Author's response to reviews

Title: Evidence for association between the HLA-DQA locus and abdominal aortic aneurysms in the Belgian population: a case control study

Authors:

Toru Ogata (ogatat@hiroshima-u.ac.jp)
Lucie Gregoire (gregoire@genetics.wayne.edu)
Katrina A B Goddard (katrina@darwin.epbi.cwru.edu)
Magdalena Skunca (ac3610@wayne.edu)
Gerard Tromp (tromp@sanger.med.wayne.edu)
Wayne D Lancaster (wayne@genetics.wayne.edu)
Antonio R Parrado (tparrado@darwin.cwru.edu)
Qing Lu (glu@darwin.cwru.edu)
Hidenori Shibamura (h-shiba@asa-hosp.city.hiroshima.jp)
Natzi Sakalihasan (nsaka@chu.ulg.ac.be)
Raymond Limet (rlimet@shu.ulg.ac.be)
Gerald L MacKean (g.mackean@dal.ca)
Claudette Arthur (Claudette.arthur@dal.ca)
Taijiro Sueda (sueda@hiroshima-u.ac.jp)
Helena Kuivaniemi (kuivan@sanger.med.wayne.edu)

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Response to the Comments by Janet T. Powell

1) Power calculations should be listed in the methods data-analysis section, not the results. No succinct power calculation is reported, rather there is a discussion of what power each component study carries. Please report how many patients would have been needed for 80% power in the methods, then remove the discussion of how underpowered the different sub-studies are to the discussion section.

RESPONSE: We have added a sub-section to the methods titled “Post hoc power calculations” in which we provide the number of samples required to achieve 80% power at two alpha levels (0.05 and 0.0125) given the allele frequencies observed in the study population.

We also moved the methodological description of the power calculation to this new sub-section.

We moved the description of how underpowered the sub-studies are to the last paragraph of the discussion where we point out the limitations of the study.

2) Since you have now adjusted for multiple testing, remove the weakness of not allowing for this in the discussion section.

RESPONSE: We have removed the mention to multiple testing from the weaknesses in the discussion about limitations of the study. This was replaced with the description of how underpowered the sub-studies were as point 1.

3) Remove from the discussion the mention of further analyses of the current data... all will be underpowered.

RESPONSE: We have removed this part from the discussion.