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Copy Number Variants and Therapeutic Response to Antidepressant Medication in Major Depressive Disorder

Katherine E. Tansey, Ph.D.1; James Rucker, Ph.D.1; M.R.C.Psych1; Michel Guipponi, Ph.D.2; Nader Perroud, M.D.3; Guido Bondolfi, M.D.3; Enrico Domenici, Ph.D.4; David Evans, Ph.D.5; Stephanie K. Hall, M.S.6; Joanna Hauser, Ph.D.7; Neven Henigsberg, M.D.8; Borut Jerman, B.Sc.9,10; Wolfgang Maier, M.D.11; Ole Mors, Ph.D.12; Michael O’Donovan, Ph.D.13; Tim J. Peters, Ph.D.14; Anna Placentino, Psy.D.15 Marcella Rietschel, M.D.16; Daniel Souery, Ph.D.17; Katherine J. Aitchison, M.D., F.R.C.Psych, Ph.D.1,18; Ian Craig, Ph.D.1; Anne Farmer, M.D., F.R.C.Psych1; Jens R. Wendland, M.D.19; Alain Malafosse, M.D., Ph.D.2,3; Glyn Lewis, Ph.D., F.R.C.Psych20; Cathryn M. Lewis, Ph.D.1; Shitij Kapur, M.D., Ph.D, F.R.C.P.C., F.Med.Sci.1; Peter McGuffin, Ph.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.Psych, F.Med.Sci.1; Rudolf Uher, M.D., Ph.D., M.R.C.Psych1,21

Affiliations

1Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, London, United Kingdom

2Department of Genetic Medicine and Laboratories, University Hospitals of Geneva, Switzerland

3Department of Psychiatry, University of Geneva, Switzerland
4F. Hoffmann-La Roche, Pharma Research and Early Development, Basel, Switzerland

5MRC CAiTE centre, School of Social and Community Medicine, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

6Molecular Medicine, Pfizer Inc., Groton, CT, USA

7Laboratory of Psychiatric Genetics, Poznan University of Medical Sciences, Poland

8Croatian Institute for Brain Research, Medical School, University of Zagreb, Croatia

9Department of Molecular and Biomedical Sciences, Jozef Stefan Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia

10Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia

11Department of Psychiatry, University of Bonn, Germany

12Centre for Psychiatric Research, Aarhus University Hospital, Risskov, Denmark

13MRC Centre for Neuropsychiatric Genetics and Genomics, Department of Psychological Medicine and Neurology, School of Medicine, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

14School of Clinical Sciences, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

15Psychiatric Unit 23, Department of Mental Health, Spedali Civili Hospital and Biological Psychiatry Unit, Centro San Giovanni di DioFatebenefratelli, Brescia, Italy

16Central Institute of Mental Health, Division of Genetic Epidemiology in Psychiatry, Mannheim, Germany

17Université Libre de Bruxelles, Erasme Academic Hospital, Department of Psychiatry, Brussels, Belgium
Correspondence and reprint requests should be addressed to:

Rudolf Uher
Social Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry
Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London
PO80, 16 De Crespigny Park
London, SE5 8AF, UK
Phone: +44 (0)20 7848 0891
Fax: +44 (0)20 7848 0866
E-mail: rudolf.uher@kcl.ac.uk

Disclosures

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O’Donovan’s department received £2000 in lieu of an honorarium to O’Donovan from Lilly as a result of his participation in sponsored symposia in 2012. Those symposia were unrelated to the contents of this manuscript. Souery is a member of a national advisory boards for Astra-Zeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Eli Lilly and Lundbeck. Aitchison has been on the Advisory Board for the Bristol-Myers Squibb and Otsuka Pharmaceuticals Ltd, and in addition received consultancy fees including payment for lectures and educational presentations from the same company. She was previously a member of various advisory boards, receiving consultancy fees and honoraria, and has received research grants from various companies including Lundbeck and GlaxoSmithKline. She currently holds an Alberta Centennial Addiction and Mental Health Research Chair, funded by the Government of Alberta. McGuffin and Farmer have previously received consultancy fees and honoraria for participating in expert panels from pharmaceutical companies including Lundbeck and GlaxoSmithKline, but have had no such income in the last 3 years. Kapur has received research funding from AstraZeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb and GlaxoSmithKline; and has served as consultant and/or speaker for AstraZeneca, Bioline, BMS-Otsuka, Eli Lilly, Janssen, Lundbeck, NeuroSearch, Pfizer, Roche, Servier and Solvay Wyeth. All other authors have declared that no competing interests exist.
Abstract

Objective: It would be beneficial to find genetic predictors of antidepressant response to help personalise treatment of major depressive disorder (MDD). Rare copy number variants (CNVs) have been implicated in several psychiatric disorders including MDD, but their role in antidepressant response is yet to be investigated.

Methods: CNVs were assessed using genome wide microarrays in 1565 individuals from the NEWMEDS consortium where we had prospective data on outcome of treatment of MDD with either a serotonergic or noradrenergic antidepressant for up to 12 weeks.

Results: We found no association between presence of rare CNVs, number of CNVs or CNV ‘burden’ and antidepressant response, response to serotonergic antidepressants, response to noradrenergic antidepressant or differential response to serotonergic versus noradrenergic antidepressants. Neither was there a relationship between antidepressant response and common CNVs.

Conclusions: Together with similarly negative data for common genetic variants, our present findings imply that personalising treatment with antidepressants based on genetic information will be a more complex task than had hitherto been expected.
Introduction:

Antidepressants are the first line of treatment for major depressive disorder (MDD). However individuals vary widely in their response to treatment and currently there is no way to predict an individual’s response. Prediction of how an individual will respond to a specific treatment is needed to reduce the delay to alleviation of symptoms and the cost of treatment and disability. While the existence of any single common genetic variant with a large enough effect to meaningfully predict antidepressant response is unlikely (1-5) we have shown that antidepressant response is moderately heritable (Tansey et at BP paper) and other forms of genetic variation remain to be investigated for a role in antidepressant response.

Copy number variants (CNVs) are submicroscopic deletions and duplications in genomic DNA that have been implicated in a variety of different psychiatric disorders including schizophrenia, autism, ADHD and MDD (6-12). Individuals with MDD have been shown to have an increased burden of rare deleterious CNVs compared to controls (12). We hypothesise that rare deleterious CNVs may also affect how individuals respond to treatment with antidepressants. To date, there is no published report on the relationship between CNVs and response to treatment with antidepressants. In this manuscript, we use information from Illumina genotyping arrays to assess the role of CNVs in response to treatment with antidepressants in individuals with MDD.

Materials and Methods:

Sample

The Novel Methods leading to New Medications in Depression and Schizophrenia (NEWMEDS)(http://www.newmeds-europe.com) sample included 2,146 treatment seeking adults diagnosed with MDD according to DSM-IV/ICD-10, with prospective data on outcome of treatment with SRI or NRI antidepressants for up to 12 weeks (1). This sample
combined data from studies conducted by academic institutions (GENDEP, n=868; GENPOD, n=601; GODS, n=131) (2, 13, 14) and pharmaceutical industry members of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA; Pfizer, n=355; GSK, n=191). Individuals were excluded if they had diagnoses of schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder or current alcohol or drug dependence. Individuals were given either an antidepressant that acts primarily through blocking the reuptake of serotonin (SSRI: escitalopram, citalopram, paroxetine, sertraline, fluoxetine) or an antidepressant that acts primarily through blocking the reuptake of norepinephrine (NRI: nortriptyline, reboxetine).

Further information on the component studies can be found in Supplementary materials.

**Genotyping**

All DNA samples were from venous blood. Information was available from 1,166 samples genotyped on the Illumina 660W BeadChip and 746 samples genotyped on the Illumina 610Quad BeadChip (Illumina, San Diego, USA), which have identical tag SNP coverage. Raw Illumina data in the form of .idat files were imported into GenomeStudio and processed according to Illumina's recommended guidelines to derive the log R ratio (LRR) and B allele frequency (BAF) for each marker within each sample. A consensus marker set between the Illumina arrays of 561,733 markers was used.

**CNV Calling**

LRR and BAF data was processed with PennCNV (15) (version dated June 2011) and QuantiSNP (16) (version 2.3) using all markers and within-sample correction for waviness artefacts attributable to local GC content. The 'HD' prior parameter settings for LRR thresholds were used within the QuantiSNP analysis, as recommended by the author.
Due to variability between calling algorithms, we used two CNV calling algorithms (PennCNV and QuantiSNP) to minimize the number of false calls. A recent study showed the use of multiple calling algorithms increases the likelihood of validation by PCR to greater than 95% (17). CNV calls were merged between PennCNV and QuantiSNP. Specifically, a call or calls made by QuantiSNP or PennCNV were merged into a consensus call if, within the same sample, the calls overlapped. Only calls with overlap of greater than 50% between the two regions were used for onward analysis. We excluded any call made with less than 10 consecutive markers, and any CNV where 50% of the call covered a region within 500kb of the telomere, centromere or immunoglobulin regions, or a region where the marker density of the consensus marker set dropped below one marker in 200,000bp.

**Sample and CNV Quality Control**

Sample QC was performed using sample-wide metrics calculated by PennCNV. A sample was excluded from further analysis if any of the following criteria were met: (A) the standard deviation of the LRR for autosomes was greater than 0.25, (B) the standard deviation for the BAF for autosomes was greater than 0.04, (C) the drift of BAF values exceeded 0.002, (D) the waviness factor was greater than 0.04 or less than -0.04, (E) the genotype call rate was less than 98%, (F) the logarithm of the total number of CNVs called by either algorithm before CNV call QC and after samples were excluded by steps A-E exceeded three standard deviations from the mean.

Only samples which passed quality control for our whole genome association study were considered for the analysis of CNVs. This ensured that individuals with ambiguous sex (n=22), abnormal heterozygosity (n=16), cryptic relatedness up to third-degree relatives by identity by descent (n=20), and non-European ethnicity admixture detected as outliers in an iterative EIGENSTRAT analysis of an LD-pruned dataset (n=35) (1) did not impact on the association results.
Definition of Antidepressant Response Phenotype

We defined antidepressant response as a proportional reduction in symptoms over the course of treatment, consistent with previous reports (1, 2). Proportional improvement in depression severity was created for each component study based on the primary depression rating scale from baseline to the end of treatment, adjusted for age, sex and recruiting centre. Depression severity was measured by one of three primary rating scales (Montgomery-Åsberg Depression Rating Scale, Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression, Beck Depression Inventory) (18). The adjusted change score for each component study was z-transformed within each study to remove correlation between data origin and outcome and to eliminate study specific effects.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analyses were done using PLINK (19) and STATA/SE 10 (20). PLINK was used to determine number of CNVs and total size of CNVs for each individual. In addition to analyzing the effect of all CNVs, we also separately examined the effects of common CNVs (found in more than 10% of individuals) and rare CNVs (found in less than 10% of individuals). Analyses were undertaken to investigate the effects of harbouring any CNVs, and more specifically for the effect of deletion or duplication CNVs. CNVs were further annotated as to whether they covering gene-coding regions (genic) or exon-coding regions (exonic) as defined by RefSeq gene annotation coordinates obtainable from the UCSC genome browser (http://genome.ucsc.edu). For information about the number of individuals with a CNV in each of the categories examined, see supplementary materials.

CNV data were analysed using four linear regressions: (1) the entire sample, (2) only those individuals taking a SSRI, (3) only those individuals taking a NRI, (4) differential response to treatment with either a SSRI or NRI (CNV by drug interaction). Analyses were co-varied for the standard deviation of the log relative ratio and four principal components from the final
iteration of the EIGENSTRAT analysis of LD-pruned genetic data to minimise the influence of population stratification (1).

Analyses were also performed within each contributing sample and meta-analysed (see Supplementary materials).

**Power Analysis**

We aimed to determine if presence, number or burden of CNVs would predict response to antidepressant treatment in a clinically significant way. Simulations based on large antidepressant treatment trials have shown that a prediction is usually judged to be clinically significant if it explains at least 6.33% of the variance in the response outcome (21). Using the `pwr` package (Power analysis functions along the lines of Cohen (22)) in R (23), we calculated the power of our four analyses (whole sample, serotonergic, noradrenergic, and gene by drug interaction). All of our analyses had power (greater than 90%) to detect a clinically significant finding at the alpha level of p<0.05. All analyses had an adequate statistical power (>80%) to detect even a signal that explains only half of what would be clinically significant prediction.

**Results**

In the combined sample, 1,565 individuals passed quality control for both the whole genome association study and the CNV calls.

We found no association between presence of any CNV, total number of CNVs or global CNV burden and response to any antidepressant, serotonergic antidepressants, noradrenergic antidepressants or differential response to serotonergic and noradrenergic antidepressants (Table 1). There was no relationship with rare or common CNVs or deletions or duplications.

We carried out additional analyses, restricted to CNVs which encompassed gene coding regions (genic) or exon coding regions (exonic), but we found no significant association
between presence of CNV, global number of CNVs or global CNV burden and antidepressant response, response to serotonergic antidepressants, response to noradrenergic antidepressants or differential response to serotonergic and noradrenergic antidepressants (Tables 2 and 3). Furthermore, there was no association with genic or exonic rare or common CNVs or deletions or duplications.

**Discussion**

CNVs have been implicated in the aetiology of several psychiatric disorders including major depression where we have previously reported an overall excess of deletions affecting exons in cases compared with controls (Rucker paper). It is reasonable to hypothesise that CNVs might also influence the form or course of the illness and this is the first investigation into the relationship between antidepressant response and CNVs. We took a comprehensive approach to explore the role of CNVs in response to antidepressant treatment by assessing both global number and burden of CNVs and considering possibly specific roles of duplications, deletions, rare, common, genic and exonic CNVs. However in each of these analyses, we found no association between CNVs and antidepressant response.

Our negative results for the role of CNVs and antidepressant response add to the growing literature of negative genome wide association studies (GWAS) for antidepressant response (1-5). By contrast, analysis of GWAS data on response to antidepressants provides perhaps the best evidence to date that it is a heritable trait (Tansey in press BP paper). While there are still other forms of genetic variation that have yet to be investigated, such as rare or personal single nucleotide mutations, it seems unlikely that any single genetic variation or simple combination of variants will be clinically useful in the personalising antidepressant medication. What is emerging instead is that antidepressant response is a complex polygenic (and likely polyenvironmental) quantitative trait. It remains to be seen whether more complex
combinatorial approaches, based for example on machine learning, can help tease out key genetic elements.

Our study has several limitations which should be taken into consideration when interpreting these results. Our analysis classifies antidepressants into mechanism of action (serotonergic versus noradrenergic) and cannot inform about the role of CNVs for a specific drug. Furthermore, our analysis focused on global measures of CNVs rather than specific deletions or duplication events which may affect an individual’s response to treatment. We obtained our large sample by bringing together numerous different studies which differ by rating scale used and method to recruit subjects. We took these steps as we are interested in predictors of antidepressant response which generalize to most individuals with MDD. Furthermore, our studies focus only on individuals of Caucasian/European ancestry and monoaminergic antidepressants. Results in other population and/or in drugs whose mechanism of action is non-monoaminergic may yield different results.

Conclusions

We have investigated for the first time the role of CNVs in response to treatment with antidepressants. We find no association between antidepressant response for global number or burden of CNVs. The growing literature of negative genetic associations for antidepressant response implies that use of some types of genetic information to personalise treatment of MDD is not likely in the near future. Future large studies investigating known functional variants not adequately captured by this type of analysis and various clinical and biological features, such as transcriptomics and/or epigenomics, are needed along with complex multivariate prediction algorithms to personalise treatment of MDD with antidepressants.
Grant Support

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Author Contribution

Tansey carried out the data analysis. Rucker called the CNVs using Penn and QuantiSNP. Tansey and Uher wrote the report. Guipponi undertook the genotyping. C.M.Lewis supervised the statistical analyses and critically revised the report. Perroud, Bondolfi,
Domenici, Evans, Hall, Hauser, Henigsberg, Hu, Jerman, Maier, Mors, O’Donovan, Peters, Placentino, Rietschel, Souery, Aitchison, Craig, Farmer, Malafosse, and G. Lewis contributed to study design, recruited participants, processed samples and aided in preparation of the manuscript. Wendland, Bryan Stensbøl, Kapur, McGuffin, and Uher conceived the study and critically revised the report. McGuffin and Uher oversaw all aspects of the study. Tansey and Uher had full access to all of the data in the study and take responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.
References:


19. Purcell S, Neale B, Todd-Brown K, Thomas L, Ferreira MA, Bender D, Maller J, Sklar P, de Bakker PI, Daly MJ, Sham PC. PLINK: a tool set for whole-genome association and population-based linkage analyses. Am J Hum Genet 2007; 81:559-75
Table 1: NEWMEDS CNV results for ALL CNVs. Regression coefficient is standardized and can be interpreted as a measure of effect size. Positive values of regression coefficient mean that carriers of more minor alleles had better treatment outcome. Negative values of regression coefficient mean that carriers of more minor alleles had worse outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All CNVs</th>
<th>Whole Sample Analysis (n=1,565)</th>
<th>Serotonergic Analysis (n=1,046)</th>
<th>Noradrenergic Analysis (n=519)</th>
<th>Gene by Drug Interaction (n=1,565)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient (SE)</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>Coefficient (SE)</td>
<td>p-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Any CNV</td>
<td>-0.015 (0.058)</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td>-0.0001 (0.0711)</td>
<td>0.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.034 (0.104)</td>
<td>0.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of CNVs</td>
<td>-0.012 (0.021)</td>
<td>0.572</td>
<td>-0.022 (0.025)</td>
<td>0.384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.022 (0.037)</td>
<td>0.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burden of CNVs</td>
<td>0.000002 (0.00005)</td>
<td>0.739</td>
<td>-0.00002 (0.00007)</td>
<td>0.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00005 (0.00006)</td>
<td>0.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any deletion CNV</td>
<td>-0.082 (0.051)</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>-0.108 (0.062)</td>
<td>0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.013 (0.090)</td>
<td>0.884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of deletion CNVs</td>
<td>-0.043 (0.036)</td>
<td>0.232</td>
<td>-0.045 (0.044)</td>
<td>0.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.025 (0.062)</td>
<td>0.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burden of deletion CNVs</td>
<td>0.000009 (0.00007)</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td>-0.00002 (0.00001)</td>
<td>0.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00006 (0.00008)</td>
<td>0.425</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any duplication CNV</td>
<td>0.038 (0.051)</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>0.041 (0.062)</td>
<td>0.514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.044 (0.090)</td>
<td>0.623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of duplication CNVs</td>
<td>0.004 (0.025)</td>
<td>0.870</td>
<td>-0.010 (0.031)</td>
<td>0.739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.042 (0.043)</td>
<td>0.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burden of duplication CNVs</td>
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<td>0.743</td>
<td>0.000002 (0.00001)</td>
<td>0.766</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000004 (0.00001)</td>
<td>0.759</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any rare CNV</td>
<td>-0.012 (0.050)</td>
<td>0.812</td>
<td>-0.043 (0.061)</td>
<td>0.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.064 (0.087)</td>
<td>0.463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of rare CNVs</td>
<td>-0.008 (0.028)</td>
<td>0.789</td>
<td>-0.034 (0.035)</td>
<td>0.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.058 (0.049)</td>
<td>0.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burden of rare CNVs</td>
<td>0.000003 (0.00005)</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>-0.00001 (0.00008)</td>
<td>0.856</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00007 (0.00007)</td>
<td>0.318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any rare deletion CNV</td>
<td>-0.069 (0.055)</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>-0.103 (0.067)</td>
<td>0.124</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.016 (0.096)</td>
<td>0.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of rare deletion CNVs</td>
<td>-0.033 (0.042)</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>-0.047 (0.052)</td>
<td>0.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.007 (0.071)</td>
<td>0.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burden of rare deletion CNVs</td>
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<td>0.742</td>
<td>-0.0001 (0.0002)</td>
<td>0.363</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00007 (0.00008)</td>
<td>0.382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any rare duplication CNV</td>
<td>0.020 (0.707)</td>
<td>0.707</td>
<td>-0.021 (0.741)</td>
<td>0.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0.207</td>
<td>0.152</td>
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<td>0.166</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.064)</td>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of rare duplication CNVs</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>0.699</td>
<td>0.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.076)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burden of rare duplication CNVs</td>
<td>0.00003</td>
<td>0.00003</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>0.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00007)</td>
<td>(0.00009)</td>
<td>(0.0001)</td>
<td>(0.0002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any common CNV</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.610</td>
<td>0.429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.050)</td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
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Table 2: NEWMEds CNV results for CNVs encompassing regions annotated to harbour genes. Regression coefficient is standardized and can be interpreted as a measure of effect size. Positive values of regression coefficient mean that carriers of more minor alleles had better treatment outcome. Negative values of regression coefficient mean that carriers of more minor alleles had worse outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENIC CNVs</th>
<th>Whole Sample Analysis (n=1,565)</th>
<th>Serotonergic Analysis (n=1,046)</th>
<th>Noradrenergic Analysis (n=519)</th>
<th>Gene by Drug Interaction (n=1,565)</th>
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<td>Coefficient (SE)</td>
<td>p-value</td>
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21
Table 3: NEWMEDS CNV results for CNVs annotated to encompass exonic regions of genes. Regression coefficient is standardized and can be interpreted as a measure of effect size. Positive values of regression coefficient mean that carriers of more minor alleles had better treatment outcome. Negative values of regression coefficient mean that carriers of more minor alleles had worse outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXOMIC CNVs</th>
<th>Whole Sample Analysis (n=1,565)</th>
<th>Serotonergic Analysis (n=1,046)</th>
<th>Noradrenergic Analysis (n=519)</th>
<th>Gene by Drug Interaction (n=1,565)</th>
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<td>Coefficient (SE)</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>Coefficient (SE)</td>
<td>p-value</td>
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<td>0.175</td>
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<td>Burden of common deletion CNVs</td>
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<td>0.365</td>
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<td>0.920</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.018</td>
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<td>0.883</td>
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