

1 **Causal relationship between cataracts and gastrointestinal diseases: a two-sample Mendelian**
2 **randomization study**

3 **Running Title: Cataracts and gastrointestinal diseases**

4 Yanchun Li^{1, #}, QingMin Pan^{1, #}, MengYa Wang², Bin Zhao^{1, *}

5 ¹Department of Ophthalmology, The Second Affiliated Hospital of Shandong First Medical University,
6 Taian, Shandong 271000, P.R. China

7 ²Department of Colorectal Surgery, The People's Hospital of Feicheng, Feicheng, Shandong 271600,
8 P.R. China

9 [#]These authors contributed equally to this work

10 ***Correspondence: Bin Zhao**

11 Department of Ophthalmology, The Second Affiliated Hospital of Shandong First Medical University,
12 No. 706 Taishan Street, Taian, Shandong 271000, China

13 Tel: 86-13605382962

14 Email: tyfyzb@126.com

15 **Abstract**

16 **Background:** Cataracts, a leading cause of blindness, have been linked to systemic conditions.
17 Previous studies showing associations between cataracts and gastrointestinal diseases do not determine
18 causal relationships. We aimed to investigate the causal relationship between cataracts and 23
19 gastrointestinal diseases.

20 **Methods:** We obtained Genome-Wide Association Study datasets for 23 gastrointestinal diseases and
21 cataracts in European populations from the IEU OpenGWAS project. Inverse variance weighting
22 (IVW) served as the primary method for Mendelian Randomization (MR). The heterogeneity test was
23 analyzed by IVW and MR-Egger regression and quantified using Cochran's Q-test. Tests for
24 multiplicity and stability were conducted using MR-Egger intercept, MR-PRESSO, and the leave-one-
25 out method.

26 **Results:** After Bonferroni correction, four suggestive causal relationships were identified: the celiac
27 disease was associated with increased risks of cataracts (OR = 1.012, 95% CI = 1.004-1.02, $p = 0.002$);
28 cataracts were associated with increased risks of Crohn's disease (OR = 2.776, 95% CI = 1.055–7.302,
29 $p = 0.039$) and pancreatic cancer (OR = 1.464, 95% CI = 1.104–1.942, $p = 0.008$); and associated with
30 a reduced risk of duodenal ulcers (OR = 0.9988, 95% CI = 0.9977-0.9999, $p = 0.043$). Other methods
31 showed consistent magnitude and direction. The leave-one-out method confirmed the robustness of the
32 results.

33 **Conclusion:** These findings reveal causal effects between cataracts and gastrointestinal diseases,
34 providing new insights into their potential biological links.

35 **Keywords:** cataract; gastrointestinal diseases; Mendelian randomization; single nucleotide
36 polymorphism; instrumental variable

1 Introduction

Cataracts represent a significant contributor to blindness and visual impairment, characterized by clouding of the lens, and contribute to approximately 2.96% of the global population with vision impairment (65.2 million out of 2.2 billion).^{1, 2} The pathogenesis of cataracts varies across different types. Age-related cataracts, the most common type, are usually associated with aging and oxidative stress.³ Genetic factors are important risk factors for various types of cataracts, with heritability estimates varying between 35% and 58%.^{4, 5} Additionally, cataracts are linked to numerous systemic diseases, including gastrointestinal diseases.⁶

Recent evidence has emphasized the crosstalk between gut health and eye health, known as the “gut-eye axis”.⁷ This interaction involves the microbiota, the immune system, the nervous system, and nutrient absorption.^{8, 9} However, the relationship between cataracts and the gastrointestinal tract is often overlooked. An evaluation of 272,873 patients with ocular disease showed that cataracts were a more common ocular disease in patients with celiac disease, Crohn's disease, and ulcerative colitis, with prevalence rates of 12%, 22%, and 29.2%, respectively.¹⁰ Patients with early-onset cataracts have an increased risk of peptic ulcers.¹¹ Furthermore, genetic associations between cataracts and gastrointestinal disorders have been observed, indicating that gene expression linked to cataracts is not confined to lens tissues.^{5, 12} Specifically, gene expression in gastrointestinal tissues has shown a significant association with cataracts, with 43 of 202 Bonferroni-significant genes in the GTEx project.¹² However, the causal link between cataracts and gastrointestinal diseases is still not well understood.

Mendelian randomization (MR) analyses follow the same design principles as randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and use single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) as instrumental variables

(IVs) to evaluate causality, which can reduce the bias of traditional observational studies.¹³ MR provides valuable insights and evidence supporting the causal relationship between cataracts and diet,¹⁴ lifestyle,¹⁵ physiological factors,¹⁶ and various diseases.^{17, 18} In this research, we leveraged the genome-wide association study (GWAS) data to perform the MR analysis to determine if there is a bidirectional causal relationship between 23 gastrointestinal diseases and cataracts. Our study offers novel insights into the potential interplay between gastrointestinal diseases and cataracts.

2 Methods

2.1 Study design

We conducted bi-directional MR analyses to investigate the causality between cataracts and 23 gastrointestinal diseases. Bi-directional MR analysis is conducted to determine the causal direction between two traits (a certain gastrointestinal disorder and cataract), assessing whether one influences the other or vice versa. For accurate causal inference in MR, SNPs utilized as IVs must satisfy three principal conditions: (1) a robust association with the exposure is required; (2) they must not be linked to any confounders; (3) their effect on the outcome should be exclusive via the exposure, with no alternative routes.

2.2 Data sources

The GWAS datasets were downloaded from the IEU OpenGWAS project (<https://gwas.mrcieu.ac.uk>). Specific information on the GWAS datasets is presented in Table S1.

2.3 Screening of IVs

SNPs were acquired from GWAS datasets, including details such as effect allele, effect size (bata), standard error, and *p* value. SNPs were selected as IVs for exposure factors with a criterion of *p* < 5.0 × 10⁻⁸. Due to the limited number of IVs obtained for the 13 gastrointestinal diseases, there may be

insufficient statistical power. Therefore, relaxing the threshold to $p < 5 \times 10^{-6}$ could help capture more genetic signals and enhance statistical power while controlling for false positives.^{19, 20} These diseases included esophageal cancer, duodenal ulcer, gastric ulcer, acute gastritis, chronic gastritis, Crohn's disease, diverticular disease, acute pancreatitis, chronic pancreatitis, pancreatic cancer, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, alcoholic liver disease, and cirrhosis (Table S1).

To minimize linkage disequilibrium (LD) bias, SNPs associated with the exposure were selected with an LD threshold of $R^2 < 0.001$ and a genetic distance of 10,000 kb. The strength of the IVs was assessed using the F statistic, calculated as $F = (\beta_{\text{exposure}} / \text{SE}_{\text{exposure}})^2$. β_{exposure} and $\text{SE}_{\text{exposure}}$ represent the effect value and standard error of the exposure dataset, respectively. $F > 10$ indicates no weak IV bias.²¹

2.4 Statistical analysis

Summary statistics from exposure and outcome datasets were harmonized to ensure that SNP effects on exposure and outcome corresponded to the same alleles. Several methods were employed in the bidirectional two-sample MR analysis, including inverse-variance weighted (IVW), MR-Egger regression, weighted median, simple mode, and weighted mode. The primary method we employed was IVW, which combines Wald ratio estimates from SNPs that satisfy the IVs assumptions, providing a consistent estimate of the causal effect of exposure on outcome. The IVW method yields the most reliable results when horizontal pleiotropy is absent.^{22, 23} The weighted median method offers a consistent estimate of the causal effect when more than half of the SNPs are valid IVs.²⁴ MR-Egger regression, which tests for horizontal pleiotropy, could provide an unbiased causal estimate even when such pleiotropy is present.²⁵ The accuracy of the results is improved with the weighted median method compared to the MR-Egger method.²⁶ Simple mode and weighted mode analyses were conducted as supplementary analyses.²⁷ The Mendelian randomization of polytropic residual sums and outliers (MR-

PRESSO) test was used to identify and adjust for horizontal pleiotropy by excluding outliers.²⁸ The TwoSampleMR²⁹ and MR-PRESSO³⁰ packages in R were used to perform statistical analyses, with a significance threshold set at $\alpha = 0.05$ ($p < 0.05$). To address multiple testing, we applied the Bonferroni correction, factoring in the total number of exposures and outcomes.¹⁴ A threshold of $p < 0.0022$ ($0.05/23$) indicated robust statistical significance, whereas results significant at $p = 0.0022-0.05$ after correction were classified as potential associations.

2.5 Heterogeneity and sensitivity test

IVW and MR-Egger regression were used for heterogeneity tests among IVs. The heterogeneity was quantified using Cochran's Q-test. When the $p < 0.05$, it implies the presence of heterogeneity, so the random effects IVW model is employed. The leave-one-out method was employed to determine whether any single SNP had a significant impact on the MR results.

3 Results

3.1 Causal effects of gastrointestinal diseases on cataracts

Gastrointestinal diseases were the exposure factors, and cataract was the outcome variable. Following the selection of SNPs based on the aforementioned criteria, we excluded palindromic SNPs (A/T or G/C) and those unavailable in the outcome data. Consequently, we identified between 4 to 66 SNPs as IVs for 23 gastrointestinal diseases. The F-statistics for all identified IVs exceeded 10.

MR analyses support the causal links between genetic susceptibility to gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and celiac disease and an increased risk of cataracts. The IVW model showed a significant association between GERD and cataracts (OR = 1.131, 95% CI = 1.065-1.201, $p = 5.85E-05$), as well as between celiac disease and cataracts (OR = 1.012, 95% CI = 1.004-1.02, $p = 0.0023$) (Figure 1, Table S2). The intercepts of the MR-Egger regression were near 0, suggesting no horizontal

pleiotropy of IVs in gastrointestinal diseases and indicating a negligible likelihood of affecting the MR results (Table S3).

Both MR-Egger and IVW analyses for GERD and celiac disease showed no heterogeneity (Table S4). However, heterogeneity was found between nine gastrointestinal diseases and cataracts (Table S4). Therefore, random effects IVW and MR-PRESSO tests were applied, which indicated no causal effect between these diseases and cataract risk (Table S5). The results of the leave-one-out method indicated that the causal effect between GERD and celiac disease and an increased risk of cataracts was robust and not influenced by any single SNP (Figure 2A-B). Nevertheless, this result should be interpreted with caution due to the inconsistent direction of MR-Egger compared to other MR analysis methods for GERD (Figure 2C-D).

3.2 Causal effects of cataracts on gastrointestinal diseases

Cataract was the exposure factor, and gastrointestinal diseases was the outcome variable. We identified between 3 to 25 SNPs as IVs for cataracts. All identified IVs had F-statistics exceeding 10.

MR analyses revealed cataracts were linked to a heightened risk of Crohn's disease (IVW result, OR = 2.776, 95% CI = 1.055–7.302, $p = 0.039$) and pancreatic cancer (IVW result, OR = 1.464, 95% CI = 1.104–1.942, $p = 0.008$) (Figure 3, Table S6). Meanwhile, cataracts were related to the risk of duodenal ulcers (IVW results: OR = 0.9988, 95% CI = 0.9977–0.9999, $p = 0.043$). Furthermore, there was no horizontal pleiotropy of IVs (Table S7). However, heterogeneity was found between cataracts and six gastrointestinal diseases (Table S8). Subsequently, random effects IVW and MR-PRESSO tests were applied, which indicated no causal effect between cataracts and the risks of these diseases (Table S5). The leave-one-out method indicated the robustness of the MR analysis results (Figure 4). Notably, Bonferroni correction ($p < 0.0022$) suggested that these casual relationships were suggestive.

4 Discussion

Gastrointestinal diseases often present with extraintestinal manifestations, including various ocular features.³¹ Cataracts, a common ocular condition, are frequently associated with systemic diseases.⁶ In this study, we identified the suggestive causal relationship between cataracts and 4 gastrointestinal diseases, providing genetic evidence for their association.

GERD may affect organs adjacent or distant to the esophagus because they lack protective mechanisms similar to those of the esophagus.³² A retrospective analysis found that up to 19% of patients undergoing cataract surgery under local anesthesia also had GERD.³³ In addition, a prospective cohort study evaluated the relationship between GERD and its comorbidities and the incidence of cataracts during a one-year follow-up period.³⁴ The results showed that various manifestations of GERD, including Barrett's esophagus, esophagitis, and simple reflux (hazard ratio [HR], 1.40; 95%CI, 1.08-1.81) were associated with an increased risk of cataracts. These observational studies frequently face limitations due to confounding factors and reverse causality, which bias causal inferences.³⁵ While we found that a potential association between GERD and cataracts (IVW model), inconsistencies across MR methods highlight the need for further validation through prospective studies.

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease of the small intestine. Previous cases have reported bilateral cataracts as a presenting feature of celiac disease.³⁶ In a cohort study of 28,756 patients with biopsy-proven celiac disease, there was an increased risk of cataracts (HR = 1.8, 95% CI: 1.19, 1.36). This association may be related to immune response, nutrient absorption, and oxidative stress.³⁷ Our MR analysis supports this association, which is consistent with previous research.³⁸ Celiac disease patients often exhibit reduced antioxidant capacity, which can lead to oxidative stress,³⁹ thereby exacerbating glutathione depletion and lipid peroxidation in the crystalline lens.⁴⁰ Dysbiosis in the gut

microbiome may also contribute,⁴¹ as intestinal metabolites such as tauroursodeoxycholic acid have been shown to effectively reduce the apoptosis of lens epithelial cells⁴². Furthermore, chronic malabsorption in celiac disease can lead to deficiencies in zinc, selenium, and vitamins C and E, all of which are critical for lens health⁴³. The use of systemic corticosteroids requires caution in patients with celiac disease, as prolonged use may lead to posterior subcapsular cataract formation.⁴⁴

Crohn's disease is a long-term inflammatory lesion affecting the gastrointestinal tract that may be associated with ocular manifestations such as cataracts.⁴⁵ Whole exome sequencing of individuals with congenital cataracts, retinitis pigmentosa, and Crohn's disease identified pathogenic variants, Wolfram Syndrome 1 (WFS1), Nucleotide-binding Oligomerization Domain-containing Protein 2 (NOD2), and Retinitis Pigmentosa 1 (RP1) genes, which are implicated in calcium regulation.⁴⁶ Of these, the NOD2 gene is aberrantly expressed in ocular tissues under pathological conditions, including cataracts.⁴⁷ Variations in NOD2 can lead to defects in intestinal flora and the innate immune response, causing Crohn's disease.⁴⁸ Furthermore, glutathione peroxidase 1 (GPX1) is involved in maintaining oxidative homeostasis and lens transparency in lens cells,⁴⁹ and the rs1800668 polymorphism of GPX1 is related to an elevated risk of Crohn's disease in New Zealand population.⁵⁰ These findings support our result, suggesting the relationship between genetically predicted cataracts and the risk of Crohn's disease. This association may be driven by the interplay between genetic factors and biological pathways, particularly calcium homeostasis and oxidative stress homeostasis.

Optic nerve involvement and vision loss may result from pancreatic cancer metastasis to the choroid and other structures of the eye.⁵¹ The causal relationship between cataracts and pancreatic cancer may be due to common genetic factors and metabolic pathways. Breast cancer type 2 (BRCA2)^{-/-} mice exhibit mammary gland hypoplasia, cataract formation, and increased susceptibility to several

cancers, including pancreatic cancer.⁵² Aberrant retinoic acid signaling, critical for both pancreatic and lens development, may also provide a mechanistic link.^{53, 54} For example, cellular retinoic acid-binding protein, regulating intracellular retinoic acid concentration, has been implicated in both cataract formation and pancreatic cancer progression.⁵⁵

Duodenal ulcers result from disruptions in mucosal integrity in the proximal small intestine, with *Helicobacter pylori*, smoking, and genetic susceptibility as risk factors.⁵⁶ Our results revealed the associations between cataracts with a reduced risk of duodenal ulcers. This contrasts with a retrospective cohort study from Taiwan that reported a higher overall incidence of peptic ulcers in patients with early-onset cataracts (n = 1910).¹¹ Such discrepancies may arise from the limitations of observational or heterogeneity among different populations, including genetic polymorphisms and environmental factors (such as diet). There are fewer studies on the association between these two diseases, and more prospective studies are needed.

Our study identified four genetic associations between cataracts and gastrointestinal diseases, including novel causal relationships with Crohn's disease, pancreatic cancer, and duodenal ulcers. We summarized potential mechanisms underlying these associations, which may involve shared and specific biological pathways. These include the interplay between genetic and disease pathways related to oxidative stress, inflammation, gut microbial metabolites, and calcium homeostasis—factors that could serve as bridges between gut and lens health. While these findings provide valuable insights, further cohort studies and functional experiments are needed to establish causal links and elucidate precise mechanisms.

This study has several limitations. Although the confounding factors and statistical efficiency of the two-sample MR analysis were good, inconsistencies in the quality and source of the data may

introduce systematic bias. Furthermore, the study was limited to a European population, which affects the applicability of the results to other populations. Different ethnic groups may have distinct genetic backgrounds and environmental exposures, which could influence the observed associations. Additionally, although relaxing the SNP selection threshold to $p < 5 \times 10^{-6}$ is a result of balancing statistical bias and power, it may still lead to the introduction of potentially non-informative tools and increase the risk of pleiotropy, which could bias the results. Although we tested for pleiotropy, it is challenging to completely rule it out.

5 Conclusion

Our study is the first to examine the causal links between cataracts and gastrointestinal diseases using MR. The findings provide genetic evidence for potential associations between celiac disease and increased cataract risk, cataracts and increased risks of Crohn's disease and pancreatic cancer, and a decreased risk of duodenal ulcers. Further research, especially with more homogenous populations and prospective studies, are necessary to confirm these associations and clarify the underlying mechanisms.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not Applicable.

Consent for publication

Not Applicable.

Availability of data and materials

The datasets used and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

234 ***Authors' contributions***

235 Yanchun Li: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Writing—original draft.

236 QingMin Pan: Investigation, Methodology, Validation, Visualization, Formal analysis. MengYa Wang:

237 Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis. Bin Zhao: Conceptualization, Data curation,

238 Methodology, Resources, Writing—original draft.

239 ***Funding***

240 This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or

241 not-for-profit sectors.

242 ***Competing interests***

243 The author(s) declare no competing interests.

244 ***Acknowledgements***

245 Not Applicable.

246 **References**

- 247 1. Causes of blindness and vision impairment in 2020 and trends over 30 years, and prevalence of
- 248 avoidable blindness in relation to VISION 2020: the Right to Sight: an analysis for the Global
- 249 Burden of Disease Study. *Lancet Glob Health*. 2021;9(2):e144-e160.
- 250 2. World report on vision. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2019.
- 251 3. Cicinelli MV, Buchan JC, Nicholson M, Varadaraj V, Khanna RC. Cataracts. *Lancet*.
- 252 2023;401(10374):377-389.
- 253 4. Yonova-Doing E, Forkin ZA, Hysi PG, et al. Genetic and Dietary Factors Influencing the
- 254 Progression of Nuclear Cataract. *Ophthalmology*. 2016;123(6):1237-1244.
- 255 5. Choquet H, Melles RB, Anand D, et al. A large multiethnic GWAS meta-analysis of cataract
- 256 identifies new risk loci and sex-specific effects. *Nat Commun*. 2021;12(1):3595.
- 257 6. Ang MJ, Afshari NA. Cataract and systemic disease: A review. *Clin Exp Ophthalmol*.
- 258 2021;49(2):118-127.
- 259 7. Campagnoli LIM, Varesi A, Barbieri A, Marchesi N, Pascale A. Targeting the Gut-Eye Axis: An
- 260 Emerging Strategy to Face Ocular Diseases. *Int J Mol Sci*. 2023;24(17):13338.
- 261 8. Floyd JL, Grant MB. The Gut-Eye Axis: Lessons Learned from Murine Models. *Ophthalmol Ther*.
- 262 2020;9(3):499-513.
- 263 9. Nguyen Y, Rudd Zhong Manis J, Ronczkowski NM, et al. Unveiling the gut-eye axis: how
- 264 microbial metabolites influence ocular health and disease. *Front Med (Lausanne)*.
- 265 2024;11:1377186.
- 266 10. Martins T, Miranda Sipahi A, Dos Santos FM, et al. Eye disorders in patients with celiac disease
- 267 and inflammatory bowel disease: A study using clinical data warehouse. *Eur J Ophthalmol*.

2021:11206721211012849.

11. Hsia NY, Tsai YY, Lin CL, Chiang CC. Increased risk of peptic ulcer in patients with early-onset cataracts: A nationwide population-based study. *PLoS One*. 2018;13(11):e0207193.
12. Choquet H, Duot M, Herrera VA, et al. Multi-tissue transcriptome-wide association study identifies novel candidate susceptibility genes for cataract. *Front Ophthalmol (Lausanne)*. 2024;4:1362350.
13. Bowden J, Holmes MV. Meta-analysis and Mendelian randomization: A review. *Res Synth Methods*. 2019;10(4):486-496.
14. Mi Y, Zhu Q, Zheng X, Wan M. The protective role of water intake in age-related eye diseases: insights from a Mendelian randomization study. *Food Funct*. 2024;15(9):5147-5157.
15. Mi Y, Zhu Q, Chen Y, Zheng X, Wan M, Li Y. Impact of Physical Activity Frequency, Duration, and Intensity on Senile Cataract Risk: A Mendelian Randomization Study. *Transl Vis Sci Technol*. 2024;13(5):26.
16. Teng M, Wang J, Su X, Tian Y, Ye X, Zhang Y. Causal associations between circulating inflammatory cytokines and blinding eye diseases: a bidirectional Mendelian randomization analysis. *Front Aging Neurosci*. 2024;16:1324651.
17. Zhang H, Xiu X, Xue A, Yang Y, Yang Y, Zhao H. Mendelian randomization study reveals a population-specific putative causal effect of type 2 diabetes in risk of cataract. *Int J Epidemiol*. 2022;50(6):2024-2037.
18. Ellervik C, Boulakh L, Teumer A, et al. Thyroid Function, Diabetes, and Common Age-Related Eye Diseases: A Mendelian Randomization Study. *Thyroid*. 2024;
19. Alhathli E, Julian T, Girach ZUA, et al. Mendelian Randomization Study With Clinical Follow-Up

290 Links Metabolites to Risk and Severity of Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension. *J Am Heart Assoc.*
291 2024;13(6):e032256.

292 20. Lin Z, Pan W. A robust cis-Mendelian randomization method with application to drug target
293 discovery. *Nat Commun.* 2024;15(1):6072.

294 21. Hemani G, Zheng J, Elsworth B, et al. The MR-Base platform supports systematic causal
295 inference across the human phenome. *Elife.* 2018;7:e34408.

296 22. Bae SC, Lee YH. Vitamin D level and risk of systemic lupus erythematosus and rheumatoid
297 arthritis: a Mendelian randomization. *Clin Rheumatol.* 2018;37(9):2415-2421.

298 23. Huang S, Tian F, Yang X, Fang S, Fan Y, Bao J. Physical Activity and Systemic Lupus
299 Erythematosus Among European Populations: A Two-Sample Mendelian Randomization Study.
300 *Front Genet.* 2021;12:784922.

301 24. Bowden J, Davey Smith G, Haycock PC, Burgess S. Consistent Estimation in Mendelian
302 Randomization with Some Invalid Instruments Using a Weighted Median Estimator. *Genet*
303 *Epidemiol.* 2016;40(4):304-314.

304 25. Burgess S, Thompson SG. Interpreting findings from Mendelian randomization using the MR-
305 Egger method. *Eur J Epidemiol.* 2017;32(5):377-389.

306 26. Sun W, Zhang L, Liu W, et al. Stroke and Myocardial Infarction: A Bidirectional Mendelian
307 Randomization Study. *Int J Gen Med.* 2021;14:9537-9545.

308 27. Xiang K, Wang P, Xu Z, et al. Causal Effects of Gut Microbiome on Systemic Lupus
309 Erythematosus: A Two-Sample Mendelian Randomization Study. *Front Immunol.*
310 2021;12:667097.

311 28. Sang N, Gao RC, Zhang MY, Wu ZZ, Wu ZG, Wu GC. Causal Relationship Between Sleep Traits

312 and Risk of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus: A Two-Sample Mendelian Randomization Study.
313 Front Immunol. 2022;13:918749.

314 29. Hemani G, Zheng J, Elsworth B, et al. The MR-Base platform supports systematic causal
315 inference across the human phenome. Elife. 2018;7

316 30. Verbanck M, Chen CY, Neale B, Do R. Detection of widespread horizontal pleiotropy in causal
317 relationships inferred from Mendelian randomization between complex traits and diseases. Nat
318 Genet. 2018;50(5):693-698.

319 31. Imam L, Haboubi HN. G-Eye: ocular manifestations of gastrointestinal disease. Frontline
320 Gastroenterol. 2020;11(2):162-167.

321 32. Herbella FA, Neto SP, Santoro IL, Figueiredo LC. Gastroesophageal reflux disease and non-
322 esophageal cancer. World J Gastroenterol. 2015;21(3):815-819.

323 33. Sharwood PL, Thomas D, Roberts TV. Adverse medical events associated with cataract surgery
324 performed under topical anaesthesia. Clin Exp Ophthalmol. 2008;36(9):842-846.

325 34. Solaymani-Dodaran M, Logan RF, West J, Card T, Coupland C. Risk of extra-oesophageal
326 malignancies and colorectal cancer in Barrett's oesophagus and gastro-oesophageal reflux. Scand J
327 Gastroenterol. 2004;39(7):680-685.

328 35. Evans DM, Davey Smith G. Mendelian Randomization: New Applications in the Coming Age of
329 Hypothesis-Free Causality. Annu Rev Genomics Hum Genet. 2015;16:327-350.

330 36. Raina UK, Goel N, Sud R, Thakar M, Ghosh B. Bilateral total cataract as the presenting feature of
331 celiac disease. Int Ophthalmol. 2011;31(1):47-50.

332 37. Mollazadegan K, Kugelberg M, Lindblad BE, Ludvigsson JF. Increased risk of cataract among
333 28,000 patients with celiac disease. Am J Epidemiol. 2011;174(2):195-202.

- 334 38. Yuan W, Li X, Wang G, Qu B, Zhao F. Association of autoimmune and allergic diseases with
335 senile cataract: a bidirectional two-sample Mendelian randomization study. *Front Immunol.*
336 2024;15:1325868.
- 337 39. Stojiljković V, Todorović A, Pejić S, et al. Antioxidant status and lipid peroxidation in small
338 intestinal mucosa of children with celiac disease. *Clin Biochem.* 2009;42(13-14):1431-1437.
- 339 40. Lee B, Afshari NA, Shaw PX. Oxidative stress and antioxidants in cataract development. *Curr*
340 *Opin Ophthalmol.* 2024;35(1):57-63.
- 341 41. Belei O, Jugănaru I, Basaca DG, Munteanu AI, Mărginean O. The Role of Intestinal Microbiota in
342 Celiac Disease and Further Therapeutic Perspectives. *Life (Basel).* 2023;13(10):2039.
- 343 42. Mulhern ML, Madson CJ, Kador PF, Randazzo J, Shinohara T. Cellular osmolytes reduce lens
344 epithelial cell death and alleviate cataract formation in galactosemic rats. *Mol Vis.* 2007;13:1397-
345 1405.
- 346 43. Sabeŋça C, Ribeiro M, Sousa Td, Poeta P, Bagulho AS, Igrejas G. Wheat/Gluten-Related
347 Disorders and Gluten-Free Diet Misconceptions: A Review. 2021;10(8):1765.
- 348 44. Mady R, Grover W, Butrus S. Ocular Complications of Inflammatory Bowel Disease.
349 2015;2015(1):438402.
- 350 45. Mrugacz M, Sredzińska-Kita D, Cyrta-Jarocka E, Bakunowicz-Lazarczyk A. Dry eye syndrome
351 and cataract as ocular manifestations of Crohn's disease. *Klin Oczna.* 2005;107(7-9):509-510.
- 352 46. Berry V, Ionides A, Georgiou M, Quinlan RA, Michaelides M. Multimorbidity due to novel
353 pathogenic variants in the WFS1/RP1/NOD2 genes: autosomal dominant congenital lamellar
354 cataract, retinitis pigmentosa and Crohn's disease in a British family. *BMJ Open Ophthalmol.*
355 2023;8(1):e001252.

356 47. Lim RR, Wieser ME, Ganga RR, et al. NOD-like Receptors in the Eye: Uncovering Its Role in
357 Diabetic Retinopathy. *Int J Mol Sci.* 2020;21(3):899.

358 48. Ogura Y, Bonen DK, Inohara N, et al. A frameshift mutation in NOD2 associated with
359 susceptibility to Crohn's disease. *Nature.* 2001;411(6837):603-606.

360 49. da Silva IV, Mlinarić M, Lourenço AR, Pérez-Garcia O, Čipak Gašparović A, Soveral G.
361 Peroxiporins and Oxidative Stress: Promising Targets to Tackle Inflammation and Cancer.
362 2024;25(15):8381.

363 50. Morgan AR, Han DY, Lam WJ, Fraser AG, Ferguson LR. Association analysis of 3p21 with
364 Crohn's disease in a New Zealand population. *Hum Immunol.* 2010;71(6):602-609.

365 51. Farahvash A, Knox JJ, Micieli JA. Severe optic neuropathy as the presenting sign of
366 leptomeningeal carcinomatosis from pancreatic cancer. *Can J Ophthalmol.* 2020;55(6):e207-e209.

367 52. Cotroneo MS, Haag JD, Zan Y, et al. Characterizing a rat Brca2 knockout model. *Oncogene.*
368 2007;26(11):1626-1635.

369 53. Sun L, Zheng M, Gao Y, Brigstock DR, Gao R. Retinoic acid signaling pathway in pancreatic
370 stellate cells: Insight into the anti-fibrotic effect and mechanism. *Eur J Pharmacol.*
371 2024;967:176374.

372 54. Chawla B, Swain W, Williams AL, Bohnsack BL. Retinoic Acid Maintains Function of Neural
373 Crest-Derived Ocular and Craniofacial Structures in Adult Zebrafish. *Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci.*
374 2018;59(5):1924-1935.

375 55. Perez-Castro AV, Tran VT, Nguyen-Huu MC. Defective lens fiber differentiation and pancreatic
376 tumorigenesis caused by ectopic expression of the cellular retinoic acid-binding protein I.
377 *Development.* 1993;119(2):363-375.

378 56. Jin LX, Fang YP, Xia CM, et al. Helicobacter pylori infection alters gastric microbiota structure
379 and biological functions in patients with gastric ulcer or duodenal ulcer. World J Gastroenterol.
380 2024;30(24):3076-3085.

381 **Figure legends**

382 **Figure 1. Forest plots of the causal effect of 23 gastrointestinal diseases on cataracts (IVW**
383 **method results).**

384 **Figure 2. The causal effect of gastrointestinal diseases on cataracts. (A) Leave-one-out plots. (B)**
385 **Scatter plots. Gastroesophageal reflux disease (left). Celiac disease (right).**

386 **Figure 3. Forest plots of the causal effect of cataracts on 23 gastrointestinal diseases (IVW**
387 **method results).**

388 **Figure 4. The causal effect of cataracts on gastrointestinal diseases. (A) Leave-one-out plots. (B)**
389 **Scatter plots. Crohn's disease (left). Pancreatic cancer (middle). Duodenal ulcers (right).**

Figure 1

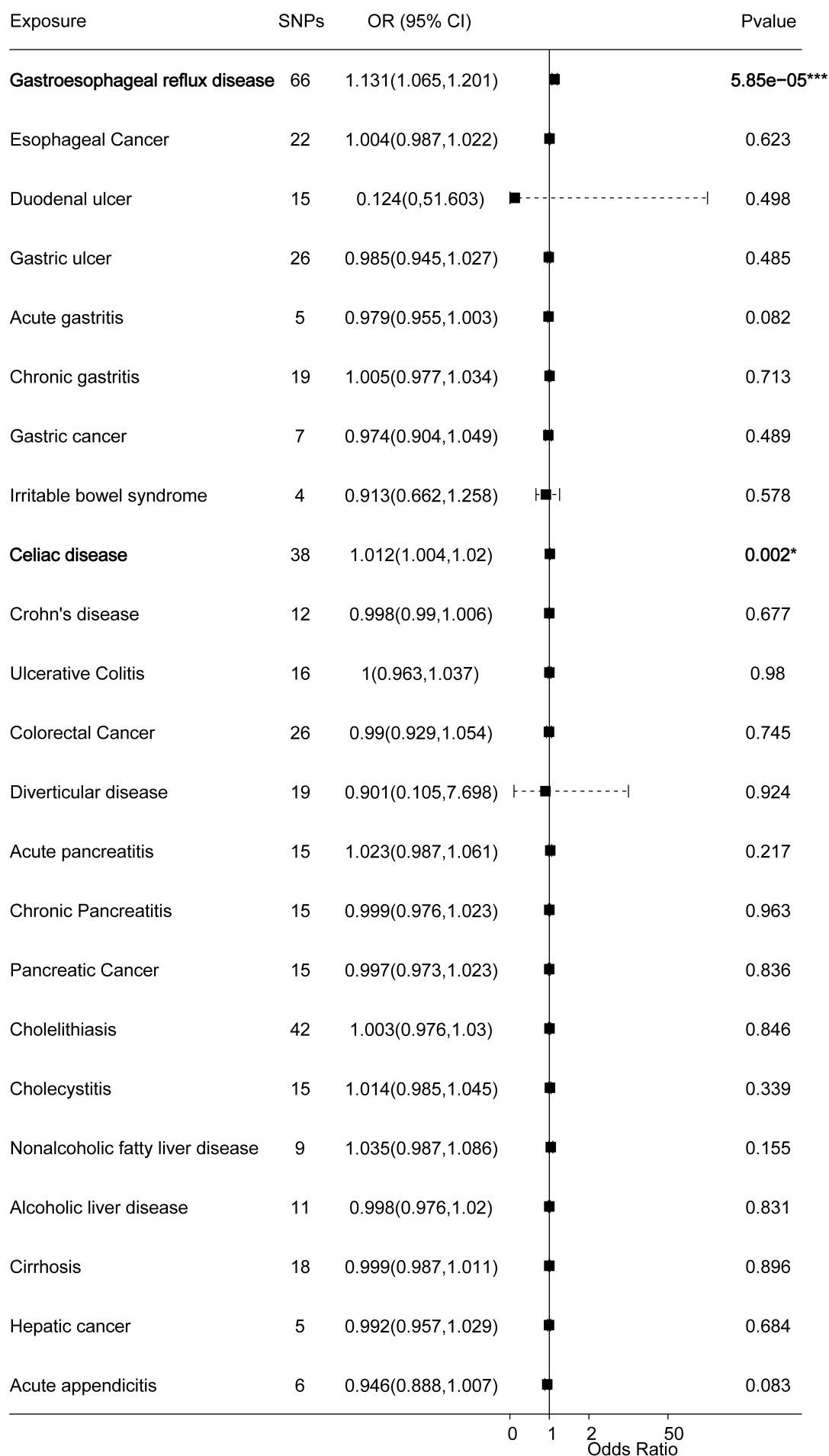


Figure 2

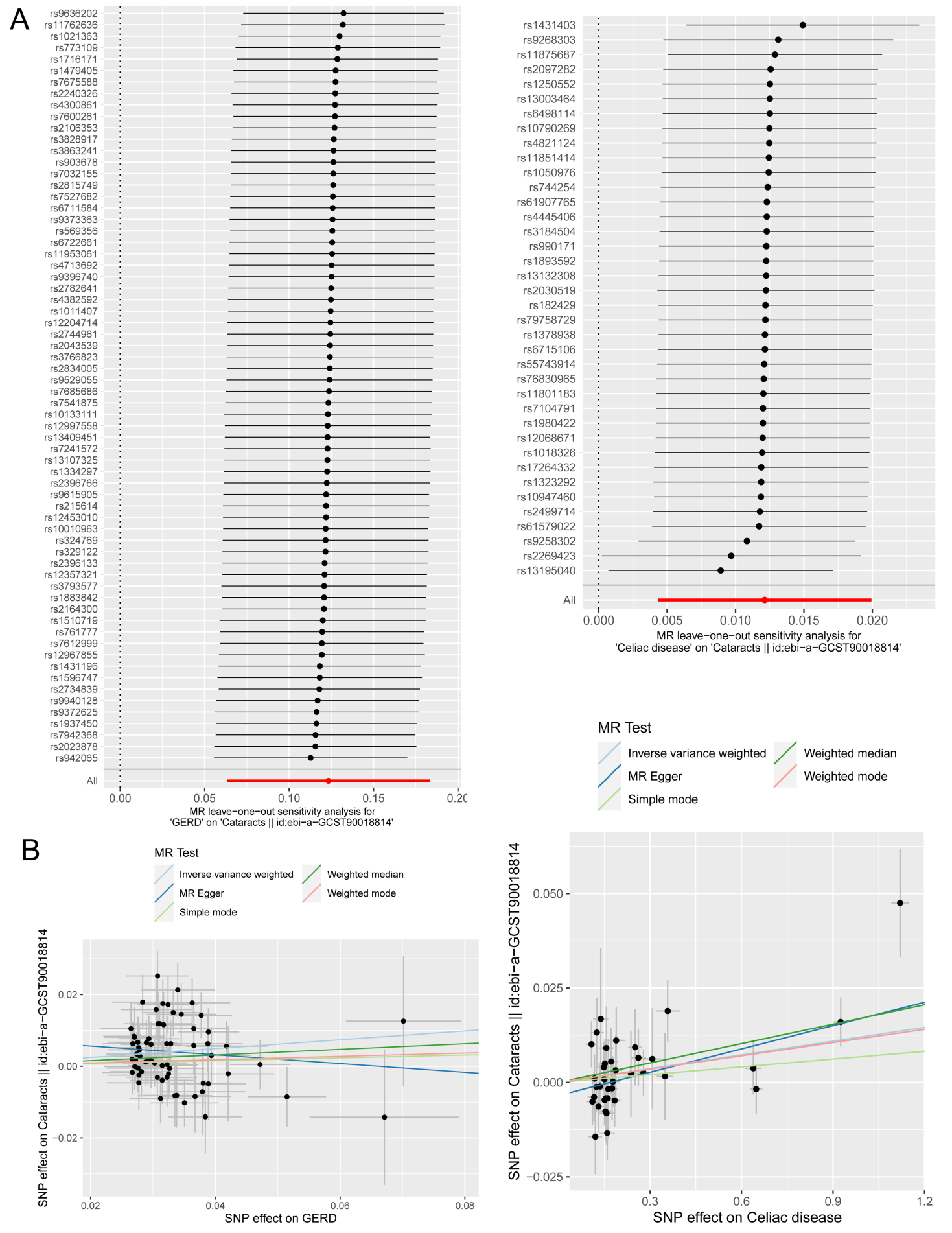


Figure 3

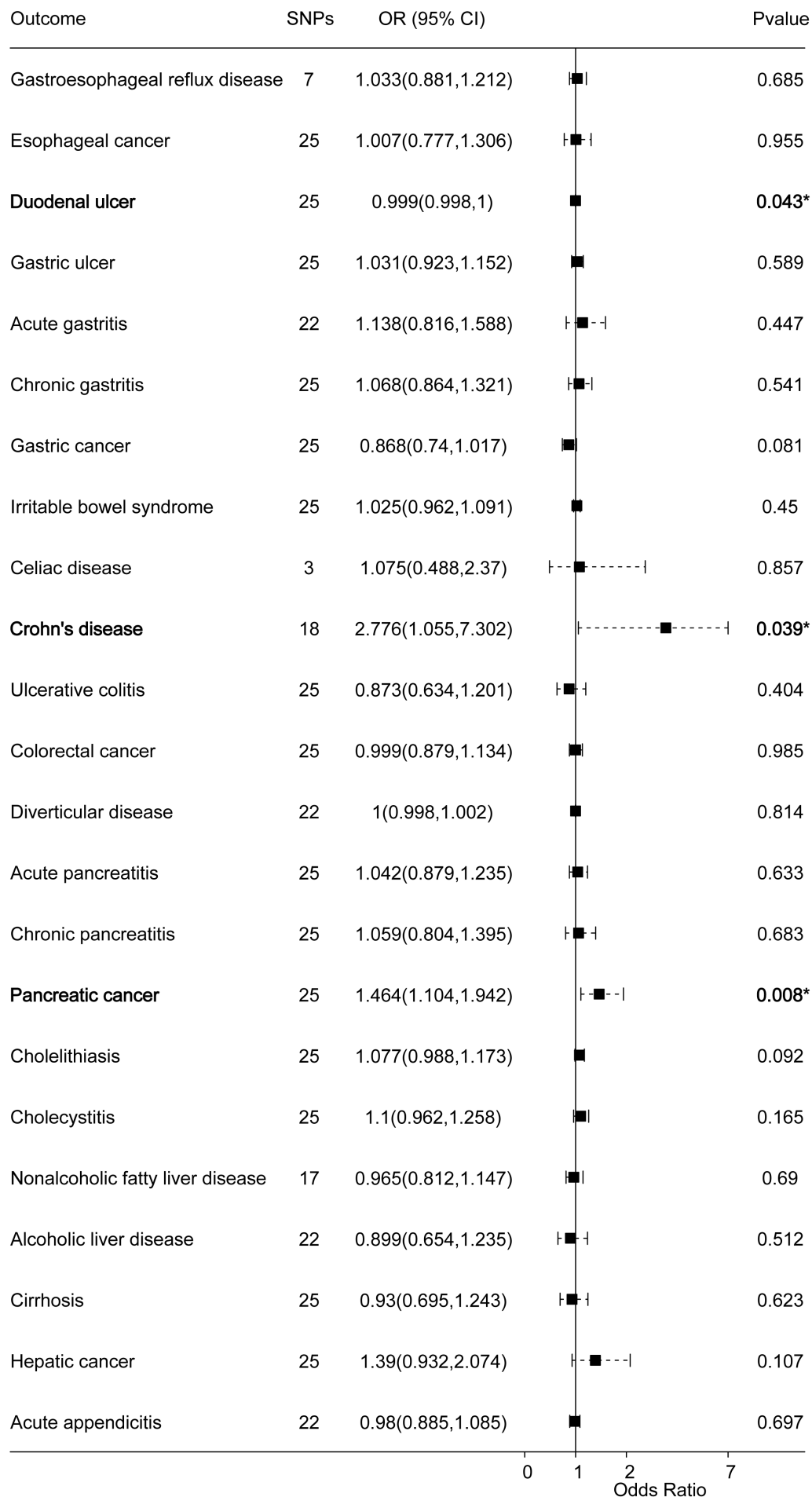


Figure 4

