK062370, R01DK072193 and Z01HG000024. The FUSION study was supported by R01DK062370, R01DK072193 and Z01HG000024. The DR's EXTRA Study was supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland (627;2004–2011), Academy of Finland (102318; 123885), Kuopio University Hospital, Finnish Diabetes Association, Finnish Heart Association, Päivikki and Sakari Sohlberg Foundation and by grants from European Commission FP6 Integrated Project (EXGENESIS); LSHM-CT-2004-005272, City of Kuopio and Social Insurance Institution of Finland (4/26/2010). VSalmomaa is funded by the Academy of Finland, grant number 139635, and the Finnish Foundation for Cardiovascular Disease. Sequencing and genotyping of British individuals

was supported by Wellcome Trust funding WT090367, WT090532, WT098381, and NIDDK U01-DK085545. Funding for the Jackson Heart Study (JHS) was provided by the NHLBI and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (N01 HC-95170, N01 HC-95171 and N01 HC-95172). APM acknowledges support from Wellcome Trust grants WT098017, WT090532, and WT064890. FVS and HS were supported by the EU 7th Framework Programme: DIAPREPP (Diabetes type 1 Prediction, Early Pathogenesis and Prevention, grant agreement 202013) and The Swedish Child Diabetes Foundation (Barndiabetesfonden)

References

1. Nassar MA, et al. Nociceptor-specific gene deletion reveals a major role for Nav1.7 (PN1) in acute and inflammatory pain. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2004; 101:12706–11. [PubMed: 15314237]
2. Cohen J, et al. Low LDL cholesterol in individuals of African descent resulting from frequent nonsense mutations in PCSK9. *Nature Genetics*. 2005; 37:161–5. [PubMed: 15654334]
3. Sullivan D, et al. Effect of a Monoclonal Antibody to PCSK9 on Low-Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol Levels in Statin-Intolerant Patients: The GAUSS Randomized Trial. *JAMA*. 2012:1–10.
4. Chimienti F, et al. In vivo expression and functional characterization of the zinc transporter ZnT8 in glucose-induced insulin secretion. *J Cell Sci*. 2006; 119:4199–206. [PubMed: 16984975]
5. Dupuis J, et al. New genetic loci implicated in fasting glucose homeostasis and their impact on type 2 diabetes risk. *Nature Genetics*. 2010; 42:105–16. [PubMed: 20081858]
6. Strawbridge RJ, et al. Genome-wide association identifies nine common variants associated with fasting proinsulin levels and provides new insights into the pathophysiology of type 2 diabetes. *Diabetes*. 2011; 60:2624–34. [PubMed: 21873549]
7. Morris AP, et al. Large-scale association analysis provides insights into the genetic architecture and pathophysiology of type 2 diabetes. *Nature Genetics*. 2012; 44:981–90. [PubMed: 22885922]
8. Nicolson TJ, et al. Insulin storage and glucose homeostasis in mice null for the granule zinc transporter ZnT8 and studies of the type 2 diabetes-associated variants. *Diabetes*. 2009; 58:2070–83. [PubMed: 19542200]
9. Rutter GA. Think zinc: New roles for zinc in the control of insulin secretion. *Islets*. 2010; 2:49–50. [PubMed: 21099294]
10. Lemaire K, et al. Insulin crystallization depends on zinc transporter ZnT8 expression, but is not required for normal glucose homeostasis in mice. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2009; 106:14872–7. [PubMed: 19706465]
11. Pound LD, et al. Deletion of the mouse Slc30a8 gene encoding zinc transporter-8 results in impaired insulin secretion. *The Biochemical journal*. 2009; 421:371–6. [PubMed: 19450229]
12. Wijesekara N, et al. Beta cell-specific Znt8 deletion in mice causes marked defects in insulin processing, crystallisation and secretion. *Diabetologia*. 2010; 53:1656–68. [PubMed: 20424817]
13. Pound LD, et al. The physiological effects of deleting the mouse SLC30A8 gene encoding zinc transporter-8 are influenced by gender and genetic background. *PLoS One*. 2012; 7:e40972. [PubMed: 22829903]
14. Hardy AB, et al. Effects of high-fat diet feeding on Znt8-null mice: differences between beta-cell and global knockout of Znt8. *Am J Physiol Endocrinol Metab*. 2012; 302:E1084–96. [PubMed: 22338079]
15. da Silva Xavier G, Bellomo EA, McGinty JA, French PM, Rutter GA. Animal Models of GWAS-Identified Type 2 Diabetes Genes. *J Diabetes Res*. 2013; 2013:906590. [PubMed: 23710470]
16. van de Bunt M, Gloyn AL. From genetic association to molecular mechanism. *Curr Diab Rep*. 2010; 10:452–66. [PubMed: 20878272]
17. Plenge RM, Scolnick EM, Altshuler D. Validating therapeutic targets through human genetics. *Nat Rev Drug Discov*. 2013; 12:581–94. [PubMed: 23868113]
18. Nejentsev S, Walker N, Riches D, Egholm M, Todd JA. Rare variants of IFIH1, a gene implicated in antiviral responses, protect against type 1 diabetes. *Science*. 2009; 324:387–9. [PubMed: 19264985]
19. Guey LT, et al. Power in the phenotypic extremes: a simulation study of power in discovery and replication of rare variants. *Genetic epidemiology*. 2011

20. Chimienti F, Devergnas S, Favier A, Seve M. Identification and cloning of a beta-cell-specific zinc transporter, ZnT-8, localized into insulin secretory granules. *Diabetes*. 2004; 53:2330–7. [PubMed: 15331542]
21. Tamaki M, et al. The diabetes-susceptible gene SLC30A8/ZnT8 regulates hepatic insulin clearance. *J Clin Invest*. 2013; 123:4513–4524. [PubMed: 24051378]
22. Sladek R, et al. A genome-wide association study identifies novel risk loci for type 2 diabetes. *Nature*. 2007; 445:881–5. [PubMed: 17293876]
23. Gudmundsson J, et al. A study based on whole-genome sequencing yields a rare variant at 8q24 associated with prostate cancer. *Nature Genetics*. 2012
24. Bloom J, Pagano M. Experimental tests to definitively determine ubiquitylation of a substrate. *Methods Enzymol*. 2005; 399:249–66. [PubMed: 16338361]
25. Waters PJ. Degradation of mutant proteins, underlying “loss of function” phenotypes, plays a major role in genetic disease. *Curr Issues Mol Biol*. 2001; 3:57–65. [PubMed: 11488412]
26. Mathieson I, McVean G. Differential confounding of rare and common variants in spatially structured populations. *Nature Genetics*. 2012; 44:243–6. [PubMed: 22306651]
27. Saxena R, et al. Genetic variation in GIPR influences the glucose and insulin responses to an oral glucose challenge. *Nature Genetics*. 2010; 42:142–8. [PubMed: 20081857]

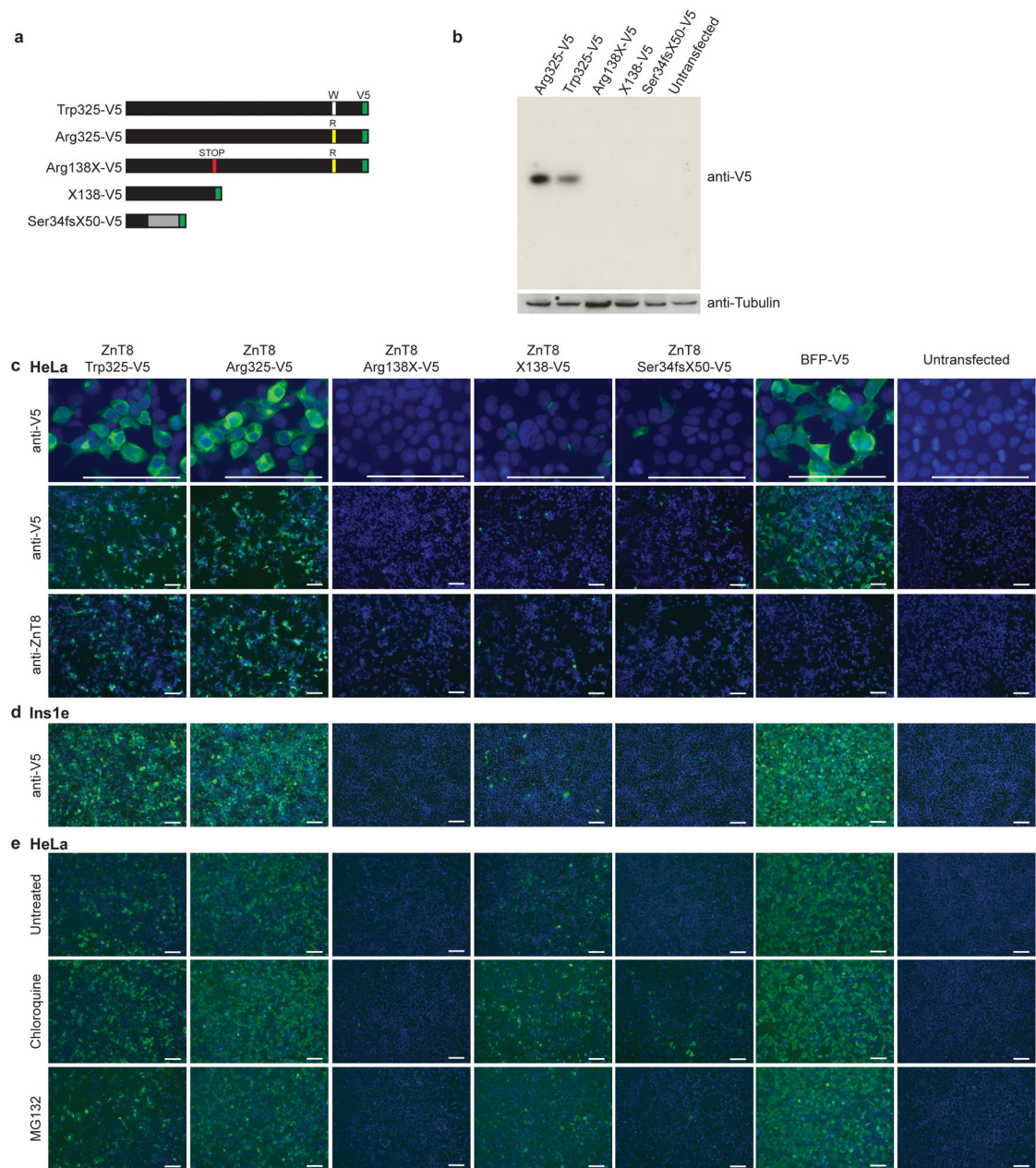


Figure 1. Over-expression of p.Arg138X- and p. Ser34fsX50-ZnT8 in HeLa cells

We sought to experimentally evaluate whether the p.Arg138X or p. Ser34fsX50 ZnT8 variants resulted in decreased ZnT8 expression and/or activity. **(a)** Depiction of *SLC30A8* open reading frames in C-terminal V5-tagged constructs (tag highlighted in green). **(b)** Western blot of HeLa lysates following transient over-expression of V5-tagged ZnT8 variants (anti-V5-tag). Antibody against tubulin was used as a loading control for each sample, and untransfected cell lysate was used to demonstrate specificity of anti-V5 antibody. **(c, d)** Immunofluorescent staining of ZnT8 variant expression in **(c)** HeLa and **(d)** Ins1e cells. ZnT8 was detected using antibodies against the C-terminal V5-tag (anti-V5) or the N-terminus of the endogenous protein (anti-ZnT8), as indicated. BFP-V5 and

untransfected HeLa cells serve as controls. Cells were co-stained with Hoechst-33342 to mark nuclei. Within each row of images for the indicated antibody and objective, identical exposure times were used across all proteins. **(e)** ZnT8 variant expression, as detected by anti-V5 immunostaining, following 4hr treatment with inhibitors of the lysosome (chloroquine, 100 μ M) or the proteasome (MG132, 10 μ M). Images were acquired using a 10x objective and identical exposure times. Scale bars, 100 μ M.

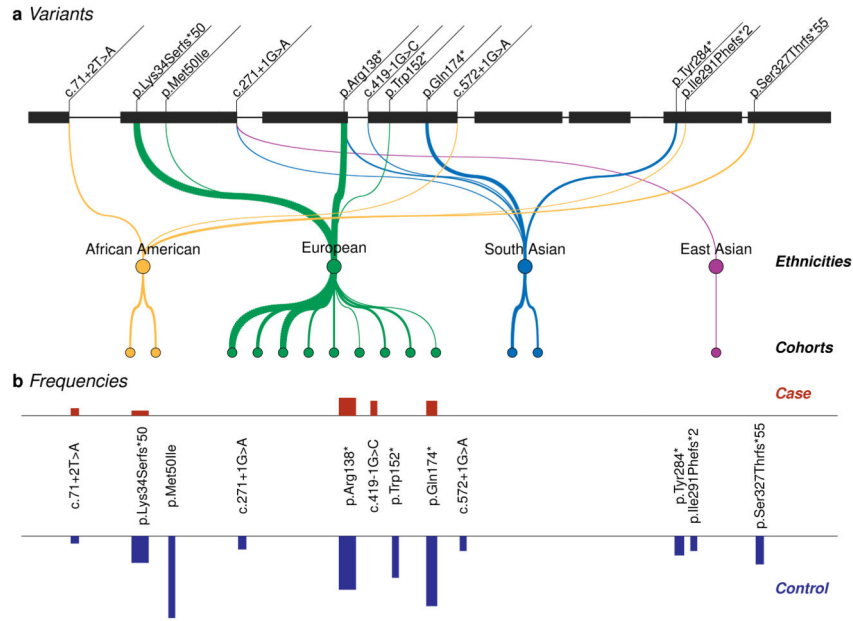


Figure 2. Protein-truncating variants identified in *SLC30A8*

Through sequencing and genotyping of nearly 150,000 individuals across 5 ethnicities, we identified 12 *SLC30A8* variants – each rare and predicted to cause premature protein truncation. **(a)** Shown is the position of each variant on the islet-specific *SLC30A8* transcript (NM_173851²⁰). p.Met50Ile is predicted to alter the initiator codon in other transcripts of *SLC30A8*. Lines are drawn from each variant to ethnicities for which carriers were observed, with greater widths corresponding to ethnicities with more observations. Lines are further drawn from each ethnicity to the populations (cohorts) from which carriers were identified. From left, cohorts are: JHS, WFS, Botnia, Danish, deCODE, Finnish, HUNT2, KORA, Malmo, PIVUS/ULSAM, WTCCC, LOLIPOP, Singapore Indians, and KARE (cohort information in Supplementary Information). Ethnicities or cohorts with no observations are not shown. **(b)** Graphical representation of the case and control frequencies for each observed variant; case frequencies in red (above) and control frequencies in blue (below). Wider bars correspond to variants with more observations. A quantitative and complete representation of these data is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Association of *SLC30A8* variants with type 2 diabetes

Through sequencing and genotyping of ~150,000 individuals across five ethnicities, a spectrum of 12 rare, predicted protein-truncating variants were identified in *SLC30A8*. Shown for each variant are: ethnicity, cohort, number of genotyped cases and controls (N), number of cases and controls observed to carry a variant (Carriers), and observed allele frequencies in cases and controls (Allele Frequency). Odds ratios (OR) and p-values were computed separately for three groups of variants: p.Arg138X, p.Lys34SerfsX50, and the remaining variants. For p.Arg138X and p.Lys34SerfsX50, for which more than ten carriers were observed, statistics were computed separately for each cohort (see **Methods**, Supplementary Information) and then combined via a fixed-effects meta-analysis. For the remaining variants, an score of association was computed by comparing the aggregate frequency of variant carriers between cases and controls. These three statistics were combined via a random-effects meta-analysis to produce combined estimates of risk and statistical significance (bottom row). Variant counts and frequencies were computed based on all studied individuals, while OR and p-values were computed with correction for sample structure (population stratification and genetic relatedness; see Supplementary Information); thus, displayed ORs differ from those computed solely from frequency estimates.

Variant	Ethnicity	Country	Cohort	N		Carriers		Allele Frequency		OR (95% CI)	P
				Case	Ctrl	Case	Ctrl	Case	Ctrl		
p-Arg138X	European	Finland	Botnia	3,727	5,440	9	39	0.12%	0.36%	0.47 (0.27–0.81)	0.0067
	European	Sweden	Malmo	6,960	5,480	2	3	0.014%	0.027%		
	European	Sweden	PIVUS/ULSAM	270	1,734	1	3	0.19%	0.087%		
	European	Denmark	Danish	3,889	7,869	0	9	0.0%	0.057%		
	European	Finland	Finnish	4,050	8,696	1	2	0.012%	0.011%		
	South Asian	Singapore	Singapore Indians	562	585	1	1	0.089%	0.085%		
p-Lys34SerfsX50	European	UK	UKT2D	321	319	0	1	0.0%	0.16%	0.17 (0.05–0.52)	0.0019
	European	Iceland	deCODE	2,953	67,919	2	248	0.034%	0.18%		
	European	Norway	HUNT2	1,645	4,069	0	3	0.0%	0.037%		
c.71+2T>A	African-American	USA	WFS	501	527	1	0	0.1%	0.0%	0.30 (0.14–0.64)	0.0021
	African-American	USA	JHS	530	533	0	1	0.0%	0.094%		
p-Met50Ile	European	Germany	KORA	97	91	0	1	0.0%	0.55%	0.30 (0.14–0.64)	0.0021
	East Asian	Korea	KARE	520	551	0	1	0.0%	0.091%		
c.271+G>A	South Asian	Singapore	Singapore Indians	562	585	0	1	0.0%	0.085%	0.30 (0.14–0.64)	0.0021
	South Asian	UK	LOLIPOP	530	537	1	0	0.094%	0.0%		
p-Trp152X	European	Finland	Botnia	134	180	0	1	0.0%	0.28%		

Variant	Ethnicity	Country	Cohort	N		Carriers		Allele Frequency		OR (95% CI)	P
				Case	Ctrl	Case	Ctrl	Case	Ctrl		
p.Arg138X	European	Finland	Botnia	3,727	5,440	9	39	0.12%	0.36%	0.47 (0.27-0.81)	0.0067
	European	Sweden	Malmö	6,960	5,480	2	3	0.014%	0.027%		
	European	Sweden	PIVUS/ULSAM	270	1,734	1	3	0.19%	0.087%		
	European	Denmark	Danish	3,889	7,869	0	9	0.0%	0.057%		
	European	Finland	Finnish	4,050	8,696	1	2	0.012%	0.011%		
p.Gln174X	South Asian	Singapore	Singapore Indians	562	585	1	1	0.089%	0.085%		
	European	UK	UKT2D	321	319	0	1	0.0%	0.16%		
c.572+1G>A	South Asian	UK	LOLIPOP	530	537	1	5	0.094%	0.47%		
	African-American	USA	JHS	530	533	0	1	0.0%	0.094%		
p.Tyr284X	South Asian	UK	LOLIPOP	530	537	0	2	0.0%	0.19%		
	South Asian	Singapore	Singapore Indians	562	585	0	1	0.0%	0.085%		
p.Ile291PhefsX2	African-American	USA	JHS	530	533	0	1	0.0%	0.094%		
p.Ser327ThrfsX5	African-American	USA	WFS	501	527	0	2	0.0%	0.19%		
Combined	-	-	-	30,433	118,701	19	326	-	-	0.34 (0.21-0.53)	1.7 × 10⁻⁶

CI=confidence interval; Ctrl=Control.