Whole-genome sequencing analysis reveals new susceptibility loci and structural variants associated with progressive supranuclear palsy

Whole-Genome Sequencing Analysis Reveals New Susceptibility Loci and Structural Variants Associated with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy

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Abstract

Background: Progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP) is a rare neurodegenerative disease characterized by the accumulation of aggregated tau proteins in astrocytes, neurons, and oligodendrocytes. Previous genome-wide association studies for PSP were based on genotype array, therefore, were inadequate for the analysis of rare variants as well as larger mutations, such as small insertions/deletions (indels) and structural variants (SVs).

Method: In this study, we performed whole genome sequencing (WGS) and conducted association analysis for single nucleotide variants (SNVs), indels, and SVs, in a cohort of 1,718 cases and 2,944 controls of European ancestry. Of the 1,718 PSP individuals, 1,441 were autopsy-confirmed and 277 were clinically diagnosed.

Results: Our analysis of common SNVs and indels confirmed known genetic loci at *MAPT*, *MOBP*, S*TX6*, *SLCO1A2*, *DUSP10*, and *SP1*, and further uncovered novel signals in *APOE*, ***FCHO1/MAP1S, KIF13A, TRIM24, TNXB, and ELOVL1***. Notably, in contrast to Alzheimer's disease (AD), we observed the *APOE* ε2 allele to be the risk allele in PSP. Analysis of rare SNVs and indels identified significant association in *ZNF592* and further gene network analysis identified a module of neuronal genes dysregulated in PSP. Moreover, seven common SVs associated with PSP were observed in the H1/H2 haplotype region (17q21.31) and other loci, including *IGH*, *PCMT1*, *CYP2A13*, and *SMCP*. In the H1/H2 haplotype region, there is a burden of rare deletions and duplications ($P = 6.73 \times 10^{-3}$) in PSP.

Conclusions: Through WGS, we significantly enhanced our understanding of the genetic basis of PSP, providing new targets for exploring disease mechanisms and therapeutic interventions.

Background

Progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP) is a neurodegenerative disease that is pathologically defined by the accumulation of aggregated tau protein in multiple cortical and subcortical regions, especially involving the basal ganglia, dentate nucleus of the cerebellum midbrain [1]. An isoform of tau harboring 4 repeats of microtubule-binding domain (4R-tau) is particularly prominent in these tau aggregates [2]. Clinical manifestations of PSP include a range of phenotypes, including the initially described and most common, PSP-Richardson syndrome that presents with multiple features, including postural instability, vertical supranuclear palsy, and frontal dementia. However, there are several other phenotypes, such as PSP-Parkinsonism, PSP-Frontotemporal dementia, PSP-freezing of gait, PSP-speech and language disturbances, etc. [3]. Presentation of these phenotypes varies widely depending on the distribution and severity of the pathology [4–6].

Currently, the most recognized genetic risk locus for PSP is at the H1/H2 haplotype region covering *MAPT* gene at chromosome 17q21.31 [7], where individuals carrying the common H1 haplotype are more likely to develop PSP with an estimated odds ratio (OR) of 5.6 [8]. Previous studies usually ascribed the observed association in the H1/H2 haplotype to *MAPT* [7,9,10]. However, recent functional dissection of this region using multiple parallel reporter assays coupled to CRISPRi demonstrated multiple risk genes in the area in addition to *MAPT*, including *KANSL1* and *PLEKMHL1* [11]. Genome-wide association studies (GWASs) in PSP have identified common variants in *STX6*, *EIF2AK3*, *MOBP*, *SLCO1A2*, *DUSP10*, *RUNX2*, and *LRRK2* with moderate effect size [8,12–14]. In addition, variants in *TRIM11* were identified as a genetic modifier of the PSP phenotype when comparing PSP with Richardson syndrome to PSP without Richardson syndrome

[15].

To date, no comprehensive analysis of single nucleotide variants (SNVs), small insertions and deletions (indels), and structural variants (SVs) in PSP by whole genome sequencing has been conducted. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the genetic underpinnings of PSP, we performed whole genome sequencing (WGS) and analyzed SNVs, indels and SVs. As a result, we not only validated previously reported genes but also unveiled new loci that provide novel insights into the genetic basis of PSP.

Methods

Study subjects

We performed WGS at 30x coverage (**Table S1**) for 1,834 PSP cases and 128 controls from the PSP-NIH-CurePSP-Tau, PSP-CurePSP-Tau, PSP-UCLA, and AMPAD-MAYO cohorts included in Alzheimer's Disease Sequencing Project (ADSP, NG00067.v7) and used 3,008 controls from other cohorts in ADSP [16]. Control subjects were self-identified as non-Hispanic white. WGS data is available on The National Institute on Aging Genetics of Alzheimer's Disease Data Storage Site (NIAGADS) [17]. We removed related subjects (identify by descent > 0.25), five clinically diagnosed PSP who were not found to have PSP on autopsy, and non-Europeans (subjects that were eight standard deviations away from the 1000 Genomes Project European samples [18,19] using the first six principal components (PCs)), resulting in 1,718 individuals with PSP and 2,944 control subjects. Of the 1,718 PSP individuals, 1,441 were autopsy-confirmed and 277 were clinically diagnosed (**Table 1**).

Considering that our sample set incorporated external controls from ADSP, initially collected for Alzheimer's Disease (AD) studies, there was a potential selection biases for *APOE* ε4 and ε2 in controls. To rigorously validate our findings linked to *APOE*, we broke down the allele frequencies of *APOE* ε4 and ε2 by cohorts (**Table S2**), reviewed the study design of each cohort, and created an additional sample set by excluding those cohorts with selection bias against *APOE* ε4 or ε2 (**Supplementary Methods**).

SNVs/indels quality controls

Only biallelic variants were included in common (Minor Allele Frequency [MAF] > 0.01) SNVs/indels analysis. Variants were removed if they were monomorphic, did not pass variant quality score recalibration (VQSR), had an average read depth ≥ 500, or if all calls have alignment depth (DP < 10) and genotype quality (GQ < 20). Individual calls with DP < 10 or GQ < 20 were set to missing. Indels were left aligned using the GRCh38 reference [20,21]. Common variants with a missing rate < 0.1, 0.25 < allele balance for heterozygous calls (ABHet) < 0.75, and Hardy-Weiberg Equilibrium tests (HWE) in controls > 1×10^{-5} were kept for analysis, leaving 7,945,112 SNVs/indels for analysis. Similar quality control procedures were applied to rare variants (**Supplementary Methods**). Then, we calculated the heritability of PSP using GCTA-LDMS [22] for common SNVs/indels (MAF > 0.01) and common plus rare SNVs/indels. A prevalence of 5 PSP cases per 100,000 individuals (0.00005) was used in the GCTA-LDMS analysis.

Common SNVs/indels analysis

For association analysis, linear mixed model implemented in R Genesis [23] were used. Genetic relatedness matrix was obtained using KING [24]. PCs were obtained by PC-AiR [25] which accounts for sample relatedness. Sex and PC1-5 were adjusted in the linear mixed model. Age was not adjusted as more than half (1,159 of 1,718) of PSP cases had age missing. SNVs and indels with a $P < 1 \times 10^{-6}$ were reported along with the WGS quality metrics, such as QualByDepth (QD) and FisherStrand (FS), (**Table S3**).

For H1/H2 region, fine-mapping were analyzed using SuSie [26]. We ran the analysis several times assuming the number of maximum causal variants were from 2 to 10. The only variant

(rs242561) robust to the choice of maximum causal variants was reported. To avoid potential confounding effects (particularly for *APOE* alleles), we also performed association analysis (**Table S4**, **Table S5**) for suggestive and genome-wide significant signals when excluding subjects from the three cohorts with selection bias against *APOE* alleles (ADSP-FUS1-APOEextremes, ADSP-FUS1-StEPAD1, and CacheCounty) along with cohorts with less than 10 subjects (NACC-Genentech, FASe-Families-WGS, and KnightADRC-WGS) (**Table S2**). We also performed additional experimental validation using TaqMan assay/Sanger sequencing to confirm the genotype of *APOE* observed from WGS (**Supplementary Methods**, **Table S6**).

Rare SNVs/indels analysis

For aggregated tests of rare variants, we considered rare protein truncating variants (PTVs) and PTVs/damaging missense variants. Variant were annotated with ANNOVAR (version 2020-06-07) [27] and Variant Effect Predictor (VEP, version 104.3) [28]. PTVs were in protein coding genes (Ensembl version 104) [29] and had VEP consequence as stop gained, splice acceptor, splice donor or frameshift. Damaging missense variants were in protein coding genes (Ensembl version 104) and had a VEP consequence as missense, CADD score $\geq$ 15, and PolyPhen-2 HDIV of probably damaging. Rare variants were selected based on a MAF < 0.01% from gnomAD and a MAF < 1% in our dataset. The number of alternative allele variants in PTVs and PTVs/damaging missense variants was similar across sequencing centers and when evaluated for loss of function intolerant genes (observed/expected score upper confidence interval < 0.35 [30]) (**Fig. S14**)

We performed SKAT-O and gene burden testing (SKATBinary, method='burden') for PTVs

and PTV/damaging missense variants (**Supplementary Methods**). We also considered only PTVs or PTVs/missense variants in loss of function intolerant genes (observed/expected score upper confidence interval < 0.35[30]) when performing the tests. *P*-values were FDR corrected for the number of genes with a total minor allele count (MAC) ≥ 10. As SKAT-O does not calculate an odds ratio, we calculated the odds ratio of significant genes using logistic regression with the same covariates as SKAT-O and burden testing, and the same variant weights.

We evaluated the C1 module, a gene set, which was previously shown to be composed of neuronal genes and enriched for common variants in PSP [31]. We performed a permutation test (N=1000) of random gene set modules from brain expressed genes that contained the same number of genes as C1. From the human protein atlas (www.proteinatlas.org) [32], brain expressed genes were defined as the union of unique proteins from the cerebral cortex, basal ganglia and midbrain (N=15,638). We calculated SKAT-O *P*-values from these random gene modules to determine the null distribution. We calculated the unadjusted odds ratio of significant genes or gene sets by summing the number of alternate alleles in the gene set among the total number alleles in cases and controls. Normalized quantification (TPM) gene expression across tissues was obtained from Genotype-Tissue Expression (GTEx) [33]. The expression of ZNF592 and C1 module (summarized as an eigengene [34]) were plotted.

SV detection and filtering

For each sample, SVs were called by Manta (v1.6.0) [35] and Smoove (v0.2.5) [36] with default parameters. Calls from Manta and Smoove were merged by Svimmer [37] to generate a union of two call sets for a sample. Then, all individual sample VCF files were merged together by Svimmer as

input to Graphtyper2 (v2.7.3) [37] for joint genotyping. SV calls after joint-genotyping are comparable across the samples, therefore, can be used directly in genome-wide association analysis [37]. A subset of SV calls was defined as high-quality calls [37]. Details of SV calling pipeline were in our previous study [38].For each individual SV reported, Samplot [39] or IGV [40] were used to keep only high-confident CNVs and inversions that are supported by read depth or split reads; for insertions, we kept high-confident insertions that are high-quality and not in the masked regions (**Supplementary Methods**).

SV analysis

For SV association, more strict sample filtering was applied: outlier samples with too many (larger than median + 4*MAD) CNV/insertion calls or too little (smaller than median - 4*MAD) high-quality CNV/insertion calls were removed. There were 4,432 samples (1,703 cases and 2,729 controls) remaining for PSP SV association analysis. Due to more false positives being picked up, the genomic inflation would be high (λ = 1.89, **Fig. S9**) if all SVs were included in the analysis. Therefore, we restricted our analysis to high-quality SVs only, making the genomic inflation drop to 1.27 (**Fig. S9**). The 14,792 high-quality common SVs (MAF > 0.1) with call rate > 0.5 were included in the analysis. Mixed model implemented in R Genesis were used for association. Sex, PCR information, SV PCs 1-5, and SNV PCs 1-5 were adjusted in the mixed model. After association, we manually inspect deletions, duplications, and inversions by Samplot or IGV to keep only those with support from read depth, split read or insert size. For insertions, those not on masked regions were reported.

For SVs inside the H1/H2 region, all SVs those that are not high-quality are included. Then, we removed SVs with missing rate > 0.5 and manual inspect deletions, duplications, and inversions by Samplot or IGV to keep only those with support from read depth, split read or insert size. For insertions, those high-quality ones not on masked regions were kept for analysis. LD between SVs was calculated using PLINK (V1.90 beta) [41].Rare SV burden on H1/H2 region was evaluated by SKAT-O [42] adjusting for gender and PCs 1-5. As SKAT-O does not calculate an odds ratio, we calculated the odds ratio using logistic regression with the same covariates.

Results

Common SNVs and *indels associated with PSP*

We conducted whole genome sequencing at 30x coverage in 4,662 European-ancestry samples (1,718 individuals with PSP of which 1,441 were autopsy confirmed and 277 were clinically diagnosed and 2,944 control subjects, **Table 1**). We successfully replicated the association of known loci at *MAPT*, *MOBP* and *STX6* [8,12,13] and identified a novel signal in *APOE* with a genome-wide significance of $P < 5 \times 10^{-8}$ (**Fig. 1, Fig. S1, Table 2, Table S3**). Furthermore, eight loci showed suggestive significance ($5 \times 10^{-8} < P < 1 \times 10^{-6}$), including two loci reported genome-wide significant (*SLCO1A2* and *DUSP10*) and one locus (*SP1*) reported suggestive significant in previous studies [12,13], as well as five new loci in *FCHO1*/*MAP1S*, *KIF13A*, *TRIM24*, *ELOVL1* and *TNXB*.

MAPT, MOBP and STX6

In the *MAPT* region, a multitude of SNVs and indels in high linkage disequilibrium (LD) with the H1/H2 haplotype remains the most significant association with PSP (**Fig. S2A**). From our analysis, the prominent signal within the *MAPT* region is rs62057121 ($P = 7.45 \times 10^{-78}$, $\beta = -1.32$, MAF = 0.15). Fine mapping suggests that rs242561 ($P = 4.49 \times 10^{-74}$, $\beta = -1.23$, MAF = 0.16) is likely to be a causal SNV underling the statistical significance. The SNP rs242561 is located in an enhancer region, containing an antioxidant response element that binds with NRF2/sMAF protein complex. The T allele of rs242561 showed a stronger binding affinity for NRF2/sMAF in ChIP-seq analysis, therefore inducing a significantly higher transactivation of the *MAPT* gene [43]. rs242561 and rs62057151 were both in high LD ($r^2 > 0.9$) with H1/H2 (defined by the 238 bp deletion in

MAPT intron 9) and represented the same association signal as the H1/H2. However, in previous studies [8,44], the H1c tagging SNV (rs242557) inside the H1/H2 region was found to be significant when conditioning on H1/H2. We confirmed that rs242557 was genome-wide significant after adjusting for H1/H2 ($P = 3.68 \times 10^{-15}$, $\beta = 0.39$, MAF = 0.42) though in weak LD with H1/H2 ($r^2 = 0.14$). To pinpoint the causal genes underlying the association in H1/H2 requires additional functional study. For example, Cooper *et al.* [11] analyzed transcriptional regulatory activity of SNVs and suggested *PLEKHM1* and *KANSL1* were probable causal genes in H1/H2 besides *MAPT*. In *MOBP* (rs11708828, $P = 7.04 \times 10^{-12}$, $\beta = -0.35$, MAF = 0.46, **Fig. S2B**) and *STX6* (rs10753232, $P = 6.79 \times 10^{-10}$, $\beta = 0.31$, MAF = 0.44, **Fig. S2C**), the associated variants were of high allele frequency and exhibited moderate effect size.

APOE and risk of PSP

One newly identified significant locus from our analysis is the well-known AD risk gene, *APOE*. We observed a significant association between the *APOE* ε2 haplotype and an elevated risk of PSP ($P = 9.57 \times 10^{-16}$, $\beta = 0.87$, MAF = 0.06, **Table 3**, **Fig. S3B**). The *APOE* ε2 haplotype is encoded by rs429358-T and rs4712-T, which is considered a protective allele in AD. The increased risk of *APOE* ε2 in PSP has been previously reported in a Japanese cohort, albeit with a relatively small sample size [45]. Furthermore, Zhao *et al.* [46] confirmed that *APOE* ε2 is linked to increased tau pathology in the brains of individuals with PSP and reported a higher frequency of homozygosity of *APOE* ε2 in PSP with an odds ratio of 4.41. Consistent with these findings, our dataset exhibited a higher frequency of homozygosity of rs7412-T in PSP, yielding an odds ratio of 3.91.

For *APOE* ε4 allele, contrary to its association with AD, we observed that rs429358-C exhibits a protective effect against PSP ($P = 5.71 \times 10^{-18}$, β = -0.60, MAF = 0.16, **Table 3**). The lead SNV demonstrating this protective association from our analysis is rs4420638 ($P = 2.91 \times 10^{-19}$, β = -0.57, MAF = 0.20, **Fig. S3A**), which is in LD ($r^2 = 0.74$) with rs429358. In a previous PSP GWAS conducted by Hoglinger *et al*. [8], another *APOE* ε4 tagging SNV (rs2075650, $r^2 = 0.52$ with rs429358) was also found to be diminished (MAF_case = 0.11 and MAF_control = 0.15) in PSP, although not reaching significance ($P = 1.28 \times 10^{-5}$). Notably, in our analysis, rs2075650 reached genome-wide significance ($P = 3.39 \times 10^{-13}$, β = -0.51, MAF = 0.15). *APOE* ε4 or ε2 displayed an independent effect for PSP risk without a significant epistatic interaction with H1/H2 haplotype ($P >$ 0.05) (**Fig. S4**).

Given that our dataset included external controls from ADSP collected for Alzheimer's disease studies, there were a potential selection biases for *APOE* ε4 and ε2 in controls. To address this concern, we broke down the allele frequencies of *APOE* ε4 and ε2 by cohorts (**Table S2**) and indicated cohorts with potential selection bias. The association analysis excluding these cohorts shows the ε2 SNV (rs7412, $P = 1.23 \times 10^{-12}$, β = 0.70, MAF = 0.06) remained genome-wide significant and ε4 SNV (rs429358, $P = 0.02$, β = -0.16, MAF = 0.14) was nominal significant (**Table S4**, **Table S5**).

Suggestive significant loci

Eight loci were suggestive of significance in our analysis of which three, *SLCO1A2*, *DUSP10*, and *SP1*, were previously reported [12,13]. In *SLCO1A2*, the lead SNV rs74651308 ($P = 2.86 \times 10^{-7}$,

β = 0.51, MAF = 0.07, **Fig. S5A**) is intronic and in LD (r^2 = 0.98) with missense SNV rs11568563 (*P* = 1.45×10^{-6}, β = 0.47, MAF = 0.07), which was reported in a previous study [12]. About 250 kb upstream of *DUSP10* lies the previously reported SNV rs6687758 [12] (*P* = 3.36×10^{-6}, β = 0.29, MAF = 0.21), which is in LD (r^2 = 0.98) with the lead SNV rs12026659 in our analysis (*P* = 9.48×10^{-7}, β = 0.31, MAF = 0.21, **Fig. S5B**). In *SP1*, the reported indel rs147124286 [13] (*P* = 4.39×10^{-7}, β = -0.35, MAF = 0.16) is in LD (r^2 = 0.995) with the lead SNV rs12817984 (*P* = 8.91×10^{-8}, β = -0.37, MAF = 0.16, **Fig. S5C**). Notably, disruption of a transcriptional network centered on *SP1* by causal variants has been implicated previously in PSP [11].

Five newly discovered suggestive loci are in *FCHO1/MAP1S, KIF13A, TRIM24, TNXB,* and *ELOVL1*. Within *FCHO1/MAP1S*, the most significant signal (rs56251816, *P* = 6.57×10^{-8}, β = 0.35, MAF = 0.22, **Fig. S6A**) is in the intron of *FCHO1*. rs56251816 is a significant expression quantitative trait locus (eQTL) for both *FCHO1* and *MAP1S* (13 kb upstream of *FCHO1*) in the Genotype-Tissue Expression (GTEx) project [47]. *MAP1S* encodes a microtubule associated protein that is involved in microtubule bundle formation, aggregation of mitochondria and autophagy [48], and therefore, is more relevant than *FCHO1* regarding PSP. *KIF13A*, which encodes a microtubule-based motor protein was also suggestive of significance (rs4712314, *P* = 2.37×10^{-7}, β = 0.27, AF = 0.51, **Fig. S6B**). The significance in genes involved in microtubule-based processes, such as *MAPT*, *MAP1S* and *KIF13A*, implicates the neuronal cytoskeleton as a convergent aspect of PSP etiology.

Other variants with suggestive association evidence include *TRIM24* (rs111593852, *P* = 3.75×10^{-7}, β = 0.87, MAF = 0.02, **Fig. S7A**). *TRIM24* is involved in transcriptional initiation and shows

differential expression in individuals with Parkinson disease [49,50]. Another suggestive locus is *TNXB*, located in the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) region on chromosome 6, with the lead SNV rs367364 (P = 7.07 × 10^{-7}, β = -0.37, MAF = 0.13, **Fig. S7B**). Finally, *ELOVL1* yields suggestive evidence of association (rs839764, P = 7.94 × 10^{-7}, β = 0.27, MAF = 0.41, **Fig. S7C**). This gene encodes an enzyme that elongates fatty acids and can cause a neurological disorder with ichthyotic keratoderma, spasticity, hypomyelination and dysmorphic features [51]. Furthermore, we found a few SNV/indels that reached genome-wide or suggestive significance without other supporting variants in LD (**Fig.S1**, **Table S3**). These signals could be due to sequencing errors and need further experimental validation.

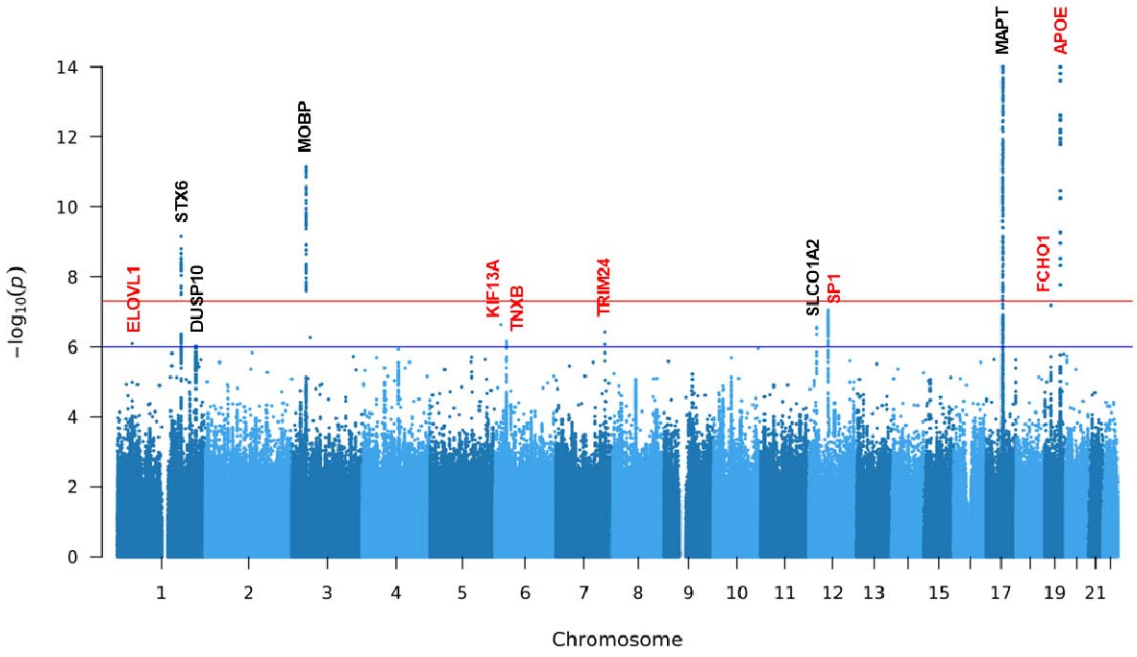

Fig. 1: Manhattan plot of SNVs/indels for PSP.
Loci with a suggestive or genome-wide significant signal are annotated (novel loci in red and known loci in black). Variants with a P- value below 1 × 10^{-14} are not shown. The red horizontal line represents genome-wide significance level (5 × 10^{-8}). The blue horizontal line represents suggestive significance level (1 × 10^{-6}).

355 **Table 1. Characteristics of study participants.**

	PSP (n = 1,718)		Control (n = 2,944)
	Autopsy Confirmed (n = 1,441)	**Clinical Diagnosed (n = 277)**	
Female	625 (43%)	129 (46%)	1,775 (60%)
Age, y (SD)	68.38 (8.22)	65.72 (7.68)	81.19 (6.01)
***APOE* ε4**[a]			
ε4 carriers	350 (24%)	57 (21%)	905 (32%)
Non-ε4 carriers	1,085 (75%)	216 (78%)	1,913 (65%)
Data missing	6 (0.42%)	4 (1%)	126 (4%)
***APOE* ε2**[b]			
ε2 carriers	234 (16%)	36 (13%)	220 (8%)
Non-ε2 carriers	1,193 (83%)	238 (86%)	2,522 (86%)
Data missing	14 (1%)	3 (1%)	202 (7%)
H2[c]			
H2 carriers	158 (11%)	27 (10%)	1,182 (40%)
Non-H2 carriers	1,283 (89%)	250 (90%)	1,761 (60)
Data missing	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.03%)

[a]*APOE* ε4 is represented by the genotypes of rs429358-C.

[b]*APOE* ε2 is represented by the genotypes of rs7412-T.

[c]H2 haplotype is determined by the genotypes of rs8070723-G.

SD, standard deviation.

356 **Table 2. Genome-wide and suggestive significant loci.**

SNV	Chr	Position	Ref	Alt	AF (Alt)	β (Alt)	P	Gene	eQTL/sQTL
Genome-wide Significance ($P < 5 \times 10^{-8}$)									
rs62057121	17	45823394	G	A	0.15	-1.32	7.45×10^{-78}	MAPT	LRRC37A4P[c*]
rs4420638	19	44919689	A	G	0.20	-0.57	2.91×10^{-19}	APOE	TOMM40[b]
rs7412	19	44908822	C	T	0.06	0.87	9.57×10^{-16}	APOE	
rs11708828	3	39458158	C	T	0.46	-0.35	7.04×10^{-12}	MOBP	PRSA[c]
rs10753232	1	180980990	C	T	0.44	0.31	6.79×10^{-10}	STX6	STX6[a*]
Suggestive Significance ($P < 1 \times 10^{-6}$)									
rs56251816	19	17750888	A	G	0.22	0.35	6.57×10^{-08}	FCHO1/MAP1S	
rs12817984	12	53410523	T	G	0.16	-0.37	8.91×10^{-08}	SP1	SP1[a*]
rs4712314	6	17833813	G	T	0.51	0.27	2.37×10^{-07}	KIF13A	
rs74651308	12	21323155	G	A	0.07	0.51	2.86×10^{-07}	SLCO1A2	
rs111593852	7	138449166	C	T	0.02	0.87	3.75×10^{-07}	TRIM24	
rs367364	6	32052169	C	T	0.13	-0.37	7.07×10^{-07}	TNXB	CYP21A1P[c*]
rs839764	1	43367703	T	A	0.41	0.27	7.94×10^{-07}	ELOVL1	TIE1[a*]
rs12026659	1	221976623	G	A	0.21	0.31	9.48×10^{-07}	DUSP10	

Chr, chromosome; Ref, reference allele; Alt, alternative allele; AF, allele frequency.

[*]Represents the SNV regulates multiple genes, and the gene with the smallest *P*-value was shown here (eQTL/sQTL for the brain region was obtained through GTEx).

[a]SNVs with significant eQTL hits.

[b]SNVs with significant sQTL hits.

[c]SNVs with both eQTL and sQTL hits.

Table 3. Allele Frequency of *APOE* ε4 SNV (rs429358) and ε2 SNV (rs7412)

Studies	rs429358		rs7412	
	AF (Case)	AF (Control)	AF (Case)	AF (Control)
PSP WGS (This study)	0.1279	0.1742	0.0844	0.0414
PSP GWAS [52]	0.1159	0.1366	0.0826	0.0794
1000 Genomes Project [18]		0.1512		0.0771
ExAC European (non-Finnish) [53]		0.2078		0.1060
gnomAD V4 European (non-Finnish) [54]		0.1506		0.0783
TOPMed Freeze 8 NFE (Non-Finnish European)		0.1501		0.0752
ADSP R3 Non-Hispanic White [55]	0.3139 (AD as cases)	0.1803	0.0244 (AD as cases)	0.0406

Rare SNVs/indels and network analysis

The heritability of PSP for common SNVs and indels (MAF > 0.01) was estimated to be 20%, while common plus rare SNVs/indels was estimated to be 23% from our analysis using GCTA-LDMS [22]. Therefore, we performed aggregated tests for rare SNVs and indels, and identified *ZNF592* (SKAT-O FDR=0.043, burden test FDR=0.041) with an of OR = 1.08 (95% CI: 1.008-1.16) (**Fig. 2**, **Table 4**, **Table S7**) for protein truncating or damaging missense variants. There was no genomic inflation with a λ=1.07 (**Fig. 2**). Risk in *ZNF592* was imparted by 16 unique variants, with one splice donor and 15 damaging missense variants (**Table S7**). *ZNF592* has not been previously associated with PSP but showed moderate RNA expression in the cerebellum compared to other tissues from GTEx (**Fig. S8**). There were no significant genes identified when evaluating PTVs only or when restricting to loss of function intolerant genes.

Considering that genes do not operate along, but rather within signaling pathways and networks,

we and others have shown that better understanding of disease mechanisms can be achieved through gene network analysis [56–58]. Therefore, we scrutinized rare variants within a network framework, focusing on co-expression network analysis performed in PSP post mortem brain that had previously identified a brain co-expression module, C1, which was conserved at the protein interaction level and enriched for common variants in PSP [31]. We found this C1 neuronal module was significantly enriched with PSP rare variants (P = 0.006, OR [95% CI] = 1.31 [1.01-1.70], **Table 4**; **Table S8**). Genes from the C1 module were more likely to be loss of function intolerant compared to the background of all brain expressed genes (**Fig. S8**). To ensure that this was association not spurious, we performed permutation testing using random gene modules of brain expressed genes with the same number of genes as C1. The C1 module remains significant (Permutation P = 0.078). Exploring GTEx, we found that C1 genes are highly expressed in brain tissues including the cerebellum, frontal cortex, and basal ganglia (**Fig. S8**), consistent with regions affected in this disorder.

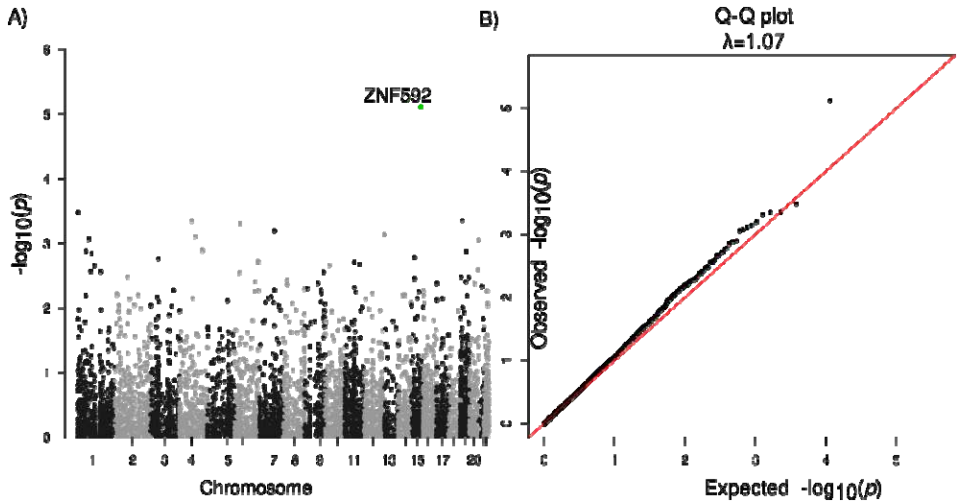

Fig. 2: Association analysis of rare SNVs/indels.
A. Manhattan plot for genes with protein truncating variants or damaging missense variants. **B.** Q-Q plot of gene P-values with protein truncating variants or damaging missense variants.

388 **Table 4. Association analysis of ZNF592 and the C1 module.**

Gene	Variants	Total MAC	Case MAC	Control MAC	Fraction Case	Fraction Control	OR (95% CI)	SKAT-O		Burden	
								FDR	P	FDR	P
ZNF592	16	19	8	11	0.0023	0.0018	1.08 (1.01-1.16)	0.044	7.60×10^{-6}	0.041	7.30×10^{-06}
Module	**Variants**	**Total MAC**	**Case MAC**	**Control MAC**	**Fraction Case**	**Fraction Control**	**OR (95% CI)**	**Permutation test**	**P**	**Permutation test**	**P**
C1	180	234	101	133	0.029	0.022	1.31 (1.01-1.70)	0.19	0.048	0.078	0.006

SVs associated with PSP

Seven high-confident SVs achieved genome-wide significance with PSP (**Table 5**, **Fig. S9**), including three deletions tagging the H2 haplotype. The most significant signal is a 238 bp deletion in *MAPT* intron 9 (**Fig. S10A**, chr17:46009357-46009595, $P = 3.14 \times 10^{-50}$, AF = 0.16) that has been reported on the H2 haplotype [59,60] and is in LD ($r^2 = 0.99$) with the lead SNV, rs62057121 (chr17:45823394, $P = 7.45 \times 10^{-78}$, $\beta = -1.32$, MAF = 0.15), in the *MAPT* region. Adding to this, two other deletions, one spanning 314 bp (**Fig. S10B**, chr17:46146541-46146855, AF = 0.19) and the other covering 323 bp (**Fig. S10C**, chr17:46099028-46099351, AF = 0.22), both are Alu elements and in LD ($r^2 > 0.8$) with the top signal (the 238 bp deletion). This observation indicates that transposable elements may play an important role in the evolution of H1/H2 haplotype structure.

Beyond the identified SVs in the H1/H2 region, we uncovered a significant deletion (chr14:105864208-105916743, $P = 4.74 \times 10^{-14}$, AF = 0.01) within the immunoglobulin heavy locus (*IGH*), which is a complex SV region (**Fig. S11**) related to antigen recognition. Moreover, a 619 bp deletion (chr6:149762615-149763234, $P = 8.60 \times 10^{-12}$, AF = 0.55; **Fig. S10D**) in *PCMT1* displayed increased risk of PSP with an odds ratio of 4.19. The odds ratio increased to 8.38 when comparing 1,244 individuals with homozygous deletions in *PCMT1* with the rest of sample set. *PCMT1* encodes a type □ class of protein carboxyl methyltransferase enzyme that is highly expressed in the brain [61] and is able to ameliorate $A\beta_{25-35}$ induced neuronal apoptosis [62,63]. Additionally, we found a deletion between *CYP2F1* and *CYP2A13* (chr19:41102802-41104285, AF = 0.17) and an insertion in *SMCP* (chr1:152880979-152880979, AF = 0.74) which were also significant (**Table 5**). The 1.5 kb deletion (chr19:41102802-41104285) almost completely overlaps the SINE-VNTR-Alus (SVA)

410 transposon region annotated by RepeatMasker [64].

411 **Table 5. Significant structural variants from association analysis ($P < 5 \times 10^{-8}$).**

Name	N	AF	beta	P	AF (case)	AF (control)	Odds Ratio	Fisher's P	Gene
chr17:46009357-46009595:DEL*	4357	0.16	-1.22	3.14×10^{-50}	0.054	0.23	0.19	5.80×10^{-118}	MAPT
chr17:46146541-46146855:DEL*	3697	0.19	-1.12	2.13×10^{-39}	0.079	0.25	0.26	1.58×10^{-83}	KANSL1
chr17:46099028-46099351:DEL*	3699	0.22	-1.07	3.88×10^{-37}	0.11	0.28	0.33	2.05×10^{-66}	KANSL1
chr14:105864208-105916743:DEL	4378	0.010	-1.53	4.74×10^{-14}	0.0053	0.014	0.39	1.33×10^{-04}	IGH
chr6:149762615-149763234:DEL	3811	0.55	0.50	8.60×10^{-12}	0.75	0.42	4.19	6.00×10^{-182}	PCMT1
chr19:41102802-41104285:DEL	2921	0.17	0.64	7.46×10^{-09}	0.21	0.14	1.59	5.95×10^{-11}	CYP2A13
chr1:152880979-152880979:INS	2872	0.74	0.67	2.37×10^{-08}	0.79	0.71	1.62	1.46×10^{-13}	SMCP

*Represents SVs with DNA samples available and PCR validated

SVs in H1/H2 haplotype region

The H1/H2 region stands out as the pivotal genetic risk factor for PSP [8,65]. The H2 haplotype exhibits a reduced odds ratio of 0.19, as we observed the allele frequency of the 238 bp H2-tagging deletion is 23% in PSP and only 5% in control ($P < 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$). Moreover, our analysis pointed out five common (MAF > 0.01) and 12 rare deletions and duplications in the region (**Table 6**), ranging from 88 bp to 47 kb. Additionally, one common and four rare high-confidence insertions were reported in the region.

Of the five common deletions and duplications (**Fig. S12**), three show genome-wide significant association with the disease (**Table 2**); four are located in regions with transposable elements (SVA, L1, or Alu) and in LD (r^2 from 0.63 to 0.92) with the 238 bp H2-tagging deletion. This further highlights the important role of transposable elements in shaping the landscape of H1/H2 region.

Among the 12 rare deletions and duplications (**Fig. S13**), five are located in potentially functional regions, such as splice sites, exons, and transcription factor binding sites (**Table 6**). Particularly, one deletion (chr17:45993882-45993970) in exon 9 of *MAPT* was identified in a PSP patient, adding to previous reports of exonic deletions in the *MAPT* in frontotemporal dementia, such as deletion of exon 10 [66] and exons 6-9 [67] in *MAPT*. Using the SKAT-O test (N = 4,432), the 12 rare CNVs displayed a significantly higher burden in PSP than controls ($P = 0.01$, OR = 1.64).–

Table 6. High-confident structural variants in the H1/H2 haplotype region

Name	Size	N	AF	AF (PSP)	AF (Control)	Gene	Annotation
chr17:46099028-46099351:DEL[a]*	323	3,699	0.24	0.11	0.28	KANSL1	intron
chr17:46146541-46146855:DEL[a]*	314	3,697	0.21	0.08	0.25	KANSL1	intron
chr17:46237619-46238142:DEL[a]	523	3,686	0.19	0.09	0.22	MAPK8IP1P1	intergenic
chr17:46009357-46009595:DEL[a]*	238	4,357	0.19	0.05	0.23	MAPT	intron
chr17:46277789-46282210:DEL	4,421	4,233	0.12	0.03	0.15	ARL17B	intron
chr17:46113802-46113802:INS	311	2,464	0.31	0.32	0.32	KANSL1	intron

Name	Size	N	N (Carriers)	N (PSP)	N (Control)	Gene	Annotation
chr17:46811121-46811289:DEL[a]	168	2,614	36	15	21	WNT3	intron
chr17:45847702-45851880:DEL[a]	4,178	4,427	31	17	14	MAPT-AS1	splicing
chr17:46837153-46839088:DEL[a]	1,935	4,415	12	8	4	WNT9B	intron
chr17:45918825-45920861:DEL[a]	2,036	4,422	1	0	1	MAPT	intron
chr17:45916681-45920693:DEL	4,012	4,430	3	0	3	MAPT	intron
chr17:45570198-45572012:DEL	1,814	4,243	3	2	1	AC091132.4	intron
chr17:45334194-45381549:DEL[a]	47,355	4,430	1	0	1	AC003070.2	transcript ablation
chr17:45311955-45312258:DEL	303	4,365	2	0	2	MAP3K14	intron
chr17:45894637-45914976:DUP[a]	20,339	4,260	1	1	0	MAPT-AS1	transcript amplification
chr17:45993882-45993970:DEL[a]	88	4,283	1	1	0	MAPT	splicing
chr17:45665996-45666370:DEL[a]	374	4,412	1	1	0	LINC02210-CRHR1	TFBS ablation
chr17:45879141-45881180:DEL	2,039	4,431	1	1	0	MAPT-AS1	intron
chr17:45741582-45741582:INS	315	4,420	10	4	6	LINC02210-CRHR1	intergenic
chr17:45929579-45929579:INS	453	3,025	5	1	4	MAPT	intron
chr17:46754483-46754483:INS	330	3,692	12	2	10	NSF	intron

AF, allele frequency; N, number of individuals with non-missing genotypes.

*High-quality SVs that were included in association analysis.

[a]Represents SVs with DNA samples available and PCR validated.

Discussion

Through comprehensive analysis of whole genome sequence, we identified SNVs, indels and SVs contributing to the risk of PSP. For common SNVs, previously reported regions, including *MAPT*, *MOBP*, STX6, *SLCO1A2*, *DUSP10*, and *SP1* [8,12,13] were replicated in our analysis and novel loci in *APOE*, *FCHO1*/*MAP1S*, *KIF13A*, *TRIM24*, *ELOVL1*, and *TNXB* were discovered. *EIF2AK3* which was significantly associated with PSP in a previous GWAS [8] did not reach significance in our study. In the current study, the SNV with the lowest *P* around *EIF2AK3* was rs13003510 ($P = 8.30 \times 10^{-5}$, $\beta = 0.22$, MAF = 0.3).

The *APOE* ε4 haplotype was of particular interest as it is a common risk factor for AD, explaining more than a 1/3 of population attributable risk [68,69]. Typically, individuals with one copy of the *APOE* ε4 allele (rs429358-C and rs4712-G) have approximately a threefold increased risk of developing AD, while those with two copies of the allele have an approximately a 12-fold increase in risk [70]. In striking contrast, the ε4 tagging allele rs429358 was protective in PSP and the ε2 tagging allele rs7412 was deleterious. This observation is particularly intriguing since both AD and PSP have intracellular aggregated tau as a prominent neuropathologic feature. Notably, both ε2 allele and ε4 allele have been associated with tau pathology burden in the brain of mice models [46,71], which raises the question of distinct tau species in 4R-PSP versus 3R-4R-AD. It is also notable that the ε2 allele is also associated with increased risk for age-related macular degeneration (AMD), and the ε4 allele was associated with decreased risk [72,73]. These results demonstrate that the same variant may have opposite effects in different degenerative diseases. This is especially important, given the advent of gene editing as a therapeutic modality, and programs focused on

changing *APOE* ε4 to ε2. Although this therapy would likely decrease risk for AD, our results indicate that it would increase risk for PSP, in addition to AMD. From this standpoint, caution is warranted in germ-line genome editing until the broad spectrum of phenotypes associated with human genetic variation is understood.

Burden association tests are an highly valuable for addressing sample size limitations in analyzing rare variants [74]. Indeed, burden testing allowed us to identify *ZNF592*, a classical C2H2 zinc finger protein (ZNF) [75,76], as a candidate risk gene. ZNF proteins have been causative or strongly associated with large numbers of neurodevelopmental disease [77,78] and neurodegenerative disease including Parkinson's disease [79] and Alzheimer's disease [80,81]. *ZNF592* was initially thought to be responsible for autosomal recessive spinocerebellar ataxia 5 from a consanguineous family with neurodevelopmental delay including cerebellar ataxia and intellectual disability due to a homozygous G1046R substitution [82]. However, further analysis of this family identified *WDR73* to be the most likely causative gene, consistent with Galloway-Mowat syndrome, although *ZNF592* may have contributed to the phenotype [83].

We also extended classical gene-based burden analysis to consider rare risk burden in the context of a gene set defined by co-expression networks [31,84]. We leveraged combined previous proteomic and transcriptomic analysis of post-mortem brain from patients afflicted with PSP, and showed that rare variants enrich in the C1 neuronal module, which was the same module enriched with common variants [31]. This, along with our recent work identifying a neuronally-enriched transcription factor network centered around SP1 disrupted by PSP common genetic risk, suggests that although PSP neuropathologically is defined by tufted astrocytes and oligodendroglial coiled

bodies [6,85,86], initial causal drivers of PSP appear to be primarily neuronal.

In analysis of SVs, we found deletions in *PCMT1* and *IGH* were significantly associated with PSP. The *IGH* deletions are in a complex region on chromosome 14 that encodes immunoglobins recognizing foreign antigens. The size of the *IGH* deletion varies across individuals (**Fig. S9**). In addition, the *IGH* deletions can be accompanied by other deletions, duplications, and inversions (**Fig. S9**). These combined make the experimental validation of the deletion challenging. The *PCMT1* deletion is common (AF = 0.55) with an odds ratio of 8.38 for PSP in homozygous individuals.

There were limitations to this study. Not all PSP were pathologically confirmed, although pathological confirmation was available in a significant subset (of the 1,718 PSP individuals, 1,441 were autopsy-confirmed and 277 were clinically-diagnosed). Additionally, the majority of control samples in this study were from ADSP and were initially collected as controls for AD studies. As ADSP is a dataset composed of multiple cohorts from diverse sources, it is imperative to ensure that any observed allele frequency differences between controls and cases can be attributed to the disease itself rather than sample selection biases arising from technical artifacts or batch effects. To mitigate the risk of false reports, we meticulously examined the allele frequencies of both cases and controls, especially in relation to novel and significant signals.

This work represents an important first step; future work is necessary to further delineate the rare genetic risk in PSP harbored in coding and noncoding regions. These results may come to fruition as additional genomic analytical methods are developed, sample size increased, and orthogonal genomic data are integrated. While PSP is rare, it is the most common primary tauopathy, and studying this disease is critical to understanding common pathological mechanisms across

tauopathies. Further work to include individuals with diverse ancestry background will also improve our understanding of genetic architecture of the disease.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study significantly advances our understanding of the genetic basis of PSP through WGS from this study. Previous GWAS signals were validated, and *APOE2* was found to the risk allele for PSP from the analysis of common SNVs and indels. Additionally, the analysis of rare SNVs/indels and SVs has revealed additional genetic targets, including *ZNF592*, *IGH*, *PCMT1*, *CYP2A13*, and *SMCP*, opening new avenues for investigating disease mechanisms and potential therapeutic interventions.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

NIAGADS Data Sharing Service (https://dss.niagads.org/)
https://github.com/whtop/PSP-Whole-Genome-Sequencing-Analysis

Competing interests

Laura Molina-Porcel received income from Biogen as a consultant in 2022. Gesine Respondek is now employed by Roche (Hoffmann-La Roche, Basel, Switzerland) since 2021. Her affiliation whilst completing her contribution to this manuscript was German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases

(DZNE), Munich, Germany. Thomas G Beach is a consultant for Aprinoia Therapeutics and a Scientific Advisor and stock option holder for Vivid Genomics. Huw Morris is employed by UCL. In the last 12 months he reports paid consultancy from Roche, Aprinoia, AI Therapeutics and Amylyx; lecture fees/honoraria - BMJ, Kyowa Kirin, Movement Disorders Society. Huw Morris is a co-applicant on a patent application related to C9ORF72 - Method for diagnosing a neurodegenerative disease (PCT/GB2012/052140). Giovanni Coppola is currently an employee of Regeneron Pharmaceuticals. Alison Goate serves on the SAB for Genentech and Muna Therapeutics.

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629 *Authors' contribution*

630 Study design: TSC, DD, GUH, GDS, DHG, and WPL. Sample collection, brain biospecimens, and
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