

1 **LUNG CANCER RISK IN NEVER SMOKERS OF EUROPEAN DESCENT IS ASSOCIATED**  
2 **WITH GENETIC VARIATION IN THE 5p15.33 *TERT-CLPTM1L* REGION**

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### **Disclosure of funding**

This work was supported in part by National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants CA149462, CA209414, CA092824, ES00002, U01CA209414, U19CA203654, 1K07CA172294, P50CA119997, R01CA060691, R01CA87895, P30CA22453, P30CA008748, P30CA076292, U01CA164973, and Department of Health and Human Services grant HHSN261201300011; James & Esther King Biomedical Research Program Grant 09KN-15; Helmholtz-DAAD fellowship A/07/97379; the Society of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center through their annual appeal and Steps for Breath; Italian Ministry of Health grant for Institutional Research 2017-2018 and Associazione Italiana per la Ricerca sul Cancro grant IG2015/17564IO; Instituto de Salud Carlos III. PI15/01211 grant and Xunta de Galicia grant 10CSA208057PR; the LUCY study was funded in part by the Germany National Genome Research Network (NGFN), the DFG (BI576/2-1; BI 576/2-2, Bi 576/4-1; Bi 576/4-2; Wi 621/10-1; Wi 621/10-2), the Helmholtzgemeinschaft (HGF) and the Federal office for Radiation Protection (BfS:STSch4454); KORA Surveys were funded by the Helmholtz-Zentrum München (HMGU), which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology and the State of Bavaria. The Liverpool Lung Project is funded by the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation. The Resource for the Study of Lung Cancer Epidemiology in North Trent (ReSoLuCENT) study was funded by the Sheffield Hospitals Charity, Sheffield Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre and Weston Park Hospital Cancer Charity.

The authors declare that none of them has a conflict of interest

### 13 **Abstract**

#### 14 *Introduction*

15 Inherited susceptibility to lung cancer risk in never smokers is poorly understood. One of the  
16 major reasons for this is that because this disease is uncommon in many populations (with a  
17 notable exception of Asians), it is difficult to assemble an adequate sample. In this study we  
18 conducted a genome-wide association study (GWAS) on the largest, to date, set of European-  
19 descent never smokers with lung cancer.

#### 20 *Methods*

1 We conducted a two-phase (discovery and replication) GWAS in never smokers of European  
2 descent. We further augmented the sample size by performing a meta-analysis with never  
3 smokers from the recent OncoArray study, which resulted in a total of 3,636 cases and 6,295  
4 controls. In addition, we compare our findings with those in smokers with lung cancer.

## 5 *Results*

6 We detected three genome-wide statistically significant SNPs rs31490 (OR 0.769, 95%  
7 confidence interval (CI) [0.722-0.820], p-value  $5.31 \times 10^{-16}$ ), rs380286 (OR 0.770, 95% CI [0.723-  
8 0.820], p-value  $4.32 \times 10^{-16}$ ), and rs4975616 (OR 0.778, 95% CI [0.730-0.829], p-value  $1.04 \times 10^{-14}$ ). All three mapped to Chromosome 5 *CLPTM1L-TERT* region, which has been previously  
9 shown to be associated with lung cancer risk in smokers and in never smoker Asian women, as  
10 well as risk of other cancers including breast, ovarian, colorectal and prostate.  
11

## 12 *Conclusions*

13 We found that genetic susceptibility to lung cancer in never smokers is associated to genetic  
14 variants with pan-cancer risk effects. The comparison with smokers shows that top variants  
15 previously shown to be associated with lung cancer risk only confer risk in the presence of  
16 tobacco exposure, underscoring the importance of gene-environment interactions in the etiology  
17 of this disease.

18

19

## 1 **Introduction**

2 Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer mortality worldwide, accounting for over 1 million  
3 deaths each year <sup>1</sup>. Although most lung cancer is preventable, since the majority of cases  
4 occur in tobacco smokers <sup>2</sup>, around 10% of cases are seen in lifetime never-smokers. Even  
5 though lung cancer is diagnosed in a minority of never smokers it still ranks as the seventh to  
6 ninth most common cause of cancer death worldwide <sup>3</sup>.

7 In never smokers, lung cancer has characteristics distinct from those associated with  
8 smoking, including different histology and mutation spectrum <sup>4</sup>. The only well-established risk  
9 factors for lung cancer in never smokers are exposure to radon <sup>5</sup>, secondhand smoke and  
10 dust <sup>6</sup>, asbestos <sup>7</sup>, and, notably, family history of cancer <sup>6, 8</sup>, which has provided evidence for  
11 inherited susceptibility.

12 To date, genome-wide association studies (GWAS) on lung cancer has largely been focused  
13 on ever smokers <sup>9-11</sup>, and have identified 18 independent loci influencing risk <sup>12</sup>. While several  
14 GWAS studies in never smokers have been conducted, these have primarily been based on  
15 Asian women <sup>13-15</sup>. Several environmental risk factors for lung cancer, including cooking  
16 fumes and air pollution, are highly prevalent in Asian populations <sup>16</sup>, raising the possibility of  
17 effect modification. Identifying lung cancer susceptibility alleles among never smoking  
18 European populations has been limited to candidate gene analyses <sup>17, 18</sup> and small GWA  
19 studies <sup>19-21</sup>. Reported here are the results of a large GWAS of lung cancer in never smokers  
20 of European descent, based on 3,636 cases and 6,295 controls.

## 21 **Materials and Methods**

### 22 Study design and samples

23 Never smokers were defined as individuals who had smoked less than 100 cigarettes over their  
24 lifetime. The study had a discovery and a replication series, both from studies participating in  
25 the International Lung Cancer Consortium (ILCCO; <http://ilcco.iarc.fr>). The discovery series,  
26 after quality control (Appendix), comprised 1,287 cases and 1,655 controls with European  
27 ancestry from seven centers (Table A.1). The replication series comprised 960 cases and 940  
28 controls from 16 study centers, of which some centers (but not study subjects) participated also  
29 in the discovery phase (Table A.2). Comprehensive details of each series have been previously  
30 reported <sup>12, 20, 22-25</sup>. To increase statistical power, data on never smokers recently generated by  
31 the OncoArray lung cancer study from ILCCO <sup>12</sup> were also leveraged. After excluding samples  
32 overlapping between the OncoArray and the discovery set and between the OncoArray and the  
33 replication set, 1,149 cases and 1,144 controls from the discovery, 1,527 cases and 4,211  
34 controls from the OncoArray, and 960 cases and 940 controls from the replication sets were  
35 included in the final analyses. Most of the lung cancer cases (76.7% in the discovery, 69.2% in  
36 the replication, and 63.1% in the OncoArray sets) had histologically confirmed adenocarcinoma,  
37 followed by squamous and small cell carcinoma (Tables A.1-A.3). Given that subtype-specific  
38 associations are likely to exist, adenocarcinomas were also analyzed separately. Table 1  
39 presents the demographic characteristics of the final dataset.

40

1 **Table 1.** Characteristics of never smoking lung cancer cases and controls included in the  
 2 final dataset.

Characteristic		Cases (n=3,636)		Controls (n=6,296)	
Age, mean, SD		63.6	12.4	61.9	11.9
Sex, n, %	Male	1,156	31.8	2,595	41.2
	Female	2,480	68.2	3,701	58.8
Histology, n, %	Adenocarcinoma	2,509	69.0	6,296	
	Squamous cell carcinoma	310	8.5	6,296	

3

4 Genotyping and quality control

5 Both cases and controls from the discovery set were genotyped using Illumina Infinium  
 6 OmniExpress-24 v1.2 BeadChips, with the exception of cases and controls from Harvard School  
 7 of Public Health (HSPH), genotyped on Illumina Human660W-Quad BeadChip. Genotyping of  
 8 the replication series for 384 selected SNPs was performed using Illumina GoldenGate  
 9 technology. Genotyping quality control and SNP selection procedures are detailed in the  
 10 Appendix. The OncoArray genotyping platform, the never smoker samples to which it was  
 11 applied, and genotyping and quality control procedures are described in the Appendix and have  
 12 been previously characterized in detail <sup>12, 26</sup>.

13 Data analysis

14 To harmonize data and address population stratification in the discovery set, the studies were  
 15 grouped as follows. Provided they used the same genotyping array and study participants were  
 16 from the similar geographic origin they were combined. This resulted in two groups: UK studies  
 17 and North American studies. Since the HSPH samples were genotyped on a different platform,  
 18 these were analyzed separately. Thus the following clusters were used: (i) HSPH, (ii) UK, and  
 19 (iii) North America (see Table A.4 for more detail). Three separate GWAS analyses were ran  
 20 based on the three groups. We applied logistic regression analyses with case-control status as  
 21 the outcome and the SNP genotype as a predictor to identify risk-associated SNPs in these  
 22 three groups. Additive models, with 0 for reference allele homozygotes, 1 for heterozygotes, and  
 23 2 for variant allele homozygotes were used. Reference alleles were defined as in hg19  
 24 reference genome. Age (continuous variable), sex, secondhand smoke exposure (SHS; from  
 25 any venue at any period in a lifetime), education level, and study site within the group (if more  
 26 than one site) were used as covariates. The definition of the education variables and more  
 27 information on the SHS assessment are given in the Appendix. Missing values for SHS and  
 28 education status were treated as a separate category. To offset potential effects of population  
 29 stratification within clusters, SNP based principal components analyses (PCA) were performed  
 30 <sup>27</sup> and the corresponding first five principal components were included as covariates, even  
 31 though the PCA of these three GWAS clusters do not suggest population stratification (Figure  
 32 A.1). An inverse variance fixed effects meta-analysis was used to combine the results for the  
 33 three group-based GWASs <sup>28</sup>.

34 A brief description of the OncoArray never smoker dataset is provided in the Appendix. To  
 35 perform the joint analysis of the discovery and the OncoArray sets, inverse variance meta-  
 36 analysis was used, whereby studies were grouped into five clusters (Discovery-North America,

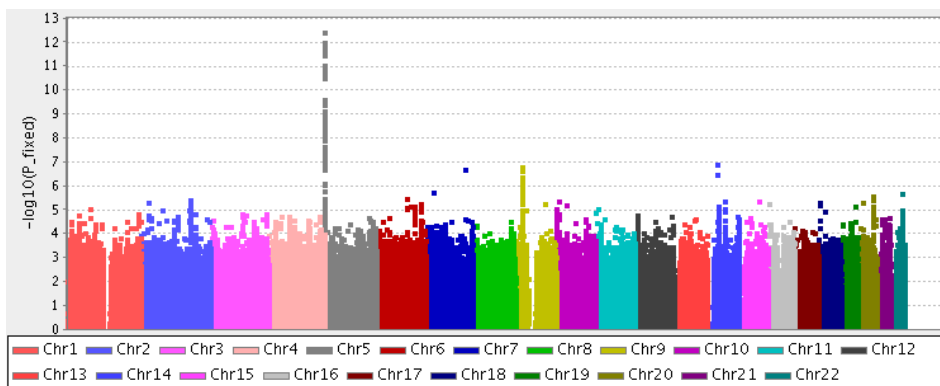
1 Discovery-UK, OncoArray-North America, OncoArray-UK, and OncoArray-Continental Europe),  
2 as detailed in Table A.5. This joint analysis was adjusted for age, sex, study site within the  
3 group, and the first five principal components, but not SHS or education level, as they were not  
4 available in the OncoArray set.

5 Criteria for SNP selection and the quality control procedures in the replication phase are  
6 described in the Appendix.

## 7 Results

8 We focus on the joint analysis of the discovery and OncoArray sets as having the largest  
9 sample size (the results for the discovery set separately are presented in the Appendix, Figure  
10 A.2 showing the Q-Q plot that demonstrates no indication of an inflation of type I error  
11 ( $\lambda=1.005$ ), and Table A.6 presenting the list of the top SNPs derived from the discovery set  
12 ( $p<1\times 10^{-4}$ ).

13 Figure 1 presents the scatter plot of the  $-\log_{10}$  p-values against the chromosome position (the  
14 so-called Manhattan plot) for the meta-analysis of the discovery and the OncoArray samples.  
15 The analysis identified 71 genome-wide statistically significant SNPs ( $P<5\times 10^{-8}$ , the accepted  
16 genome-wide level of statistical significance<sup>29</sup>), all of them mapping to the 5p15.33 *CLPTM1L*-  
17 *TERT* region. Table A.7 presents the 229 top SNPs at  $P<10^{-5}$ . There is also a peak on  
18 Chromosome 9 in the *CDKN2A* region, but none of the SNPs in this regions attained statistical  
19 significance at the GWAS level.



20

21 **Figure 1.** Manhattan plot of the association analysis of lung cancer in European ancestry never smokers performed  
22 jointly in the discovery set and the OncoArray samples. The x-axis is chromosomal position, and the y-axis is the  
23 statistical significance on a  $-\log_{10}$  scale.

24 The principal component analysis of the replication samples showed no differences by the case-  
25 control status for the first five principal components (Figure A.3).

26 Table A.8 presents the list of nominally statistically significant ( $p<0.05$ ) SNPs from the  
27 replication analysis. The most significant SNPs (rs380286 ( $p=3.88\times 10^{-7}$ ), rs31490 ( $p=4.68\times 10^{-7}$ ),  
28 and rs4975616 ( $p=2.50\times 10^{-6}$ ) were located in the 5p15.33 (*CLPTM1L-TERT*) region (Table 2).  
29 These three SNPs were significant after the Bonferroni correction for 370 tests resulting in the  
30 p-value of  $1.35\times 10^{-4}$  to declare significance (the FDR approach identified the same three SNPs  
31 as statistically significant; Table A.8).

1 The 370 candidate SNPs selected for the replication (see Appendix for the selection criteria)  
 2 were analyzed using all three study population sets: the discovery, the replication, and the  
 3 OncoArray (total 3,636 cases and 6,295 controls). The analysis identified three SNPs  
 4 statistically significant at the genome wide level: rs380286 ( $P=1.6 \times 10^{-14}$ ), rs31490 ( $P=5.1 \times 10^{-14}$ ),  
 5 and rs4975616 ( $P=5.8 \times 10^{-14}$ ; Table 2). These three SNPs are from the *CLPTM1L-TERT* region  
 6 and the association with the variant alleles was consistently negative ( $OR < 1$ ). These SNPs  
 7 belong to a wide LD block corresponding to the LD Region 2 marked by rs451360 as described  
 8 in <sup>30</sup>. The very high LD between the pairs of SNPs (0.925 for rs380286 and rs31490; 0.915 for  
 9 rs380286 and rs4975616; 0.955 for rs31490 and rs4975616) did not allow identifying the  
 10 leading SNP among the three, as there was very little variation in a SNP when the genotypes of  
 11 the other two were fixed.

12 **Table 2.** The three GWAS-significant ( $P < 5 \times 10^{-8}$ ) variants for lung cancer in European ancestry  
 13 never smokers, found in the joint analysis of the original discovery set, the never smoker subset  
 14 of the OncoArray set, and the replication set (6 clusters, 3636 cases, 6295 controls), adjusted  
 15 for age, sex, and the first five principal components.

SNP ID	CHR*	Position	Odds Ratio*	95% CI Lower boundary	95% CI Upper boundary	P-value*	Reference allele	Effect allele	EAF*	Gene symbol
rs380286**	5	1320247	0.770	0.723	0.820	$4.32 \times 10^{-16}$	A	G	0.4169	<i>CLPTM1L</i>
rs31490†	5	1344458	0.769	0.722	0.820	$5.31 \times 10^{-16}$	G	A	0.4142	<i>CLPTM1L</i>
rs4975616‡	5	1315660	0.778	0.730	0.829	$1.04 \times 10^{-14}$	G	A	0.4005	<i>CLPTM1L</i>

16 \* Adjusted for age, gender, and the first 5 principal components; CHR, chromosome; EAF, effect allele frequency

17 \*\* intronic variant

18 † splice variant

19 ‡ downstream gene variant

20

21 The results of the joint analysis of the discovery and replication sets without the OncoArray  
 22 samples are shown in the Table A.9. In brief, the same 3 SNPs from the *CLPTM1L-TERT*  
 23 region were identified as genome-wide statistically significant.

24 Analysis of only adenocarcinoma cases produced nearly identical results, with only *CLPTM1L-*  
 25 *TERT* region SNPs showing statistical significance (Tables A.10, A.11).

26 Table 3 summarizes the comparisons between our study results and previous published  
 27 findings reported in never smokers from genome-wide and candidate gene/SNP association  
 28 studies in both individuals of European descent and Asians. Our study confirmed SNPs located  
 29 in 5p15.33 (*CLPTM1L-TERT*) region. Notably, the direction of the association is highly  
 30 concordant among the studies for the SNPs in this region. The results for 3q28 (*TP63*) and  
 31 6q22.2 (*ROS1-DCBLD1*) regions are suggestive in our analysis ( $P$ -values of  $\sim 10^{-4}$  for both  
 32 these regions). The results from our study for the loci identified in the recently published largest-  
 33 to-date lung cancer study that involved mostly smokers <sup>12</sup> are shown in Table A.12.

34 A comparison of the regional association plots for the *CLPTM1L-TERT* region and 15q25  
 35 (*CHRNA3*) region in never smokers and smokers was also performed (whereby the smokers'  
 36 data were obtained from the lung OncoArray project) (Figure 3 a,b). We found that the risk  
 37 association profile plotted as the  $-\log_{10}P$  for the SNPs in the *CLPTM1L-TERT* region in never  
 38 smokers tightly followed that in smokers (Fig. 3a). By contrast, the association profiles in the

1 *CHRNA3* region (implicated in nicotine dependence) are strikingly different in never and ever  
 2 smokers, with very high  $-\log_{10}P$  values in smokers and a flat profile in never smokers (Fig. 3b).  
 3 Analogous comparisons for two other regions, *TP63* and *CDKN2A*, are presented in the Figure  
 4 A.4.

5 The analyses of associations for the 3 most statistically significant SNPs from the *CLPTM1L*-  
 6 *TERT* region stratified by the SHS exposure status are shown in the Appendix (Table A.13).  
 7 There was no indication of SNP-SHS interaction effects or a SNP effect modification by the SHS  
 8 exposure, as the interaction term was not significant for any of the SNPs.

9 **Table 3.** Previous findings from the association analyses of lung cancer in never smokers, with  
 10 a comparison to this study

Region	Gene	RefSeq*	Study type	Pubmed ID	Histology	Ethnicity	Previously Published Studies		OR*	P-value	This Study*	
							Discovery cases   controls	Replication cases   controls			OR	P-value
13q31.3	<i>GPC5</i>	rs2352028	GWAS*	Li et al <sup>20</sup>	NSCLC	Mostly Eur. descent	377   377	328   407	1.46	5.90E-06	0.99	0.95
5p15.33	<i>CLPTM1L</i>	rs4975616	Candidate	Wang et al <sup>18</sup>	NSCLC	Eur. descent	239   553	-	0.69	7.90E-04	0.78	<b>1.04E-14</b>
5p15.33	<i>CLPTM1L-TERT</i>	rs2736100	GWAS	Hsiung et al <sup>13</sup>	Adeno	Asian women	584   585	2184   2515	1.5	5.40E-11	1.3	<b>2.66E-09</b>
10q25.2	<i>VTI1A</i>	rs7086803	GWAS	Lan et al <sup>14</sup>	NSCLC	Asian women	5547   4492	1085   2877	1.3	5.10E-17	1.3	<b>0.011</b>
6q22.2	<i>ROS1-DCBLD1</i>	rs9387478							0.85	7.80E-08	0.86	<b>1.50E-04</b>
6p21.32	<i>HLA II</i>	rs2395185							1.16	2.60E-06	1.04	0.34
5p15.33	<i>CLPTM1L-TERT</i>	rs2736100							1.38	4.20E-27	1.27	<b>2.66E-09</b>
5p15.33	<i>CLPTM1L-TERT</i>	rs2853677	GWAS	Shiraishi et al <sup>15</sup>	Adeno	Asians (Japanese)	1695   5333	3328   8168	1.44	3.90E-23	1.28	<b>1.12E-09</b>
5p15.33	<i>CLPTM1L-TERT</i>	rs2736100							1.37	9.90E-19	1.27	<b>2.66E-09</b>
3q28	<i>TP63</i>	rs10937405							1.28	2.00E-10	1.16	<b>1.50E-04</b>
17q24.3	<i>BPTF</i>	rs7216064							1.21	1.50E-06	1.1	0.054
6p21.3	<i>BTNL2</i>	rs3817963							1.21	1.50E-07	1.06	0.2
1q25.1	<i>ACVR1B</i>	rs10127728	Candidate	Spitz et al <sup>17</sup>	NSCLC	Mostly Eur. descent	451   508	-	1.68	3.00E-04	1.06	0.34
3q28	<i>TP63</i>	rs4488809	Replication of GWAS findings	Seow et al	Adeno	Asian women		7448   7007	0.8	4.30E-17	0.82	<b>8.52E-07</b>
5p15.33	<i>TERT</i>	rs2736100						7505   7070	1.43	6.12E-43	0.79	<b>2.66E-09</b>
6p21.1	<i>FOXP4</i>	rs7741164						10531   10648	1.17	3.96E-13	0.97	8.28E-01
6p21.3	<i>BTNL2</i>	rs3817963						7255   6745	1.16	1.63E-07	1.06	1.97E-01
6p21.32	<i>HLA-DPB1</i>	rs2179920						7457   7020	1.17	1.69E-05	1.08	9.42E-02
6p21.32	<i>HLA class II</i>	rs2395185						7757   9637	1.16	2.04E-09	1.04	3.91E-01
6q22.2	<i>ROS1/DCBLD1</i>	rs9387478						8022   9970	0.86	5.25E-11	0.86	<b>1.53E-04</b>
9p21.3		rs72658409						10780   10938	0.76	2.37E-10	0.89	1.43E-01
10q25.2	<i>VTI1A</i>	rs7086803						7964   9914	1.25	9.22E-17	1.31	<b>1.12E-02</b>
12q13.13		rs11610143						10267   10634	0.85	3.55E-13	0.97	4.88E-01
17q24.3	<i>BPTF</i>	rs7216064						7720   8630	0.86	6.19E-09	1.10	5.43E-02

\*"This study" pertains to the results of the meta-analysis of the discovery and OncoArray sets, except for rs4975616, for which the result from the meta-analysis of the discovery, OncoArray, and replication sets is shown; RefSeq, Reference sequence or SNP ID; GWAS, genome wide association study; OR, odds ratio; nominally significant p-values are shown in bold

11

## 12 Discussion

13 This is the largest lung cancer GWAS so far conducted in never smokers of European descent.  
 14 However, only one region (*CLPTM1L-TERT*) strongly associated with lung cancer risk in this



1 patient population was found. Our results for this region corroborate findings by earlier studies  
2 of lung cancer in never smokers (Table 3), showing consistent direction of effect. The 5p15.33  
3 *CLPTM1L-TERT* region SNPs have also been reported to be associated with multiple cancers  
4 including lung cancer in smokers<sup>19,31</sup>, breast cancer<sup>32</sup>, glioma<sup>33</sup>, nasopharyngeal cancer<sup>34</sup> and  
5 prostate cancer<sup>35</sup>. *TERT* encodes the catalytic subunit of the telomerase reverse transcriptase,  
6 which takes part in adding nucleotide repeats to chromosome ends<sup>36</sup>. While active in early  
7 development and germ cells, this gene is not expressed in most adult tissues, resulting in a  
8 shortening of telomeres with each cell division. When telomeres become critically short, the cell  
9 can no longer divide. However, cancer cells can upregulate telomerase, which enables them to  
10 continue dividing<sup>37</sup>. The *CLPTM1L* gene is reported to be overexpressed in lung and pancreatic  
11 cancer where it promotes growth and survival<sup>38,39</sup>. Also there is a locus within the *CLPTM1L*  
12 gene that serves as a binding site for ZNF148, which promotes expression of *TERT*<sup>40</sup>.

13 Functional annotation of the top identified SNPs using Encyclopedia of DNA Elements  
14 (ENCODE) Ref found that rs4975616 coincides with the binding site for three transcription  
15 factors: ELF1, ZEB1 and BCLAF1. The target genes for the first two transcription targets include  
16 *TERT* and *CLPTM1L* and the target genes for BCLAF1 include *CLPTM1L* only. According to  
17 Ensemble regulatory database Ref, SNP rs31490 is located in the region that acts as promotor  
18 for *CLPTM1L* in the developing lung. In the Genotype-Tissue Expression (GTEx) Ref all three  
19 SNPs: rs31490, rs380286, and rs4975616 are reported as eQTLs for *TERT* in esophagus and  
20 *CLPTM1L* in skin.

21 Previously, a fine-mapping study has been conducted on this locus (Kachuri et al 2016,  
22 [Carcinogenesis, PMID: 26590902](#)); it included a limited number of never smokers and the  
23 identified novel loci did not show a significant effect specifically in that group. However, the  
24 direction of the effect was largely consistent with that in smokers, in line with what our study  
25 found (Fig. 3a).

26 For other SNPs, e.g. those reported by Li et al<sup>20</sup>, no association in our study was detected.  
27 However, Li et al.'s study<sup>20</sup> used additional covariates (e.g. COPD, lung cancer family history)  
28 to adjust for in their analyses. This may have made a comparison of their results with our study  
29 less straightforward, because the data on these covariates were not available from the majority  
30 of the sites participating in our study. The SNPs rs10937405 for 3q28 and rs9387478 for  
31 6q22.2, previously reported to be significant in Asian never smoking women (Table 3), showed  
32 at best a suggestive association (P-values of  $\sim 10^{-4}$  in both cases). These two regions have been  
33 shown also to be implicated in other cancer sites. SNPs in the *TP63* region have been shown to  
34 be associated with lung adenocarcinoma in the UK population<sup>10</sup>, acute lymphoblastic leukemia  
35<sup>41</sup>, bladder cancer<sup>42</sup> and pancreatic cancer<sup>43</sup>. SNPs in the *ROS1-DCBLD1* region have been  
36 shown to be associated with colorectal cancer<sup>44</sup>. This further suggests that SNPs/regions  
37 associated with lung cancer risk in never smokers are not specific for this type of cancer but  
38 rather have pleiotropic effects.

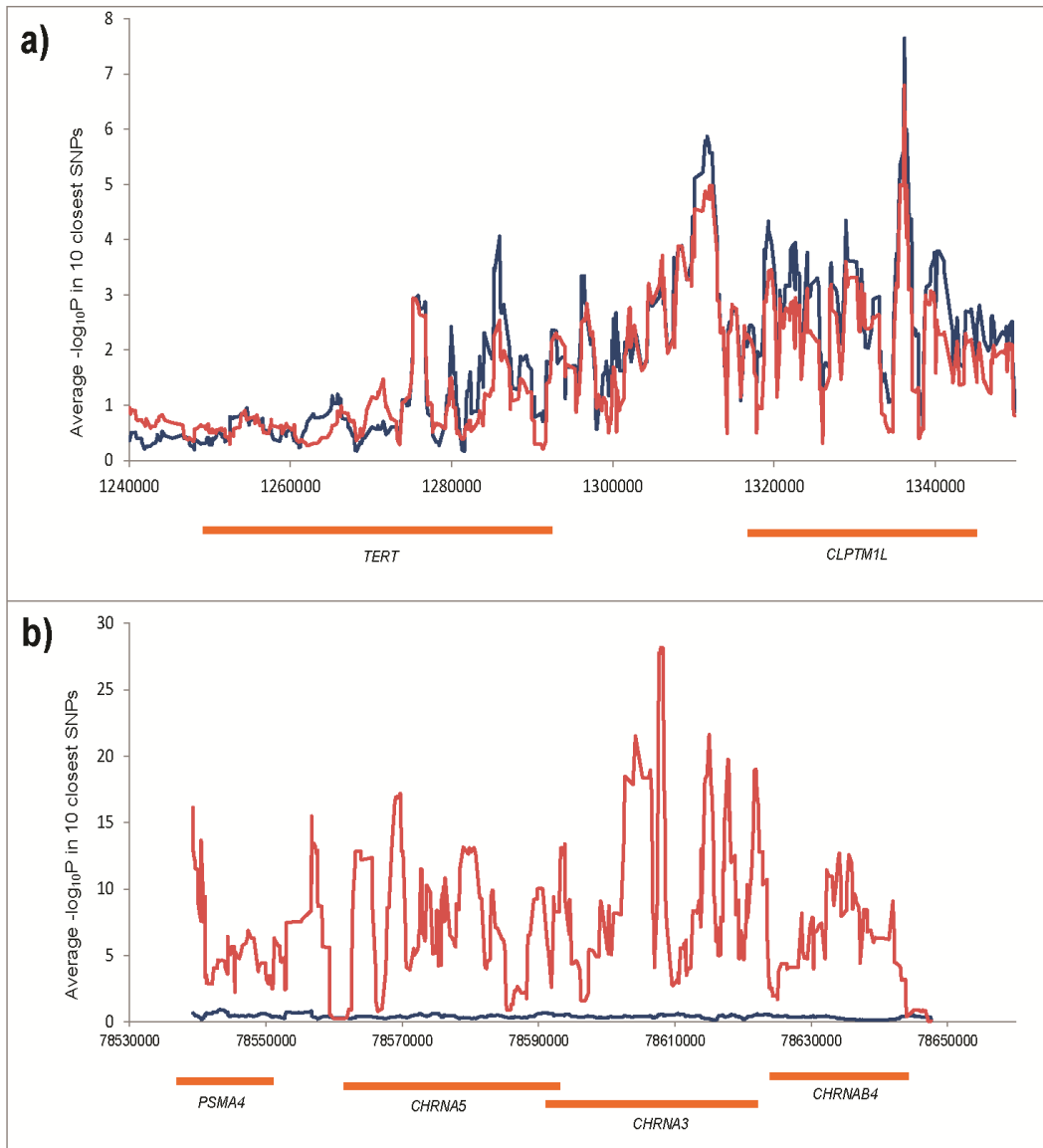
39 Our analysis was designed to control for demographic variables (age and sex, as controls were  
40 slightly but statistically significantly younger ( $p < 0.001$ ) and had a higher proportion of men than  
41 cases ( $p < 0.001$ )) as well as for known and potential risk factors, specifically, where possible, for  
42 education status and self-reported secondhand smoke exposure<sup>45</sup>. To account for possible  
43 population stratification, the first five principal components and the study site were also  
44 adjusted. However, the information on radon exposure, asbestos, prior respiratory conditions,

1 and diet was not available from most studies. As such, these established and putative risk  
2 factors were not accounted for in the analyses. A further limitation is the self-reported nature of  
3 the never smoker status. Differential misreporting of the smoking status, e.g., if a modest  
4 proportion of former or current smoker controls reported that they have never smoked, might  
5 lead to SNPs associated with smoking appear as protective. Unfortunately, the great majority of  
6 the participating studies did not verify it by cotinine measurements. However, SNPs in  
7 *CHRNA3-5* or *CYP2A6* regions, known to be associated with smoking <sup>12</sup>, did not show any  
8 effect in this study (Fig. 3b; Table A.11).

9 Latest GWASs of lung cancer in smokers have generated many more findings than did this  
10 study, which is not surprising given that the former are much larger. Most SNPs reported as  
11 statistically significant in smokers showed the same direction of effect in never smokers (Table  
12 A.12). Gene-smoking interaction may be another factor contributing to the higher number of  
13 positive findings among smokers than never smokers: some of the sequence variations that are  
14 neutral in the absence of tobacco smoking confer risk when smoking and the associated tissue  
15 and DNA damage are present.

16 High BMI <sup>46</sup> and alcohol exposure <sup>47</sup> are common and may also explain a proportion of the lung  
17 cancer risk in never smokers. It is possible that there are rare variants influencing risk that could  
18 not be detected by a GWAS that focuses on common variants. Additionally, gene-gene  
19 interactions that are beyond the scope of this study may in part explain variability in the  
20 incidence of lung cancer in never smokers. Very rarely, individuals can carry inherited mutations  
21 in *TP53* increasing lung cancer risk <sup>48, 49</sup>. The availability of results from our GWAS will allow  
22 additional exposures to be studied using Mendelian Randomization approaches (as exemplified  
23 in <sup>50</sup>), and developing models that can identify never smokers at highest risk for lung cancer  
24 development could improve early detection.

25



1

2 **Figure 3.** Regional association plots for smokers (red line) and never smokers (blue line) in  $CLPTM1L$ -  
 3  $TERT$  region (a) and  $CHRNA3$ -5 region (b). The y axis corresponds to  $-\log_{10}P$  for 650 SNPs in the  
 4  $CLPTM1L$ - $TERT$  region and  $-\log_{10}P$  for 535 SNPs in  $CHRNA3$ -5 region. To aid visual representation we  
 5 selected the 10 closest SNP and computed average  $-\log_{10}P$ - values.

6

7

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