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PAPER OF THE MONTH • JUNE 2012



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nature
genetics

Genome-wide meta-analysis identifies 56 bone mineral density loci and reveals 14 loci associated with risk of fracture

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Bone mineral density (BMD) is the most widely used predictor of fracture risk. We performed the largest meta-analysis to date on lumbar spine and femoral neck BMD, including 17 genome-wide association studies and 32,961 individuals of European and east Asian ancestry. We tested the top BMD-associated markers for replication in 50,933 independent subjects and for association with risk of low-trauma fracture in 31,016 individuals with a history of fracture (cases) and 102,444 controls. We identified 56 loci (32 new) associated with BMD at genome-wide significance ($P < 5 \times 10^{-8}$). Several of these factors cluster within the RANK-RANKL-OPG, mesenchymal stem cell differentiation, endochondral ossification and Wnt signaling pathways. However, we also discovered loci that were localized to genes not known to have a role in bone biology. Fourteen BMD-associated loci were also associated with fracture risk ($P < 5 \times 10^{-4}$, Bonferroni corrected), of which six reached $P < 5 \times 10^{-8}$, including at 18p11.21 (*FAM210A*), 7q21.3 (*SLC25A13*), 11q13.2 (*LRP5*), 4q22.1 (*MEPE*), 2p16.2 (*SPTBN1*) and 10q21.1 (*DKK1*). These findings shed light on the genetic architecture and pathophysiological mechanisms underlying BMD variation and fracture susceptibility.

Nature Genetics **44**, 491-501 (2012) doi:10.1038/ng.2249.