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- 1 **Classification and correlation of** *RYR2* **missense variants in individuals with catecholaminergic**
- 2 **polymorphic ventricular tachycardia reveals phenotypic relationships**
- 3
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32 **Abstract**

33 Catecholaminergic polymorphic ventricular tachycardia (CPVT) is predominantly caused by 34 heterozygous missense variants in the cardiac ryanodine receptor, *RYR2*. However, many *RYR2* 35 missense variants are classified as variants of uncertain significance (VUS). We systematically re-36 evaluated all *RYR2* variants in healthy individuals and those with CPVT or arrhythmia using the 2015 37 American College of Medical Genomics guidelines. *RYR2* variants were identified by the NW 38 Genomic Laboratory Hub, from the published literature and databases of sequence variants. Each 39 variant was assessed based on minor allele frequencies, *in silico* prediction tools and appraisal of 40 functional studies and classified according to the ACMG-AMP guidelines. Phenotype data was 41 collated where available. Of the 326 identified *RYR2* missense variants, 55 (16.9%), previously 42 disease-associated variants were re-classified as benign. Application of the gnomAD database of 43 >140,000 controls allowed reclassification of 11 variants more than the ExAC database. CPVT-44 associated *RYR2* variants clustered predominantly between amino acid positions 3949-4332 and 45 4867-4967 as well as the RyR and IP3R homology associated and ion transport domains (P < 0.005). 46 CPVT-associated *RYR2* variants occurred at more conserved amino acid positions compared to 47 controls, and variants associated with sudden death had higher conservation scores (P < 0.005). 48 There were five potentially pathogenic *RYR2* variants associated with sudden death during sleep 49 which were located almost exclusively in the C-terminus of the protein. In conclusion, control 50 sequence databases facilitate reclassification of *RYR2* variants but the majority remain as VUS. 51 Notably, pathogenic variants in *RYR2* are associated with death in sleep.

52

53 KEYWORDS: Catecholaminergic ventricular tachycardia, cardiac ryanodine receptor, variant 54 classification, arrhythmia.

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56

57 **Introduction**

58 The rare monogenic arrhythmogenic disorder catecholaminergic polymorphic ventricular 59 tachycardia (CPVT, MIM 604772) is characterised by episodic ventricular dysrhythmia triggered by 60 exercise or emotion in individuals without structural cardiac defects (1). CPVT can be inherited in 61 both an autosomal dominant form caused by heterozygous pathogenic variants in the cardiac 62 ryanodine receptor gene (*RYR2*) (MIM 180902)(2), less frequently in *CALM1* (MIM 114180)(3) 63 encoding calmodulin 1 and autosomal recessive form due to biallelic variants in *CASQ2* (MIM 64 114251)(4) encoding calsequestrin, *TRDN* (MIM 603283)(5) encoding triadin and *TECRL* (MIM 65 617242)(6). Furthermore, CPVT can also be caused by rare deletions in exon 3 of *RYR2* (7). However, 66 in such cases CPVT is often accompanied by left ventricular non-compaction (7). It is estimated that 67 one in 10,000 people are clinically affected by the condition, with sudden cardiac death being the 68 first manifestation in some individuals (1, 8, 9). The phenotypic heterogeneity of CPVT can delay or 69 obscure diagnosis. It has been reported that almost one in three individuals with CPVT are initially 70 diagnosed with long QT syndrome (LQTS) despite a normal QT interval (2). Consequently, combined 71 approaches of cardiac assessment including exercise stress testing and genetic analysis are used to 72 confirm a diagnosis of CPVT. 73 The large coding region of the cardiac ryanodine receptor (105 exons) previously made genetic 74 testing costly and time consuming using conventional DNA sequencing methods. As a result, it 75 became common practice to only screen the four regions considered to be mutation hotspots in 76 *RYR2* (10). Next generation sequencing has now become more widely available and all coding exons 77 of *RYR2* can be screened rapidly and cheaply. This has led to an increase in the number of *RYR2* 78 variants being reported in individuals with cardiac dysrhythmia or associated symptoms of 79 palpitations, syncope or sudden unexplained death. Concomitant with this has been the increase in

80 *RYR2* variants identified in apparently healthy individuals collated through international resources,

81 including the Genome Aggregation Database (gnomAD)(11). The majority of *RYR2* variants are

- 83 channel activity consistent with pathogenicity. However, the rarity of these variants and complexity
- 84 of functional assays makes it difficult to determine their pathogenicity, and so the majority are
- 85 classified as variants of uncertain significance (VUS). Recently the American College of Medical
- 86 Genetics and Genomics and the Association for Molecular Pathology (ACMG-AMP) proposed
- 87 guidelines to standardise the classification of genetic variants (12).
- 88 In this study we collate *RYR2* variants reported in individuals with, or suspected of having CPVT, and
- 89 classify them according to these ACMG guidelines and correlate the variants with clinical features.

90 **Methods**

- 91 A comprehensive search for *RYR2* variants identified in individuals undergoing genetic testing for
- 92 CPVT or an associated arrhythmia was performed. A total of 326 different *RYR2* variants was
- 93 obtained from the North West Genomic Laboratory Hub, UK (a service that has been undertaking
- 94 clinical diagnostic testing of RYR2 for >10 years), the published literature and clinical variant
- 95 databases, including ClinVar and the Human Gene Mutation Database (HGMD) (Supplementary
- 96 Table 1) (13, 14). Allele frequencies of *RYR2* variants in apparently healthy individuals were obtained
- 97 from gnomAD as a comparator, accessed online from https://gnomad.broadinstitute.org (11).
- 98 **Phenotype-Genotype analysis**
- 99 All *RYR2* variants both in control and CPVT populations were mapped to the domains, structural
- 100 motifs and regions in which they are located in the RyR2 protein (using the universal protein
- 101 resource (UniProt) accession number Q92736) with Mutation Mapper from the cBio Cancer
- 102 Genomics Portal. For the purpose of our analysis *RYR2* regions that were not associated with any
- 103 known functional or structural domains were individually labelled as 'no domain' followed by a
- 104 number ranging from 1 to 9 corresponding to their location. The proportion of missense variants in
- 105 each region/domain of *RYR2* in control and CPVT populations were compared using the Fisher's

106 exact test using GraphPad prism. To account for multiple testing a p-value < 0.005 was considered 107 significant.

108 **Variant Classification**

- 109 *RYR2* variants were classified based on the 2015 ACMG-AMP guidelines. As reported by Denham *et*
- 110 *al.* (2019) 12 of the 27 criteria listed in the ACMG-AMP guidelines were excluded from this study as
- 111 they were considered non-applicable (reasons for the exclusion of these criteria are included in
- 112 Supplementary Table 2) (15). The application of these guidelines has been previously reported
- 113 (Supplementary Table 3 and 4)(15).

114 **Criteria for segregation**

- 115 The criteria for a variant to qualify for variant segregation (PP1) required that the variant was
- 116 present in two or more members of the same family with a CPVT-like phenotype (arrhythmias,
- 117 syncope, bradycardia or sudden death). The occurrence of affected individuals in whom the putative
- 118 variant did not segregate was considered strong evidence for a benign classification (BS4).

119 **Criteria for functional studies**

- 120 Robust functional studies, including animal models, calcium imaging, cellular electrophysiology and
- 121 single channel analysis showing either a significant reduction or gain of function, were considered
- 122 strong evidence for pathogenicity (PS3). Conflicting functional data on variants was not considered
- 123 as positive evidence of pathogenicity. Functional studies that reported no change in channel
- 124 function were considered evidence for a benign classification (BS3).

125 **Criteria for variant frequency**

- 126 Variants that were absent from gnomAD were considered ultra-rare (PM2) and variants with an
- 127 allele count of below 4 were considered rare.

128 The statistical framework used to identify variants that occur too frequently in the gnomAD

- 129 database to be pathogenic has been described by Whiffin et al. (2017) (16). To summarize, it
- 130 involves the determination of the maximum credible population allele frequency for a missense
- 131 variant in *RYR2* that causes CPVT. This was calculated based on CPVT as a dominant condition with a
- 132 penetrance of approximately 60% (8). A binomial distribution of the maximum credible allele
- 133 frequency was generated for our sample of CPVT cases (observed allele number) and the upper
- 134 boundary of the 95% confidence interval (the maximum tolerated allele count) was used as the cut
- 135 off frequency. Variants that occurred more frequently than the maximum tolerated allele count in
- 136 gnomAD were considered common and this was strong evidence for a benign classification (BS1).
- 137 **Criteria for variant enrichment in CPVT cases**

138 Ultra-rare and rare variants were considered for variant enrichment analysis. The presence of an 139 ultra-rare or rare variant in at least five or ten CPVT cases, respectively, was considered as strong 140 evidence (PS4).

141 **Criteria for computational evidence**

142 To remain consistent with previously reported variant classification methods, five protein-level in 143 silico prediction tools: SIFT, PolyPhen, Mutation Taster, Mutation assessor, FATHMM and three 144 conservation tools GERP++, PhyloP conservation and SiPhy were used for the computational analysis 145 of variants where DNA positional information was provided (GERP++, PhyloP, and SiPhy scores of 146 4.4, 1.6, and 12.17, respectively were set as thresholds for conservation)(15). In addition, Consurf 147 (http://consurf.tau.ac.il/), which uses advanced probabilistic evolutionary models to distinguish true 148 conservation resulting from purifying selection and produces estimates for the credibility of the 149 results, was used to measure conservation of amino acid positions of variants in controls and CPVT 150 patients. The Consurf scores of the amino acid positions of control, CPVT and sudden death cases 151 were compared using the Mann-Whitney test using GraphPad prism, p-value <0.005 was considered 152 significant.

153 **Criteria for critical functional domain**

- 154 The location of a missense variant in the transmembrane 4-6 region or ion-transport domain of the
- 155 protein was considered as moderate evidence for a pathogenic classification, as the functional
- 156 significance of these regions has been established (17, 18).

157 **Results**

158 **Collation of RYR2 missense variants**

- 159 A total of 326 independent *RYR2* single nucleotide, non-synonymous variants associated with CPVT
- 160 or arrhythmia were identified. Of these variants 97 were present in both control and CPVT
- 161 populations. Importantly, 104 (31.9%) of the CPVT-associated *RYR2* variants were located outside of
- 162 regions previously considered mutation hotspots. The hotspot regions with the most *RYR2* variants
- 163 were domains III and IV, where 21.5% and 21.2% of variants were located, respectively. The numbers
- 164 of male and female cases were similar (Table 1).
- 165 The most common amino acid position at which missense changes occurred was Arg420. Nineteen
- 166 (19) of 440 (4.3%) independent cases were reported to have a missense change at this amino acid
- 167 position, 10 cases carried the Arg420Trp variant and 9 carried the Arg420Gln variant. The second
- 168 most common protein position for missense changes was Arg176, 8 of 440 (1.8%) cases carried the
- 169 Arg176Gln variant.

170 **Genotype-Phenotype analysis**

- 171 Several domains or regions within *RYR2* contained a significantly higher proportion of CPVT-
- 172 associated missense variants compared with controls (Figure 1 and Table 2). CPVT-associated
- 173 missense variants occurred more frequently than expected between amino acid positions 3949-4332
- 174 and 4867-4967 (No Domain regions 5 and 7). CPVT-associated *RYR2* variants were also enriched in
- 175 the RyR and IP3R homology-associated and ion transport domains when compared to control
- 176 variants (p < 0.005). In contrast, control variants clustered between amino acid positions 2906-3826

- 177 and the SPRY and RYR domain when compared to CPVT-associated variants (p < 0.005). There was
- 178 no clear relationship between sudden death and the location of CPVT-associated *RYR2* variants
- 179 (Figure 1A, Supplementary Table 5). However, five of the nine *RYR2* variants associated with sudden
- 180 death during sleep occurred in the C-terminus of the protein (Figure 1A, Supplementary Table 6).

181 **Conservation analysis**

- 182 CPVT variants occurred at positions with significantly higher Consurf scores than controls (P <
- 183 0.0001), and variants identified in individuals or families with a history of sudden death had higher

184 Consurf scores compared to variants in individuals and families without a history of sudden death (P

- 185 < 0.0001) (Figure 2). This suggests variants with Consurf scores above 7 are more likely to be CPVT-
- 186 associated and of these variants those with Consurf scores above 8 are more likely to be associated
- 187 with sudden death.

188 **Classification of RYR2 variants**

189 *RYR2* variants were classified according to the ACMG-AMP guidelines and statistical methods were

190 used to identify those variants that occurred too frequently in controls to be pathogenic, these

191 variants were classified as benign (Supplementary Table 7). Using the statistical method described by

- 192 Whiffin et al. (2017)(16), data on the most common CPVT-associated *RYR2* variant c.1258C>T
- 193 (Arg420Trp) and control populations from the ExAC or gnomAD databases, the maximum tolerated
- 194 allele count for CPVT associated *RYR2* variants was calculated (Supplementary Tables 8 and 9).
- 195 The maximum tolerated allele count for pathogenic *RYR2* variants was calculated to be two when
- 196 using the ExAC database as a control population and three for the gnomAD database. Using the
- 197 gnomAD database and the maximum tolerated allele count as a frequency threshold for
- 198 pathogenicity 55 of 326 previously putative disease associated variants were re-classified as benign
- 199 according to the ACMG guidelines, 11 fewer variants (44) were reclassified as benign using the ExAC
- 200 database. A further 245 variants were classified as variants of uncertain significance, 14 as likely

201 pathogenic and 12 as pathogenic using gnomAD as the control comparator (Table 3). Both benign

202 and pathogenic variants occurred most frequently outside of known functional domains. The ion

203 transport domain contained the most (7 of the 26) pathogenic or likely pathogenic variants. The

- 204 SPRY domain was found to be the domain containing the most benign variants; this domain did not
- 205 contain any pathogenic variants.
- 206 Sufficient functional data to aid classification was available for 50 of the 326 variants
- 207 (Supplementary Table 10). The classification of the 26 variants deemed to be pathogenic/likely

208 pathogenic was driven by absence from the gnomAD database (92%, P6), computational evidence

- 209 (88%, P9), functional data (73%, P3) and *de novo* status (50%, P2). The classification of the 55
- 210 variants classified as benign was largely driven by variant frequency in gnomAD exceeding the
- 211 maximum tolerated allele count (100%, B2) and only one or none of the computational prediction
- 212 tools indicating pathogenicity (11%, B5).

213 **Reason for referral and genetic testing outcome**

214 Cases referred for genetic testing at MCGM with a more confident diagnosis of CPVT based on

215 clinical evaluation were tested using the CPVT genetic panel, whereas those cases with less

216 diagnostic certainty were tested using either the arrythmia panel (including 37 genes associated

217 with inherited arrhythmia) or the molecular autopsy panel (61 genes associated with sudden cardiac

218 death). The proportion of patients referred for genetic testing with the CPVT panel that carried *RYR2*

- 219 variants was significantly greater than that of the patients tested with the arrhythmia panel (P <
- 220 0.05) or molecular autopsy panel (P < 0.0005). Furthermore, these patients were more likely to carry
- 221 pathogenic *RYR2* variants (P < 0.05) (Table 4, Figure 3).

222 **Discussion**

223 The availability of sequence variant databases like gnomAD (11) and a statistical threshold to aid in

224 the classification of pathogenicity for genetic variants (16) is aiding the robust classification of

225 sequence variants as associated, or not, with disease. The maximum tolerated allele count method 226 was validated in individuals with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy using previous variant assessments 227 and reports of pathogenicity in ClinVar (14). In the present study we used this method to calculate a 228 maximum tolerated allele count for CPVT-associated *RYR2* missense variants. Using this frequency 229 threshold, 55 of 326 (16.9%) CPVT associated *RYR2* variants were re-classified as benign. Thus, our 230 data show a sizeable number of *RYR2* variants are not disease-causing, in which case the proportion 231 of CPVT cases attributable to *RYR2* variants is likely to be over-estimated and the proportion of cases 232 attributable to changes in other genes or to post-translational modifications is likely to be 233 underestimated. The reclassification of VUS as benign variants is important as family members 234 previously cascade tested to carry these variants may not be at increased risk and those without 235 these variants may have been falsely reassured and remain at risk of arrhythmia or sudden cardiac 236 death. Furthermore, this classification of benign variants offers the opportunity to find the real 237 explanation for the CPVT phenotype in affected individuals. 238 In the present study the maximum tolerated allele count for CPVT associated *RYR2* missense variants 239 was calculated using both the ExAC and gnomAD databases as control populations. Variants that 240 occurred above the frequency threshold in each population where then reclassified accordingly. The 241 ExAC database contains exome data from 60,706 unrelated apparently healthy individuals, whereas 242 the gnomAD database contains combined exome and genome variant data from 141,456 individuals. 243 Importantly 1600 of the 1975 (81%) *RYR2* missense variants reported in gnomAD have a minor allele 244 count below four. This not only highlights that a number of potentially healthy individuals have rare 245 variants in *RYR2* which may have a consequence in the context of a particular trigger e.g. exercise or 246 emotion, but also that many benign *RYR2* variants are rare. The utility of larger control datasets in 247 reclassifying *RYR2* variants was exemplified in this study. Comparison with the larger gnomAD 248 database as a control population allowed the reclassification of 11 additional *RYR2* variants as 249 benign compared to ExAC. Further reclassification of VUSs may be achieved with larger sequence

250 datasets and by using data from individuals with more phenotype data and of older age to reduce 251 the effects of non-penetrance.

274 Our data shows that CPVT-associated *RYR2* variants predominantly cluster in four regions/domains, 275 namely the RyR and IP3R homology-associated domain; the ion transport domain; and two regions 276 outside of known domains (No domain regions 5 and 7). Generally, these regions correspond to the 277 previously-reported mutation hotspots. However, more than 30% of CPVT-associated *RYR2* variants 278 occurred outside of mutation hotspots, emphasising the importance of screening the entire coding 279 region of *RYR2* in patients suspected of having CPVT.

280 The presence of functional data was a major driver of pathogenic classifications. However functional 281 data was only available for 50 of the 326 CPVT associated variants. In addition to this the threshold 282 of at least a 50% effect on channel function required for pathogenicity as applied by Denham et al. 283 (2019) may not be applicable for *RYR2* as there is no direct correlation between the magnitude of 284 variant functional effect and disease phenotype in CPVT (15). Computational evidence and absence 285 from control datasets were also major contributors to pathogenic classifications, similar to Denham 286 et al. (2019), we used eight computational tools and applied a threshold of six tools predicting a 287 pathogenic effect for pathogenic classification (15). This method was found to be more stringent and 288 require more evidence for a pathogenic classification when compared to previous systems (15). 289 A limitation of this study was the lack of systematically collected phenotype data and this will be 290 required prospectively to identify effective means of combining clinical and genetic information to 291 make accurate CPVT diagnoses. Nonetheless, based on the clinical indications considered our data 292 shows specificity of testing (a surrogate for confidence in the underlying phenotype) correlates with 293 the likelihood of identifying a relevant variant. Thus, although genetic testing is a useful aid in the 294 diagnosis of CPVT rigorous clinical evaluations and the establishment of additional common

295 phenotypic traits for CPVT is likely to increase the efficiency of genetic testing, identification of

296 pathogenic variants and possibly improve the management of the condition.

297 In summary, CPVT-associated *RYR2* variants cluster in specific domains/regions, many of which are

298 within, but not confined to, previously established mutation hotspots. CPVT-associated variants

- 323
- 324

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375 2002;82:2436-47.

- 405 Titles and legends to figures
- 406 Figure 1A. The distribution of missense variants in RYR2 in control population from the gnomAD
- 407 database (A), CPVT (B), sudden death (C) and sudden death in sleep (D) populations.

408

- 409 Figure 1B. Proportion of RYR2 variants in grouped domains in controls from the gnomAD database,
- 410 CPVT, sudden death and sleep-associated sudden death populations. The number of cases in the
- 411 sudden death and sleep-associated sudden death groups was limited, there were 47 sudden death
- 412 cases and 7 sleep-associated sudden death cases.

413

- 414 Figure 1C. Grouped domains of RYR2 in which the proportion of RYR2 variants was significantly 415 different in controls from gnomAD compared to CPVT patients. **** and *** represent P < 0.0001
- 416 and P < 0.005, respectively.

417

418 Figure 2. A) Consurf scores of amino acid positions of CPVT variants compared to controls from

419 gnomAD. B) Consurf scores of amino acid positions of non-sudden death CPVT variants compared to

420 sudden death CPVT variants. **** represents P < 0.0001.

421

- 422 Figure 3. A) Number of patients referred for genetic testing using the CPVT, arrhythmia or molecular
- 423 autopsy panel with an RYR2 variant detected. B) Number of patients referred for genetic testing
- 424 using the CPVT, arrhythmia or molecular autopsy panel with a pathogenic RYR2 variant detected.

Table 1. Pre-established RyR2 variant hotspot regions in CPVT.

Table 2. Proportion of *RYR2* variants in individual *RYR2* domains or regions in controls from gnomAD, CPVT, sudden death and sleep-associated sudden death populations.

Table 4. Outcome of genetic testing for patients referred for CPVT, arrhythmia and molecular autopsy panels to the Manchester Laboratory (MCGM).

D

100 Percentage of missense variants 80 60 40 20 0 Control Population CPVT (%) Sudden death (%) Sleep (%) $(%)$ Inositol 1,4,5-trisphosphate/ryanodine 3.8 5.2 1.6 receptor lon_transdomain 0.9 3.2 5.5 Ryanodine Receptor TM 4-6 4.5 6.1 12.7 22.2 RyR and IP3R Homology associated 0.4 3.4 6.3 RyR domain 7.3 1.5 1.6 $11.1\,$ SPRY domain 9 3.3 1.6 $11.1\,$ RYDR_ITPR domain 6.4 11.4 20.6 $11.1\,$ MIR domain 4.4 2.8 1.6 No domain 63.3 44.5 60.8 50.8

■ Control ■ CPVT

A

B

Patients without RYR2 variant

Panel used for genetic testing

Patients with pathogenic RYR2 variant Patients without pathogenic RYR2 variant

Panel used for genetic testing