Published in final edited form as:

J Rheumatol. 2008 November ; 35(11): 2171–2178.

Genetic Variation in the C-Reactive Protein (CRP) Gene may be Associated with the Risk of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus and CRP Levels:

Genetic Variation in CRP and SLE Risk

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Abstract

Objective—The gene coding for C-reactive protein (*CRP*) is located on chromosome 1q23.2, which falls within a linkage region thought to harbor a systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) susceptibility gene. Recently, two SNPs in the *CRP* gene (+838, +2043) have been shown to be associated with CRP levels and/or SLE risk in a British family-based cohort. The current study was done to confirm the reported association in an independent population-based case-control cohort, and also to investigate the impact of three additional CRP tagSNPs (-861, -390, +90) on SLE risk and serum CRP levels.

Methods—DNA from 337 white women who met the ACR criteria for definite ($n = 324$) or probable ($n = 13$) SLE and 448 white female healthy controls was genotyped for five *CRP* tagSNPs (-861, -390, +90, +838, +2043). Genotyping was performed using PCR-RFLP, pyrosequencing or TaqMan assays. Serum CRP levels were measured using ELISA. Association studies were performed using the χ^2 distribution, Z-test, Fisher's exact test and ANOVA. Haplotype analysis was performed using EH software and haplo.stats package in R 2.1.2.

Results—While none of the SNPs were found to be associated with SLE risk individually, there was an association with the five-SNP haplotypes ($p < 0.000001$). Three SNPs (-861, -390, +90) were found to significantly influence serum CRP level in SLE cases, both independently and as haplotypes.

Conclusion—Our data suggests that unique haplotype combinations in the *CRP* gene may modify the risk of developing SLE and influence circulating CRP levels.

The pathogenesis of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is complex and multifactorial, involving interactions among multiple genes, hormones and several environmental factors. Even though the etiopathogenesis of SLE remains elusive, it is believed that impaired handling of antigen–antibody complexes and subsequent tissue deposition leading to release of

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inflammatory mediators and an array of inflammatory cells can induce a broad spectrum of clinical manifestation[1]. Among a range of factors that are thought to be contributing to the pathophysiology of SLE, chronic inflammation is thought to play a pivotal role in the pathogenesis of SLE.

Family and twin studies suggest that genetic factors play a significant role in the predisposition to SLE[2,3]. The estimated heritability of SLE in Caucasian is 66%[4]. Recent genome wide linkage analyses in multiplex SLE families have provided many chromosomal regions for exploration of disease-predisposing genes, including a region on the q-arm of chromosome 1 [5]. The gene coding for C-reactive protein (*CRP*) is located at 1q23, which falls within the 1q23-43 region thought to harbor a susceptibility gene for SLE in multiple independent genome scans of both mice and humans[6-10]. The unique position of the *CRP* gene makes it a logical positional candidate gene to investigate as a susceptibility locus for SLE.

CRP is also a functional candidate gene based on the physiological activity of its products. CRP is an important liver-derived acute-phase protein that can increase up to 1000-fold in serum as a response to diverse stimuli such as infection or injury[11]. CRP has been shown to bind chromatin[12], histones[13] and apoptotic cells[14]. These unique characteristics of CRP are thought to contribute to its ability to modify the autoimmune disease phenotype by promoting the removal of necrotic and apoptotic cells and recruiting complement and FcγR-mediated effector pathways[15]. In the host, the increased clearance of apoptotic cells and their derived nuclear contents by phagocytic cells via CRP opsonization may prevent the development of potential nuclear antigen-specific autoimmune responses[14,16]. Recent *in vivo* studies have shown that lupus-prone BW mice carrying the *CRP* transgene had reduced proteinuria, lived longer than non-transgenic BW, and had delayed accumulation of IgM and IgG in their renal glomeruli[17]. Injecting CRP to another lupus strain mouse, NZB/NZW, also delayed the onset of high-grade proteinuria and prolonged survival[18]. CRP's autoimmunity prevention ability may come from its ability to prevent activation of autoreactive B cells by promoting clearance of autoantigens to non-antigen presenting sites[15].

Several studies have shown that CRP levels in SLE patients are abnormally elevated both in the absence and presence of infection[19-23]. The value of using CRP to monitor SLE disease activity has remained controversial given the inconsistent correlation between circulating CRP and disease activity from numerous studies[24-28]. The abnormal elevation pattern of CRP in SLE patients provided the first clinical clue that variation in the *CRP* may contribute to the pathogenesis of SLE. With CRP's unquestionable tie to inflammation, association with atherogenesis, its unique ability to modify the disease phenotypes of SLE, and its status as a positional candidate gene, *CRP* serves as a promising susceptibility gene for SLE.

Russell *et al.*[29] found basal levels of CRP to be influenced independently by 2 *CRP* polymorphisms (+838 & +2043), and the latter was also associated with SLE and antinuclear autoantibody production. They hypothesized that defective disposal of potentially immunogenic material, indicated by low basal CRP levels, may be a contributory factor in lupus pathogenesis. In the present study, we examined five tagSNPs, including +838 and +2043 both individually and as haplotypes to investigate the associations of *CRP* with SLE risk and serum CRP levels in SLE patients. We hypothesized that the variation in the *CRP* gene may contribute to the genetic susceptibility of SLE and may have impact on CRP levels in patients with SLE.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Subjects

A total of 337 white female SLE cases and 448 healthy female controls were included in this study. All cases were 18 years of age or older (mean age 43 ± 11 years, 40.3% post-menopausal, disease duration 10.13 ± 7.13) and were recruited from the Pittsburgh Lupus Registry. All subjects met the 1982 and 1997 American College of Rheumatology (ACR) criteria for definite ($n = 324$) or probable ($n = 13$) SLE[30,31] at the time of recruitment.

Participating subjects in this study have been seen either at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center or by practicing rheumatologists in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. The diagnosis of SLE was confirmed by a rheumatologist at the University of Pittsburgh (SM) prior to entry into the study. Since these patients are not exclusively from a tertiary referral center, they represent a spectrum of SLE that may be more reflective of a population-based sample.

Controls were race, sex and geographically matched and obtained from the Central Bank of Pittsburgh, and had no apparent history of SLE (mean age 45 ± 13 years, 100% Caucasian, 100% female). This study was approved by the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board, and all subjects provided written informed consent.

SLE Clinical and Laboratory Characteristics

A subset of SLE cases ($n = 237$, mean age 44.26 ± 10.9 , 40% post-menopausal) participating in a Cardiovascular Disease Study in SLE had high-sensitivity CRP data for the current genetic association study[32]. None of the 237 SLE cases with CRP measurement had any evidence of infection at the time of the study CRP level (logCRP range: -1.6 to 4.4).

CRP was measured using high sensitivity enzyme-linked immunoabsorbent assay and details of the assay are previously described[33,34]. SLE disease activity and cumulative damage were measured by the same physician (SM) in all patients, using the Systemic Lupus Activity Measure (SLAM)[35] and the Systemic Lupus International Collaborating Clinics (SLICC) damage index[36], respectively. Renal disease among SLE patients was defined using the ACR criteria, which requires (a) renal biopsy showing lupus nephritis, or (b) persistent proteinuria greater than 0.5 grams per day or greater than 3+ if quantification is not performed, or (c) evidence of cellular casts in the urine. Central nervous involvement (CNS) and arthritis among SLE patients were defined by the ACR criteria including history of seizure or psychosis due to SLE for the former. Two hundred and ninety five patients (87.2%) had arthritis, 88 (26.1%) patients had a diagnosis of SLE-renal disease and 30 (8.9%) patients had CNS involvement. Patients' mean SLICC score at the time of recruitment was 1.42 (SD: 1.76) and mean SLAM score was 6.29 (SD: 3.73). Additional measurements included anti-double stranded DNA, antiphospholipid antibodies, serum C3, and C4.

TagSNP Selection and Genotyping

Five informative tag SNPs were selected from a total of 31 known SNPs in the SeattleSNPs Program for Genomic Applications web site (<http://pga.gs.washington.edu/education.html>). SNPs -861 and -390 are located in the promoter region, SNP +90 is located in intron/exon boundary, +838 is a synonymous SNP present within exon 2, and +2043 maps in the 3' untranslated region. We have designated our SNPs based on their position relative to the ATG codon of the *CRP* translation site in the FASTA database. For clarification, reference numbers from the NCBI Entrez SNP database are provided for each of our six SNPs: -861 is rs3093059, -390 is rs3091244, +90 is rs1417938, +838 is rs1800947 and +2043 is rs1205.

Genotyping for +838 and +2043 was obtained using polymerase chain reaction restriction fragment length polymorphism (PCR-RFLP). SNPs -861 was genotyped using pyrosequencing assays. SNPs -390 and +90 were genotyped using TaqMan assays. TaqMan assays required a higher concentration of DNA that was not available in all subjects at the time of the experiment. Therefore genotyping was performed on 275 cases and 375 controls for the -390 and +90 SNPs. Our genotyping success rates on all SNPs ranged from 89% to 99% in the total sample. Ten percent of samples were re-genotyped for a second time and the concordance rate were > 99%.

Statistical Analyses

Allele frequencies were calculated by the allele counting method. Goodness of fit to Hardy–Weinberg expected proportions was examined by χ^2 test. The pairwise linkage disequilibrium (LD) between markers was estimated using the D' method[37]. The differences in genotype frequencies between cases and controls were tested by Fisher's Exact test. Common haplotype frequency was estimated using the expectation-maximization algorithm in the EH software program[38] in both cases and controls. After detecting a significant association between CRP genetic variation and SLE risk, we performed follow-up tests to assess possible associations between CRP genetic variation and SLE clinical characteristics using either analysis of variance (ANOVA) for quantitative clinical characteristics of SLE (C3, C4, SLAM and SLICC) or logistic regression analysis for categorical variables (renal disease, joint inflammation, CNS involvement and antiphospholipid antibodies). Covariates adjusted for in the models included age, BMI, and smoking.

To assess the association between CRP genetic variation and serum CRP in SLE subjects, CRP values were log-transformed to reduce non-normality. The mean log-transformed CRP (logCRP) levels between different genotype groups were compared using ANOVA and adjusted for the effects of age, BMI, and smoking. We also conducted haplotype association tests with logCRP were conducted using the haplo.stats package for R[39], with age, BMI, and smoking included as covariates. Haplo.stats tests association by means of a generalized linear-regression framework that incorporates haplotype phase uncertainty by inferring a probability matrix of haplotype likelihoods for each individual (derived by use of the EH haplotype-inference algorithm) rather than by assignment of a most likely haplotype. All computations were performed using R version 2.1.2.

RESULTS

Association of CRP SNPs with SLE Risk

Of the total 785 subjects (337 cases and 448 controls) genotyped for five CRP SNPs, we repeated genotyping on 10% of the subjects for each SNP a second time and had higher than 99% concordance rate in all SNPs. No statistically significant deviations from Hardy–Weinberg equilibrium were found in any of the SNPs. Table 1 presents the genotype and allele frequencies in our cases and controls for the five CRP SNPs examined. Genotype and allele frequencies were not significantly different between cases and controls (using the *p*-value of 0.05) in any of the individual five SNPs examined.

Association of CRP Haplotype with SLE Risk

We conducted pair-wise linkage disequilibrium (LD) analysis using four SNPs (excluding the tri-allelic SNP -390), and found different patterns of LD association in cases versus controls. In cases, with the exception of the -861/+90 and +90/+838 pairs, all SNP pairs are in significant LD. Among controls, all pairs were in significant LD except for the -861/+838 pair (Table 2). Because SNP haplotype may be more informative analyses of multiple SNP and the LD pattern may differ between cases and controls, we assessed the distribution of CRP haplotypes between cases and controls. All SNPs (-861, -390, +90, +838, +2043) were included in our global

haplotype analysis using 222 cases and 313 controls for which 100% genotyping data were available (Table 3). A total of 8 haplotypes were observed at a frequency of 2% or greater from either case or control groups. Even accounting for two tests (the logistic regression and haplotype analyses) of the relationship between the CRP SNPs and case/control status, the overall haplotype distribution was significantly different between cases and controls ($\chi^2 = 138.86, p < 0.000001$) (Table 3). Haplotype 5 appears to be the most pronounced risk haplotype for SLE while haplotypes 2, 4 and 8 seem to convey protection against SLE. However, since no single allele at any locus defined and was restricted to a given risk or protective overall haplotype, no specific haplotype-tagging SNP could be identified to account for the significant overall haplotype associations.

Association of CRP SNPs with SLE Clinical Characteristics

Because we detected a significant association between CRP SNP haplotypes and SLE, we perform follow-up analyses to determine if the CRP SNPs were associated with specific SLE characteristics. These tests were done in a subgroup of 237 SLE patients on whom we have clinical phenotype data, and we performed either ANOVA for quantitative clinical characteristics of SLE or logistic regression analysis for categorical variables adjusting for the effects of age, BMI, CRP levels, and smoking when appropriate. Individuals with +838 GC genotype also exhibited nominally significantly higher C4 levels compared to GG individuals (23.46 ± 8.35 vs. $20.67 \pm 7.68, p = 0.033$). No significant associations were observed between any of the individual SNPs and SLAM, SLICC, C3, creatinine, renal disease, arthritis, and antiphospholipid antibodies (data not shown).

CRP SNPs Associations with Serum C-Reactive Protein Levels

We performed both single-site and haplotype analyses to assess the association between the five CRP SNPs and log-transformed serum CRP levels (logCRP) in a subgroup of SLE patients ($n = 237$) in which CRP levels were available. After performing 5 tests of the single-site analyses, minor alleles of two SNPs revealed significant associations with increased logCRP in SLE patients (+90, $p = 0.0032$; -390, $p = 0.012$), even at the conservative Bonferroni level of significance ($p = 0.01$). Homozygotes of the less common allele (T) at +90 had the highest logCRP level (1.544 ± 0.271) compared to homozygotes of the wild type allele (0.639 ± 0.120) and the heterozygotes (0.623 ± 0.117). Mean logCRP levels were significantly higher in homozygotes of T allele at the triallelic promoter SNP-390 (1.305 ± 0.259) and heterozygotes with an A allele (CA) (1.356 ± 0.286) when compared to homozygotes of the wild type (CC) (0.519 ± 0.134). SNP -861 and the two SNPs (+838, +2043), which were previously found to be associated with decreased CRP levels by Russell *et al.*, did not show a statistically significant impact on circulating CRP levels in this cohort (Table 4).

CRP Haplotype Association with Serum CRP Levels

Given the significant individual effects of SNP -390, and +90 have on CRP levels and the LD between these SNPs, and the observation that +90 is in high LD with -861, whereas -861 is in high LD with +838 and +2043 in cases, we performed 3-SNP haplotype analysis consisting of these three potentially functional SNP to evaluate the significance of the CRP promoter region has on CRP levels. Three-SNP haplotypes were inferred using the haplo.glm function in the haplo.stats package in R. Haplotype -861C X -390T X +90T (H3 in Table 5) was associated with an increase of 1.171 logCRP units compared to the reference haplotype ($p = 0.0161$), and is consistent with the results in Table 4 (the individual SNP associations). Haplotype -861T X -390T X +90T also associated with an increase of logCRP by 0.2928 ($p = 0.0423$) (H6 in Table 5).

DISCUSSION

We examined the association of *CRP* tagSNPs in relation to SLE risk and CRP levels in SLE patients. Individually none of the examined SNPs showed significant association with SLE risk. Previously, Russell *et al.*[39] reported that minor (A) allele of +2043 was associated with SLE risk; but this association is not confirmed in our sample. However, in contrast to the single-site analysis, the *CRP* haplotype analyses yielded significant associations with SLE risk. The global 5-site *CRP* haplotype distribution was significantly different (nominal $p < 0.000001$), between cases and controls even after conservative Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons (critical p -value = $0.05/5$ tests = 0.01). Further inspection of the haplotype results indicated that no single haplotype-tagging SNP explained the significant haplotype association with SLE risk, consistent with the individual SNP results.

The observed significant haplotype association in the absence of individual SNP association may be explained in several ways. First, the use of multilocus analyses in the SNP setting should improve the information content of genomic regions[40] and may also capture effects from multiple polymorphisms (versus single tag SNP analysis) as well as subtle interaction effects (epistasis)[41] within the given haplotype block. Second, haplotypes can mark unique chromosomal segments that harbor susceptibility alleles, even if the linkage disequilibrium (LD) patterns differ between study populations. Given that LD patterns are likely to differ between groups due to population history and/or genetic admixture, our finding that *CRP* haplotype differ between SLE cases and controls is consistent with previous results with Russell *et al.*[39]. Both studies indicate that *CRP* polymorphisms are associated with SLE risk; however, neither study has identified strong evidence of a specific susceptibility allele. Even though the individual tag SNP approach has been the gold standard for association studies for many years, it requires that a SNP be in strong LD with a causal polymorphism that has a measurable effect. Given the polygenic and multifactorial nature of SLE pathogenesis, the haplotype approach may be more useful in detecting genotype-phenotype associations in comparison to the individual SNP approach, especially if multiple and/or uncommon variants are associated with the SLE risk. As noted in the methods, there are 31 SNPs reported in the SeattleSNPs Program for Genomic Applications, of which five were sufficiently polymorphic for analysis purposes in our study sample.

Genetic variation at the *CRP* locus could influence SLE risk via its effect on CRP levels and Russell *et al.*[39] reported a significant association between CRP levels and genotypes at SNPs +2043 and +838. We did not observe significant association between CRP levels and genotypes at these two SNPs, but we did observe significant association between genotypes at a promoter SNP (SNP-390, nominal $p=0.01$) and a SNP at an intron/exon boundary (SNP+90, nominal $p=0.003$), even after Bonferroni adjustment for five tests. In fact, our result that the -390T allele is associated with increased CRP levels directly supports previous observations that T allele forms an E-Box binding site, which is involved in transcription binding[42]. Additional *in silico* prediction analysis and *in vitro* data confirmed that haplotypes containing the -390T allele increases reporter gene activity significantly[43]. Among our SLE cases, homozygotes for the -390T allele had a two-fold increase in logCRP (1.544 ± 0.271) compared to homozygotes of the wild type allele (0.639 ± 0.120) and heterozygotes (0.623 ± 0.117 , $p = 0.0032$) (Table 4).

Polymorphisms located in gene promoters may play a role in gene function by altering transcription factor identification and binding, which in turn can influence gene expression and affect biological pathways. Likewise, SNPs at the intron/exon boundary may result in alternative splicing and affect gene function. In fact, these relationships between CRP levels at these two individual SNPs have also been reported in healthy, non-SLE populations

[43-45]. In addition, our haplotype analyses of the 2 promoter and 1 splice site SNPs (Table 5) further indicate that all three SNPs contribute to increased CRP levels.

Previously Russell *et al.*[29] reported significant association between SNPs +838, +2043 and decreased CRP level in a British SLE cohort. Similarly, a more recent study by Miller *et al.* [44] reported the same association of these two SNPs in three large cohorts of healthy general population. However, we did not observe the same association between SNPs +838, +2043 and decreased CRP in our 273 SLE patients. The lack of association in our SLE women may be attributed to the limited sample size of the minor allele carriers in our study, or it may be confounded by the effects from anti-inflammatory medications SLE patients take on the regular basis, like corticosteroids.

Although our association results between CRP genotypes and CRP levels are consistent with some previous reports, they differ from others. Determining the true association between genetic variation and CRP levels is inherently difficult due to the complex mechanism of CRP production, which is activated by cytokines IL-6 and IL-1 and influenced by multiple other genes and environmental factors[46]. The difficulty is compounded in SLE cohort because not only are the inflammatory cytokines increased in SLE patients[47], but the strong correlation between CRP and IL-6 levels in healthy subjects may be absent in SLE[48]. SLE is a chronic inflammatory disease with abnormal expression of *CRP* during both the presence and absence of acute infections. Multiple studies have also found inconsistent correlations between CRP levels and SLE disease activity, indicating that the mechanism influencing *CRP* expression in SLE individuals may differ from that in the general population. Our data showed that even though the exon 2 and 3' regions SNPs did not correlate with significantly decreased CRP levels in our SLE patients as others have found, individual SNPs and haplotype in the promoter region revealed associations with increased basal CRP levels as shown in the general population. Our findings emphasize the important functional role of CRP promoter polymorphisms may play in their expression even in patients with a chronic inflammatory disease.

Russell *et al.* 's family-based study proposed that low basal levels of CRP may predispose to antinuclear autoantibody production, which in turn contributes to the development of human lupus[39]. Our results show that individually, certain SNPs are correlated with CRP levels, but their association with SLE risk was not significant. Although we did not find strong evidence that any of the individual *CRP* SNPs influence CRP level and thereby predict SLE risk, the significant global haplotype results suggest that variation in the *CRP* gene modifies SLE risk via as yet unidentified mechanisms. Our individual SNPs results, coupled with promoter haplotype results, confirm the previous studies done in the general population that CRP promoter variants have a significant impact on CRP levels in SLE patients. The lack of association with SNPs +838, +2043 and decreased CRP levels in our patients may result from years of SLE insult (mean disease duration of 10.13 years) from the chronic inflammatory state.

It remains a possibility that *CRP* itself does not directly contribute to SLE susceptibility, rather one or more as yet unidentified SLE susceptibility alleles in nearby loci may be in strong LD with one or more of the *CRP* SNPs we examined. Two potential SLE susceptibility genes that also mapped to 1q23, *FcγRIIA* and *FcγRIIIA*, encode for low-affinity receptors for IgG. Recent meta-analyses revealed that the *FcγRIIA-R/H131* polymorphism was associated with a 1.3-fold greater risk of development of lupus, and that the *FcγRIIIA -V/F158* polymorphism conferred 1.4-fold risk for developing lupus nephritis[49]. The interaction of IgG Fc receptors containing an activation motif (ITAM) with immune complexes and cytotoxic autoantibodies can initiate an inflammatory response leading to tissue damage[50]. It has also been demonstrated that *FcγRIIA-R/H131*, working in conjunction with CRP, has the unique ability to alter the cytokine profile of the host[51] by mediating phagocytosis[52], and contributing to the impaired removal

of circulating immune complexes[53], resulting in the antibody-triggered inflammation and disease pathogenesis of SLE and nephritis. Given the overlapping chromosomal position of the human *CRP*, *FcγRIIA* and *FcγRIIIA* genes and their unique ability to modify SLE phenotype when working together, it is likely that genetic interaction between these three loci (epistasis) may modify SLE susceptibility.

In summary, our study is consistent with some previous studies that genetic variation in *CRP* influences risk of SLE and levels of CRP in SLE patients although the same genetic variation did not influence both CRP levels and SLE risk in our study and some of our single SNP association results differ from those of other studies. These results may indicate that the SNPs may not act via level alone, but exerts their effects via different kinds of activity or interactions with other proteins. Furthermore, complex diseases and traits (such as SLE and CRP levels) are likely to be influenced by multiple genes each exerting effects in small to modest range [54]. A limitation of our study is the relatively small sample size which reduces our ability to detect genes with small effects as well as effects of gene by gene and gene by environment interactions. In addition, as circulating CRP is a sensitive acute-phase protein that could easily be fluctuated by multiple factors, longitudinal studies of CRP and SLE would be useful. Future work is necessary, perhaps using murine models[27,28 to determine the true mechanism underlying the associations between *CRP* genetic variation and SLE risk.. Such information will further our understanding of SLE etiology and may have direct clinical relevance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank Dr. Christopher Carlson from the University of Washington for his assistance in the triallelic SNP -390 genotyping protocol.

Supported in parts by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Grants HL 074165 and HL 54900, the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Grants AR 46588 and AR 002213, and a grant from the NIH General Clinical Research Center M01-RR000056.

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Table 1

Genotype and allele frequencies of CRP SNPs

SNP	Genotype	SLE cases <i>n</i> (%)	Controls <i>n</i> (%)	<i>p</i> -value	Allele	SLE cases <i>n</i> (%)	Controls <i>n</i> (%)	<i>p</i> -value
-861 (rs3093059)	TT	287 (85.93)	388(86.8)	0.813	T	621 (93)	834(93.3)	0.802
	TC	47(14.07)	58(12.98)		C	47(7)	60 (6.7)	
	CC	0(0)	1 (0.22)					
-390 (rs3091244)	CC	92 (38)	135 (41)	0.849	C	289 (59)	416(61)	0.565
	CT	88 (36)	118(36)		T	161 (33)	196(31)	
	TT	29 (12)	30(9)		A	36(7)	52(8)	0.789
	CA	17(7)	28(8)					
	TA	15(6)	18(5)					
+90 (rs 1417938)	AA	2(1)	3(1)	0.973	A	335 (69.8)	461 (69.4)	0.895
	AA	117(48.75)	159(47.89)		T	145 (30.2)	203(30.6)	
	AT	101 (42.08)	143(43.07)					
+838 (rs 1800947)	TT	22(9.17)	30(9.04)	0.125	G	619(91.8)	840(93.8)	0.14
	GG	283 (83.98)	395(88.17)		C	55 (8.2)	56(6.3)	
	GC	53(15.73)	50(11.16)					
+2043 (rs1205)	CC	1 (0.3)	3 (0.67)	0.538	G	441 (66)	607(67.9)	0.434
	GG	142(42.51)	207(46.31)		A	227 (34)	287(32.1)	
	GA	157(47.01)	193(43.18)					
	AA	35(10.48)	47(10.51)					

Table 2
Pairwise Linkage Disequilibrium between CRP SNPs

Pairwise Linkage Disequilibrium - SLE				
	+90	+838	+2043	
-861	0.018 (0.945)	0.993 (0.037)	0.880 (< 0.001)	D' (p-value)
+90		0.066 (0.511)	0.234 (0.016)	
+838			0.846 (< 0.001)	
Pairwise Linkage Disequilibrium - Controls				
	+90	+838	+2043	
-861	0.996 (< 0.001)	0.482 (0.319)	0.996 (< 0.001)	D' (p-value)
+90		0.687 (0.002)	0.952 (< 0.001)	
+838			0.753 (< 0.001)	

Table 3

CRP Haplotype Case-Control Comparison

Haplotype	-861 (T>C)	-390 (C>T>A)	+90 (A>T)	+838 (G>C)	+2043 (G>A)	SLE Frequency (n = 222)	Control Frequency (n = 313)	Frequency Difference
H1	T	C	A	G	G	0.330	0.304	0.026
H2	T	C	A	G	A	0.183	0.259	-0.076
H3	T	C	A	C	A	0.047	0.050	-0.004
H4	T	T	T	G	G	0.201	0.286	-0.085
H5	T	T	T	G	A	0.061	0.002	0.058
H6	T	A	A	G	G	0.038	0.011	0.027
H7	C	C	A	G	G	0.032	0.004	0.028
H8	C	A	A	G	G	0.007	0.061	-0.054
						Overall p < 0.000001 $\chi^2 = 138.86$		

Table 4

Association of CRP Polymorphisms and Mean logCRP level (+/- SE)

SNP	Genotype	n (%)	Mean $\pm$ S.E.	p-value
-861* (rs3093059)	TT	191 (84.14)	0.718 $\pm$ 0.073	0.16
	TC	36(15.86)	0.977 $\pm$ 0.184	
	CC	0(0)	...	
-390* (rs3091244)	CC	50 (34.48)	0.519 $\pm$ 0.134	0.012
	CT	55 (37.93)	0.589 $\pm$ 0.121	
	TT	19(13.10)	1.305 $\pm$ 0.259	
	CA	11(7.59)	1.356 $\pm$ 0.286	
	TA	8 (5.52)	0.696 $\pm$ 0.351	
	AA	2(1.38)	0.515 $\pm$ 0.596	
+90* (rs1417938)	AA	66 (45.83)	0.639 $\pm$ 0.120	0.0032
	AT	63 (43.75)	0.623 $\pm$ 0.117	
	TT	15 (10.42)	1.544 $\pm$ 0.271	
	GG	193 (83.91)	0.703 $\pm$ 0.075	
+838* (rs 1800947)	GC	37 (16.09)	0.869 $\pm$ 0.161	0.373
	CC	0(0)	...	
	GG	100 (43.67)	0.845 $\pm$ 0.112	
+2043* (rs1205)	GA	107 (46.72)	0.605 $\pm$ 0.092	0.207
	AA	22 (9.61)	0.857 $\pm$ 0.213	
	AA	22 (9.61)	0.857 $\pm$ 0.213	

* Mean logCRP level ($\pm$ SE) - Adjusted for Age, BMI, and Smoking

Table 5

Association of CRP Promoter Haplotype with Serum logCRP Levels in SLE

3-Loci Promoter Haplotype	-861 (T>C)	-390 (C>T>A)	+90 (A>T)	Haplotype Frequency	Coefficient	SE	t-stat	p-value
Intercept	...	...	...	...	-1.651	0.364	-4.536	0.000
Age	...	...	...	...	0.014	0.007	2.064	0.040
BMI	...	...	...	...	0.048	0.010	4.887	0.000
Smoke	...	...	...	...	0.394	0.137	2.878	0.004
H2	C	C	A	0.050	0.028	0.273	0.103	0.918
H3	C	T	T	0.019	1.171	0.483	2.425	0.016
H4	T	A	A	0.074	0.263	0.246	1.072	0.285
H5	T	T	A	0.024	-0.158	0.384	-0.411	0.682
H6	T	T	T	0.301	0.293	0.143	2.042	0.042
H _{other} *	*	*	*	0.009	0.648	0.682	0.950	0.343
H1 = Referent	T	C	A	0.522	Referent	...	...	...

NOTE. -- *t*-statistics and *p* values were calculated from the coefficients and SEs within the best-fit multivariate model by the haplo.glm function in the haplo.stats R package.

* Haplotypes with frequency <2% were pooled as "H_{other}."