

Mining gene and disease associations with Open Targets for improved target identification



Coursebook

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Notes

This course is based on the April 2017 release of our Open Targets Platform.

Some useful links:

1) About the Open Targets Consortium
www.opentargets.org/about

2) About the Open Targets Platform
www.targetvalidation.org/about

3) Our publication
www.bit.ly/OpenTargets

4) Details on the latest Platform release
<https://blog.opentargets.org/our-latest-release-is-out-its-all-about-data/>

Feel free to tackle questions relative to your own research instead of following the ones provided in this coursebook.

Questions or Feedback?
support@targetvalidation.org

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OVERVIEW

Open Targets is a public-private initiative to generate evidence on the validity of therapeutic targets based on genome-scale experiments and analysis. We are working to create an R&D framework that applies to a wide range of human diseases, and we want to share this data openly with the scientific community.

The consortium was launched in March 2014 under the name of Centre for Therapeutic Open Targets (CTTV) and started with GlaxoSmithKline (<http://www.gsk.com/>), the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute (<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/>) and the European Bioinformatics Institute (<http://www.ebi.ac.uk/>). In February 2016, a fourth institution namely Biogen (<https://www.biogen.com/>) joined the initiative and the consortium was rebranded to Open Targets in April 2016.

In the process of drug discovery, the *validation* of a target refers to the creation of a specific entity that modulates that target's activity to provide therapeutic benefit to individuals with a disease. The ultimate validation of a target is the creation of an effective therapeutic molecule. This is a long and costly endeavour with more failures than successes. The goal of Open Targets is to transform this process by predicting if the modulation of a target is likely to provide therapeutic benefit. This would be done much earlier in the drug discovery process than is currently possible and far in advance of having a final, approved medicine.

Points covered in this workshop:

- The projects of Open Targets consortium
- An introduction to the Open Targets Platform
- Browsing the Platform
- Pointing to alternative ways to access the data

INTRODUCTION TO OPEN TARGETS

Open Targets employs large-scale human genetics and genomics data to change the way drug targets are identified and validated. We have established a set of projects to develop both the data and analytical processes that implicate targets as valid, and the core platform to provide the information to a diverse audience of users.

The core bioinformatics team develops pipelines and a database to integrate existing target data. The core also designed, created and maintains the Open Targets Platform, a public web portal to serve the integrated data and views.

Our experimental projects focus on providing insights in the identification of targets relevant to key therapeutic areas namely:

- Oncology
- Inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD)
- Respiratory disease
- Inflammation and immunity
- Neurodegenerative diseases

We also aim to develop standard epigenome profiles of cell models in use within the pharmaceutical industry and academia and establish a systematic approach for the determination of human biological and disease relevance.

More details can be found in our [Projects](#) page.

Retrieving data from Open Targets with our Platform

The Open Targets Platform is a web application that integrates and displays publicly available biological data to foster the discovery and prioritisation of targets for new therapies. We use data sources as diverse as Gene2Phenotype, IntOGen, GWAS, UniProt, ChEMBL, Expression Atlas, Cancer Census, Reactome and EuropePMC as pieces of evidence to support target-disease associations. The associations are scored using objective statistical and computational techniques.

In our latest release (April 2017), the Platform provides information on 31,380 targets; 8,891 diseases; 5.3 million evidence; and 2.6 million target-disease associations.




In addition to the web application, we include the data dumps, a REST API and a Python client.

The Open Targets Platform is aimed at users from both academia and industry, whether they want to browse a target on a gene by gene (or disease by disease) basis, carry out more complex queries using the API, or download all evidence and association objects for downstream analyses.

Synopsis: what can I do with the Open Targets Platform?

- Find out which targets are associated with a disease
- Explore the evidence supporting this target-disease association
- Export a table with the FDA drugs currently in clinical trials
- Discover if there other diseases associated with a given target
- Get the association of a target with diseases from different therapeutic areas
- Find target specific information, such as baseline expression, protein structure, alternatively spliced transcripts, gene trees
- Get disease target specific information, such as a classification based on the ontology of the disease and the drugs mapped to it

Help documentation and support

-  [Data sources](#) in the Open Targets Platform
-  View our [FAQs](#)
-  [Email us](#)

Connect with us

- ❖ [Open Targets Blog](#)
- ❖ Follow us on [Twitter](#)
- ❖ Check our page on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

Further reading

Koscielny, G. *et al.* Nucleic Acids Res (2017 Database Issue):
<http://nar.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/11/29/nar.gkw1055>

A breakthrough article from Nucleic Acids Research:
<http://www.narbreakthrough.com/>

OPEN TARGETS PLATFORM: LIVE DEMOS

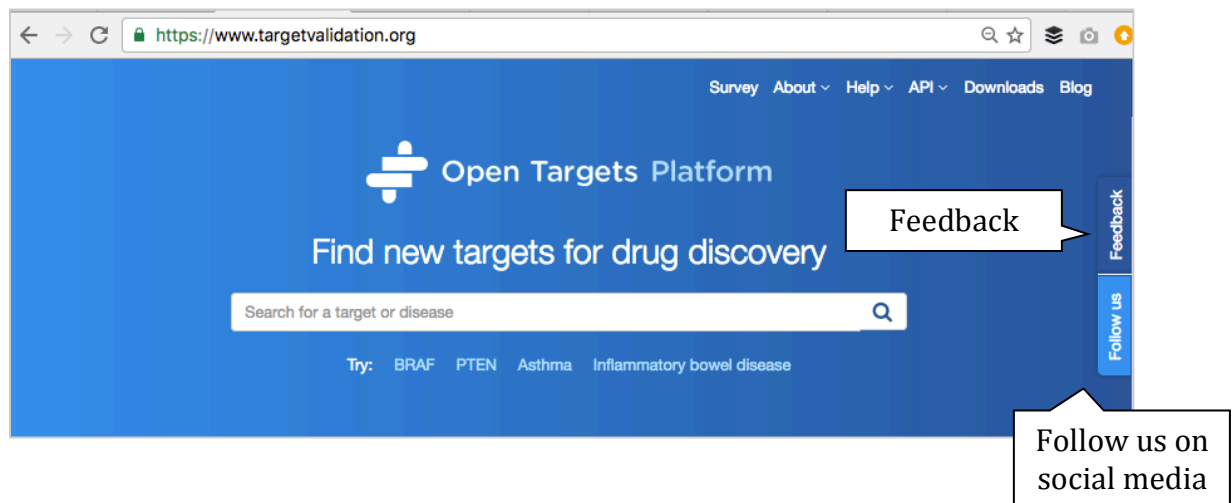
We will guide you through the website using multiple sclerosis, as an example and exploring the *CD86* gene.

The following points will be addressed during the walkthrough:

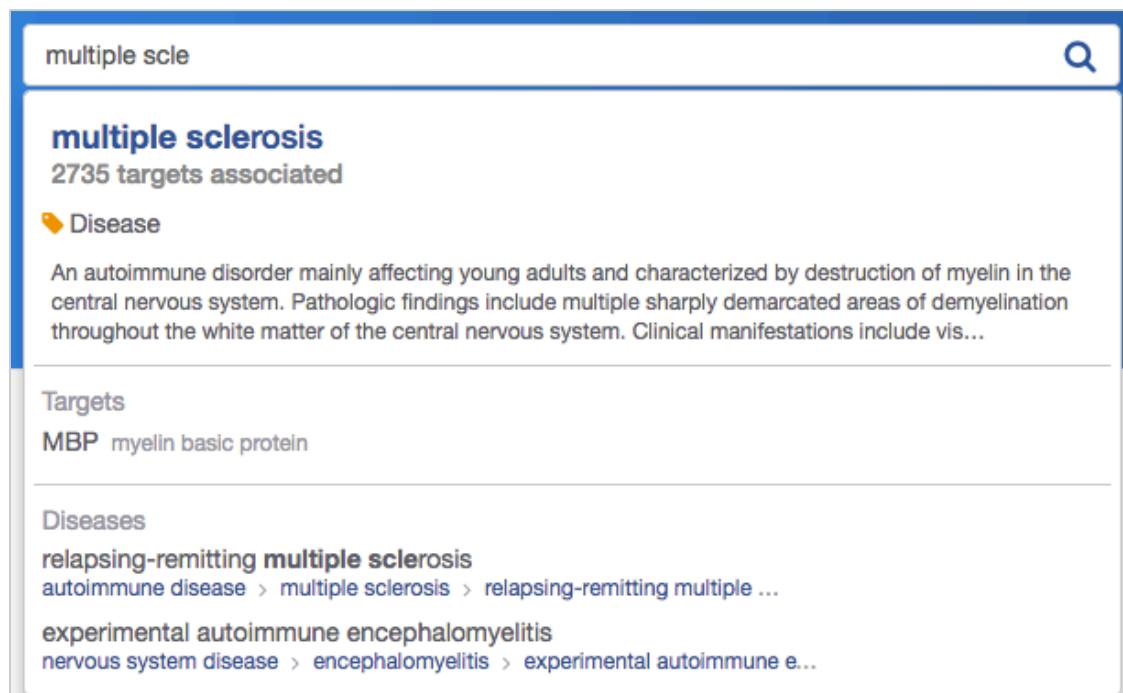
- How to find targets associated with multiple sclerosis
- How to filter down the number of targets based on specific type of evidence
- How to find the data sources used to support the target-disease association
- How to look for other diseases (than multiple sclerosis) associated with a given target
- How to visualise a target in a browser-like view
- How to find out how strong the association between a target and a disease is
- How to find drugs currently in clinical trials
- How to filter **our** associations by **your** list of target genes

Demo 1: Disease centric workflow

Go to www.targetvalidation.org and search for multiple sclerosis.



Select the first (best) hit:



You will see a page like this:

Total number of targets associated with multiple sclerosis

273 targets associated with multiple sclerosis

Filter the results

Filter by

Datatype

Showing 1 to 50 of 2,735 targets

Search:

Data types (Genetic Associations, Drugs, etc)

Target symbol	Association score	Genetic associations	Somatic mutations	Drugs	Affected pathways	RNA expression	Text mining	Animal models	Target name
IL2RA									interleukin 2 receptor sub...
TNFRSF1A									TNF receptor superfamily ...
MS4A1									membrane spanning 4-do...
KCNB2									potassium voltage-gated ...
VDR									vitamin D (1,25- dihydroxy...
PTGS2									prostaglandin-endoperoxi...
S1PR1									sphingosine-1-phosphate...
NR3C1									nuclear receptor subfamil...
IFNAR1									interferon alpha and beta ...
CD52									CD52 molecule

Pathway types

Clear all ✕ Select all ✓

Immune System (618)

Signal Transduction (489)

Metabolism (351)

The current release of the Open Targets Platform (April 2017) lists 2778 targets associated with multiple sclerosis.

The data types supporting these results are based on Genetic association, Somatic mutations, Drugs, RNA expression, Text mining, and Animal models. There is no data on affected pathways available for this disease.

Check our help page to find out more about our data sources: https://targetvalidation.org/data_sources.

You can filter the number of associations by 'Data types', 'Pathway types', 'Target class' and by uploading 'Your target list':

A) Data types

- Genetic associations (e.g. GWAS catalog)
- Somatic mutations (e.g. Cancer Gene Census, EVA)
- Drugs (from ChEMBL)
- Affected Pathways (from Reactome)
- RNA expression (from Expression Atlas)
- Text mining (from EuropePMC)
- Animal models (from PhenoDigm)

B) Pathway types

- Signal Transduction

Metabolism

...

C) Target class

Enzyme

Membrane receptor

...

D) Your target list

Upload your own list of genes (in official gene symbols from HGNC or Ensembl Gene IDs)

What are **Data types**, **Pathway types** and **Target class**?

We collect data from various sources and combine them into categories called Data types. Example of data sources are GWAS catalog and UniProt, both combined into Data types. Note that data from an individual source can contribute to different Data types, e.g. data from EVA is observed in two data types, Genetic associations and Somatic mutations.

'Pathway types' are defined by Reactome:

<http://www.reactome.org/>

whereas the categories within 'Target class' are defined by ChEMBL

<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/chembl/>.

Let's now filter the data to focus on 'Genetic associations' (Data type) only. The number of targets goes down to 171:

The screenshot shows the Open Targets Platform interface. At the top, there's a search bar and navigation links. Below, it states '171 targets associated with multiple sclerosis'. A 'Filter by' section on the left shows 'Data type' with 'Genetic associations (171)' selected. A table of targets is displayed, with columns for Target symbol, Association score, Genetic associations, Somatic mutations, Drugs, Affected pathways, RNA expression, Text mining, Animal models, and Target name. The first few targets are IL2RA, TNFRSF1A, KCNB2, CD86, CD58, CLEC16A, and EVI5. A callout box points to the 'Genetic associations' column, stating 'Genetic Associations selected'. Another callout box points to the 'Association score' column, stating 'Top targets with the highest score of 1'. A third callout box points to blank cells in the table, stating 'Blank cells have no data to support the - association (score of 0)'.

Target symbol	Association score	Genetic associations	Somatic mutations	Drugs	Affected pathways	RNA expression	Text mining	Animal models	Target name
IL2RA	1								interleukin 2 receptor sub...
TNFRSF1A	1								TNF receptor superfamily ...
KCNB2	1								potassium voltage-gated ...
CD86	1								CD86 molecule
CD58	1								CD58 molecule
CLEC16A	1								C-type lectin domain cont...
EVI5	1								ecotropic viral integration ...

Those are targets associated with multiple sclerosis based on genetic variants only. Genetic variants are SNPs (single nucleotide polymorphisms or mutations, or short indels) from the GWAS catalog, UniProt and EVA (European Variation Archive) sources only.

The table is sorted by default with the best hit on the top of the table i.e. *IL2RA*. The best hit is the target that contains the highest (overall) association score. Different weight is given to different data types when computing the score:

From the highest to the lowest weight, this is the ranking of our data types:

Genetic association = somatic mutations = drugs = pathways
 RNA expression
 Animal models = Text mining

You can sort the table by alphabetical order of the list of targets, or by the association score (either overall or per data type e.g. Genetic associations, Drugs, Text mining, etc). The association score varies from 0 to 1, the closer to 1 the stronger the association. This score is computed for each piece of evidence that is used to support the association. Individual scores within data sources and data types are combined to give the overall score ('Association score' column in the table below):

Showing 1 to 50 of 168 targets

Search:

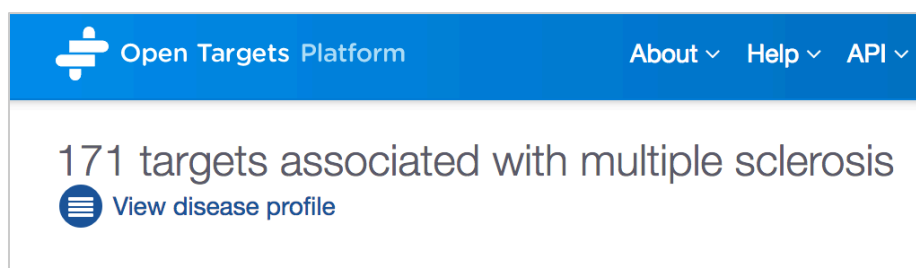
Download icon

Target symbol	Association score	Genetic associations	Somatic mutations	Drugs	Affected pathways	RNA expression	Text mining	Animal models	Target name
IL2RA									interleukin 2 receptor sub...
TNFRSF1A									
KCNB2									

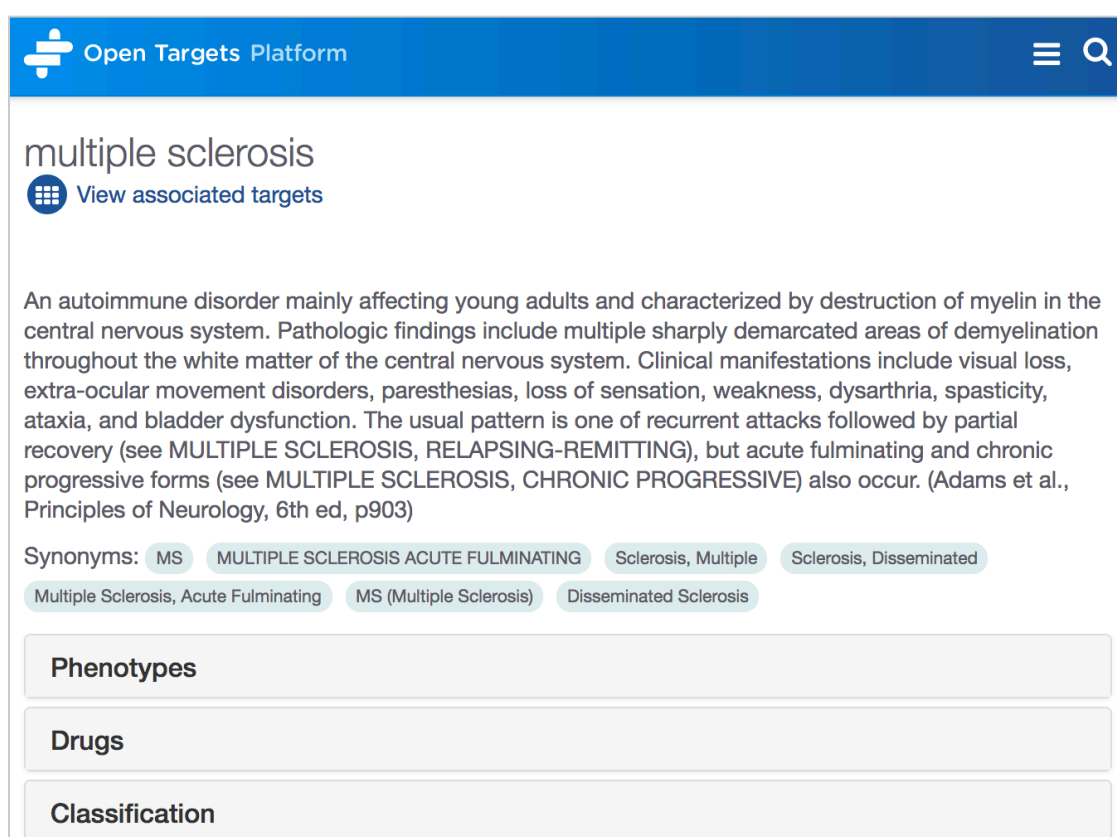
Click here to sort the results by alphabetical order of the gene symbols

Click on the arrows to sort the results by score values of individual data types e.g. Text mining.

To see which drugs are used in the clinical trials with patients with multiple sclerosis (or children terms of this disease), click on the 'View disease profile' below:



Let's now expand the tab 'Drugs'. You will see a page like this:

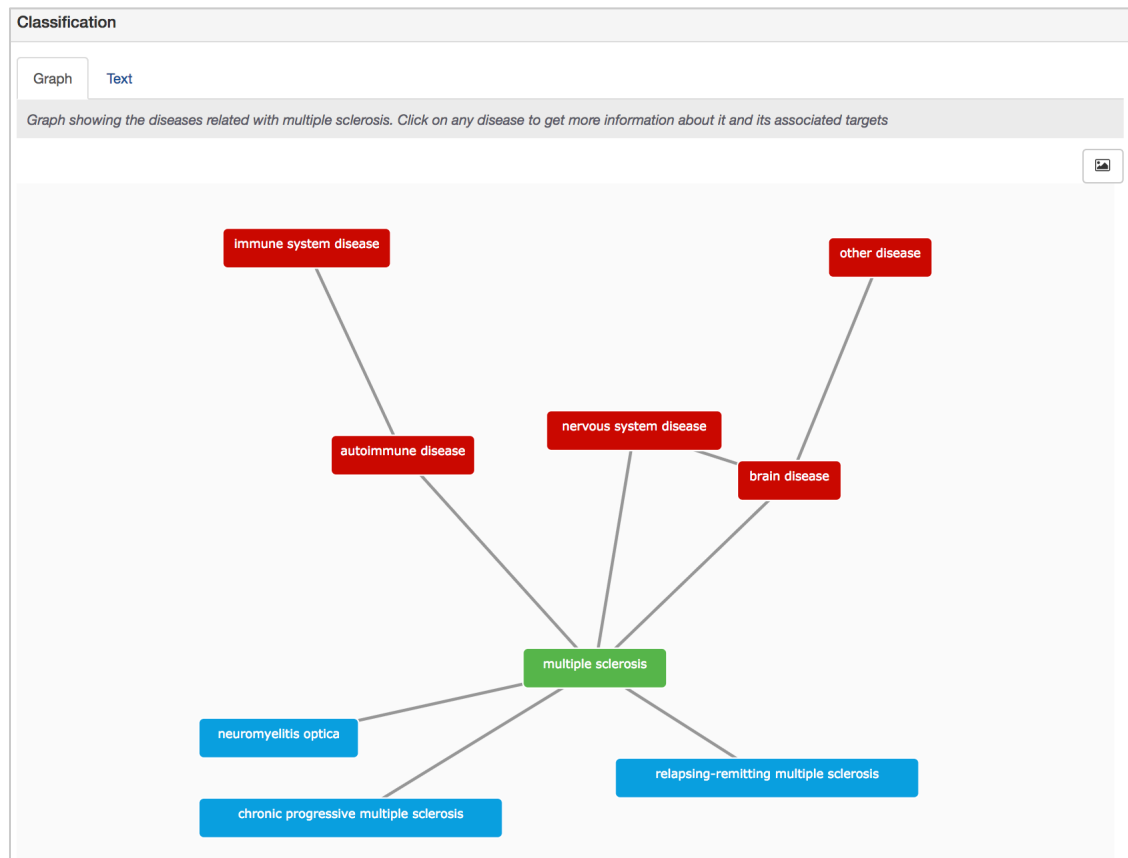


In the April release of the Open Targets Platform, we have 31 unique drugs in different phases of clinical trials with patients suffering from this condition. They will be targeting different proteins.

You can filter (and sort) the table by disease, phase of clinical trial (e.g. IV, the most advanced phase), class of the target (e.g. membrane receptor), and much more. You can also download this table in csv (comma separated value):

Drugs								
Source: ChEMBL								
Found 32 unique drugs: ALEMTUZUMAB BACLOFEN BOTULINUM TOXIN TYPE A PURIFIED NEUROTOXIN COMPLEX CHOLECALCIFEROL CORTICOTROPIN DACLIZUMAB DALFAMPRIDINE DICLOFENAC DIMETHYL FUMARATE DULOXETINE ECULIZUMAB ERGOCALCIFEROL FINGOLIMOD INTERFERON BETA-1A INTERFERON BETA-1B LAMOTRIGINE MEMANTINE METHYLPREDNISOLONE MIRABEGRON MITOXANTRONE MYCOPHENOLATE MOFETIL NALTREXONE NATALIZUMAB OCRELIZUMAB OFATUMUMAB PEGINTERFERON BETA-1A PREDNISOLONE PREDNISONE RITUXIMAB SIMVASTATIN Siponimod TERIFLUNOMIDE								
Showing 1 to 10 of 1,000 entries								
Search: <input type="text"/>								
Drug Information							Gene-Drug Evidence	
Disease	Drug	Phase	Status	Type	Mechanism of action	Activity	Target class	Evidence source
multiple sclerosis	DICLOFENAC	Phase IV	Completed	Small molecule	Cyclooxygenase inhibitor 1 publication FDA	antagonist	Oxidoreductase	Curated from Clinical Trials Information Information
multiple sclerosis	DALFAMPRIDINE	Phase IV	Completed	Small molecule	Voltage-gated potassium channel blocker 1 publication FDA	antagonist	Voltage-gated potassium channel	Curated from Clinical Trials Information Information

Next we can scroll down to view the disease ontology (disease relationship) in the 'Classification' tab. The data on the relationship of diseases comes from the EFO (Experimental Factor Ontology) and the diagram is developed by Open Targets.



Multiple sclerosis is represented in green. Red nodes correspond to parental terms, whereas the children terms of multiple sclerosis are shown in blue (e.g. chronic progressive multiple sclerosis). Click on any of disease names to get the targets associated with them:

relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis

relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis	
EFO code	EFO_0003929
226 genes associated (Showing the first 10)	
CD52	See Evidence
S1PR1	See Evidence

By using the EFO parent-child relationships, we can derive new associations that do not have direct evidence. For instance, IBD is an autoimmune disease and the direct evidence for targets associated with IBD are propagated to the higher autoimmune level to allow

users to find common targets across groups of related diseases (e.g. Ulcerative Colitis, Crohn's disease and IBD). In EFO, 'asthma' is a 'respiratory system disease' and 'childhood onset asthma' is a subclass of 'asthma'. Both evidence from 'asthma' and 'childhood onset asthma' are propagated to 'respiratory system disease'.

So you will get direct and indirect associations of diseases and genes. For more on this, check our blog post:

<https://blog.opentargets.org/direct-versus-indirect-evidence-should-you-care/>


Demo 2: Evidence supporting association

Let's now explore the evidence used to associate *CD86* and multiple sclerosis. We've chosen this target for follow up based on the availability of information from different data types.

Click on any row corresponding to CD86 in the table below:

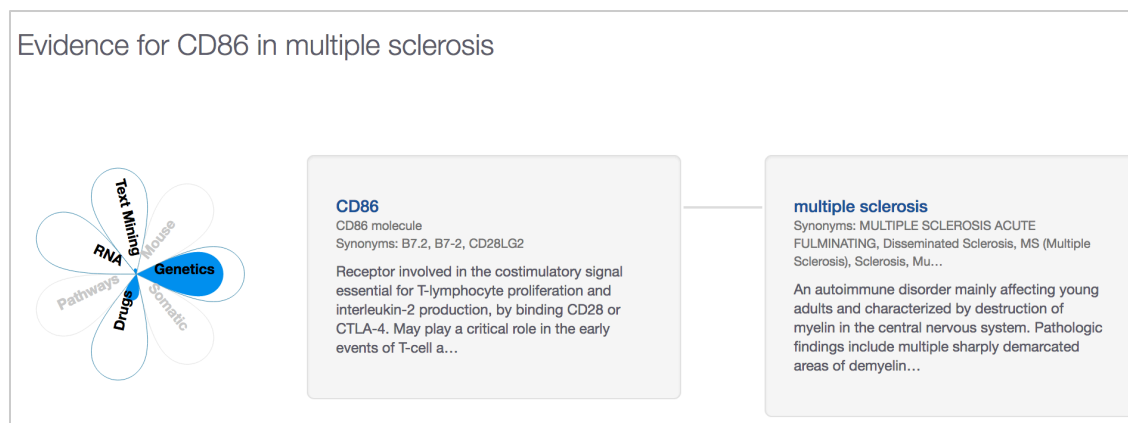
Showing 1 to 50 of 168 targets

Search:



Target symbol	Association score	Genetic associations	Somatic mutations	Drugs	Affected pathways	RNA expression	Text mining	Animal models	Target name
IL2RA	1.00	0.70		1.00			0.07		interleukin 2 receptor sub ..
TNFRSF1A	1.00	1.00					0.07		TNF receptor superfamily ..
KCNB2	1.00	0.07		1.00					potassium voltage-gated ..
CD86	0.89	0.82		0.25		0.01	0.05		CD86 molecule

land in the evidence page for the association between a gene and a disease:



The data types that support this association are (see the flower and the coloured petals):

Genetic association

Drugs

RNA expression

Text mining

Note: If you wish to suggest data types or resources we could/should incorporate into our Platform, please get in touch:

support@targetvalidation.org

Greyed out areas in the flower image above indicate there is no information for those data types, i.e. Affected Pathways, Animal models and Somatic mutations.

The genetic evidence that supports the association (*CD86* – multiple sclerosis) comes from the GWAS catalog and is processed by our pipeline.

These variants are known in public databases i.e. dbSNP (the hint is on the rsIDs, such as rs9282641, rs4308217, rs2255214, and rs2681424.

Genetic associations

Table

Browser

Common diseases

Source: [GWAS catalog](#)

Showing 1 to 4 of 4 entries

Search:

Disease	Variant	Gene-Variant Evidence		Variant-Disease Evidence		Publications
		Variant type	Evidence source	Evidence source	P-Value	
multiple sclerosis	rs9282641	splice region variant	Open Targets pipeline	gwas catalog	1e-11	1 publication
multiple sclerosis	rs4308217	intron variant	Open Targets pipeline	gwas catalog	6e-8	1 publication
multiple sclerosis	rs2255214	upstream gene variant	Open Targets pipeline	gwas catalog	5e-8	1 publication
multiple sclerosis	rs2681424	upstream gene variant	Open Targets pipeline	gwas catalog	2e-7	1 publication

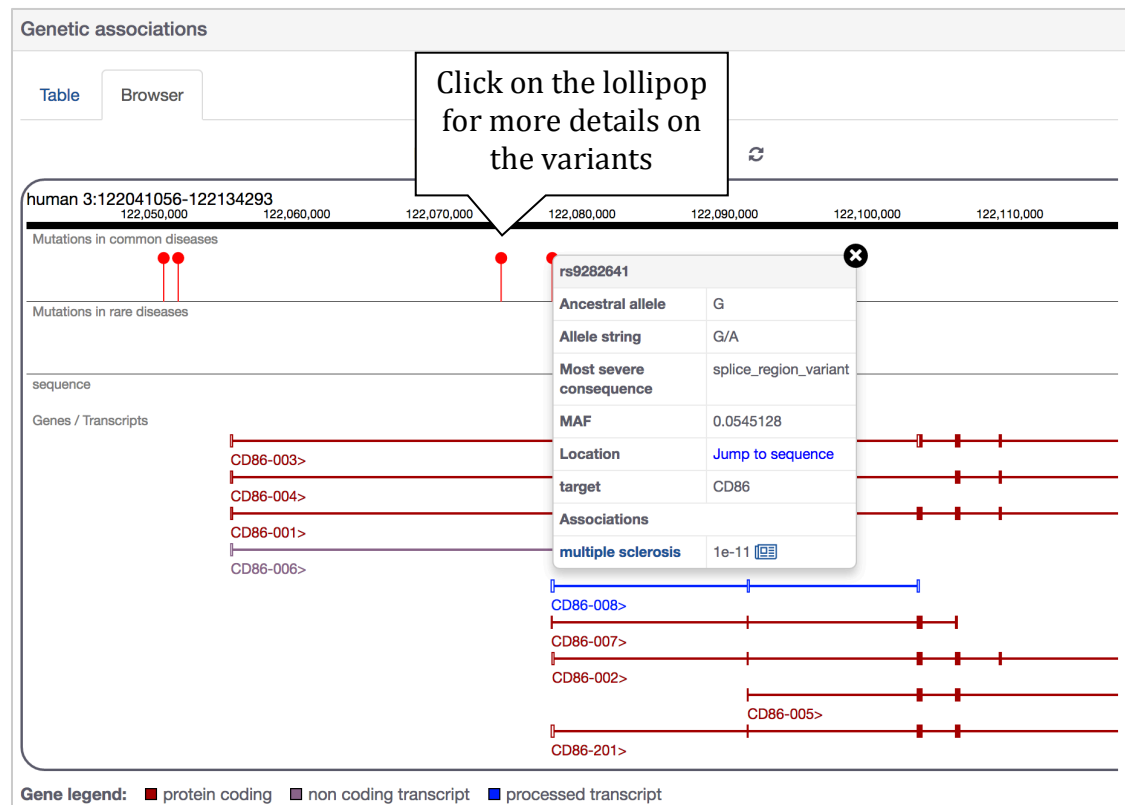
Show 10 entries

Previous1Next

In addition to the table above, you can also explore the ‘Genetic associations’ data in a Browser view.

In the Browser view, you can zoom in and out, scroll along the genome and find out more about the gene (s), transcript (s), and the genetic variants (depicted as lollipops).

Note: The assembly we use is GRCh38, also known as hg38.



To find out if there are drugs currently in clinical trials targeting *CD86* in patients with multiple sclerosis, let's expand the 'Drugs' tab. There is just one drug (i.e. ABATACEPT) on phase II of clinical trials. There are two studies from clinicaltrials.gov, NCT01116427 (in multiple sclerosis) and NCT00035529 (in relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis).

You may also want to find out the research articles that have been mined for the co-occurrence of gene name and disease in the same sentence:

Text mining

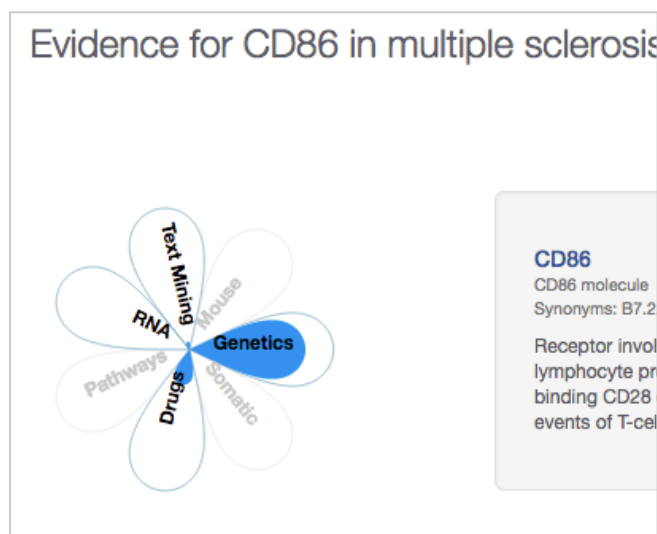
Source: [Europe PMC](#)

Shown are the 14 articles where **target** and **disease** are found in the same sentence.


Showing 1 to 10 of 14 entries

Disease	Publication	Year
multiple sclerosis	<p>Polymorphisms in CD28, CTLA-4, CD80 and CD86 genes may influence the risk of multiple sclerosis and its age of onset.</p> <p>Wagner M et al. J. Neuroimmunol. 288:79-86</p> <p>Abstract</p> <p>CD28/CTLA-4-CD80/CD86 molecules play an important role in the regulation of T cells activation. Defects in proteins involved in this pathway may lead to the development of autoimmune diseases in which T cells are involved. In this case-control study (336 multiple sclerosis (MS) patients and 322 controls) we investigated the possible association of eleven polymorphisms in CD28, CTLA-4, CD80 and CD86 genes with susceptibility to MS and/or its progression. We also took into account HLA-DRB1*15:01 status. Moreover, this study aimed to determine the possible gene-gene interactions between examined SNPs associated with the susceptibility to MS and its outcome. Our investigation revealed that in HLA-DRB1*15:01 negative individuals, G allele in rs231775A NGof CTLA-4 gene was associated with higher risk of multiple sclerosis. Additionally, the association of rs2715267T NGof CD86 gene with MS susceptibility was detected. In details, carriers of G allele at this polymorphic site possessed higher risk of MS in comparison to TT homozygotes. On the other hand, the lower risk of MS was observed in individuals carrying A allele at the rs1599795T N A polymorphic site of CD80. Furthermore, the analysis revealed an interaction between three polymorphisms: rs3116496T N C (CD28), rs6641T N G (CD80) and rs17281995G N C (CD86), associated with the age of MS onset.</p>	2015


We can now scroll back to the top of the page and click on the ‘CD86 link (next to the flower) to explore this gene in more details, such as to find out its RNA expression levels across several tissues and whether or not it is associated with other diseases of the nervous system.



You will land on a page like this:


Open Targets Platform

[About](#)
[Help](#)
[API](#)
[Downloads](#)
[Blog](#)



CD86

CD86 molecule

[View associated diseases](#)

Receptor involved in the costimulatory signal essential for T-lymphocyte proliferation and interleukin-2 production, by binding CD28 or CTLA-4. May play a critical role in the early events of T-cell activation and costimulation of naive T-cells, such as deciding between immunity and anergy that is made by T-cells within 24 hours after activation. Isoform 2 interferes with the formation of CD86 clusters, and thus acts as a negative regulator of T-cell activation.

Synonyms: [B7.2](#) [B7-2](#) [CD28LG2](#) [B70](#) [FUN-1](#) [Activation B7-2 antigen](#) [T-lymphocyte activation antigen CD86](#) [CTLA-4 counter-receptor B7.2](#) [B-lymphocyte antigen B7-2](#) [BU63](#)

Protein Information (from UniProt)

Variants, isoforms and genomic context

Protein baseline expression

RNA baseline expression

Gene Ontology

Protein Structure

Pathways

Drugs

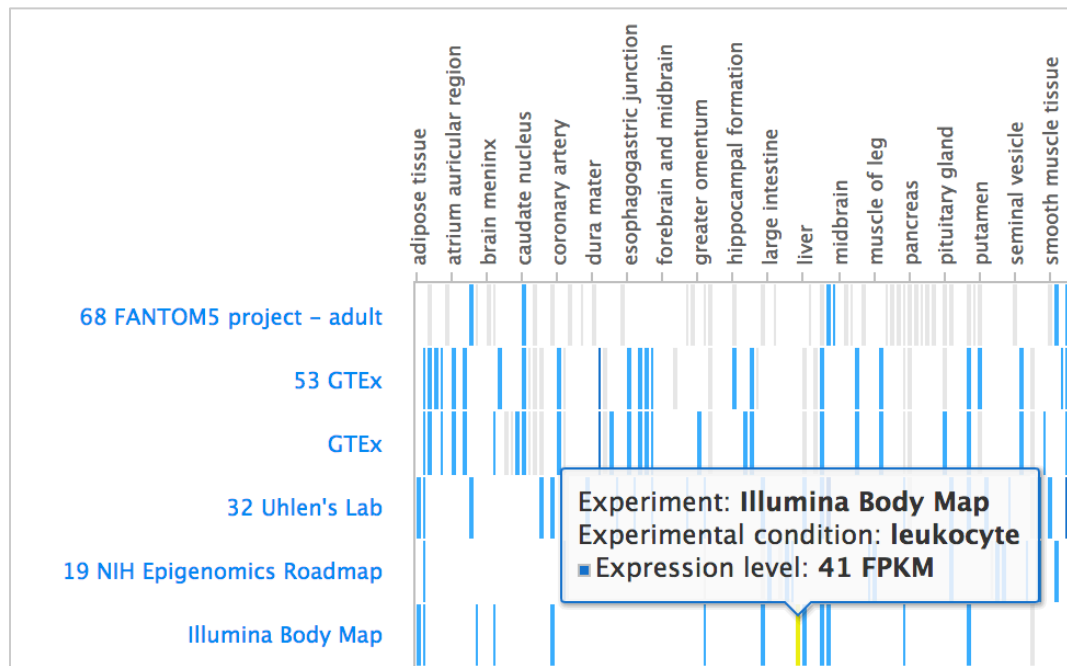
Gene tree

Bibliography

Expand the ‘RNA baseline expression’ to find out in which tissues *CD86* is highly expressed.

You will find two tabs in there: one with Expression Atlas data (with data from several projects including the Illumina Body Map), and one with GTEx data only.

According to the Illumina Body Map data, leukocytes are the cells with the highest expression level for the *CD86* gene:



You can zoom this view in and out and apply filters such as 'Expression Value' (below cutoff, low, medium or high) and Anatomical Systems.

RNA baseline expression

Expression Atlas

GTEx variability

♂

♀

🧠

Showing 18 experiment:

☐ Default ▼
 ☒ Filters

☐ Download table content


Select a section of the heatmap to zoom in

) area 24


and

issue

Let's now click on 'View associated diseases' to find out all diseases associated with the *CD86* (not only multiple sclerosis):


Open Targets Platform
About ▾


CD86

CD86 molecule |  View associated diseases

You will land on a page like this:

Number of diseases associated with CD86

31 diseases associated with CD86

 View CD86 profile

Filter by

Datatype

Clear all ✕ Select all ✓

☐ Genetic associations (10)
 ☐ Somatic mutations (0)
 ☐ Drugs (41)
 ☐ Affected pathways (2)
 ☐ RNA expression (58)
 ☐ Text mining (252)
 ☐ Animal models (42)

Filter the results

Clear all ✕ Select all ✓

☐ Neoplasm (80)
 ☐ Genetic disorder (61)
 ☐ Immune system disease (55)
 ☐ Nervous system disease (46)
 ☐ Infectious disease (38)
 ☐ Hematological system d... (36)
 ☐ Phenotype (26)
 ☐ Skin disease (26)
 ☐ Other (22)
 ☐ Digestive system disease (20)
 ☐ Respiratory system dise... (17)
 ☐ Cardiovascular disease (15)
 ☐ Reproductive system di... (15)

Therapeutic area

Clear all ✕ Select all ✓

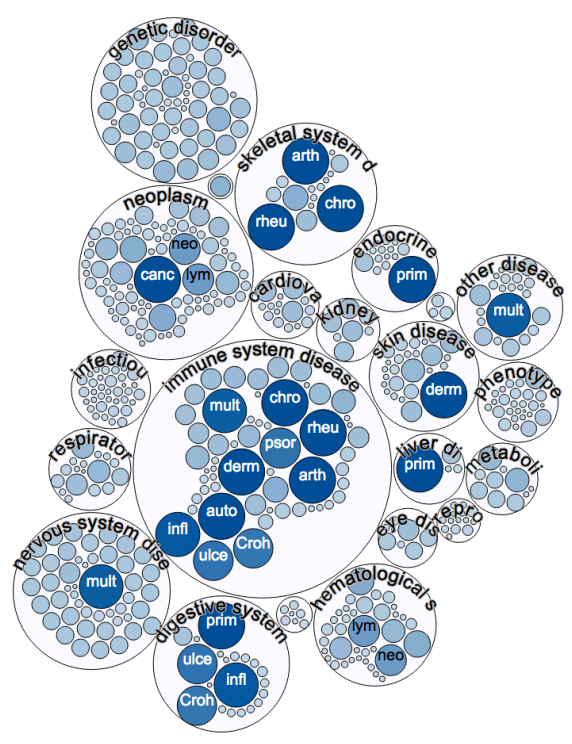
☐ Neoplasm (80)
 ☐ Genetic disorder (61)
 ☐ Immune system disease (55)
 ☐ Nervous system disease (46)
 ☐ Infectious disease (38)
 ☐ Hematological system d... (36)
 ☐ Phenotype (26)
 ☐ Skin disease (26)
 ☐ Other (22)
 ☐ Digestive system disease (20)
 ☐ Respiratory system dise... (17)
 ☐ Cardiovascular disease (15)
 ☐ Reproductive system di... (15)

Bubbles

Table

Tree

The associations can be viewed in three different displays



Data types (e.g. Drugs)

Therapeutic areas (e.g. Neoplasm)

There are three different displays that can be used to view the diseases associated with any given target:

23

- Bubble view

In this view, we group diseases into 'bubbles' based on the disease ontology. Large bubbles correspond to a therapeutic area and consist of smaller bubbles representing diseases within this area. A disease can belong to several therapeutic areas and therefore can appear within more than one large bubble. The strength of the association between the target and a disease is represented by the size of the bubble and the shade of its blue colour; the larger the bubble and the darker the blue, the stronger the association.

- Table view

In this view, we list all diseases associated with a target, ordered by the association score, which is colour coded. When there is no evidence to support the association, the cells in this table are coloured in white (score of zero). You can show the 10 first entries and get the pagination for the remaining entries.

BubblesTableTree

Showing 1 to 10 of 46 entries

Search:

Download

Disease	Association score	Genetic associations	Somatic mutations	Drugs	Affected pathways	RNA expression	Text mining	Animal models	Therapeutic area
multiple sclerosis									immune system disease, ...
relapsing-remitting multipl...	0.20			0.20					immune system disease, ...
Charcot-Marie-Tooth dise...	0.15							0.15	nervous system disease, ...
Hereditary spastic paraple...	0.15						0.03	0.14	nervous system disease, ...
Charcot-Marie-Tooth dise...	0.15							0.15	nervous system disease, ...
Charcot-Marie-Tooth dise...	0.15							0.15	nervous system disease, ...
Charcot-Marie-Tooth dise...	0.15							0.15	nervous system disease, ...
Charcot-Marie-Tooth dise...	0.15							0.15	nervous system disease, ...
Autosomal dominant inter...	0.15							0.15	nervous system disease, ...
Autosomal dominant Char...	0.15							0.15	nervous system disease, ...

Show 10 entries

Previous

1

2

3

4

5

Next

No data

0 1

Score

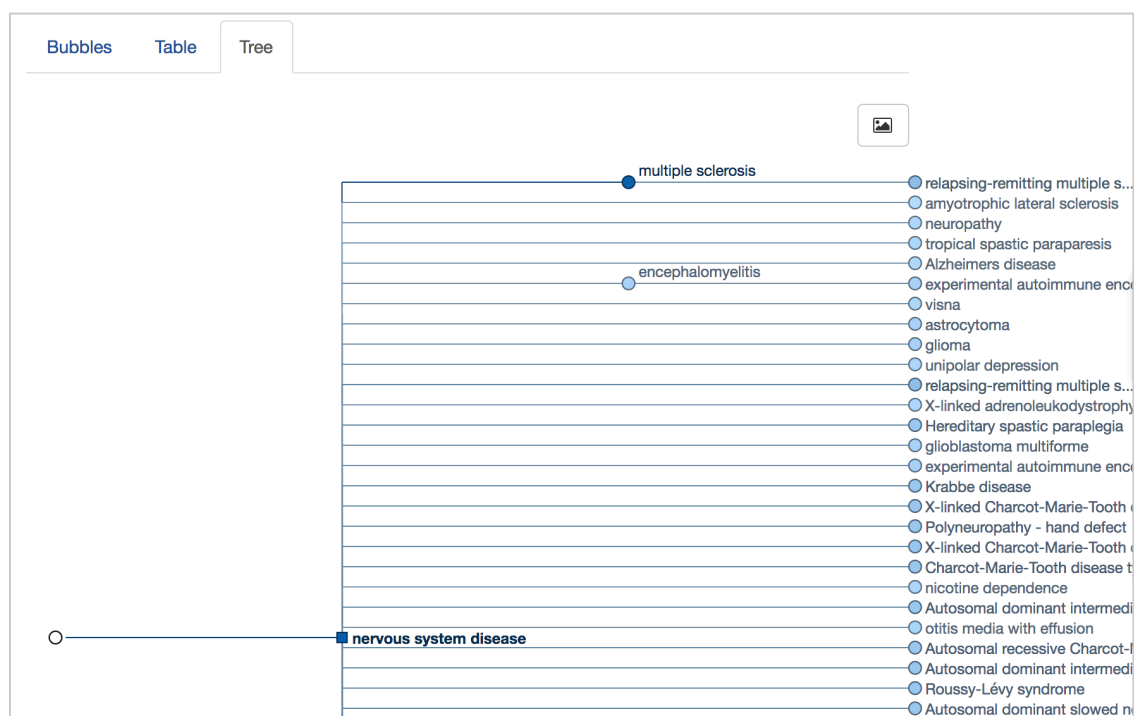


This table can be exported in csv format (look for the download button).

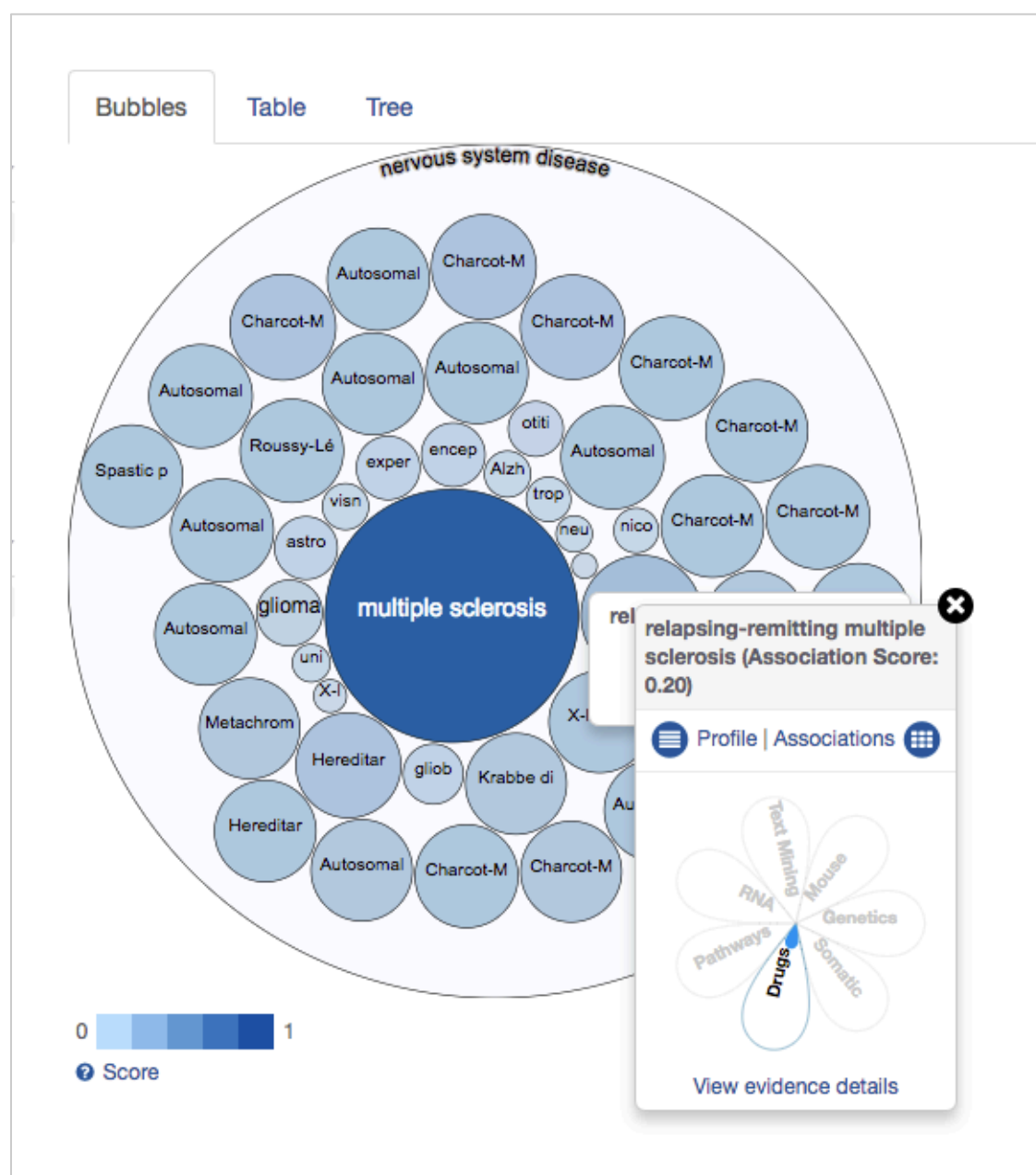
Tip: We colour code the cells in the table in different shade of blue as a visual way to convey the strength of the association (strongest association is coloured in dark blue). The score varies from 0 to 1. Hover over the cells in the table to view the numbers. Alternatively, you can select the cells in the table so that you can view the numerical values.

- Tree view

In the Tree view, you can visualise the evidence across the therapeutic areas in a tree format that represents the relationships of diseases. Therapeutic areas have a square symbol (e.g. Genetic disorders), while the diseases (e.g. ovarian carcinoma) are represented as circles. The squares and circles are colour coded in blue, and the darker the blue, the stronger the association:



Regardless the view you choose to explore, you can filter the data to find out if there are other “Nervous system” diseases associated with this target. There are 46 of them (e.g. Hereditary spastic paraplegia, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and neuropathy). The scores vary from 0.01 to 0.20 (score of 0.89 for multiple sclerosis).



HANDS-ON EXERCISES PART I

Exercise 1

TRAF3IP2 in psoriasis

BACKGROUND

The *TRAF3IP2* gene encodes a protein that is involved in regulating responses to cytokines by members of the Rel/NF-kappaB transcription factor family. These factors play a central role in innate immunity in response to pathogens, inflammatory signals and stress. Genome-wide association studies have identified a psoriasis susceptibility locus at *TRAF3IP2* (PMID:20953188, PMID: 20953186).

QUESTIONS

- a) Is this target associated with other skin diseases? If so, can you name three of them with the highest (overall) association score (> 0.70)?
- b) Which types of data suggest these top three associations?
- c) Can you name the variants that support genetic associations between *TRAF3IP2* and psoriasis? Which data source does this evidence come from?
- d) Can you view the genetic variants in a Browser view? Are there variants that map to this gene but are associated with other diseases than psoriasis? In which human chromosome does this gene map to? Is it a forward or reverse stranded gene?
- e) How many research articles seem to support the association between *TRAF3IP2* in psoriasis based on Text mining?

Exercise 2

Aducanumab, antibody that may slow the progress of Alzheimer's disease

BACKGROUND

The most common cause of dementia, Alzheimer's disease is a brain disorder that leads to impairment of intellectual functions and social skills, resulting in significant disturbance of daily living activities. Dementia is caused by the destruction of cells in certain parts of the brain primarily involved in memory and mental function.

SIGNIFICANCE

Alzheimer's disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States and it's expected 16 million Americans will be living with Alzheimer's by 2050 (source: alz.org).

Biogen in collaboration with Neurimmune have been conducting clinical studies investigating a potential new treatment (Aducanumab) for early Alzheimer's disease. Aducanumab is an antibody that binds to and may reduce amyloid plaques from the brain, potentially slowing the progress of the disease.

QUESTIONS

- a) Which gene (s) and disease (s) does this drug match to?
- b) Which biochemical pathway is this gene involved in, which likely play a role in the pathogenesis of Alzheimer's?
- c) Are there other pathways that this gene can be mapped to, outside the context of any disease? Hint: these pathways are not related to Alzheimer's or other diseases. Click on the gene name to get to the profile page of the target (or gene).
- d) Let's now focus on the gene itself, outside the context of a disease. What is the human tissue with the highest RNA baseline expression for this target according to GTEx? Does a higher RNA expression result in more protein being produced (hint: look for the Protein baseline expression)?
- e) Are there any clinical trials in phase 4 where the product of this gene is a possible target?
- f) Is there a zebrafish homologue to this human gene (targeted by aducanumab)? *Note: Zebrafish can be a useful animal model to focus on the roles of intracellular aggregate-prone proteins in the pathogenesis*

of AD and to help the identification of pathways, which can enhance the clearance of these toxic proteins. See more in the link below:

<http://www.pdn.cam.ac.uk/directory/angeleen-fleming>

Exercise 3

BACKGROUND

Franke et al (2006) described seven genes associated with Alzheimer's disease:

HFE

PSEN1

TF

APOE

ADRB2

PSEN2

A2M

The information available in Open Targets could help you choose and prioritise the best targets from that list.

QUESTIONS

a) Can filter the associations for Alzheimer's to show the data for your genes of interest only (hint: you will input this data as a list under the 'Your target list' filter in the association page for Alzheimer's. Scroll down in that page to find 'Your target list' on the left hand side, and upload your text file.

b) Which of those seven genes have the strongest association w/ Alzheimer's?

b) Are there any targets, which are membrane receptors?

c) Which amino acids of this membrane receptor correspond to the extracellular domain?

HANDS-ON EXERCISES PART II

Exercise 4

***IL6* as a possible target in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis**

BACKGROUND

IL6 encodes a cytokine that functions in inflammation and the maturation of B cells. In addition, it has been shown to be an endogenous pyrogen capable of inducing fever in people with autoimmune diseases or infections. The protein implicated in a wide variety of inflammation-associated disease states, including systemic juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (PMID:9769329).

QUESTIONS

- a) How many diseases within the broader Therapeutic area 'Immune system disease' are associated with this target based on 'Drugs' as one of the data types?
- b) Besides drugs, are there other types of data supporting the association between *IL6* and rheumatoid arthritis?
- c) Can you describe some of the phenotypes in mice that seem to mimic the phenotypes in patients with rheumatoid arthritis?

Let's now explore some information available for rheumatoid arthritis.

d) What are the different subtypes (i.e. the children terms) of rheumatoid arthritis? Can you download the ontology tree displayed in the Platform? Let's now have a look at one of the subtypes of RA i.e. chronic childhood arthritis.

e) Can you list the drugs in phase III of clinical trials for the treatment of chronic childhood arthritis, which are still recruiting volunteers?

f) Which phenotypes can describe this disease?

Let's now click on 'View associated targets' to see the targets associated with chronic childhood arthritis.

f) What are the top two targets, which are surface antigen, associated with this disease?

Exercise 5

BACKGROUND

The Drug Discovery Unit at the University of Dundee translates biology research into novel drug targets and candidate drugs to address unmet medical need across, such as infectious affecting mainly the developing world.

These are some of the targets that have been selected for further investigation: *ODC1*, *GUCY1A2*, *GUCY1A1*, *CSF3R*, *CCR5*, *TLR7*, and *CD28*.

QUESTIONS

a) Can you search for all these targets in one go using the web interface of the Open Targets Platform?

b) What are the top 10 diseases within the therapeutic area of infectious diseases that these targets are most specific to (hint: look for the p-value provided, the lower the value, the higher the chances this set of targets are specific to a disease)?

c) Can you list a few of the pathways these targets are involved in? Click on any of the pathway names to see a schematic diagram of it.

d) Which targets from this list of seven have drugs currently in phase IV of the clinical trials? Can you find out the mechanism of action of VICRIVIROC?

e) Do any of these targets seem to be interacting with each other? Where does this data come from?

QUICK GUIDE TO DATABASES

Here is a list of databases and projects that may be useful for you to explore:

PROTEINS

UniProtKB – The “Protein knowledgebase” is a comprehensive set of protein sequences. It is divided into two parts: TrEMBL and Swiss-Prot. The later is manually annotated and reviewed, therefore provides a set of protein sequences of high quality.

<http://www.uniprot.org/>

GENE NOMENCLATURE COMMITTEES

HGNC – The HUGO Gene Nomenclature Committee assigns unique names and symbols to every single human gene, whether they are coding or not. These gene names and symbols are the official ones for human genes.

<http://www.genenames.org/>

MGI – The HGNC counterpart for naming mouse genes and symbols.

<http://www.informatics.jax.org/>

GENETIC VARIANTS and SOMATIC MUTATIONS

GWAS catalog– The catalog of Genome Wide Association Studies (GWAS) provides genetic variants (e.g. SNPs) that are associated with a disease.

<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/gwas/>

EVA – The European Variation Archive (EVA) provides genetic variants and somatic mutations (associated with cancer).

<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/eva/>

Cancer Gene Census – A catalogue of genes for which mutations have been causally implicated in cancer. The Catalogue of Somatic Mutations in Cancer (COSMIC) at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute provides us with the set of genes associated with specific cancers in the Cancer Gene Census, in addition to other cancers associated with that gene in the COSMIC database.

www.cancer.sanger.ac.uk/census/

IntOGen - It provides evidence of somatic mutations, genes and pathways involved in tumorigenesis from 6,792 samples across 28 cancer types.

<https://www.intogen.org/search>

Gene2Phenotype - The data in Gene2Phenotype (G2P) provides evidence of genetic variants that are manually curated from the literature by consultant clinical geneticists in the UK. This is provided by DECIPHER, a database of genomic variants and phenotypes in patients with developmental disorders.

<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/gene2phenotype>

DRUGS

ChEMBL - The ChEMBL database at the EMBL-EBI provides evidence from known drugs that can be linked to a disease and a known target.

<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/chembl/>

RNA EXPRESSION

Expression Atlas – The Expression Atlas at EMBL-EBI provides information on genes that are differentially expressed between normal and disease samples, or among disease samples from different studies. In addition to differential expression, they provide baseline expression information for each gene.

<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/gxa/home>

AFFECTED PATHWAYS

Reactome – The Reactome database at the EMBL-EBI contains pathway information on biochemical reactions sourced from manual

curation. It identifies reaction pathways that are affected by pathogenic mutations.

<http://www.reactome.org/>

ANIMAL MODELS

Phenodigm - The Phenodigm resource at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute provides evidence on associations of targets and disease. It uses a semantic approach to map between clinical features observed in humans and mouse phenotype annotations.

<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/resources/databases/phenodigm/>

TEXT MINING

Europe PMC - The Europe PubMed Central at the EMBL-EBI mines the titles, abstracts and full text research articles from both PubMed and PubMed Central to provide evidence of links between targets and diseases.

<http://europepmc.org/>