



**University of Dundee**

## **A multi-layer functional genomic analysis to understand noncoding genetic variation in lipids**

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1 **A multi-layer functional genomic analysis to understand noncoding genetic variation in**  
2 **lipids**

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741

742 **Summary**

743 A major challenge of genome-wide association studies (GWAS) is to translate phenotypic  
744 associations into biological insights. Here, we integrate a large GWAS on blood lipids  
745 involving 1.6 million individuals from five ancestries with a wide array of functional  
746 genomic datasets to discover regulatory mechanisms underlying lipid associations. We first  
747 prioritize lipid-associated genes with expression quantitative trait locus (eQTL)  
748 colocalizations, and then add chromatin interaction data to narrow the search for functional  
749 genes. Polygenic enrichment analysis across 697 annotations from a host of tissues and cell  
750 types confirms the central role of the liver in lipid levels, and highlights the selective  
751 enrichment of adipose-specific chromatin marks in high-density lipoprotein cholesterol and  
752 triglycerides. Overlapping transcription factor (TF) binding sites with lipid-associated loci  
753 identifies TFs relevant in lipid biology. In addition, we present an integrative framework to  
754 prioritize causal variants at GWAS loci, producing a comprehensive list of candidate causal  
755 genes and variants with multiple layers of functional evidence. We highlight two of the  
756 prioritized genes, *CREBRF* and *RRBP1*, which show convergent evidence across functional  
757 datasets supporting their roles in lipid biology.

758

759



## 760 **Introduction**

761

762 Most GWAS findings have not directly led to mechanistic interpretations, largely because  
763 approximately 90% of GWAS associations map to non-coding sequences<sup>1,2</sup>. Mechanistic  
764 interpretations in GWAS have proven challenging because the strongest signals identified in  
765 GWAS typically contain many variants in strong linkage disequilibrium (LD)<sup>3</sup> and  
766 functional mechanisms including genes of action are often not clear from GWAS data alone  
767 <sup>4,5</sup>.

768

769 Linking trait-associated variants to genome function has emerged as a promising model for  
770 mechanistic interpretation of non-coding findings in GWAS. This 'variant-to-function' model  
771 is premised on recent observations that non-coding variants often affect a trait of interest  
772 through the regulation of genes and processes in trait-relevant cell types or tissues<sup>2,6</sup>.

773 Implementing this functional model in GWAS has become more feasible as large-scale  
774 functional genomic resources, such as epigenomic<sup>7</sup> and transcriptomic<sup>8</sup> catalogues, have  
775 been systematically generated across a wide range of human cell types and tissues. The  
776 integration of functional genomics with GWAS has identified regulatory mechanisms in  
777 variants associated with some flagship disorders such as obesity<sup>9</sup> and schizophrenia<sup>10</sup>,  
778 yielding important functional insights into the genetic architecture of human complex traits.

779

780 The history of the human genetics of lipids mirrors the successes and challenges of GWAS.  
781 Increasing sample size and genetic diversity has significantly boosted the power of discovery:  
782 the first lipid GWAS in 2008 with 8,816 European-descent individuals identified 29 lipid-  
783 associated loci<sup>11</sup>; the latest study of 1.6 million individuals across five ancestries<sup>12</sup> found  
784 941. Despite the dramatic increase in the number of associations, our biological

785 understanding of many of these genetic discoveries remains limited. The causal gene has  
786 been confidently assigned at only a small fraction of these loci <sup>2</sup>, and the regulatory  
787 mechanism connecting variant to phenotype has been conclusively characterized only for a  
788 handful of genes <sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, systematic mapping of lipid-associated variants to their  
789 biological functions has been missing in the literature at the time of this study.

790

791 Here we conduct a genome-scale integrative analysis on the largest published GWAS to-date  
792 of five lipid phenotypes (LDL, or low density lipoprotein; HDL, or high density lipoprotein;  
793 TC, or total cholesterol; nonHDL, or non-high density lipoprotein; and TG, or triglycerides)  
794 involving 1.65 million individuals from five ancestries <sup>12</sup>. Combining the lipid GWAS with a  
795 wide array of functional genomic resources in diverse human tissues and cell types, we  
796 identify regulatory mechanisms of noncoding genetic variation in lipids with a full suite of  
797 computational approaches. Further, we develop a generalizable framework to understand how  
798 tissue-specific gene regulation can explain GWAS findings, and demonstrate its real-world  
799 value on lipid-associated loci.

800

## 801 **Material and methods**

802

### 803 *GWAS*

804

805 We used the recently-published GWAS data for five blood lipid traits (LDL, HDL, TC, TG,  
806 and nonHDL) in 1.65 million individuals from five ancestry groups <sup>12</sup> (African and African-  
807 admixed, East Asian, European, Hispanic, South Asian) at 91 million variants imputed  
808 primarily from the Haplotype Reference Consortium <sup>13</sup> or 1000 Genomes Phase 3 <sup>14</sup>. GWAS

809 of individual cohorts were based on the hg19 version of the human reference genome. MR-  
810 MEGA <sup>15</sup> was used for meta-analysis across cohorts.

811

812 We defined 'sentinel variants' as the most significant variant at independent trait-associated  
813 loci in the genome. The windows are the greater of 500kb or 0.25cM around the sentinel  
814 variant; genetic distances were defined using reference maps from HapMap 3 <sup>16</sup>. We  
815 performed a second round of conditional analysis, conditioning on the sentinel variants to  
816 identify and remove any significant windows that are shadow signals of (or dependent on) a  
817 neighboring locus to enforce independence of associated loci.

818

819 For each sentinel variant, we defined credible sets of potentially causal variants within +/-  
820 500kb region around the sentinel variant representing the set of variants harboring the causal  
821 variant with a 95% posterior probability. Full details of the credible set construction are  
822 reported in our recent GWAS publication <sup>12</sup>. The credible sets are freely available (Web  
823 resources).

824

### 825 *Colocalization of GWAS associations with eQTLs*

826

827 We performed statistical colocalization of lipid GWAS with eQTLs obtained from GTEx v8  
828 across 49 tissues <sup>8</sup>. For each of the five lipid traits, we used the same sentinel variants defined  
829 in the previous section to represent approximately independent GWAS-associated windows  
830 (also removing shadow signals as described before). For each such window, we ran eQTL  
831 colocalization with GTEx v8 single-tissue cis-eQTL summary statistics <sup>8</sup>. For each of 49  
832 GTEx tissues, we first identified all genes within 1Mb of the sentinel SNP, and then restricted  
833 analysis to those genes with significant eQTLs (i.e., 'eGenes' as defined by GTEx) in that

834 tissue (FDR < 0.05). We used the R package 'coloc' (R version 3.4.3, coloc version 3.2.1) <sup>17</sup>  
835 with default parameters to run colocalization between the GWAS signal and the eQTL signal  
836 for each of these cis-eGenes, using as input those SNPs in the defined window (greater than  
837 500kb or 0.25cM on either side of the lead variant) that are present in both datasets. eQTL  
838 summary statistics were in GRCh38, so we lifted over the GWAS summary statistics from  
839 hg19 to GRCh38 using liftOver <sup>18</sup>. As in previous studies <sup>19</sup>, we used a colocalization  
840 posterior probability of (PP3+PP4) > 0.8 to identify loci with enough colocalization power,  
841 and PP4/PP3 > 0.9 to define those loci that show significant colocalization, where PP4  
842 represents posterior probability of a single shared signal, and PP3 represents posterior  
843 probability of two unique signals in the GWAS and eQTL datasets.

844

#### 845 *Overlap with promoter Capture-C data*

846

847 We used four promoter-focused Capture-C (henceforth Capture-C) datasets from three human  
848 cell types (Web resources) to capture physical interactions between gene promoters and their  
849 regulatory elements. The four Capture-C datasets are (1) three biological replicates of HepG2  
850 liver carcinoma cells (HepG2.1) <sup>20</sup>; (2) another HepG2 dataset described in Selvarajan et al  
851 (HepG2.2) <sup>21</sup>; (3) hepatocyte-like cells (HLC) produced by differentiating three biological  
852 replicates of iPSCs (which in turn were generated from peripheral blood mononuclear cells  
853 using a previously published protocol <sup>22</sup>); (4) an adipose dataset obtained from Pan et al <sup>23</sup>  
854 that was produced using primary human white adipocytes. Across the four datasets, the  
855 number of significant interactions on the same chromosome ranges from 67,819 (adipose) to  
856 126,565 (HLC). The bait end has a median size of 2,141 (HepG2.1) to 6,567 (HepG2.2)  
857 bases. The interacting end has a median size of 2,100 (HepG2.1) to 3,243 base pairs  
858 (HepG2.2) for all datasets. The median distance between the bait and interacting ends for all

859 interactions on the same chromosome ranges from 71,722 (HLC) to 285,140 base pairs  
860 (adipose).  
861  
862 The detailed protocol to prepare HepG2 or HLC cells for the Capture-C experiment is  
863 described in Chesi et al<sup>20</sup>. Briefly, for each dataset, 10 million cells were used for promoter  
864 Capture-C library generation. Custom capture baits were designed using an Agilent  
865 SureSelect library design targeting both ends of DpnII restriction fragments encompassing  
866 promoters (including alternative promoters) of all human coding genes, noncoding RNA,  
867 antisense RNA, snRNA, miRNA, snoRNA, and lincRNA transcripts, totalling 36,691 RNA  
868 baited fragments. Each library was then sequenced on an Illumina HiSeq 4000 (HepG2) or  
869 Illumina NovoSeq (HLC), generating 1.6 billion read pairs per sample (50 base pair read  
870 length.) We used HiCUP v0.7.2<sup>24</sup> to process the raw FASTQ files into loop calls and  
871 CHiCAGO v1.6.0<sup>25</sup> to define significant looping interactions; we defined a CHiCAGO score  
872 of 5 as significant, as specified in the default parameters.  
873  
874 Starting with Capture-C maps processed as described above, we re-annotated the baits to  
875 gene IDs from Gencode v19<sup>26</sup> to ensure uniformity of gene annotations with the rest of our  
876 pipeline. For each bait, we identified any gene whose transcription start site (TSS) from any  
877 transcript in Gencode v19 was within 175 base pair distance from the bait (to account for  
878 differing bait designs for external datasets which may not directly overlap the canonical  
879 TSS). We filtered all datasets to only include interactions in which the interacting end was  
880 not another bait. Enrichment with colocalized genes was robust to our choice of distance  
881 between bait and gene (enrichment with eQTL colocalized genes ranging from 2.94-2.96 for  
882 bait distances from 0-350 base pairs).  
883

884 To identify genetic variants associated with any of the five lipid traits that physically interact  
885 with locations in the genome, we used the R package ‘Genomic Ranges’ version 1.30.3<sup>27</sup> to  
886 find overlap between credible sets for each trait’s GWAS and the previously annotated  
887 promoter Capture-C data. Given the bait end of a gene, we defined a GWAS locus as  
888 interacting with this gene if a variant in the credible set for this GWAS locus fell inside the  
889 interacting end.

890

### 891 *Presence of gene-variant pairs in same topologically associated domains*

892

893 To assess the frequency of colocalized gene-sentinel variant pairs in the same topologically  
894 associated domain (TAD), we used a list of 2,499 publicly-available TADs from human liver  
895<sup>28</sup> (Web resources). We computed as a fraction the number of colocalizations with the  
896 sentinel variant and colocalized gene in the same TAD divided by all colocalizations in which  
897 the sentinel variant lies in a TAD. To test if this fraction was statistically significant, we  
898 generated random TAD boundaries using ‘bedtools shuffle’ 1000 times and calculated the  
899 same fraction for these randomly-generated TAD boundaries.

900

### 901 *Pathway enrichment*

902

903 We used ClusterProfiler v3.6.0<sup>29</sup> to look for pathways over-represented in each gene list:  
904 genes with eQTL colocalization and genes interacting with variants in GWAS credible sets.  
905 We used the enrichKEGG function to look for enriched pathways in the latest version of the  
906 KEGG database<sup>30</sup>. We first re-mapped gencode IDs to gene symbols using the Gencode v24  
907 annotation and then used the biomaRt R package v2.34.2<sup>31</sup> to convert gene symbols to

908 Entrez IDs. We ran enrichKEGG to identify enriched pathways that were significant at a  
909 Benjamini-Hochberg threshold of 0.05.

910

#### 911 *Enrichment in known lipid-associated genes*

912

913 We calculated enrichment odds ratio of genes identified in our analysis with four known sets  
914 of lipid-associated genes using the Fisher's exact test (R function 'fisher.test'). First, we  
915 identified 33 Mendelian genes from ClinVar<sup>32</sup> with lipidemia-associated ICD10 codes (E78).  
916 Second, we used 35 genes with rare-coding variants associated with lipid levels<sup>33</sup>. Third, we  
917 extracted 1,115 genes associated with 'cholesterol' or 'lipidemia' phenotypes in mouse  
918 knockouts from the Mouse Genome Informatics database<sup>34</sup>. Fourth, we identified 4,008  
919 genes from a transcriptome-wide association study (TWAS) on the same GWAS and GTEx  
920 v8 summary statistics using the S-PrediXcan software<sup>35</sup> default setup. The TWAS method  
921 accounts for allelic heterogeneity and thus complements the eQTL colocalization approach  
922 that assumes one causal variant per locus.

923

#### 924 *TF binding sites*

925

926 We extracted TF binding sites from ChIP-seq data of 161 TFs in 91 cell types from the  
927 ENCODE project<sup>7</sup> (Web resources). We included all cell types in our primary analysis  
928 because TFs were not comprehensively assayed in most cell lines. We also performed a  
929 secondary analysis using TF binding sites from HepG2 only. All TF binding sites were  
930 aligned to the hg19 version of human reference genome  
931 ([https://www.encodeproject.org/chip-seq/transcription\\_factor/](https://www.encodeproject.org/chip-seq/transcription_factor/)).

932

933 *Stratified LD score (S-LDSC) regression analysis*

934

935 We used LDSC version 1.0.1<sup>36</sup> to estimate the enrichment of heritability explained using  
936 GWAS summary statistics in different epigenetic and transcriptomic annotations, including  
937 gene expression, chromatin marks, and TF binding sites. The gene expression and chromatin  
938 mark annotations across 205 datasets from more than 170 tissues and cell types and the  
939 corresponding LD scores were provided as 'Multitissuegeneexpr1000Gv3' and  
940 'Multitissuechromatin1000Gv3' databases in LDSC software (Web resources). The LD  
941 scores for binding sites of each TF were estimated from 1000 Genomes Phase 3 European  
942 samples using 'ldsc.py --l2'. We first converted the summary statistics for each phenotype to  
943 LDSC-formatted summary statistics using 'munge\_sumstats.py'. Second, we ran 'ldsc.py'  
944 using the baseline\_v1.2 baseline model on each annotation to estimate enrichment of  
945 heritability. For primary analyses, we used multi-ancestry GWAS summary statistics and LD  
946 scores estimated from 1000 Genomes Phase 3 European samples. For secondary analyses on  
947 East Asian (EAS) GWAS alone, we obtained EAS-specific LD scores for the same functional  
948 annotations<sup>37</sup>.

949

950 *Genomic regulatory elements and GWAS overlap algorithm (GREGOR) analysis*

951

952 We used GREGOR<sup>38</sup> to estimate enrichment of sentinel variants for each lipid phenotype in  
953 TF binding sites for 161 TFs from ENCODE compared to a null distribution of variants  
954 matched for allele frequency. We ran GREGOR with default parameters, specifying 0.8 as  
955 the  $R^2$  threshold, window size of 1Mb, and 'EUR' as the population. Annotations with  
956 enrichment  $> 2$  and FDR-adjusted P-value  $< 0.05$  were considered significant.

957



958 *Enrichment in single-cell expression data*

959

960 We overlapped our list of colocalized genes with publicly available single-cell RNA-  
961 sequencing data of 8,444 cells from liver<sup>39</sup> and 38,408 cells from adipose (Web resources) in  
962 humans. For both datasets, we downloaded normalized TPM data and existing tSNE cluster  
963 annotations for each cell. For each cluster, we defined median expression for each gene  
964 across all cells in that cluster. Then for each cluster, we quantified the overrepresentation of  
965 our gene list in ranked genes for this cluster via an enrichment P-value computed by the  
966 ‘fgsea’<sup>40</sup> R package v1.4.1 implemented in R 3.4.3.

967

## 968 **Results**

969

970 We systematically integrated lipid GWAS results<sup>12</sup> with multiple layers of functional  
971 genomic data from diverse tissues and cell types to understand regulatory mechanisms at  
972 lipid-associated loci (Figure 1). Specifically, we overlaid GWAS loci with eQTL and  
973 chromatin-chromatin interactions to identify causal genes. We assessed polygenic  
974 enrichments of tissue-specific histone marks to prioritize relevant tissues and examined  
975 GWAS loci at transcription factor (TF) binding sites to detect lipid-relevant TFs. Finally, we  
976 combined all these layers to prioritize functional variants at GWAS loci, providing a holistic  
977 view of gene regulation at lipid loci in relevant tissue and cell types.

978

979 *Colocalization with eQTLs identifies candidate lipid-relevant genes*

980

981 First, we identified shared association signals between lipid levels and expression of nearby  
982 genes, since most GWAS signals are presumed to influence complex traits through impact on

983 gene expression<sup>41</sup>. To do so, we tested for colocalization of each significant lipid GWAS  
984 signal with significant cis-eQTL data across 49 human tissues from the GTEx consortium<sup>8</sup>.  
985 The significant GWAS signals were 1,750 loci reaching genome-wide significance and  
986 corrected for shadow signals in our multi-ancestry meta-analysis for at least one of five lipid  
987 traits. Credible set sizes ranged from 1 to 417 variants at the 1,750 examined loci, with a  
988 median size of 5 variants per credible set.

989

990 Second, we restricted our analysis to loci most likely mediated through regulatory  
991 mechanisms as opposed to coding variation. Specifically, we excluded all loci with credible  
992 sets containing at least one missense variant (369 of 1,750 loci, 21% of credible sets). Of the  
993 remaining 1,381 GWAS loci, 696 significantly colocalized with eQTLs (the ratio of posterior  
994 probability of a shared signal to the posterior probability of two signals being  $> 0.9$ <sup>19</sup>) in at  
995 least one of 49 tissues for at least one lipid phenotype. This resulted in 1,076 colocalized  
996 eGenes ranging from 1 to 16 genes per locus (Figure 2A, Table S1). Since with eQTL data  
997 alone it is difficult to disentangle a single functional gene from multiple functional (and likely  
998 coregulated) genes at a locus<sup>42</sup> we performed all downstream analyses with all 1,076  
999 colocalized genes, to further prioritize functional genes at loci with multiple eGenes.

1000

1001 Since lipid-associated genetic variants are often enriched in the liver and adipose<sup>43,44</sup>, we  
1002 repeated the colocalization analysis on eQTLs only from liver or adipose. Compared to the  
1003 1,076 colocalized eGenes identified from all 49 tissues, the liver- and adipose-only analysis  
1004 identified 119 and 225 respectively (Figure 2A). The reduced discovery of colocalized  
1005 eGenes in the liver- and adipose-only analysis is likely due to the small sample sizes of liver  
1006 (N=208) and adipose (N=581) in GTEx v8 (Figure S1). Leveraging the large degree of tissue  
1007 sharing in eQTLs<sup>19,45</sup>, our cross-tissue colocalization analysis enhanced the discovery power

1008 through the collectively large sample size across all 49 tissues (N=15,201). For example,  
1009 several well-documented lipid-relevant genes such as *PPARA*<sup>46</sup> and *LPL*<sup>47</sup> were not  
1010 identified in the liver- or adipose-only analysis but were identified as significant in our cross-  
1011 tissue analysis.

1012

1013 To acquire additional functional insights into the 1,076 colocalized genes, we assessed their  
1014 enrichments across existing biological and clinical gene sets (Figure 2B, Table S2, Table S3).  
1015 Colocalized genes showed enrichments in (a) 20 KEGG pathways<sup>30</sup> at FDR 5%, including  
1016 known lipid-related processes such as cholesterol metabolism, PPAR signaling, and bile  
1017 secretion; (b) 33 Mendelian genes from ClinVar<sup>32</sup> associated with lipid-related ICD10 codes  
1018 (11.61-fold enrichment, P=2.08e-06, including *APOB*, *LPL*, and *APOE*), suggesting the  
1019 shared genetic basis of Mendelian and complex lipid phenotypes<sup>48</sup>; (c) 35 genes with rare-  
1020 variant burden for lipid phenotypes in a recent multi-ancestry analysis<sup>33</sup> (30.82-fold  
1021 enrichment, P=1.77e-16, including *APOB*, *LPL*, *LIPG* and *ANGPTL4*), confirming shared  
1022 mechanisms of rare and common variation underlying lipid traits<sup>48,49</sup>; (d) genes implicated  
1023 by cholesterol or lipidemia phenotypes in mouse knockouts (3.92-fold enrichment, P=2.18e-  
1024 20), suggesting the shared genetic basis of lipid traits between human and mouse<sup>50</sup>.

1025 Colocalized genes also showed enrichment with genes implicated in TWAS (Table S4) run  
1026 on the same GWAS and eQTL summary statistics (20.14-fold enrichment, P<2.22e-308).

1027 These enrichment results demonstrate the biological relevance of candidate functional genes  
1028 prioritized by our approach.

1029

1030 *Chromatin-chromatin interactions shortlist eQTL-based colocalization*

1031

1032 Our eQTL-based colocalization analysis uses a linear sequence of DNA, and ignores physical  
1033 interaction between non-adjacent DNA segments, another regulatory layer underlying  
1034 complex human traits<sup>51</sup>. To add this layer to our analysis, we generated Capture-C data from  
1035 HepG2 liver carcinoma cells (HepG2.1) and hepatocyte-like cells (HLC) derived from  
1036 differentiating iPSCs<sup>22</sup>, as well as publicly-available Capture-C datasets from HepG2<sup>21</sup>  
1037 (HepG2.2) and white adipocytes<sup>23</sup>. Based on the Capture-C data, we defined an interaction  
1038 between a GWAS locus and a gene as a significant interaction between the bait end  
1039 (promoter) for this gene and the interacting end that contains a variant in the credible set for  
1040 this GWAS locus. In total, 1,079 of 1,750 GWAS loci had at least one variant in the credible  
1041 set with a physical interaction with a gene promoter and 3,543 of 26,621 genes with  
1042 promoter-interactions had promoters physically interacting with at least one GWAS credible  
1043 set variant (Figure 2A, Table S5).

1044

1045 Unlike eQTL-colocalized genes, genes interacting with GWAS credible sets were not  
1046 significantly enriched in lipid-relevant KEGG pathways (Table S2) and lipid-related genes  
1047 from ClinVar (Figure 2B, Table S3). These genes were significantly enriched in genes with  
1048 rare-variant lipid associations (5.36-fold enrichment,  $P=2.8e-05$ ), genes with lipid-related  
1049 mouse knockouts (1.43-fold enrichment,  $P=2.8e-04$ ), and TWAS-prioritized genes (5.05-fold  
1050 enrichment,  $P=2.5e-288$ ), but their enrichments were consistently lower than enrichments of  
1051 eQTL-colocalized genes nonetheless (Figure 2B, Table S3).

1052

1053 Since genes expressed in the liver are most likely to harbour genuine lipid-relevant variant-  
1054 gene interactions, we repeated the enrichment analyses above restricting both eQTL  
1055 colocalization and Capture-C interactions to genes expressed in the liver ( $>0.1$  TPM and  $\geq 6$   
1056 reads in at least 20% of GTEx liver samples). Reassuringly, we observed higher enrichments

1057 for each combination of two methods (eQTL, Capture-C) and four databases (ClinVar, Rare  
1058 Variant, Mouse Knockout, TWAS), when we restricted our analyses to genes expressed in the  
1059 liver (Figure 2B, Table S3). For the same database, we observed higher enrichments in eQTL  
1060 colocalized genes than Capture-C prioritized genes, consistent with the results based on all  
1061 genes.

1062

1063 Genes physically interacting with GWAS loci significantly overlapped with eQTL  
1064 colocalized genes despite their reduced enrichments in lipid-related gene sets. Of 1,079  
1065 credible sets with promoter interactions, 224 also colocalized with eQTLs for the same gene.  
1066 Across 49 eQTL tissues and four Capture-C cell lines, 233 genes were implicated in both  
1067 eQTL colocalizations and Capture-C interactions (, Table S6), representing an enrichment of  
1068 3-fold compared to random chance (Figure 2C,  $P = 3.11e-38$ ). Because our Capture-C data  
1069 came from liver and adipose only, we observed a stronger enrichment in overlap when  
1070 restricting genes expressed in the liver or adipose (4.5-fold enrichment,  $P = 2.89e-65$ ). We  
1071 observed similar enrichment patterns when analysing liver and adipose Capture-C data  
1072 separately (Figure 2C). Together, the enrichments in overlap suggest that, despite a large  
1073 number of genes identified by Capture-C (Figure 2A), many of them are likely to harbour  
1074 functional interactions with GWAS loci.

1075

1076 Chromatin-chromatin interactions helped shortlist functional genes from eQTL  
1077 colocalization. Among 224 loci with concordant eQTL colocalizations and Capture-C  
1078 interactions across all tissues, only 39% (88) mapped to a single gene using eQTL data alone,  
1079 whereas adding Capture-C information increased this fraction to 80% (180). We observed the  
1080 same trend in the adipose-only and liver-only analysis: 80% (12/15) and 79% (26/33) of loci  
1081 mapped to a single gene using adipose and liver eQTLs alone, compared to 93% (14/15) and

1082 97% (32/33) after the integration of adipose-only and liver-only Capture-C data respectively  
1083 (Figure 2D). These results showcase the potential value of combining eQTLs with physical  
1084 chromatin interactions to prioritize functional genes at GWAS loci.

1085

1086 Since eQTLs are likely to reside in the same topologically associated domain (TAD) as the  
1087 genes they regulate<sup>52</sup>, we examined TADs from an independent human liver dataset<sup>28</sup> at  
1088 lipid GWAS loci with eQTL colocalizations to confirm GWAS variant-target gene  
1089 colocalization within the same TAD. Of eQTL-GWAS colocalizations in which the sentinel  
1090 variant resided within a TAD, 84.8% (1,040 out of 1,235) had the colocalized gene residing  
1091 in the same TAD ( $P < 0.001$  with 1000 permutations). When we restricted to all  
1092 colocalizations concordant with Capture-C data in any cell type, 96.9% (252 out of 260) of  
1093 gene-variant pairs fell in the same TAD. This fraction further increased to 100% (33 out of  
1094 33) when we repeated the analysis using liver eQTLs and liver Capture-C interactions only.  
1095 These results add to the existing evidence for TAD boundaries being regulatory insulators in  
1096 the cell<sup>53</sup> and confirm our integration of chromatin interactions with eQTL colocalizations as  
1097 an effective strategy to hone in on functional genes.

1098

1099 *Tissue-specific enrichment of GWAS signals differentiates lipid traits*

1100

1101 Regulatory variants often affect complex traits in a tissue-specific manner<sup>6</sup>, as shown in our  
1102 eQTL colocalization analysis. Specifically, by computing the ratio of the number of  
1103 colocalizations in a tissue to eQTL sample size in that tissue, we found that the liver was  
1104 universally enriched for colocalized eGenes with respect to sample size across all lipid traits  
1105 whereas adipose was selectively enriched in HDL and TG only (Figure S1). Motivated by

1106 these findings, we leveraged systematic approaches and additional data to identify relevant  
1107 tissues and cell types for each lipid trait.

1108

1109 We implemented stratified LD score regression (S-LDSC)<sup>36</sup>, a polygenic approach not  
1110 restricted to genome-wide significant variants, on tissue-specific transcriptomic and  
1111 epigenomic annotations across 205 datasets from more than 170 tissues and cell types, to  
1112 identify relevant tissues for each lipid trait. Consistent with previous studies<sup>43,44</sup> and our  
1113 eQTL-based analysis, liver-related tissues (Table S7, Table S8) showed strong enrichments  
1114 across all lipid traits (S-LDSC enrichment p-values ranging from .001 in TG to .0001 in TC),  
1115 for both expression (Figure 3A) and chromatin annotations (Figure 3B). This result was  
1116 confirmed by analysis using two other approaches: DEPICT<sup>54</sup> (Figure S2, Table S9) and  
1117 RSS-NET<sup>55</sup> (Table S10). To assess the robustness of our S-LDSC results based on multi-  
1118 ancestry GWAS, we applied S-LDSC to population-specific GWAS in European and East  
1119 Asian ancestry participants together with population-specific LD scores and obtained similar  
1120 results (Table S11, Figure S3, Figure S4).

1121

1122 The S-LDSC results also highlighted tissues selectively enriched in certain lipid traits as  
1123 shown in the eQTL-based analysis. The most enriched category for HDL using chromatin  
1124 annotation is ‘Adipose H3K4me3’ (P=7.6e-04); for TG, enrichment in liver-related tissues  
1125 (P=1.2e-03) is similar to enrichment in adipose (P=2.7e-03). For LDL, TC, and non-HDL,  
1126 enrichment P-values for the liver were much more significant than for all other tissues  
1127 including adipose (Figure 3B). We observed the same pattern in S-LDSC results based on  
1128 gene expression (Figure 3A). This finding is consistent with the known influence of adipose  
1129 on plasma HDL levels<sup>56</sup>, and the role of adipose as TG deposits<sup>57</sup>. These results were  
1130 corroborated by eQTL colocalizations stratified by phenotype (Figure S1) and DEPICT

1131 analysis on gene expression<sup>54</sup> (Figure S2, Table S9). Together, these results confirm the  
1132 liver as a tissue of action for all five lipid traits, and highlight the additional role of adipose  
1133 primarily in HDL and TG.

1134

1135 Given the importance of the liver and adipose in modulating lipid levels, we further identified  
1136 the relevant cell types within these tissues. Using existing single-cell data from adipose and  
1137 liver<sup>39</sup>, we performed gene-set enrichment analysis<sup>58</sup> to identify cell-type clusters enriched  
1138 for genes with eQTL colocalizations for any lipid trait. Out of 11 identified cell types in 20  
1139 clusters in the liver, only hepatocytes were enriched at FDR-adjusted  $P < 0.05$  (Figure S5,  
1140 Table S12), consistent with previous results<sup>21</sup>. In adipose, only adipocyte clusters and  
1141 macrophage-monocyte clusters showed suggestive enrichment (nominal  $P < 0.05$ ) in  
1142 colocalized genes (Figure S6, Table S12). Of note, the enrichment in adipocytes was  
1143 significant when we restricted this analysis to genes that were colocalized with HDL and TG  
1144 (FDR-corrected  $P < 0.05$ ), consistent with the selective enrichments of adipose in HDL and  
1145 TG (but not the other lipid traits) from our S-LDSC analysis. Evaluations at cellular  
1146 resolution are required to understand the cell-type specific mechanisms underlying lipid  
1147 GWAS loci, but our results could form a useful basis for future studies.

1148

1149 *Overlapping GWAS signals with binding sites highlights lipid-relevant TFs*

1150

1151 TFs have been implicated as a key mediator of linking genetic variation to complex traits<sup>59</sup>.  
1152 To understand lipid GWAS in the context of TF activity, we assessed enrichment of genome-  
1153 wide significant variants at TF binding sites using GREGOR<sup>38</sup> and performed polygenic  
1154 enrichment analysis of TF binding sites using S-LDSC. Because TFs were not



1155 comprehensively assayed in most cell lines (Figure S7), we used all cell types in our primary  
1156 analysis presented below.

1157

1158 Using ChIP-Seq data from 161 TFs across 91 cell types from the ENCODE project <sup>7</sup>, 70.7%  
1159 of lipid credible sets overlapped with at least one TF binding site. Using GREGOR <sup>38</sup>, we  
1160 identified 137 TFs whose binding sites were significantly enriched in GWAS lead SNPs for  
1161 at least one lipid phenotype (enrichment > 2; FDR adjusted P-value < 0.05; Figure 4A, Table  
1162 S13). We obtained similar results when repeating the GREGOR analysis on TF binding sites  
1163 derived from HepG2 only (Table S14). To assess the impact of GWAS power on TF  
1164 enrichments, we repeated the GREGOR analysis on the same TF binding sites using a  
1165 previous version of lipid GWAS <sup>11</sup>, and we identified 54 enriched TFs (Table S15). Between  
1166 the two versions of lipid GWAS, the total sample size and number of GWAS loci increased  
1167 8.7-fold (from 188,577 to 1,650,000) and 11-fold (from 156 to 1750) respectively, but the  
1168 number of enriched TFs only increased 2.5-fold (from 54 to 137), suggesting that the large  
1169 number of enriched TFs is unlikely driven by the GWAS power alone.

1170

1171 Among these 137 enriched TFs, 69 of them (50%) showed significant enrichments across all  
1172 five lipid phenotypes, suggesting a potential core regulatory circuit shared by all lipid traits  
1173 (Figure 4A, Table S13). The TF with the strongest enrichment in all phenotypes was ESRRA  
1174 (estrogen-related receptor alpha), a nuclear receptor active in metabolic tissues <sup>60</sup>; ESRRA  
1175 has been implicated in adipogenesis and lipid metabolism, and ESRRA-null mice display an  
1176 increase in fat mass and obesity <sup>60</sup>.

1177

1178 The GREGOR analysis also highlighted 68 TFs significantly enriched in specific subsets of  
1179 (but not all five) lipid phenotypes (Figure 4A, Table S13). For example, we found 4 TFs

1180 (FOXM1, PBX3, ZKSCAN1, ZEB1) enriched in HDL and TG only, 4 TFs (EZH2, NFE2,  
1181 NFATC1, KDM5A) enriched in HDL only and 11 TFs (FOSL1, IRF3, JUN, MEF2C,  
1182 NANOG, PRDM1, RUNX3, SIRT6, SMC3, STAT3, ZNF217) enriched in TG only. Of these  
1183 TFs, the central role of ZEB1 in adiposity<sup>61</sup> and fat cell differentiation has been  
1184 demonstrated<sup>62</sup>. These TF-centric findings corroborate the selective enrichments of adipose  
1185 in HDL and TG (but not the other lipid traits) identified in our previous tissue prioritization  
1186 analyses.

1187

1188 We also performed polygenic enrichment analysis of TF binding sites using S-LDSC (Figure  
1189 4B, Table S16), which differed from GREGOR analysis by looking at not only the genome-  
1190 wide significant associations but also the polygenic signal without GWAS P-value cutoff. On  
1191 the same 161 ENCODE TFs, this polygenic analysis identified 25 TFs whose binding sites  
1192 were significantly enriched in heritability explained (nominal  $P < 0.05$ ) for at least one lipid  
1193 phenotype; reassuringly, 24 of 25 TFs were also significant in the GREGOR analysis. As a  
1194 sensitivity check, we repeated the analysis on TF binding sites derived from HepG2 only, and  
1195 we obtained similar results (Table S17).

1196

1197 Among 24 enriched TFs identified by both GREGOR and S-LDSC identified by both  
1198 GREGOR and S-LDSC, eight were significantly enriched in all five lipid traits (CEBPB,  
1199 CEBPD, FOXA2, HDAC2, HNF4G, NFYA, RXRA, SP1). RXRA (retinoid X receptor  
1200 alpha) is encoded by a colocalized gene (*RXRA*) near a GWAS hit (chr9:137,268,682).  
1201 RXRA is a ligand-activated transcription factor that forms heterodimers with other receptors  
1202 (including PPARG) and is involved in lipid metabolism<sup>63</sup>. Moreover, 145 lipid GWAS loci  
1203 overlap RXRA binding peaks, and RXRA binds to the promoters of 26 colocalized genes (18  
1204 of which are protein-coding) (Figure 4C, Table S18), suggesting that the GWAS variants

1205 might affect lipids (partially) through affecting the binding activity of RXRA. While *RXRA*  
1206 has been previously implicated as a GWAS locus<sup>64</sup>, our study demonstrates its role in lipid  
1207 biology through its regulatory influence on other lipid-associated genes.

1208

1209 *Multi-layer functional integration reveals regulatory mechanisms at GWAS loci*

1210

1211 Motivated by our finding that integrating chromatin interaction shortlisted eQTL  
1212 colocalizations, we further brought together multiple lines of functional evidence at each  
1213 GWAS locus for mechanistic inference. We started with the list of genes with evidence for  
1214 both eQTL colocalization and Capture-C interactions in the liver or adipose. We next  
1215 annotated each variant in the 95% credible set with various indicators of regulatory function,  
1216 including its open chromatin status in liver<sup>20</sup> or adipose-related cell types<sup>65</sup>, its proximity to  
1217 a promoter or an enhancer<sup>66</sup>, and its RegulomeDB regulation probability<sup>67</sup>; see Table S19  
1218 for the complete list of annotations used. To account for complexities of regulatory  
1219 mechanisms and limitations of functional datasets, we combined evidence across these  
1220 datasets to prioritize variants at GWAS loci (Figure 5A). Specifically, we prioritized variants  
1221 with at least three independent lines of functional evidence (chromatin openness, physically  
1222 interaction with target genes, and promoter/enhancer status) in the liver or adipose, with at  
1223 least two being in the same tissue with colocalization with the target gene, and with a  
1224 RegulomeDB score > 0.5. Applying this simple procedure to lipid GWAS we prioritized 28  
1225 candidate loci with the strongest multi-layer evidence, 13 of which point to a single  
1226 functional variant (Table 1). We have also made the full results of variant prioritization freely  
1227 available (Web resources). Below we describe two examples to highlight key features of this  
1228 multi-layer integration framework.

1229

1230 *RRBP1* (ribosomal binding protein 1) could be identified from eQTL colocalization alone,  
1231 but our multi-layer integration approach strengthened the conclusion via convergent evidence  
1232 from various sources (Figure 5B). The *RRBP1* eQTL signals in the liver colocalize with LDL,  
1233 TC, and nonHDL GWAS signals. The credible set at this locus contains a single lead variant  
1234 (chr20:17,844,684). The 'T' allele of this lead variant decreases *RRBP1* expression levels and  
1235 increases LDL, TC, and nonHDL levels. This lead variant is in open chromatin in HLC and  
1236 adipose, and physically interacts with the *RRBP1* promoter (250kb away) in adipose. All  
1237 these data consistently point to *RRBP1* as the functional gene underlying this locus. *RRBP1*  
1238 specifically tethers the endoplasmic reticulum to the mitochondria in the liver (an interaction  
1239 that is enriched in hepatocytes) and regulates very low density lipoprotein levels <sup>68</sup>. Rare  
1240 variants in *RRBP1* are associated with LDL in humans <sup>69</sup> and silencing *RRBP1* in liver affects  
1241 lipid homeostasis in mice <sup>68</sup>.

1242  
1243 *CREBRF* (CREB3 regulatory factor) further demonstrates the power of our multi-layer  
1244 integration framework in prioritizing functional variants (Figure 5C). The eQTL signals of  
1245 *CREBRF* colocalized with a GWAS locus for HDL with 30 candidate variants. In contrast,  
1246 our multi-layer approach identified a single candidate variant (chr5:172,566,698) at this locus  
1247 that physically interacts with the *CREBRF* promoter in adipose and is predicted to be a  
1248 regulatory element (RegulomeDB score=0.91). Consistent with the index variant  
1249 (chr5:172,591,337), the allele 'A' at this functional variant increased HDL levels and  
1250 increased *CREBRF* expression in adipose. Missense variants in *CREBRF* have been linked to  
1251 body mass index, and the gene has been linked to obesity risk in Samoans <sup>70</sup>.

1252  
1253 Finally, to compare the power of functional fine-mapping with multi-ancestry fine-mapping,  
1254 we applied our prioritization rule to credible sets derived from European-only meta-analysis.

1255 The 111 variants prioritized by our rule described above (including multiple variants in the  
1256 same credible set) were all found in the multi-ancestry credible sets, representing a 3.7-fold  
1257 enrichment ( $P < 1e-04$  based on 10000 permutations randomly sampling variants from the  
1258 European-only credible sets). This convergence of complementary approaches to the same  
1259 smaller set of fine-mapped variants highlights the power of multi-ancestry datasets as an  
1260 approach to narrow in on functional variants.

1261

## 1262 **Discussion**

1263

1264 Here we integrate the largest multi-ancestry lipid GWAS to date with a wide array of  
1265 functional genomic resources to understand how noncoding genetic variation affects lipids  
1266 through gene regulation. Specifically, we identify 1,076 genes whose eQTL signals  
1267 colocalize with lipid GWAS signals and demonstrate how physical chromatin interaction can  
1268 improve standard eQTL-based colocalization. We assess tissue-specific enrichments of lipid  
1269 GWAS signals and demonstrate the selective importance of adipose in HDL and triglyceride  
1270 biology. We examine binding site enrichments of 161 TFs in lipid GWAS and expand our  
1271 understanding of lipid GWAS loci (e.g., *RXR $\alpha$* ) in the context of TF activity. Finally, we  
1272 build a simple and interpretable prioritization framework that automatically combines  
1273 multiple lines of evidence from orthogonal datasets, pinpointing a single functional variant at  
1274 each of 13 lipid-associated loci (e.g., *RRBP1* and *CREBRF*). While there are studies that  
1275 interpret lipid GWAS associations<sup>21,71,72</sup>, the size of our multi-ancestry GWAS and multi-  
1276 layer functional integration represent a comprehensive effort and an important step forward in  
1277 this direction.

1278

1279 Our multi-layer analysis has two key strengths. First, despite a large array of functional  
1280 genomic resources being embedded, our analysis produces results with high consistency. For  
1281 example, the selective enrichment of adipose in HDL and TG identified by S-LDSC is  
1282 confirmed by our eQTL-based colocalization and TF binding site overlap. Another example  
1283 of consistency is the multi-layer prioritization of *RRBPI*, which can be identified from eQTL-  
1284 based colocalization alone and it is further validated by chromatin accessibility and  
1285 interaction. Such convergent evidence from various sources improves the confidence of our  
1286 findings. Second, our analysis highlights that combining multiple layers of regulatory  
1287 information can improve sensitivity to prioritize functional genes and variants. For example,  
1288 we refined eQTL colocalized genes (1,076) to a smaller set of functional genes (233) through  
1289 integration with promoter Capture-C data. Another example of sensitivity is *CREBRF*, where  
1290 eQTL-based colocalization implicates 30 candidate variants and adding other regulatory  
1291 layers points to a single functional variant. Moving forward, we expect these two features  
1292 will serve as useful guidelines for future integrative genomic analyses of other traits.

1293

1294 Our results rely on the breadth and accuracy of functional genomic datasets used in our  
1295 analyses. First, unlike our lipid GWAS, current functional datasets<sup>73</sup> are limited both in  
1296 sample size and ancestral diversity, which can affect discovery and replication of regulatory  
1297 mechanisms in diverse populations. Second, some functional datasets are generated at limited  
1298 resolution. For example, our colocalizations are based on eQTLs from bulk tissue RNA-seq  
1299<sup>8,74</sup>, which may miss detailed cell types and biological processes in which lipid-associated  
1300 SNPs regulate gene expression. Third, some functional datasets are not available across the  
1301 full spectrum of human tissues and cell types. One example is that our chromatin-chromatin  
1302 interaction analysis only examines a few cell types in two known lipid-related tissues,  
1303 producing results that may be biased towards known lipid biology. Another example is that

1304 ENCODE TF ChIP-Seq data are not available in adipose-related cell lines. Fourth, our results  
1305 are validated computationally but not experimentally. That said, our results provide a high-  
1306 confidence list of regulatory mechanisms at lipid GWAS loci, forming a useful basis for  
1307 future experiments. As more comprehensive and accurate functional genomic resources are  
1308 becoming publicly available in diverse cellular contexts and ancestry groups, the resolution  
1309 and power of integrative analyses like ours will be markedly increased.

1310

1311 Other limitations of this study stem from computational methods embedded in our  
1312 framework. First, the colocalization approach ‘coloc’ assumes one causal variant per locus,  
1313 whereas recent studies suggest extensive allelic heterogeneity<sup>75</sup> consistent with a model of a  
1314 milieu of related transcription factors binding within a single locus. Accounting for allelic  
1315 heterogeneity in summary statistics-based colocalization typically requires modelling  
1316 multiple correlated SNPs through LD matrix<sup>76</sup>, which is computationally intensive in large-  
1317 scale analyses derived from many cohorts with diverse ancestries, like the multi-ancestry  
1318 GWAS examined here. Second, due to restricted access to individual genotypes of 201  
1319 cohorts, we cannot produce multi-ancestry LD scores within GLGC but have to use  
1320 European-based LD scores in all S-LDSC analyses. This approach, though less rigorous in  
1321 principle, provides robust results in practice (as confirmed by our ancestry-specific analysis),  
1322 largely because 79% of cohorts in GLGC are of European descent<sup>12</sup>. That said, we caution  
1323 that the same approach might fall short in ancestrally diverse studies with few European  
1324 individuals<sup>77</sup>. Third, our multi-layer variant prioritization framework is built on a series of  
1325 simple rules that are easy to implement on large datasets. This approach could possibly be  
1326 formalized as statistical models (e.g., priors in Bayesian methods<sup>55</sup>), but our approach  
1327 simplifies computation and allows for scalability of the underlying framework. Despite the

1328 technical limitations, our approach here can serve as a useful benchmark for future  
1329 development of methods with improved statistical rigor and computation efficiency.

1330 In summary, mapping noncoding genetic variation of complex traits to biological functions  
1331 can benefit greatly from thorough integration of multiple layers of functional genomics, as  
1332 demonstrated in the present study. Although tested on lipids only, our integrative framework  
1333 is straightforward to implement more broadly on many other phenotypes, yielding functional  
1334 insights of heritable traits and diseases in humans.

### 1335 **Description of supplemental data**

1336 Supplemental data include seven figures and nineteen tables, and study-specific  
1337 acknowledgements.

### 1338 **Declaration of interests**

1339 G.C-P. is currently an employee of 23andMe Inc. M.J.C. is the Chief Scientist for Genomics  
1340 England, a UK Government company. B.M.P. serves on the steering committee of the Yale  
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1342 K.S. are employees of deCODE/Amgen Inc. V.S. has received honoraria for consultations  
1343 from Novo Nordisk and Sanofi and has an ongoing research collaboration with Bayer Ltd.  
1344 M.M. has served on advisory panels for Pfizer, NovoNordisk and Zoe Global, has received  
1345 honoraria from Merck, Pfizer, Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly, and research funding from  
1346 Abbvie, Astra Zeneca, Boehringer Ingelheim, Eli Lilly, Janssen, Merck, NovoNordisk,  
1347 Pfizer, Roche, Sanofi Aventis, Servier, and Takeda. M.M. and A.M. are employees of  
1348 Genentech and a holders of Roche stock. M.S. receives funding from Pfizer Inc. for a project  
1349 unrelated to this work. M.E.K. is employed by SYNLAB MVZ Mannheim GmbH. W.M. has  
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1351 Pharmaceuticals, grants and personal fees from AMGEN, grants from Astrazeneca, grants  
1352 and personal fees from Sanofi, grants and personal fees from Alexion Pharmaceuticals, grants  
1353 and personal fees from BASF, grants and personal fees from Abbott Diagnostics, grants and  
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1359 from Synlab Holding Deutschland GmbH, all outside the submitted work. A.V.K. has served  
1360 as a consultant to Sanofi, Medicines Company, Maze Pharmaceuticals, Navitor  
1361 Pharmaceuticals, Verve Therapeutics, Amgen, and Color Genomics; received speaking fees  
1362 from Illumina, the Novartis Institute for Biomedical Research; received sponsored research  
1363 agreements from the Novartis Institute for Biomedical Research and IBM Research, and  
1364 reports a patent related to a genetic risk predictor (20190017119). S.K. is an employee of  
1365 Verve Therapeutics, and holds equity in Verve Therapeutics, Maze Therapeutics, Catabasis,  
1366 and San Therapeutics. He is a member of the scientific advisory boards for Regeneron  
1367 Genetics Center and Corvidia Therapeutics; he has served as a consultant for Acceleron, Eli  
1368 Lilly, Novartis, Merck, Novo Nordisk, Novo Ventures, Ionis, Alnylam, Aegerion, Haug  
1369 Partners, Noble Insights, Leerink Partners, Bayer Healthcare, Illumina, Color Genomics,  
1370 MedGenome, Quest, and Medscape; he reports patents related to a method of identifying and  
1371 treating a person having a predisposition to or afflicted with cardiometabolic disease  
1372 (20180010185) and a genetics risk predictor (20190017119). D.K. accepts consulting fees  
1373 from Regeneron Pharmaceuticals. D.O.M-K. is a part-time clinical research consultant for  
1374 Metabolon, Inc. D.S. has received support from the British Heart Foundation, Pfizer,

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1377

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1388 provided in the supplemental information.

1389

### 1390 **Web resources**

1391 Browser of noncoding variant prioritization: [http://csg.sph.umich.edu/willer/public/glgc-](http://csg.sph.umich.edu/willer/public/glgc-lipids2021/variant_prioritization.html)  
1392 [lipids2021/variant\\_prioritization.html](http://csg.sph.umich.edu/willer/public/glgc-lipids2021/variant_prioritization.html)

1393 GLGC GWAS summary statistics and credible sets:

1394 <http://csg.sph.umich.edu/willer/public/glgc-lipids2021/>

1395 GTEx v8 summary statistics: <https://www.gtexportal.org/home/datasets>

1396 coloc: <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/coloc>

- 1397 liftOver: <https://genome.ucsc.edu/cgi-bin/hgLiftOver>
- 1398 HepG2 Capture-C data (Chesi et al): <https://www.ebi.ac.uk/arrayexpress/experiments/E->  
1399 MTAB-7144/
- 1400 HepG2 Capture-C data (Selvarajan et al):  
1401 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/query/acc.cgi?acc=GSE157306>
- 1402 Human white adipocyte Capture-C data:  
1403 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/query/acc.cgi?acc=GSE110619>
- 1404 HiCUP: <https://www.bioinformatics.babraham.ac.uk/projects/hicup/>
- 1405 CHiCAGO: <https://www.bioconductor.org/packages/release/bioc/html/Chicago.html>
- 1406 GenomicRanges: <https://bioconductor.org/packages/release/bioc/html/GenomicRanges.html>
- 1407 Human liver Hi-C data: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/query/acc.cgi?acc=GSE58752>
- 1408 bedtools: <https://bedtools.readthedocs.io/en/latest/>
- 1409 ClusterProfiler: <https://guangchuangyu.github.io/clusterProfiler>
- 1410 biomaRt: <https://bioconductor.org/packages/release/bioc/html/biomaRt.html>
- 1411 ClinVar: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/clinvar/>
- 1412 MGI: <http://www.informatics.jax.org/downloads/reports/index.html#pheno>
- 1413 S-PrediXcan: <https://github.com/hakyimlab/MetaXcan>

- 1414 ENCODE ChIP-Seq data:
- 1415 [https://hgdownload.cse.ucsc.edu/goldenpath/hg19/encodeDCC/wgEncodeRegTfbsClustered/](https://hgdownload.cse.ucsc.edu/goldenpath/hg19/encodeDCC/wgEncodeRegTfbsClustered/wgEncodeRegTfbsClusteredWithCellsV3.bed.gz)
- 1416 [wgEncodeRegTfbsClusteredWithCellsV3.bed.gz](https://hgdownload.cse.ucsc.edu/goldenpath/hg19/encodeDCC/wgEncodeRegTfbsClustered/wgEncodeRegTfbsClusteredWithCellsV3.bed.gz)
- 1417 LDSC software: <https://github.com/bulik/ldsc>
- 1418 European LD scores and related annotations:
- 1419 <https://data.broadinstitute.org/alkesgroup/LDSCORE/>
- 1420 East Asian LD scores and related annotations: <http://jenger.riken.jp/en/data>
- 1421 DEPICT: <https://data.broadinstitute.org/mpg/depict>
- 1422 RSS-NET: <https://github.com/SUwonglab/rss-net>
- 1423 Liver single-cell data: <http://shiny.baderlab.org/HumanLiverAtlas/>
- 1424 Adipose single-cell data:
- 1425 [https://singlecell.broadinstitute.org/single\\_cell/study/SCP133/human-adipose-svf-single-cell](https://singlecell.broadinstitute.org/single_cell/study/SCP133/human-adipose-svf-single-cell)
- 1426 fgsea: <http://bioconductor.org/packages/release/bioc/html/fgsea.html>
- 1427 GREGOR: <https://genome.sph.umich.edu/wiki/GREGOR>
- 1428 Open chromatin data from HepG2: [https://www.omicsdi.org/dataset/arrayexpress-](https://www.omicsdi.org/dataset/arrayexpress-repository/E-MTAB-7543)
- 1429 [repository/E-MTAB-7543](https://www.omicsdi.org/dataset/arrayexpress-repository/E-MTAB-7543)
- 1430 Open chromatin data from adipose:
- 1431 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/query/acc.cgi?acc=GSE110734>

1432 Roadmap epigenomic data (promoters and enhancer annotation):  
1433 <https://egg2.wustl.edu/roadmap/data/byFileType/chromhmmSegmentations/ChmmModels/col1434 reMarks/jointModel/final/>

1435 RegulomeDB: <https://regulomedb.org/regulome-search/>

1436

### 1437 **Data and code availability**

1438 The HLC Capture-C data is available at

1439 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/query/acc.cgi?acc=GSE189026>.

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## Figure titles and legends

**Figure 1.** Schematic overview of the multi-layer functional genomic analysis. We integrate GWAS summary statistics for five lipid phenotypes with eQTL and chromatin interaction data to identify potential genes mediating the GWAS loci, and use epigenomic annotations to identify regulatory mechanisms at these loci. For a GWAS locus indexed by a lead variant

‘X’, A, B, and C represent nearby eGenes across tissues, and SNPs around SNP X represent variants in the credible set for this locus.

**Figure 2.** Overlap between eQTL colocalized genes and Capture-C prioritized genes, and their enrichments in known lipid-associated genes. A. Numbers of genes identified by two approaches: eQTL colocalization and promoter *Capture-C* interaction. Capture-C interactions restricted to genes expressed in the tissue of interest (or in the union of adipose and liver for ‘All Tissues’) are shaded. B. Overlap between two list of prioritized genes (left: Capture-C prioritized genes; right: eQTL colocalized genes) with four external sets of genes previously associated with lipid biology (MGI knockout genes, ClinVar lipidemia-associated genes, genes implicated in rare burden of lipids, and genes from a lipid TWAS). Dashed lines represent enrichments using only genes expressed in the liver. C. Enrichment in overlap between eQTL colocalized genes and Capture-C prioritized genes against what is expected by chance, assuming both gene sets are independent. Dashed lines represent genes expressed in the tissue of interest (or in the union of adipose or liver for ‘All’). Enrichment estimates and confidence intervals shown in Panels B and C are based on the Fisher’s exact test. D. Fraction of colocalized loci that point to a single candidate gene when using eQTL data alone or using both eQTL and Capture-C data.

**Figure 3.** Tissue relevance of lipid-associated loci. Partitioning heritability of summary statistics on gene expression (A) and active chromatin marks (B) across tissues. Each plotted point represents a tested dataset for enrichment of heritability, with larger dots representing datasets with P-value < 0.05. Each color represents a tissue group (Table S6), and the y-axis represents  $-\log_{10}$  P-value of enrichment of heritability.

**Figure 4.** TF enrichment identified by GREGOR and S-LDSC. A. Number of TFs enriched in the GREGOR analysis on GWAS loci for each of the five lipid traits. B. Number of TFs enriched in S-LDSC analysis on each of the five lipid traits. C. TF RXRA binds to the promoters of 26 colocalized genes (18 protein-coding); colors represent the subset of lipid phenotypes with colocalization. Larger node sizes represent smaller GWAS P-value of colocalized loci.

**Figure 5.** Multi-layer functional integration to prioritize variants at GWAS loci. A. Variant annotation and prioritization scheme at each GWAS credible set. B. Evidence for gene *RRBP1* from functional genomics data. The LDL GWAS locus at this region (first row) is an eQTL for gene *RRBP1* in the liver (second row). Variants in the credible set of this locus interact with the gene promoter in both adipose and HepG2 Capture-C data (third row). The interacting variant is also in an open chromatin peak in three liver-related cell types (fourth row). C. Multiple sources of functional genomics data support *CREBRF* as a gene contributing to HDL levels. The HDL GWAS locus at this region (first row) is an eQTL for gene *CREBRF* in adipose (second row). Variants in the credible set at this locus interact with the *CREBRF* promoter in adipose (third row). The interacting variant is also in open chromatin in liver-related cell types (fourth row).

## Tables

**Table 1.** Thirteen prioritized loci with highest confidence of a single functional variant in the credible set. The ‘Sentinel’ column represents the lead variant at the locus. The ‘Prioritized var’ column represents the prioritized variant in the credible set. Columns 5-8 represent overlap of the functional variant with open chromatin (‘Open’), capture-C (‘CapC’) interactions with the candidate gene, enhancer and promoter marks from Roadmap in liver (‘Liver’), adipose (‘Ad’), both or none of these tissues. The ‘RegDB’ column represents the RegulomeDB score of the prioritized variant.

<b>Gene Name</b>	<b>Tissue</b>	<b>Sentinel</b>	<b>Prioritized Var</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>CapC</b>	<b>Enhancer</b>	<b>Promoter</b>	<b>RegDB</b>
<i>CEP68</i>	Adipose	2:65284231	65279414	Liver	Liver	None	Ad	0.5896
<i>TIPARP</i>	Adipose	3:156797941	156795408	Both	Both	Ad	Liver	0.705
<i>CREBRF</i>	Adipose	5:172591337	172566698	Liver	Ad	None	Both	0.9124
<i>PALM2</i>	Adipose	9:112556911	112556911	Both	Ad	Both	None	0.6091
<i>MEGF9</i>	Adipose	9:123481206	123421556	Liver	Ad	None	Liver	0.9933
<i>GBF1</i>	Liver	10:104142294	104107191	Ad	Ad	None	Both	0.705
<i>MICAL2</i>	Liver	11:12071855	12221016	Liver	Liver	None	Liver	0.6018
<i>ACP2</i>	Liver	11:47278917	47276350	Ad	Liver	Liver	Ad	0.6091
<i>PTPRJ</i>	Adipose	11:48021778	48011180	Liver	Ad	Liver	Ad	0.8797
<i>NFATC2IP</i>	Adipose	16:28899411	28883327	Liver	Liver	None	Both	0.6091
<i>HELZ</i>	Liver	17:65109591	65156919	Liver	Liver	None	Both	0.60906
<i>FAM210A</i>	Liver	18:13725674	13725674	Liver	Liver	None	Both	0.7571
<i>RRBP1</i>	Liver	20:17844684	17844684	Both	Ad	Both	None	0.6091