

Genetic Evidence for the Involvement of Variants at *APOE*, *BIN1*, *CR1*, and *PICALM* Loci in Risk of Late-Onset Alzheimer's Disease and Evaluation for Interactions with *APOE* Genotypes

Jalal Gharesouran · Maryam Rezazadeh ·
Aziz Khorrami · Morteza Ghojzadeh · Mahnaz Talebi

Received: 22 May 2014 / Accepted: 3 July 2014 / Published online: 15 July 2014
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Abstract Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common form of dementia in older population. Growing evidence of genetic background that predisposes individuals to AD has been reported as the risk factors in recent years. The Department of Medical Genetics and the Immunology Research Centre investigated the distribution of 11 polymorphisms in 160 patients with late onset AD (LOAD) and in 163 healthy controls, using the sequencing technique. All participants were of Turkish Azeri ethnicity. We compared allele and genotype frequencies between the LOAD patients and control subjects using a chi-square or Fisher's exact test. Alleles and genotypes of *APOE*, *PICALM* rs3851179 and rs541458, and the *BIN1* gene rs744373 polymorphism were significantly different between LOAD and control groups. The frequencies of the other investigated alleles were similar in the two groups. We also analyzed the association of *BIN1*, *CR1* and *PICALM* SNPs with LOAD in subgroups stratified by the presence or

absence of the *APOE* ϵ 4 allele. After adjusting for *APOE*, statistical analysis revealed that the association with *PICALM* rs541458 and *BIN1* rs744373 were only significant among subjects without the *APOE* ϵ 4 allele.

Keywords Alzheimer's disease · *APOE* · *BIN1* · *CR1* · *PICALM*

Introduction

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive age-related dementia with clinical features that include a decline in memory and an inability to perform the activities of daily living (Querfurth and LaFerla 2010; Stanford 2004). AD is classified into two clinical categories, early-onset AD (EOAD) and late-onset AD (LOAD) (Rogaev 1999). The symptoms of EOAD, which represents less than 5 % of all cases, appear before 60 years of age, and the disease tends to follow Mendelian patterns of inheritance. Early-onset AD is caused by highly penetrant single-gene mutations in one of three genes, amyloid precursor protein (APP) (Goate et al. 1991), presenilin 1 (Sherrington et al. 1995), and presenilin 2 (Rogaev et al. 1995). The late-onset form of AD, also called sporadic AD, is the most common form, and is diagnosed after 65 years of age. The genetics of LOAD are more complex than the genetics of EOAD and none of the mutations directly responsible for EOAD is involved in LOAD (Rao et al. 2014). The causes of LOAD are not yet completely understood, but a combination of several genetic, epigenetic, and environmental factors contribute to determining an individual's risk for the disease (Gatz et al. 2006; Zawia et al. 2009; Kwok 2010).

During the preclinical stage of AD, which can last a decade or more, affected people are free of symptoms, but toxic changes are taking place in the brain. Over time, neurons lose the ability to communicate with each other, causing

Jalal Gharesouran and Maryam Rezazadeh have equal contribution.

J. Gharesouran (✉)
Immunology Research Center, Tabriz University of Medical
Sciences, Tabriz, Iran
e-mail: Gharesouranj@tbzmed.ac.ir

J. Gharesouran · M. Rezazadeh · A. Khorrami
Department of Medical Genetics, Faculty of Medicine, Tabriz
University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Iran

M. Rezazadeh
Genetics Research Center, University of Social Welfare and
Rehabilitation Sciences, Tehran, Iran

M. Ghojzadeh
Liver and Gastrointestinal Disease Research Center, Tabriz
University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Iran

M. Talebi
Neuroscience Research Center, Tabriz University of Medical
Sciences, Tabriz, Iran

neurological and physical changes; the condition of the patient deteriorates and eventually they die (Mei Sian and Sahadevan 2005; Van Rossum et al. 2010; Lazarczyk et al. 2012). Characterizing the various genetic and environmental causes of AD to better understand the mechanism of the disease is currently a major scientific challenge. Several genome-wide association studies (GWAS) have been carried out around the world, with the aim of identifying new AD association loci (Harold et al. 2009). In addition to the search for better ways to manage the symptoms of AD, scientists hope to develop ways of slowing or stopping the progression of AD.

Previous studies have identified a number of genes, in addition to *APOE* ϵ 4, that may increase the risk of LOAD, including *BIN1*, *PICALM* and *CR1* (Harold et al. 2009) (Table 1). The

APOE gene appears to act as a molecular chaperone for APP and it regulates APP conformation, aggregation and deposition. It has been shown that APOE and clusterin cooperate to suppress APP deposition and to regulate both the toxicity of A β and its conversion into insoluble forms (Koren et al. 2009). The bridging integrator 1 (BIN1) gene, also known as amphiphysin 2, is the second most important risk locus for LOAD after APOE. BIN1 is involved in endocytosis, inflammation, calcium homeostasis and apoptosis (Tan et al. 2013). The other gene locus shown to be associated with AD is phosphatidylinositol-binding clathrin assembly protein (PICALM), also known as clathrin assembly lymphoid-myeloid leukemia gene (CALM). *PICALM* is located at 11q23 and is ubiquitously expressed in all tissues, especially in neurons, where it is distributed in pre- and

Table 1 Investigated SNPs (PICALM, CR1, and BIN1), previously reported in different genome-wide association studies

SNP used in our study	Gene	Chromosome	Position	SNP cited in literature	Literature
rs3851179	PICALM	11q14	85546288	rs3851179	Harold et al. 2009; Lambert et al. 2009; Gyungah et al. 2010; Jones et al. 2010; Jun et al. 2010; Seshadri et al. 2010; Hu et al. 2011; Lee et al. 2011; Kamboh et al. 2012a, b; Shi et al. 2012
rs541458			85465999	rs541458	Jones et al. 2010; Lambert et al. 2011; Lee et al. 2011;
rs17159904			85497725	rs543293	Lee et al. 2011; Masoodi et al. 2013
rs12800974			85477927	rs561655	Naj et al. 2011
			85463935	rs17159904	Lee et al. 2011
			85536186	rs7941541	Lee et al. 2011
rs3818361	CRI	1q32	85403635	rs12800974	Masoodi et al. 2013
			205851591	rs3818361	Lambert et al. 2009; Jun et al. 2010; Kamboh et al. 2012a; Shi et al. 2012
			rs6701713	205852912	Jones et al. 2010; Jun et al 2010;
			205758672	rs6656401	Lambert et al. 2009; Comeveaux et al. 2010; Kamboh et al. 2012a
rs1408077	BIN1	2q14	205870764	rs1408077	Jun et al. 2010; Wijsman et al. 2011
74124436			rs6701710	Wijsman et al. 2011	
rs744373			127611085	rs744373	Jones et al. 2010; Seshadri et al. 2010; Lambert et al. 2011; Shi et al. 2012
rs11554585			127556011	rs10194375	Lee et al. 2011
			127557567	rs13426725	Lee et al. 2011
			127589265	rs4663098	Lee et al. 2011
			127604351	rs11685593	Lee et al. 2011
			127544136	rs11554585	Masoodi et al. 2013
rs7561528			127604455	rs12989701	Hu et al. 2011
			127606107	rs7561528	Lee et al. 2011; Naj et al. 2011; Wijsman et al. 2011; Kamboh et al. 2012a, b;
rs2075650	APOE	19q13	50087459	rs2075650	Harold et al. 2009; Jones et al. 2010; Seshadri et al. 2010; Hostage et al. 2013; Shi et al. 2012

postsynaptic structures (Tebar et al. 1999). The PICALM gene encodes the 652 amino acid phosphatidylinositol-binding clathrin assembly protein involved in clathrin-mediated endocytosis (CME) (Harel et al. 2008).

Recently, it has been shown that BIN1 and PICALM proteins are involved in intracellular trafficking of proteins such as vesicle-associated membrane protein 2 (VAMP2) and neurotransmitters, through CME. The gene that encodes receptors for the complement peptides C3b, C4b, C3bi, and C1q, complement receptor 1 (CR1), also known as C3b/C4b receptor, and its variants are also associated with LOAD. CR1 has functions in the immune system and in the clearance of A β through phagocytosis (Krych-Goldberg and Atkinson 2001). The CR1 gene is located on Chromosome1 at locus 1q32. Various polymorphisms of CR1 can affect the expression of CR1 molecules on the cell surface (Khera and Das 2009). Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), rheumatoid arthritis, insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM), and nephritic syndrome have been shown to be associated with CR1 gene variants (Khera and Das 2009). According to a recent GWAS, different markers within the CR1 gene have been found to be associated with susceptibility to LOAD in Caucasians (Lambert et al. 2009) (Table 1). The present case-controlled study included 160 LOAD cases and 163 ethnically and sex-matched healthy controls. We chose to genotype 11 previously investigated polymorphic sites (Table 1) to examine the possible relationship between these polymorphisms and susceptibility to LOAD disease in patients with a Turkish Azeri ethnic background.

Materials and Methods

Sample Preparation

A total of 160 unrelated LOAD patients of Turkish Azeri ethnicity, including 94 women and 66 men (age range 65–99 years, mean age 76.06 ± 7.75 years), were enrolled in this study. All patients were from three provinces (East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, and Ardabil) in northwest Iran. The patients were diagnosed by specialists between 2010 and 2013, based on DSM-IV diagnostic criteria (American Psychiatric Association 1994; The Dementia Study Group of the Italian Neurological Society 2000). We also included 163 ethnically and sex-matched healthy controls without AD or other mental disorders (95 women and 68 men; age range 65–89 years, mean age 75.29 ± 6.75 years) (Gharesouran et al. 2013a; Gharesouran et al. 2013b). Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to commencing the study.

Experimental Methods

Genomic DNA was isolated from EDTA-anticoagulated blood using the total DNA extraction kit (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany),

according to the manufacturer's instructions. Eleven fragments encompassing the above-mentioned polymorphisms were amplified by PCR using specific oligonucleotide primers. Each PCR was carried out in a total volume of 25 μ L consisting of 12.5 μ L of 2 $\times$ PCR master mix, 0.75 μ L of a 10 mol/L solution of each primer, 1 μ L of genomic DNA (80 ng/ μ L), and 9.5 μ L of H $_2$ O. PCR products were purified with the High Pure PCR product purification kit (Roche, Mannheim, Germany) and were subjected to automated DNA sequencing using specific primers.

Data Analysis

Comparison of allele and genotype frequencies between LOAD patients and healthy controls was carried out using a chi-square test with Yates' correction or Fisher's exact test. Probability values of ≤ 0.05 were considered as statistically significant. The odds ratio (OR) and the 95 % confidence intervals (CI) were calculated when possible.

Results

The genotype frequencies in LOAD patients and healthy controls were found to be in the Hardy–Weinberg equilibrium ($p=0.95$ for patients and $p=0.95$ for healthy controls). Allele and genotype distributions in 7 of the 11 investigated polymorphisms showed no significant difference between LOAD patients and healthy controls in this ethnic group (Table 2). The allele and genotype distributions of PICALM rs3851179, PICALMrs541458, and the BIN1 rs744373 polymorphism were significantly different between the LOAD and control groups. The frequencies of the PICALMrs3851179, PICALM rs541458, and BIN1rs744373 minor alleles were 35.3, 19.3, and 12.8 %, respectively, in LOAD patients and 10.1, 7.3, and 5 %, respectively, in healthy controls. The frequencies of PICALM rs3851179, PICALM rs541458, and BIN1 rs744373 genotypes with at least one mutant allele (heterozygote or mutant homozygotes) were 55.6, 31.8, and 18.5 %, respectively, in LOAD patients and 19, 14, and 9.2 %, respectively, in healthy controls.

The frequency of the $\epsilon 4$ allele was 30 % in LOAD patients and 5.5 % in healthy controls, demonstrating an association of this allele with LOAD (Table 3). The frequency of APOE genotypes with at least one $\epsilon 4$ allele was 41.8 % in LOAD patients and 9.8 % in healthy controls. Our results demonstrated a statistically significant susceptibility to LOAD in patients who had the $\epsilon 4/\epsilon 4$, $\epsilon 4/\epsilon 2$ or $\epsilon 4/\epsilon 3$ genotype.

After adjusting for APOE, statistical analysis showed the association with PICALM rs541458, rs3851179, and BIN1 gene rs744373 was evident only among subjects without the APOE $\epsilon 4$ allele. The interactions of other SNPs with the APOE $\epsilon 4$ allele were not statistically significant (Table 3).

Table 2 Statistical analysis results for association of 11 investigated SNPs in PICALM, BIN1, CRI, and APOE in Iranian Azeri Turkish patients with LOAD and healthy controls

Gene	SNP	MA	MAF	MA-OR (95 % CI)	w/m+m/m frequencies	
					OR (95 % CI)	<i>p</i> value ^a
PICALM	rs3851179	G	<i>p</i> <0.001	4.8469 (3.1633–7.4264)	5.33 (3.236–8.802)	<0.001
	rs541458	T	<i>p</i> <0.001	3.023 (1.834–4.983)	2.848 (1.639–4.947)	<0.001
	rs12800974	T	<i>p</i> =0.187	1.954 (0.817–4.677)	1.713 (0.69–4.253)	0.342
	rs17159904	G	<i>p</i> =0.596	1.47 (0.552–3.91)	1.377 (0.466–4.062)	0.7518
CRI	rs6701713	G	<i>p</i> =0.203	0.5394 (0.2348–1.2392)	1.758 (0.746–4.143)	0.27
	rs3818361	T	<i>p</i> =0.396	1.857 (0.615–5.605)	1.663 (0.532–5.196)	0.548
	rs1408077	T	<i>p</i> =0.3961	1.857 (0.615–5.605)	1.445 (0.449–4.653)	0.74
BIN1	rs744373	T	<i>p</i> <0.001	2.847 (1.562–5.187)	2.276 (1.173–4.418)	0.02
	rs11554585	G	<i>p</i> =0.5485	1.328 (0.649–2.718)	1.371 (0.643–2.926)	0.5270
	rs7561528	G	<i>p</i> =0.1482	1.77 (0.879–3.592)	1.743 (0.840–3.61)	0.1846
ApoE	rs2075650	G	<i>p</i> <0.001	7.333 (4.307–12.484)	6.61 (3.617–12.109)	<0.001

AD Alzheimer disease, MA minor allele, MAF minor allele frequency, w wild type, m mutant, OR odds ratio, SNP single-nucleotide polymorphism

Discussion

The aim of this paper is to report the results of a case-controlled study of LOAD patients of Turkish Azeri ethnicity, performed in northwest Iran. We examined a total of 11 SNPs (one in APOE, four in PICALM, and three each in CR1 and BIN1 genes), those most widely implicated in LOAD in GWAS. All SNPs were in Hardy–Weinberg equilibrium in both LOAD patients and healthy controls.

The APOE gene was the first to be identified as an associated risk factor for LOAD (Saunders et al. 1993). This association was detected using genetic linkage in families with a history of AD, after the protein was detected in amyloid plaques (Strittmatter et al. 1993; Kuusisto et al. 1994). The APOE gene has since been mapped on chromosome 19. The protein coded by the gene functions as a chaperone, has antioxidant actions, plays a key role in brain lipid metabolism, and transports cholesterol, and other fats in the bloodstream (Barberger-Gateau et al. 2011; Mahley and Rall 1988). It exists in several isoforms with a number of known differences coded by distinct alleles. APOE has three prominent forms, which by convention are named $\epsilon 2$, $\epsilon 3$, and $\epsilon 4$. The $\epsilon 4$ allele has an arginine at positions 112 and 158 (of 299), the $\epsilon 3$ allele has a cysteine at position 112, and the $\epsilon 2$ allele has cysteine residues at positions 112 and 158 (Saunders et al. 1993). The different isoforms bind to different lipoproteins, but the $\epsilon 4$ variant of the APOE gene functions less efficiently in the delivery of cholesterol to neurons compared with APOE $\epsilon 3$, and APOE $\epsilon 3$ and $\epsilon 2$ have more stable protein folding compared with APOE $\epsilon 4$. The $\epsilon 4$ variant has a dose-dependent effect on variation in the onset of LOAD and the average survival time after disease onset (Roses 1996).

We found significant differences in the APOE $\epsilon 4$ allele distribution between LOAD patients and healthy controls. The present study also verified a significant association between the PICALM (rs3851179 and rs541458) and BIN1 rs744373 alleles and their related genotypes with LOAD, confirming these polymorphisms as contributing factors for susceptibility to LOAD. There were no significant associations between other polymorphisms and LOAD. Our results agree with previous studies that have identified the APOE $\epsilon 4$ allele as the most important risk factor for AD (Schmechel et al. 1993; Blacker et al. 1997; Styczyńska et al. 2008). In the present study, individuals carrying the $\epsilon 4$ allele were 7.3 times more likely to develop AD than noncarriers (OR=7.333, 95%CI=4.307–12.484). In a previous study in Iran, individuals carrying the $\epsilon 4$ allele were 6.5 times more likely to develop LOAD than non-carriers (OR=6.52, 95%CI=2.63–16.17) (Gozalpour et al. 2010). In our study, the frequencies of $\epsilon 4$ alleles and genotypes with at least one $\epsilon 4$ in patients (30 and 41.8 %, respectively) were higher than found in the previous study in Iran (12.7 and 23.2 %, respectively) (Gozalpour et al. 2010). In Gyungah et al. study on 7,070 cases with AD and 8,169 elderly cognitively normal controls, from 12 different studies, including white, African American, Israeli-Arab, and Caribbean Hispanic individuals APOE $\epsilon 4$ was significantly associated with AD (ORs, 1.80–9.05) in all but not in one small white cohort and in the Arab cohort (Gyungah et al. 2010). Hostage et al. analyzed MR images and genetic data on 662 patients from the Alzheimer's disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI) database—198 cognitively normal controls (CN), 321 mild-cognitive impairment (MCI) subjects, and 143 AD subjects to investigate dose-dependent effects of the $\epsilon 4$ and $\epsilon 2$ alleles on hippocampal volumes. This study showed there was a dose-dependent effect of the $\epsilon 4$ allele on

Table 3 Association of AD with *PICALM*, *CRI*, and *BINI* SNPs stratified by APOE 4 carrier status

Gene	Variation	ApoEε4	SNP level	Group		OR (95 % CI)	P value
				AD patients	Controls		
<i>PICALM</i>	rs3851179	+	–	27 (8.4 %)	18 (5.5 %)	–	<0.0001
			+	69 (21.5 %)	0 (0 %)		
		–	–	180 (56.25 %)	275 (84.3 %)	0.4909 (0.3011–0.8004)	0.0056
			+	44 (13.8 %)	33 (10 %)		
	rs541458	+	–	57 (17.8 %)	11 (3.3 %)	0.9627 (0.3436–2.6976)	0.841
			+	39 (12 %)	7 (2.1 %)		
		–	–	201 (62.8 %)	292 (89.6 %)	2.0883 (1.0763–4.052)	0.040663
			+	23 (7 %)	16 (5 %)		
	rs12800974	+	–	95 (29 %)	18 (5.5 %)	–	1
			+	1 (0.3 %)	0 (%)		
		–	–	210 (65.6 %)	300 (92 %)	0.4 (0.1649–0.9705)	0.0617
			+	14 (4.3 %)	8 (2.5 %)		
<i>CRI</i>	rs6701713	+	–	89 (.....%)	17 (5.2 %)	–	1
			+	7 (.....%)	1 (%)		
		–	–	169 (.....%)	285 (%)	0.5271 (0.1996–1.3921)	0.2899
			+	9 (2.8 %)	8 (2.5 %)		
	rs3818361	+	–	92 (28.7 %)	18 (5.5 %)	–	0.61
			+	4 (1.25 %)	0 (0 %)		
		–	–	219(68.4 %)	303(93 %)	0.7228 (0.2067–2.5271)	0.749
			+	5 (1.6 %)	5 (1.5 %)		
	rs1408077	+	–	93 (29 %)	17 (5.2 %)	1.8235 (0.1789–18.5837)	1
			+	3 (0.9 %)	1 (0.3 %)		
		–	–	218 (68.1 %)	304 (93.2 %)	0.4781 (0.1333–1.7144)	0.334
			+	6 (1.9 %)	4 (1.2 %)		
<i>BINI</i>	rs744373	+	–	91 (28.4 %)	15 (4.6 %)		
			+	5 (1.56 %)	3 (1 %)		
		–	–	188 (58.75 %)	295 (90 %)	4.3453(2.2458–8.4078)	<0.001
			+	36 (11.25 %)	13 (4 %)		
	rs11554585	+	–	96 (30 %)	18 (5.5 %)	–	1
			+	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)		
		–	–	206 (64.3 %)	294 (90 %)	0.7831(0.3824–1.6037)	0.6242
			+	18 (5.6 %)	14 (4.2 %)		
	rs7561528	+	–	92 (28.7 %)	16 (5 %)	2.875(0.4856–17.0228)	0.239
			+	4 (1.25 %)	2 (0.6 %)		
		–	–	206 (64.3 %)	296 (90.7 %)	2.1553(1. 0163–4.571)	0.064
			+	18 (5.6 %)	12 (3.6 %)		

AD Alzheimer disease, APOE apolipoprotein E, CI confidence interval, OR odds ratio, SNP single-nucleotide polymorphisms

hippocampal volume in AD ($p=0.04$) and MCI ($p=0.02$) (Hostage et al. 2013).

Apart from the APOE locus, GWAS have identified significant evidence for a novel susceptibility locus in the *PICALM* gene (rs3851179: $p=1.3 \times 10^{-9}$, OR=0.86; rs541458: $p=8.3 \times 10^{-10}$, OR=0.86) (Harold et al. 2009). This association was first observed in Caucasians in a two-stage GWAS. In another

study, Lambert et al. identified association with the same alleles, supporting the *PICALM* locus as a susceptibility locus, but the levels of association ($p=0.03$ for rs3851179 and $p=3 \times 10^{-3}$ for rs541458) differed from those reported by Harold et al. (Lambert et al. 2009). Another GWAS looked at the association between *PICALM* SNPs and AD but the association was not significant ($p=0.071$ – 0.086), although there was

a positive trend (Kamboh et al. 2012a, b). Xiaolan et al. designed a genome-wide association study in an independent set of 1,034 cases and 1,186 controls after coupling data with available GWAS datasets from the ADNI and GenADA and Genotype-Phenotype Alzheimer's disease Associations (GenADA), the associations in PICALM (rs3851179) was replicated ($p=0.006$) (Hu et al. 2011). PICALM (SNP rs3851179) confers risk for AD (OR, 0.89; 95 % CI, 0.84–0.94) in white individuals but not in the African-American, Arab and Hispanic populations in Gyungah et al. study. Evidence for association with PICALM greatly reduced after adjusting for the presence of at least one APOE $\epsilon 4$ allele. (Gyungah et al. 2010).

A possible association between the BIN1 gene and AD was initially identified in the GERAD1 (Genetic and Environmental Risk in AD Consortium 1) study (Harold et al. 2009). In a subsequent study, rs744373 and rs7561528 (located in the 5' region, approximately 30 and 25 kb from the BIN1 coding region, respectively) were also found to be significantly associated with AD (Seshadri et al. 2010). In a three-stage meta-analysis (8,371 LOAD cases and 26,965 controls), after APOE, CLU, and PICALM, the strongest association with LOAD was found with variant rs744373, residing near BIN1 on chromosome 2 (OR=1.15, $p=1.6\times 10^{-11}$) (Seshadri et al. 2010). In another study, BIN1 (OR=1.17, $p=0.02$) associations were successfully replicated in an independent Spanish sample (1,140 LOAD cases and 1,209 controls (Seshadri et al. 2010). Lambert et al. have replicated the association of BIN1 with the risk of AD in three European populations (rs744373, OR=1.26; 95 % CI 1.15–1.38; $p=2.9\times 10^{-7}$) (Lambert et al. 2009).

Recently, rs744373 polymorphism has also been investigated in Chinese and Japanese populations. However, no significant association with AD was reported ($p=0.06$) (Ohara et al. 2012; Tan et al. 2012). We investigated the association of BIN1 with AD in the present case-controlled series and successfully replicated the association observed for the variant near BIN1 (rs744373).

Although the SNPs with the strongest association have varied in different studies in ethnically distinct populations, several independent candidate gene studies have replicated and confirmed these results (Table 1). On the other hand, for the remaining polymorphisms, contradictory to previous GWAS, our study found a lack of association between LOAD subjects and controls in either genotype or allele distribution in an Iranian Turkish Azeri population. In summary, our results suggest that these polymorphisms may not play a major role in the development of LOAD in the studied population. It is possible that the negative findings could be attributed to the small sample size with insufficient power to detect moderate association. In addition, association study results can be affected by specific gene–gene or gene–environment interactions in a population-specific manner. It is possible that the effect of these polymorphisms on AD risk

is not large enough to be detected reliably by an investigation of our size, or that it is only specific to particular ethnic groups. To explore potential interactions with APOE, we re-evaluated the association of AD with the mentioned SNPs after adjusting for the presence of APOE $\epsilon 4$.

Statistical analysis showed the association with PICALM rs541458, rs3851179, and BIN1 gene rs744373 was evident only among subjects without the APOE $\epsilon 4$ allele. These results suggest that the APOE and these SNPs antagonistically interact. The interactions of other SNPs with the APOE $\epsilon 4$ allele were not statistically significant.

For polymorphisms that did not have significant associations with AD, after stratification of the sample by APOE $\epsilon 4$ status, statistical analysis showed that the lack of association was independent from the presence of APOE $\epsilon 4$.

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