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Shared genetic background between children and adults with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder

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Abstract

1 Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common neurodevelopmental
2 disorder characterized by age-inappropriate symptoms of inattention, impulsivity and
3 hyperactivity that persist into adulthood in the majority of the diagnosed children.
4 Despite several risk factors during childhood predicting the persistence of ADHD
5 symptoms into adulthood, the genetic architecture underlying the trajectory of ADHD
6 over time is still unclear. We set out to study the contribution of common genetic
7 variants to the risk for ADHD across the lifespan by conducting meta-analyses of
8 genome-wide association studies on persistent ADHD in adults and ADHD in childhood
9 separately and jointly, and by comparing the genetic background between them in a
10 total sample of 17 149 cases and 32 411 controls. Our results show nine new
11 independent loci and support a shared contribution of common genetic variants to
12 ADHD in children and adults. No subgroup heterogeneity was observed among
13 children, while this group consists of future remitting and persistent individuals. We
14 report similar patterns of genetic correlation of ADHD with other ADHD-related
15 datasets and different traits and disorders among adults, children, and when combining
16 both groups. These findings confirm that persistent ADHD in adults is a
17 neurodevelopmental disorder and extend the existing hypothesis of a shared genetic
18 architecture underlying ADHD and different traits to a lifespan perspective.

19

20 Introduction

21 Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common neurodevelopmental
22 disorder that severely impairs the daily functioning of patients due to age-inappropriate
23 levels of impulsivity and hyperactivity, and/or difficulties in focusing attention [1].
24 ADHD has a prevalence of 5-6% in childhood, and impairing symptoms persist into
25 adulthood in around two-thirds of children with ADHD diagnosis, with an estimated
26 adult prevalence around 3.4%[1, 2].

27 ADHD is a multifactorial disorder with heritability averaging 76% throughout the
28 lifespan[3-5]. There is consistent evidence that both common and rare variants make an
29 important contribution to the risk for the disorder[6-11]. Several genome-wide
30 association studies (GWAS) and meta-analyses across those have been conducted[7],
31 but only the largest GWAS meta-analysis (GWAS-MA) performed to date reported
32 genome-wide significant loci[6]. This study concluded that common genetic variants
33 (minor allele frequency, MAF, >0.01) account for 22% of the heritability of the
34 disorder[6] and supported substantial genetic overlap between ADHD and other brain
35 disorders and behavioral/cognitive traits[6,12].

36 The presentation of ADHD symptoms changes from childhood to adulthood, with lower
37 levels of hyperactivity in adulthood but a high risk for ongoing attention problems,
38 disorganization, and emotional dysregulation[13, 14]. As in the general population, the
39 pattern of psychiatric and somatic comorbid conditions in ADHD also changes
40 substantially over time, with learning disabilities, oppositional defiant disorder, and
41 conduct disorder being more prevalent in children, and substance use disorders, social
42 phobia, insomnia, obesity, and mood disorders becoming more pronounced in
43 adulthood[1, 15-18]. In addition, persistent ADHD in adults is, compared to the general
44 population (and to cases with remitting ADHD), associated with higher risk for a wide

45 range of functional and social impairments, including unemployment, accidents, and
46 criminal behavior[7, 19-23].

47 Several risk factors measured in childhood predict the persistence of ADHD symptoms
48 into adulthood, such as the presence of comorbid disorders, the severity of ADHD
49 symptoms, being exposed to psychosocial adversity as well as having a high polygenic
50 risk score for childhood ADHD[24-28]. Twin studies suggest that both stable and
51 dynamic genetic influences affect the persistence of ADHD symptoms[4, 5, 29, 30].
52 However, specific genetic factors differentiating childhood and persistent ADHD into
53 adulthood are not well understood due to the lack of longitudinal studies. Molecular
54 studies, including the most recent GWAS-MA of ADHD[6], have been performed in
55 children and adults either separately or jointly[6, 31-40], but large-scale analyses
56 comparing their genetic basis are yet to be conducted.

57 Given this background, we set out to study the contribution of common genetic variants
58 to the risk for ADHD from a lifespan perspective by conducting the largest GWAS-
59 MAs performed so far on persistent ADHD in adults (diagnosed according to DSM-
60 IV/ICD-10 criteria) and on ADHD in childhood (that may include remittent and
61 persistent forms of the disorder) separately and jointly. For the first time, we estimated
62 the genetic correlation between childhood and persistent ADHD, compared their
63 patterns of genetic correlation with other traits and disorders, assessed the effect of
64 childhood ADHD polygenic risk scores on persistent ADHD and explored whether
65 individuals in which ADHD symptoms may persist into adulthood could be
66 distinguished already in childhood using genetic data.

67

68

69 **Material and Methods**

70 **Sample description**

71 A total of 19 GWAS of ADHD comprising 49 560 individuals (17 149 cases and 32 411
72 controls), provided by the Psychiatric Genomics Consortium (PGC), the Lundbeck
73 Foundation Initiative for Integrative Psychiatric Research (iPSYCH), and the
74 International Multi-centre persistent ADHD CollaboraTion (IMpACT), were analyzed.
75 All participants were of European ancestry, had provided informed consent and all sites
76 had documented permission from local ethics committees.

77 The meta-analysis on persistent ADHD was conducted in 22 406 individuals (6 532
78 ADHD adult cases and 15 874 controls) using six datasets from the IMpACT
79 consortium, two datasets from the PGC, and the adult subset from the iPSYCH cohort
80 included in Demontis and Walters et al.[6] The meta-analysis on ADHD in childhood
81 included 27 154 individuals (10 617 cases and 16 537 controls), comprising two
82 Brazilian and Spanish cohorts, seven datasets from the PGC, and the children subset
83 from the iPSYCH cohort included in Demontis and Walters et al.[6] All patients met
84 DSM-IV/ICD-10 diagnostic criteria. In total, 7 086 new samples not included in
85 Demontis and Walters et al.[6] were considered in the present study. Detailed
86 information on each dataset is provided in Table S1 and in the Supplementary Methods.

87 **GWAS and meta-analyses**

88 Genotyping platforms and quality control (QC) filters for each of the datasets are shown
89 in Table S1. Pre-imputation QC at individual and SNP level were performed using the
90 Rapid Imputation and COmputational PIpeLline (RicoPili) with the default settings
91 (<https://sites.google.com/a/broadinstitute.org/ricopili/>). Non-European ancestry samples,
92 related and duplicated individuals, and subjects with sex discrepancies were excluded.

93 Phasing of genotype data was performed using the SHAPEIT2 algorithm, and
94 imputation for unrelated samples and trios was performed with MaCH, IMPUTE2, or
95 MINIMAC3 (<http://genome.sph.umich.edu/wiki/Minimac3>) depending on software
96 availability at the time of imputation[41-43] (Table S1). The European ancestry panel of
97 the 1 000 Genomes Project using genome build hg19 was considered as reference for
98 genotype imputation (<ftp://ftp.1000genomes.ebi.ac.uk/vol1/ftp/>). After imputation, the
99 association with ADHD of genotype dosages was tested using logistic regression in
100 PLINK 1.9[44], assuming an additive genetic model and including sex, the first 10
101 principal components, and other relevant covariates for each case-control study (Table
102 S1). GWAS summary statistics were filtered prior to meta-analysis, excluding variants
103 with MAF <0.01, and imputation quality scores (INFO) ≤ 0.8 . Inverse-variance
104 weighted fixed-effects meta-analyses were conducted using METAL[45] and results
105 were filtered by effective sample size >70% of the total, defined as $N_{\text{eff}} = \frac{2}{\left(\frac{1}{N_{\text{ca}}}\right) + \left(\frac{1}{N_{\text{co}}}\right)}$
106 [46]. The genome-wide significance threshold was set at $P < 5.00E-08$ to correct for
107 multiple testing. Independent loci for variants exceeding this threshold were defined
108 based on clumping using PLINK 1.9. Variants that were ± 250 kb away from the index
109 variant (variant with smallest P-value in the region), with $P\text{-value} < 0.001$, and with an
110 estimated linkage disequilibrium (LD) of $r^2 > 0.2$ with the index variant were assigned to
111 a clump ($p_1 = 5.00E-08$, $p_2 = 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.2$, $\text{kb} = 250$). Manhattan and Forest plots were
112 generated using the ‘qqman’ and ‘forestplot’ R packages (3.4.4 R version), respectively.
113 The LocusZoom software[47] was used to generate regional association plots.

114

115 Details of downstream analyses for top-signals identified are provided in the online
116 supplement and include conditional analysis, Bayesian credible set analysis and
117 functional characterization of the significant variants.

118 SNP-based heritability

119 The SNP-based heritability (SNP- h^2) was estimated by single-trait LD score regression
120 using summary statistics, HapMap 3 LD-scores, considering default SNP QC filters
121 (INFO>0.9 and MAF>0.01) and assuming population prevalence of 3.4%, 5.5% and 5%
122 for persistent ADHD, ADHD on childhood, and ADHD across the lifespan,
123 respectively[48]. Data of 1 113 287, 1 072 558, and 1 092 418 SNPs from the GWAS-
124 MA of persistent ADHD, ADHD on childhood, and ADHD across the lifespan,
125 respectively, were considered to estimate the liability scale SNP- h^2 . Partitioning and
126 enrichment of the heritability by functional categories was analyzed using the 24 main
127 annotations (no window around the functional categories) described by Finucane et
128 al[49]. Statistical significance was set using Bonferroni correction ($P<2.08E-03$).

129 Gene-based and gene-set analyses

130 MAGMA software was undertaken for gene-based and gene-set association testing
131 using summary data from our GWAS-MAs[50]. Variants were mapped to a gene if they
132 were within 20 kb upstream or downstream from the gene according to dbSNP build
133 135 and NCBI 37.3 gene definitions. Genes in the MHC region (hg19:chr6:25-35M)
134 were excluded from the analyses. LD patterns were estimated using the European
135 ancestry reference panel of the 1000 Genomes Project. Gene sets denoting canonical
136 pathways were downloaded from MSigDB
137 (<http://www.broadinstitute.org/gsea/msigdb>), which integrates Kyoto Encyclopedia of
138 Genes and Genomes (KEGG) (<http://www.genome.jp/kegg/>), BioCarta
139 (<http://www.biocarta.com/>), Reactome (<https://reactome.org/>) and Gene Ontology (GO)
140 (<http://www.geneontology.org/>) resources. Bonferroni correction ($P<2.77E-06$ for 18
141 038 genes in persistent ADHD; $P<2.75E-06$ for 18 218 genes in childhood ADHD;

142 $P < 2.79E-06$ for 17 948 genes in ADHD across the lifespan) and 10 000 permutations
143 were used for multiple testing correction in the gene-based and gene-set analyses,
144 respectively.

145 **BUHMBOX analysis**

146 The Breaking Up Heterogeneous Mixture Based On cross(X)-locus correlations
147 (BUHMBOX) analysis[51] was used to test whether the genetic correlation between
148 persistent ADHD and ADHD in childhood was driven by subgroup heterogeneity,
149 found when there is a subset of children enriched for persistent ADHD-associated
150 alleles. Subgroup heterogeneity was tested in each childhood dataset considering
151 independent SNPs ($r^2=0.1$, kb=10,000) with MAF>0.05 from the GWAS-MA of
152 persistent ADHD using two different P-value thresholds of $P < 5.00E-05$ (62 SNPs) and
153 $P < 1.00E-03$ (710 SNPs). Results were meta-analyzed using the standard weighted sum
154 of z-score approach, where z-scores are weighted by the square root of the effective
155 sample size. The statistical power was calculated using 1 000 simulations, considering
156 the ADHD children meta-analysis sample size, the odds ratios and risk allele
157 frequencies from the GWAS-MA of persistent ADHD, and assuming 65% of
158 heterogeneity proportion (π).

159 **Sign test**

160 The direction of the effect of variants associated with ADHD in childhood was tested in
161 persistent ADHD and vice versa, using strict clumping ($r^2=0.05$, kb=500, $p_2=0.5$) and
162 different P-value thresholds (1.00E-07, 5.00E-07, 1.00E-06, 5.00E-06, 1.00E-05, 5.00E-
163 05, 1.00E-04, and 5.00E-04). The concordant direction of effect was evaluated using a
164 one sample test of the proportion with Yates' continuity correction against a null
165 hypothesis of $P=0.50$ with the 'stats' R package.

166 Polygenic risk scoring

167 Polygenic risk scores (PRSs) were constructed using different P-value thresholds
168 ($P < 0.001$, 0.05, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.5, and 1) to select independent variants ($p_1=1$, $p_2=1$,
169 $r^2=0.1$, $kb=250$) from the childhood GWAS-MA of ADHD and were then tested for
170 association with persistent ADHD in each of the nine datasets, adjusting for the
171 covariates included in the GWAS and using PRSice-2
172 (<https://choishingwan.github.io/PRSice/>). Best guess genotypes for non-ambiguous
173 strand variants present in all the persistent ADHD studies (missing rate ≤ 0.02) were
174 included ($N_{SNPs}=32\ 584$ for $P=1$). Results from the nine PRS analyses at each P-value
175 threshold were combined using inverse-variance weighted meta-analysis.

176 Genetic correlation

177 Cross-trait LD score regression with unconstrained intercept was used to calculate
178 genetic correlations (r_g) between pairs of traits, considering HapMap3 LD-scores,
179 markers with $INFO \geq 0.90$, and excluding the MHC region (hg19:chr6:25-35M)[48].
180 Other ADHD datasets[6, 52] and phenotypes from the LD-hub centralized database[53]
181 with heritability z-scores (observed heritability/observed standard error) > 4 and with an
182 observed heritability > 0.1 were considered ($N=139$ out of 689 available traits).
183 Statistical significance was set using Bonferroni correction ($P < 3.60E-04$). Pearson's
184 correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) was calculated between the genetic correlations of
185 persistent ADHD with the phenotypes from the LD-hub and the genetic correlations of
186 ADHD in childhood with the phenotypes from the LD-hub.

187

188

189 **Results**190 **GWAS meta-analysis of persistent ADHD in adults**

191 The GWAS-MA of persistent ADHD in adults included 6 532 adult ADHD cases and
192 15 874 controls. Minimal population stratification or other systematic biases were
193 detected (LD score regression intercept=1.01, Figure S1A). The proportion of
194 heritability of persistent ADHD attributable to common single nucleotide
195 polymorphisms on the liability-scale (SNP- h^2) was 0.19 (SE=0.024), with a nominally
196 significant enrichment in the heritability of variants located in conserved genomic
197 regions (P=5.18E-03) and in the cell-specific histone mark H3K4me1 (P=3.17E-02)
198 (Figure S2A). The gene-based analysis revealed six genes in four loci (*ST3GAL3*,
199 *FRAT1/FRAT2*, *CGBI*, and *RNF225/ZNF584*) significantly associated with persistent
200 ADHD, with *ST3GAL3* being the most significant one (P=8.72E-07) (Table S2A). The
201 single-marker analysis showed no variants exceeding genome-wide significance, with
202 the most significant signal being rs3923931 (P=1.69E-07) (Figure 1A and Table S3A).
203 Similarly, no significant gene sets were identified in the pathway analysis after
204 correction for multiple comparisons (Table S4A [excel file]).

205 **GWAS meta-analysis of ADHD in childhood**

206 To compare the genetic background between persistent ADHD in adults and ADHD in
207 childhood (that may include future remittent and persistent forms of the disorder), we
208 conducted a GWAS-MA on children with ADHD in a total of 10 617 ADHD cases and
209 16 537 controls. We found no evidence of genomic inflation or population stratification
210 (LD score regression intercept=1.02, Figure S1B). The liability-scale SNP- h^2 for ADHD
211 in childhood was 0.19 (SE=0.021), with a significant enrichment in the heritability of
212 variants located in conserved genomic regions after Bonferroni correction (P=1.21E-06)

213 (Figure S2B). The gene-based analysis highlighted a significant association between
214 *FEZF1* and ADHD in childhood ($P=5.42E-07$) (Table S2B). No single genetic variant
215 exceeded genome-wide significance, with the top signal being in rs55686778 ($P=1.67E-$
216 07) (Figure 1B and Table S3B), and no significant gene sets were identified in the
217 pathway analysis after correction for multiple comparisons (Table S4B [excel file]).

218 **Comparison of the genetic background of persistent ADHD in adults and ADHD in** 219 **childhood**

220 We found a strong genetic correlation between persistent ADHD in adults and ADHD
221 in childhood ($r_g=0.81$, 95% CI: 0.64-0.97), significantly different from 0 ($P=2.13E-21$)
222 and from 1 ($P=0.02$). Sign test results provided evidence of a consistent direction of
223 effect of genetic variants associated with ADHD in childhood in persistent ADHD and
224 vice-versa ($P=6.60E-04$ and $P=4.47E-03$, respectively for variants with $P<5.00E-05$ in
225 each dataset) (Table S5). In addition, PRS analyses showed that childhood ADHD PRSs
226 were associated with persistent ADHD at different predefined P-value thresholds, with
227 the $P=0.40$ threshold ($N_{SNPs}=20\ 398$) explaining the most variance ($R^2=0.0041$ and
228 $P=1.20E-27$) (Figure 2A). The quintiles of the PRS built using this threshold showed the
229 expected trend of higher ADHD risk for individuals in higher quintiles (Figure 2B,
230 Table S6).

231 We then tested whether the genetic correlation between persistent ADHD and ADHD in
232 childhood was driven by a subset of children enriched for persistent ADHD-associated
233 alleles using the Breaking Up Heterogeneous Mixture Based On Cross-locus
234 correlations (BUHMBOX) analysis. We found no evidence of subgroup genetic
235 heterogeneity in children, supporting that the sharing of persistent ADHD-associated
236 alleles between children and adults was driven by the whole group of children, with a

237 statistical power of 98.4% and 100% for thresholds of $P < 5.00E-05$ and $P < 1.00E-03$,
238 respectively (Table S7).

239 **GWAS meta-analysis of ADHD across the lifespan**

240 Given the strong genetic correlation between persistent ADHD in adults and in
241 childhood, we performed a GWAS-MA of ADHD across the lifespan considering all
242 datasets included in the GWAS-MAs. In total, 17 149 ADHD cases and 32 411 controls
243 were included, and no evidence of genomic inflation or population stratification was
244 found (LD score regression intercept=1.03, Figure S1C). The liability-scale SNP- h^2 for
245 ADHD across the lifespan was 0.17 (SE=0.013), and a significant enrichment in the
246 heritability of variants located in conserved genomic regions was observed after
247 Bonferroni correction ($P=1.53E-06$) (Figure S2C). We identified four genome-wide
248 significant variants (Figure 1C, Figure 3, Table 1A and Figure S3) and nine genes in
249 seven loci (*FEZF1*, *DUSP6*, *ST3GAL3/KDM4A*, *SEMA6D*, *C2orf82/GIGYF2*, *AMN*,
250 and *FBXL17*) significantly associated with ADHD across the lifespan (Table 1B). The
251 most significantly associated locus was on chromosome 6 (index variant rs183882582-
252 T, OR=1.43 (95% CI 1.26-1.60), $P=1.57E-08$), followed by loci on chromosome 7
253 (index variant rs3958046), chromosome 4 (index variant rs200721207) and
254 chromosome 3 (index variant rs1920644) (Table 1A, Figure 3). The gene-set analysis
255 showed a significant association of the “ribonucleoprotein complex” GO term with
256 ADHD across the lifespan ($P_{adj}=0.021$) (Table S4C [excel file]).

257 One of the four loci identified in the single variant analysis also reached genome-wide
258 significance in the previous GWAS-MA on ADHD[6], and all of them showed
259 consistent direction of the effect in that study (Table S8A). Significant loci reported by
260 Demontis and Walters et al.[6] showed nominal association with ADHD across the

261 lifespan in our study (Table S8B and S8C), with single variant hits showing the same
262 direction of the effect (Table S8B).

263 Analyses conditioning on the index variant for the four ADHD-associated loci did not
264 reveal new independent markers. These four significant loci were functionally
265 characterized by obtaining Bayesian credible sets and searching for expression
266 quantitative trait loci (eQTL) using available data in blood or brain [54,55]. We found
267 that credible sets for three of the four loci contained at least one eQTL within 1Mb of
268 the index variant. The credible set on chromosome 6 included the index variant
269 (rs183882582) and rs12197454. This variant, in LD with the index variant ($r^2=0.56$),
270 was associated with the expression of *RSPH3* in blood and brain (P.adj<1.65E-05 and
271 P.adj=2.36E-07, respectively), and with the expression of *VIL2* in blood (P.adj=3.21E-
272 03). The credible set for the second most associated locus on chromosome 7 included 24
273 variants. The index variant, rs3958046, and other variants in this set, were eQTLs for
274 *CADPS2* in brain (maximum P.adj=2.91E-03). The credible set for the locus on
275 chromosome 4 contained 50 variants, most of them located in or near *PCDH7*, but no
276 eQTLs were identified. In the credible set for the locus on chromosome 3, which
277 included 98 variants, the index variant, rs1920644, was associated with the expression
278 of *KPNA4*, *IFT80*, and *KRT8P12* in brain (P.adj=1.16E-04, P.adj=1.40E-03, and
279 P.adj=1.77E-03, respectively). Many other variants in this set were eQTLs for these
280 genes and also for *TRIM59*, *OTOL1*, and/or *C3orf80* in brain (P.adj<0.05) (Table S9
281 [excel file]).

282 In a summary-data-based Mendelian Randomization (SMR) analysis, we used summary
283 data from the GWAS-MA of ADHD across the lifespan and the eQTL data in blood and
284 brain from Westra et al.[54] and Qi et al.[55] to identify gene expression levels
285 associated with ADHD. We found a significant association between ADHD across the

286 lifespan and *RMII* expression in blood ($P_{\text{SMR}}=5.36\text{E-}06$) (Table S10 [in excel]), finding
287 not likely to be an artifact due to LD between eQTL and other ADHD-associated
288 variants given that the P_{HEIDI} was 0.47.

289 Genetic correlation with other ADHD datasets and phenotypes

290 We found significant genetic correlations of ADHD in children and adults from the
291 previous GWAS-MA[6] ($N=53\ 296$) and persistent ADHD ($rg=0.85$, $SE=0.04$,
292 $P=5.49\text{E-}99$), ADHD in childhood ($rg=0.99$, $SE=0.03$, $P=5.02\text{E-}273$), and ADHD
293 across the lifespan ($rg=0.98$, $SE=0.01$, $P<2.23\text{E-}308$) (Table S11). When removing
294 sample overlap (LD score genetic covariance intercept=0.75) and considering only the
295 subset of new samples included in our GWAS-MA on ADHD across the lifespan ($N=7$
296 086), a significant genetic correlation was also obtained between their sample and ours
297 ($rg=0.91$, $SE=0.35$, $P=8.70\text{E-}03$).

298 We also observed significant genetic correlations between childhood ADHD symptom
299 scores from a GWAS-MA in a population of children reported by the EAGLE
300 consortium[52] ($N=17\ 666$) and persistent ADHD ($rg=0.65$, $SE=0.20$, $P=1.10\text{E-}03$),
301 ADHD in childhood ($rg=0.98$, $SE=0.21$, $P=2.76\text{E-}06$), and ADHD across the lifespan
302 ($rg=0.87$, $SE=0.19$, $P=4.80\text{E-}06$). Similarly, significant genetic correlations between
303 GWAS of self-reported ADHD status from 23andMe ($N=952\ 652$) and persistent
304 ADHD ($rg=0.75$, $SE=0.05$, $P=2.49\text{E-}45$), ADHD in childhood ($rg=0.63$, $SE=0.05$,
305 $P=1.39\text{E-}42$), and ADHD across the lifespan ($rg=0.72$, $SE=0.04$, $P=4.86\text{E-}88$) were
306 observed (Table S11).

307 We also estimated the genetic correlation of persistent ADHD in adults, ADHD in
308 childhood, and ADHD across the lifespan with all available phenotypes in LD-hub.
309 Results for 139 phenotypes passed the quality control parameters and 41 genetic

310 correlations were significant after Bonferroni correction in both children and adults with
311 persistent ADHD (Table S12 [excel file]). Again, the genetic correlations with ADHD
312 were consistent across the lifespan, with similar patterns found in adulthood and
313 childhood (Pearson's $r=0.89$) (Figure 4A, Table S12 [excel file]). The strongest genetic
314 correlations with ADHD were found for traits related to academic performance,
315 intelligence and risk-taking behaviors, including smoking and early pregnancy (Figure
316 4B).

317

Author accepted manuscript

318 **Discussion**

319

320 In the current study, we set out to explore the contribution of common genetic variants
321 to the risk of ADHD across the lifespan by conducting GWAS-MAs separately for
322 children and adults with persistent ADHD that meet DSM-IV/ICD-10 criteria. Using the
323 largest GWAS datasets available from the PGC, the iPSYCH, and IMpACT consortia
324 we found evidence for a common genetic basis for ADHD in childhood and persistent
325 ADHD in adults and identified nine new loci associated with the disorder.

326 We found a highly similar proportion of the heritability of ADHD explained by
327 common variants in children and in adults ($\text{SNP-}h^2=0.19$), which is consistent with the
328 $\text{SNP-}h^2$ estimate reported in the recent GWAS-MA on ADHD[6] ($\text{SNP-}h^2=0.22$), that
329 included children and adults, and is in line with multiple studies supporting the stability
330 of ADHD's heritability from childhood to adulthood[3-5]. These results, together with
331 the 0.81 genetic correlation found between children and adults with persistent ADHD
332 reinforce the hypothesis of the neurodevelopmental nature of persistent ADHD in
333 adults. Consistently, the sign test and the PRS analysis confirmed the extensive overlap
334 of common genetic risk variants for ADHD in childhood and adulthood.

335 In the view of the fact that children with ADHD may be an admixed group of
336 individuals whose ADHD symptoms will persist or remit in adulthood, we ran a
337 BUHMBOX analysis to elucidate if the potential "persistent" individuals could be
338 distinguishable already in childhood. Our data supported genetic similarities in ADHD
339 across the lifespan with no evidence of a subset of patients enriched for persistent
340 ADHD-associated alleles within the group of children.

341 Despite not having identified specific genetic contributions for ADHD in children or
342 persistent ADHD, our results are not inconsistent with evidence suggesting changes in

343 the genetic contribution to ADHD symptoms from childhood into adulthood, as
344 described in previous twin studies in the general population[4, 5, 29, 30]. Our study
345 design and the still limited statistical power of the GWAS-MAs may have facilitated the
346 identification of the shared genetic basis rather than specific genetic factors for
347 persistence. Also, differences between the origin of the samples (population-based
348 versus clinical) and/or discrepancies between self- and medical reports could explain
349 why we found no group-specific genetic variants. In addition, given that Chen et al. [56]
350 and Biederman et al. [57] reported that persistence of ADHD into adulthood indexed
351 stronger familial aggregation of ADHD, we cannot yet discard influences of non-
352 additive genetic effects, or other types of genetic variation, such as rare mutations or
353 copy number variation, playing a role in the different ADHD trajectories across the
354 lifespan.

355 We also found strong and significant positive genetic correlations of ADHD ascertained
356 in clinical populations of adults, children or both with other ADHD-related measures
357 from general population samples, including the largest GWAS of self-reported ADHD
358 status from 23andMe participants (N=952 652) and the GWAS-MA of childhood rating
359 scales of ADHD symptoms in the general population[52]. In agreement with previous
360 reports, these data suggest that a clinical diagnosis of ADHD in adults is an extreme
361 expression of continuous heritable traits[6] and that a single question about ever having
362 received an ADHD diagnosis, as in the 23andMe sample, may be informative for
363 molecular genetics studies.

364 Similar patterns of genetic correlation of ADHD with different somatic disorders and
365 anthropometric, cognitive, and educational traits were identified for children and adults.
366 These findings were highly similar to those observed in the recent GWAS-MA[6] and

367 further extend the existing hypothesis of a shared genetic architecture underlying
368 ADHD and these traits to a lifespan perspective.

369 We report 13 loci in gene- and SNP-based analyses for childhood ADHD, adult ADHD,
370 and/or ADHD across the lifespan. Four ADHD-associated loci were previously
371 identified by Demontis and Walters et al.[6], which was expected due to the sample
372 overlap between the two datasets. The new loci identified in the present study mainly
373 included genes involved in brain formation and function, such as *FEZF1*, a candidate
374 for autism spectrum disorder implicated in the formation of the diencephalon[58,59],
375 *RSPH3*, which participates in neuronal migration in embryonic brain[60], *CADPS2*,
376 which has been associated with psychiatric conditions due to its role in monoamine and
377 neurotrophin neurotransmission[61-65], *AMN*, which is involved in the uptake of
378 vitamin B12[65, 66], essential for brain development, neural myelination, and cognitive
379 function[67], and *FBXL17*, which has previously been related to intelligence[68].

380 The main limitation of this study is the sample overlap (85.7%) between the present
381 GWAS-MAs and the previous one by Demontis and Walters et al.[6] which highlighted
382 loci previously associated with ADHD. Although sample overlap may have inflated the
383 genetic correlation found between these studies, the estimate remained strong and
384 significant when excluding non-overlapping datasets.

385 In summary, the present cross-sectional analyses identify new genetic loci associated
386 with ADHD and, more importantly, support the hypothesis that persistent ADHD in
387 adults is a neurodevelopmental disorder that shows a high and significant genetic
388 overlap with ADHD in children. Future longitudinal studies will be required to
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856 **Figure legends**

857

858 **Figure 1. Manhattan plots of GWAS meta-analyses of (A) Nine cohorts of**
859 **persistent ADHD in adults, (B) 10 cohorts of ADHD in childhood and (C) GWAS**
860 **datasets of ADHD across the lifespan (ADHD in childhood + persistent ADHD).**
861 Horizontal lines indicate suggestive (P -value= $5.00E-06$) and genome-wide significant
862 ($P=5.00E-08$) thresholds in A-B and C, respectively.

863 **Figure 2. Polygenic risk scores for ADHD in childhood tested on persistent ADHD**
864 **as target sample. (A) Bar plot and (B) Quintile plot of meta-analysis odds ratios (OR**
865 **meta) with 95% confidence intervals for P -value threshold=0.4 using the third quintile**
866 **as baseline.**

867 **Figure 3. Regional association plots for genome-wide significant loci identified in**
868 **the GWAS meta-analysis of ADHD across the lifespan.** Each plot includes
869 information about the locus, the location and orientation of the genes in the region, the
870 local estimates of recombination rate (in the right corner), and the LD estimates of
871 surrounding SNPs with the index SNP (r^2 values are estimated based on 1 000 Genomes
872 European reference panel), which is indicated by colour (in the upper left corner).

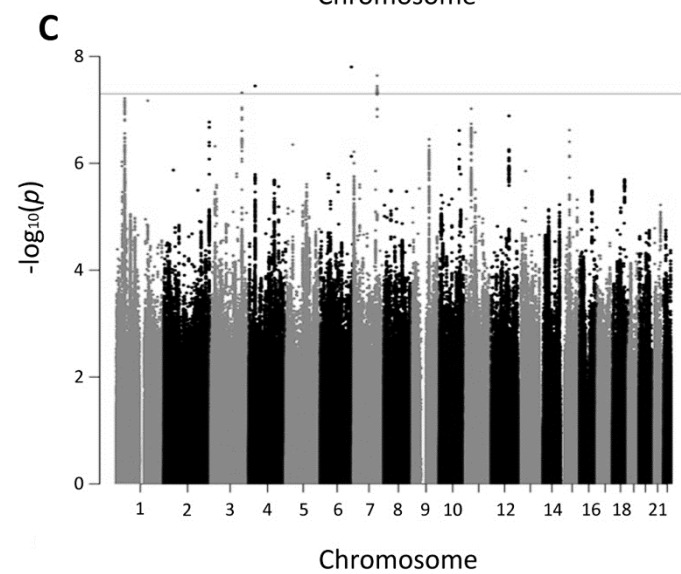
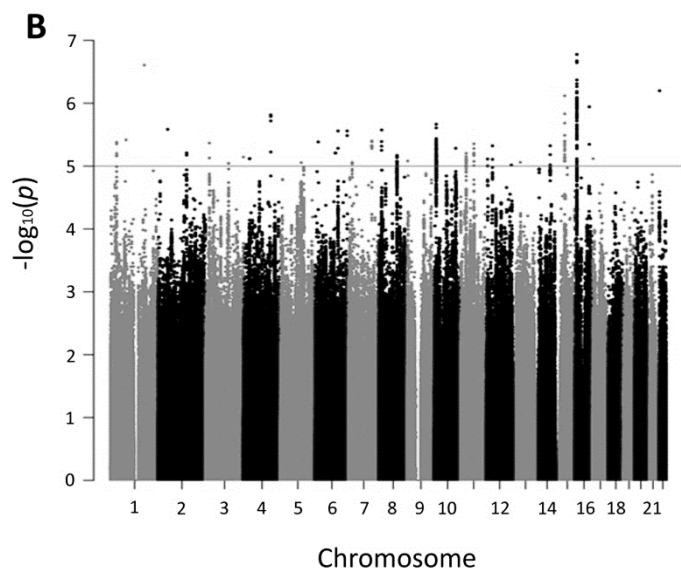
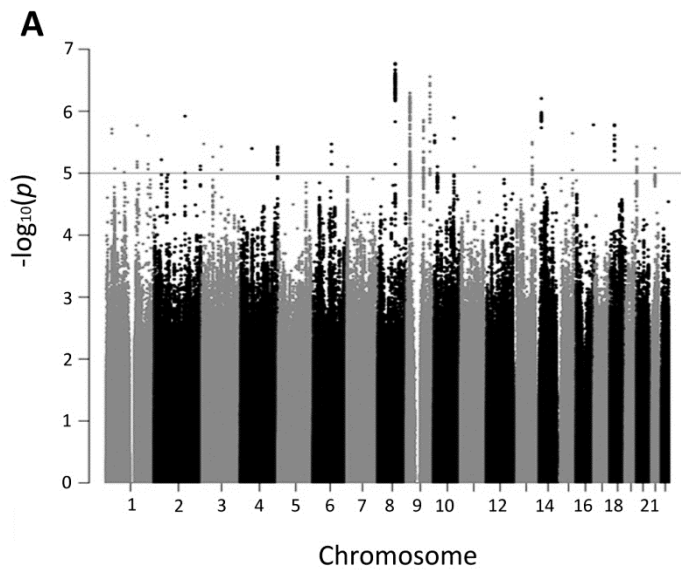
873 **Figure 4. Genetic correlation of ADHD and several traits. (A) Black and grey dots**
874 **represent genetic correlations (r_g) for all traits considered (with $h^2 > 0.1$ and z -score > 4)**
875 **and for those traits which met Bonferroni correction in both children and adult ADHD**
876 **groups, respectively. r indicates Pearson's correlation coefficient. (B) The 10 strongest**
877 **genetic correlations (with 95% confidence intervals) surpassing Bonferroni corrections**
878 **in the children and persistent ADHD analysis are shown for each trait and ADHD.**

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880 **Figures**881 **Figure 1**

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884 **Figure 2**

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886 **A**

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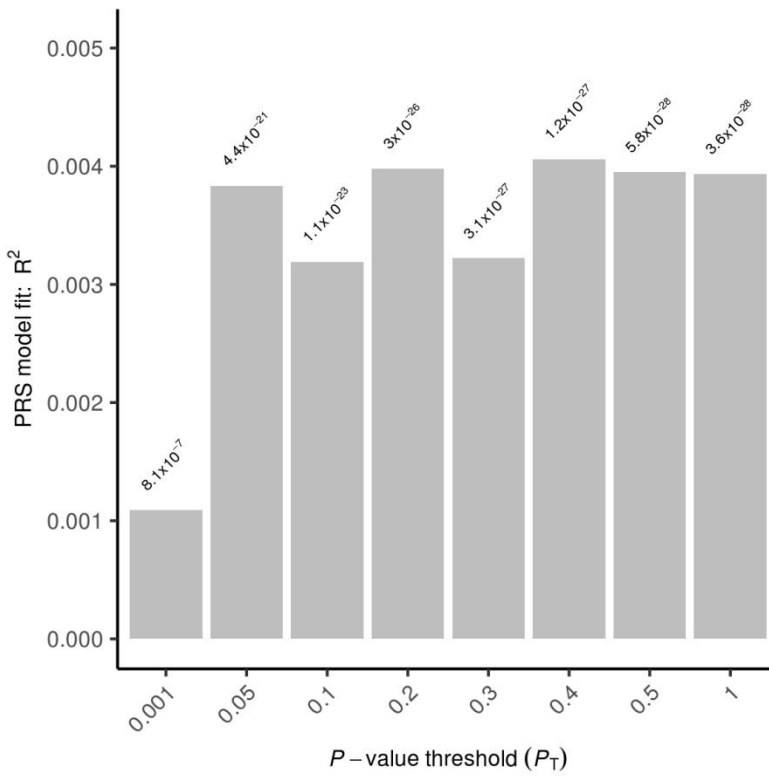
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900 **B**

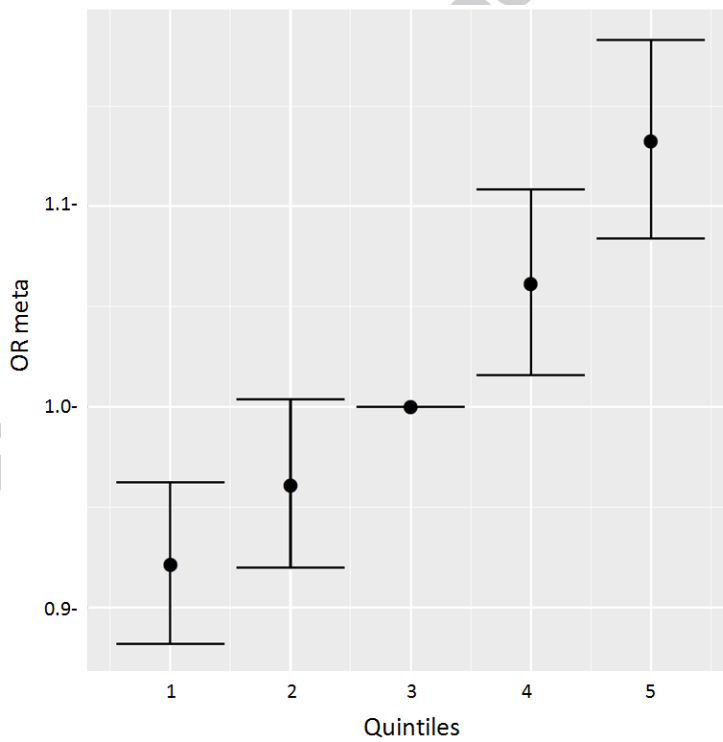


Figure 3

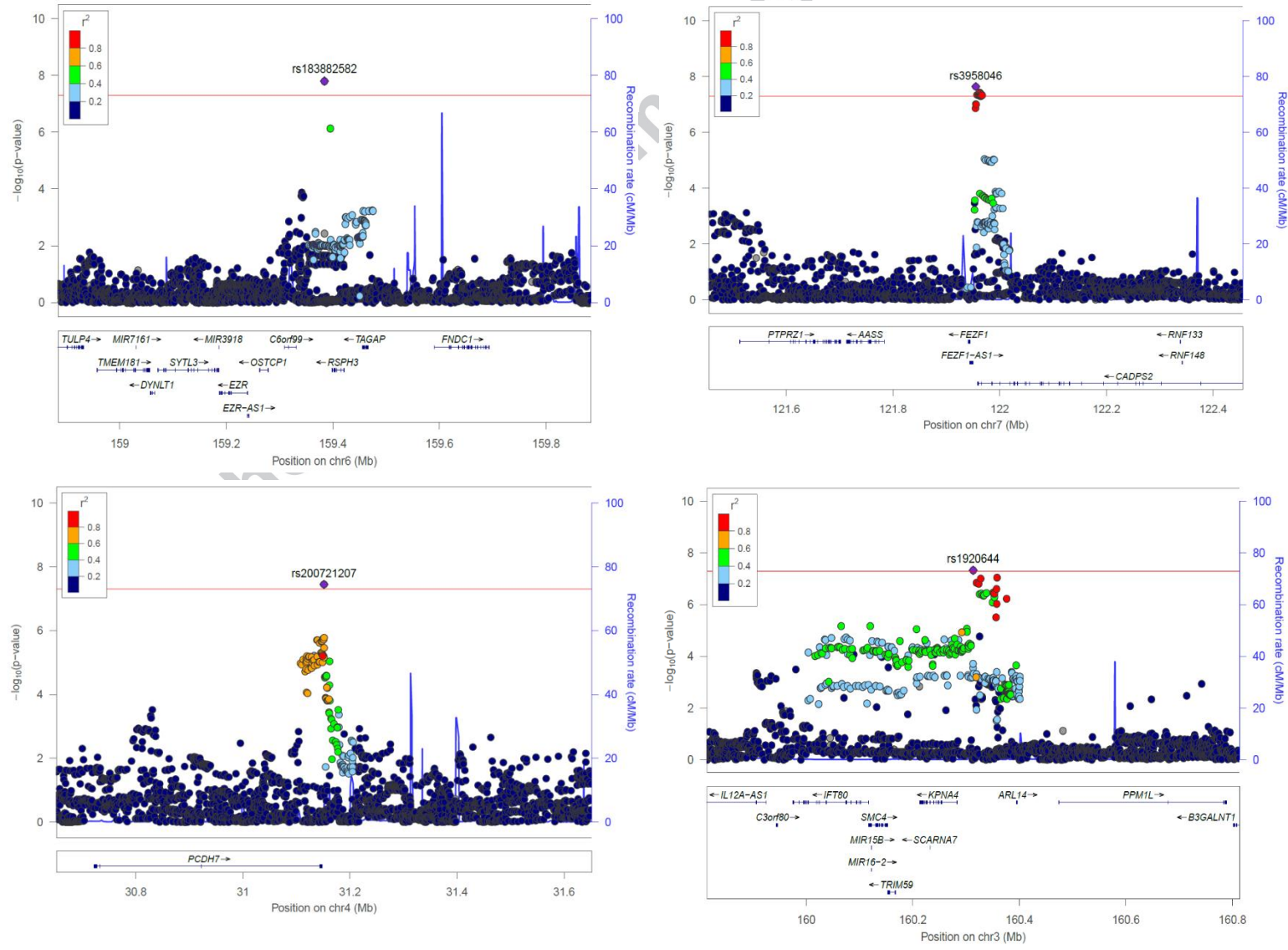


Figure 4



Table 1. Genome-wide significant loci in the GWAS meta-analysis of ADHD across the lifespan identified through (A) single-variant analysis and (B) gene-based analysis. The location (chromosome (Chr) and base position (BP)), effect allele and its frequency, odds ratio (OR) of the effect allele with 95% confidence interval (CI 95%) and association P-values, along with genes in the locus are shown for each index variant ID (SNP). For the gene-based results, the number of single nucleotide polymorphisms in the genes (*) and the number of relevant parameters used in the model by MAGMA software (**) are given.

A.

Chr	BP	SNP	Effect allele	Freq Effect allele	OR	CI 95%	P-value	Gene
6	159384224	rs183882582	T	0.98	1.43	1.26-1.60	1.57E-08	<i>RSPH3</i> (+14kb)
7	121955328	rs3958046	T	0.40	1.09	1.06-1.10	2.28E-08	<i>CADPS2</i> (+3.2kb) / <i>FEZF1</i> (-13.9kb) / <i>FEZF1-AS1</i> (+5.2kb)
4	31151465	rs200721207	T	0.66	1.10	1.06-1.13	3.56E-08	<i>PCDH7</i> (3.0kb)
3	160313354	rs1920644	T	0.52	1.09	1.05-1.12	4.74E-08	<i>BC125159</i> (+27.9kb) / <i>KPNA4</i> (-30kb) / <i>ARL14</i> (-81.6kb)

B.

Gene	Chr	Start	Stop	N SNPs*	N PARAM**	Z-STAT	P-value
<i>FEZF1</i>	7	121921373	121971173	108	18	5.6	9.57E-09
<i>DUSP6</i>	12	89721837	89766296	103	12	5.4	3.51E-08
<i>ST3GAL3</i>	1	44153204	44416837	521	19	5.4	3.58E-08
<i>SEMA6D</i>	15	47456403	48086420	1565	55	5.3	7.24E-08
<i>KDM4A</i>	1	44095797	44191189	169	13	4.9	4.34E-07
<i>C2orf82</i>	2	233713724	233761111	138	17	4.8	7.74E-07
<i>GIGYF2</i>	2	233542015	233745287	511	19	4.8	8.36E-07
<i>AMN</i>	14	103368993	103417179	101	21	4.6	2.56E-06
<i>FBXL17</i>	5	107174734	107738080	1273	35	4.6	2.59E-06