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1 **eQTL colocalization analyses identify *NTN4* as a candidate breast cancer risk gene**

2

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19 **ABSTRACT**

20 Breast cancer genome-wide association studies (GWAS) have identified 150 genomic risk regions  
21 containing more than 13,000 credible causal variants (CCVs). The CCVs are predominantly  
22 noncoding and enriched in regulatory elements. However, the genes underlying breast cancer risk  
23 associations are largely unknown. Here, we used genetic colocalization analysis to identify loci at  
24 which gene expression could potentially explain breast cancer risk phenotypes. Using data from the  
25 Breast Cancer Association Consortium (BCAC) and quantitative trait loci (QTL) from the Genotype-  
26 Tissue Expression (GTEx) project and The Cancer Genome Project (TCGA), we identify shared  
27 genetic relationships and reveal novel associations between cancer phenotypes and effector genes.  
28 Seventeen genes, including *NTN4*, were identified as potential mediators of breast cancer risk. For  
29 *NTN4*, we showed the rs61938093 CCV at this region was located within an enhancer element that  
30 physically interacts with the *NTN4* promoter, and the risk allele reduced *NTN4* promoter activity.  
31 Furthermore, knockdown of *NTN4* in breast cells increased cell proliferation *in vitro* and tumor growth  
32 *in vivo*. These data provide evidence linking risk-associated variation to genes that may contribute  
33 to breast cancer predisposition.

34

35

36 The influence of common genetic variation on gene expression underlies a considerable proportion  
37 of the heritability associated with complex traits. Mapping of expression QTL (eQTL), where genetic  
38 variants are tested for association with gene expression levels, is widely used to identify genes that  
39 are regulated by trait-associated variants. Several studies have shown that eQTLs are enriched in  
40 cell types relevant to the trait of interest<sup>1, 2</sup>. For example, T cell-specific eQTLs are over-represented  
41 for autoimmune risk alleles and monocyte-specific eQTLs for Alzheimer's [MIM: 104300] and  
42 Parkinson's [MIM: 168600] disease alleles<sup>2</sup>. For breast cancer [MIM: 114480], several studies have  
43 used eQTL data from tumor and normal tissues datasets to identify candidate target genes<sup>3-6</sup>. Recent  
44 studies have also showed that breast cancer risk variants could regulate genes in cells of the tumor  
45 microenvironment, such as immune cells and fibroblasts<sup>7, 8</sup>. Because eQTLs are widespread, overlap  
46 between GWAS and eQTL signals is likely to occur by chance when using nominal significance

47 levels. To mitigate false positive findings it is therefore important to show that the same genetic  
48 signal underlies gene expression and disease susceptibility.

49

50 Several statistical colocalization approaches have been developed to determine whether molecular  
51 traits (e.g. gene expression) and a disease trait share common causal variants. The simplest  
52 Bayesian model used in tools such as QTLMatch<sup>9</sup> and COLOC<sup>10</sup> tests for colocalization for two traits  
53 and determines whether they are driven by distinct variants or share a single causal signal. For  
54 example, Parker et al used COLOC to identify 32 emphysema-associated [MIM: 130700] regions  
55 where it is likely that colocalized GWAS and eQTL signals arise from the same causal variant<sup>11</sup>.  
56 Additional functional studies then showed that the emphysema-associated variant rs1690789  
57 regulates *TGFB2* (encoding transforming growth factor beta 2 [MIM: 190220]) expression in human  
58 lung fibroblasts. A recent implementation of COLOC, called HyPrColoc (Hypothesis Prioritization in  
59 multi-trait Colocalization), identifies colocalized association signals using summary statistics on large  
60 number of traits<sup>12</sup>. This method has been used to identify regulatory loci underlying quantitative  
61 haematopoietic traits<sup>13</sup>.

62

63 In this study, we extracted eQTL association effect estimates and standard errors for all variants at  
64 the 150 breast cancer risk loci previously analysed by BCAC<sup>14</sup> (mean region size = 1.09 Mb). GWAS  
65 summary data were available for overall breast cancer risk from 122,977 cases and 105,974  
66 controls<sup>3</sup>; and for estrogen receptor negative (ER-) breast cancer risk from 21,468 cases and  
67 100,594 controls, combined with 18,908 *BRCA1* mutation carriers (9414 with breast cancer)<sup>15</sup> all of  
68 European ancestries. Variant IDs were converted to GRCH38 build co-ordinates and harmonized  
69 with GTEx data (0.86% failed conversion and were dropped from the analysis). The GTEx version 8  
70 release includes data from normal breast tissue from 396 individuals. GTEx eQTL association data  
71 for variants within  $\pm 1$  Mb windows of transcription start sites were extracted based on the variants  
72 present in the breast cancer risk data. Colocalization of the GWAS and eQTL signals were calculated  
73 using the HyPrColoc R package<sup>12</sup>. Breast cancer risk phenotypes and each proximal gene were  
74 analyzed separately with default parameters. Signals were considered to be plausibly colocalizing if  
75 posterior probability for colocalization (PPFC)  $> 0.7$ , resulting in a false discovery rate of 5%<sup>12</sup>.

76

77 We identified 17 genes at 14 loci where the GTEx eQTL association  $P$  values are  $< 10^{-6}$  (**Table 1**).  
78 For every locus, all candidate SNPs met the GWAS significance  $P$  value threshold ( $5 \times 10^{-8}$ ) for overall  
79 or ER- breast cancer risk (**Table 1**). For 11 loci (*NTN4*, *PIDD1* [MIM: 605247], *CBX8* [MIM: 617354],  
80 *L3MBTL3* [MIM: 618844], *RCCD1* [MIM: 617997], *PRC1-AS1*, *SSBP4* [MIM: 607391], *MARCH11*  
81 [MIM: 613338], *ZNF596*, *RP5-855D21.3* and *RP11-53O19.1*), the candidate colocalized SNPs have  
82 been previously nominated as strong candidate causal signals using multivariate logistic  
83 regression<sup>14</sup> (**Table 1** and **Figure 1**). However, at six loci (*ATG10* [MIM: 610800], *CCDC88C* [MIM:  
84 611204], *PPM1K* [MIM: 611065], *RP11-250B2.3*, *RP1-265C24.5* and *RP11-250B2.5*), the  
85 colocalized signals are independent secondary signals based on stepwise multinomial logistic  
86 regression analysis ( $10^{-6} < P < 10^{-4}$ )<sup>14</sup>. While this does not rule out causality, larger GWAS would  
87 be required to confirm genome-wide significance (**Figure S1**)<sup>14</sup>.

88

89 Published computational predictions of target genes at breast cancer risk loci using the INQUISIT  
90 pipeline (which interrogates data including ChIA-PET, Hi-C, ChIP-seq and eQTL data independent  
91 of GTEx) provide further support for ten colocalized genes (**Table S1**)<sup>3, 14</sup>. Of these, *NTN4*, *PIDD1*,  
92 *L3MBTL3* and *RCCD1* have the strongest evidence from functional genomics data. Transcriptome-  
93 wide association studies also suggest that 13 of the 17 genes are regulated by breast cancer risk  
94 variants<sup>5-7, 16, 17</sup> (**Table S1**). Moreover, previous eQTL analysis based on TCGA breast tumor data  
95 have identified three of these candidate genes<sup>3, 14</sup> (**Figure S2**). For three genes (*PIDD1*, *L3MBTL3*  
96 and *SSBP4*), CCVs are located in the promoter regions, and for *PIDD1* previous reporter assays  
97 indicate the risk haplotype increases promoter activity<sup>3</sup>. Our recent capture Hi-C data showed also  
98 chromatin looping occurs between putative regulatory regions containing CCVs and the promoters  
99 of four genes (*NTN4*, *PRC1-AS1*, *ATG10* and *RP1-265C24.5*) in breast cell lines<sup>18</sup>. For the remaining  
100 loci, multiple CCVs were located in the introns of target genes and/or intergenic regions, but lacked  
101 demonstrable CCV-gene interactions. It is possible that some *cis*-regulatory interactions are only  
102 detected in specific breast cell subpopulations, or that CCVs are acting through other mechanisms  
103 such as perturbation of pre-messenger RNA splicing or altered noncoding RNA stability, structure  
104 and/or function. Of note, three genes (*PIDD1*, *CBX8*, and *L3MBTL3*) contain breast cancer CCVs in

105 their exons which are predicted to change the amino acid sequence, thus we cannot rule out that  
106 these are functional variants that affect the protein product.

107

108 One high probability colocalization signal, targeting *NTN4*, was detected at a locus at 12q22 (**Table**  
109 **1, Figures 1 and 2**). Genetic fine-mapping studies have identified one risk signal at 12q22 that  
110 contains two CCVs (rs61938093 and rs17356907; odds ratio = 1.094,  $r_2 = 1$ )<sup>14</sup>. Both CCVs fall within  
111 putative regulatory elements (PREs) marked by open chromatin in B80T5 and MCF10A non-  
112 tumorigenic breast cell lines (**Figure 3A**). The PREs map to a large intergenic region between  
113 *USP44* [MIM: 610993] (encoding ubiquitin-specific protease 44) and *NTN4* (encoding Netrin 4;  
114 **Figure 3A**). Using promoter capture HiC data<sup>18</sup>, we observed that the PREs frequently participate in  
115 long-range chromatin interactions with the *NTN4* promoter in non-tumorigenic and tumorigenic  
116 breast cell lines (**Figures 3A and S2A**). Notably, no other eQTLs or chromatin interactions from the  
117 PRE to promoter regions were detected in the breast cell lines we examined (**Figures 3A and**  
118 **S2A**)<sup>18</sup>, suggesting *NTN4* is the likely target gene at this signal.

119

120 To determine how the PRE alters *NTN4* transcriptional activity, we targeted a nuclease-defective  
121 dCas9 fused to the Kruppel-associated box (lentiviral vector pHR-SFFV-dCas9-BFP-KRAB; a gift  
122 from Stanley Qi & Jonathan Weissman, Addgene plasmid #46911) to the PRE. Two independent  
123 single-guide RNAs (sgRNAs) targeting the PRE were designed (**Table S2**) and cloned into the  
124 lentiviral vector pgRNA-humanized (a gift from Stanley Qi, Addgene plasmid #44248). Lentiviral  
125 particles were produced from HEK293 cells transfected with accessory plasmids pCMV-dR8.91 and  
126 pCMV-VSV-G (gifts from David Harrich, QIMR Berghofer), and with dCas9-KRAB or pgRNA  
127 constructs using Lipofectamine 2000 (Life Technologies). Supernatants from dCas9-KRAB and  
128 pgRNA cultures were mixed and transduced into Bre80-TERT1 breast cells. Cells expressing both  
129 dCas9-KRAB (co-expressing blue fluorescent protein) and pgRNA (co-expressing mCherry) were  
130 enriched by FACS on the Aria IIIu platform (Becton-Dickinson). Notably, silencing of the PRE  
131 significantly reduced *NTN4* expression in Bre80-TERT1 cells, suggesting that the PRE acts as an  
132 transcriptional enhancer (**Figure 3B**).

133

134 The regulatory capability of the PRE, combined with the effects of the CCVs, was further examined  
135 in reporter assays. An *NTN4* promoter-driven luciferase reporter construct was generated by the  
136 insertion of a PCR amplified genomic fragment into the KpnI/HindIII sites of pGL3-basic (Promega).  
137 A 1010 base pairs (bp) fragment containing a PRE1, with either the risk or protective alleles of  
138 rs61938093, or a 983 bp fragment containing a PRE2, with either the risk or protective alleles of  
139 rs17356907, were synthesized as gBlocks (Integrated DNA Technologies) and then cloned into the  
140 BamHI/Sall sites of the *NTN4*-promoter construct (genomic coordinates and primers are listed in  
141 **Table S2**). MCF10A and Bre80-TERT1 breast cells were transfected with the reporter constructs  
142 and luciferase activity was measured 24 h post-transfection using the Dual-Glo Luciferase System  
143 (Promega). To correct for any differences in transfection efficiency, *Firefly* luciferase activity was  
144 normalized to *Renilla*. Reporter assays confirmed strong enhancer activity of the PRE1 on the *NTN4*  
145 promoter in MCF10A and Bre80-TERT1 cells and inclusion of the rs6198093 risk allele significantly  
146 reduced *NTN4* promoter activity (**Figure 3C**). In contrast, inclusion of PRE2 with the protective or  
147 risk alleles of rs17356907 had no significant effects on the *NTN4* promoter activity. pGL3-promoter  
148 luciferase results ????? These results suggest that rs61938093 alters transactivation of *NTN4*, but it  
149 is possible that the CCVs also influence recruitment of key proteins required for chromatin looping  
150 between the enhancer and *NTN4* promoter, which would not be observed in a reporter assay.

151

152 To assess the potential impact of the CCVs on chromatin looping, quantitative allele-specific 3C was  
153 performed in heterozygous MCF10A and T47D breast cell lines. 3C libraries were generated using  
154 HindIII as previously described<sup>19</sup>. Three independent 3C libraries or genomic input DNA were  
155 amplified for 15 cycles with two separate xxxxx 3C specific or genomic DNA PCR primers (primers  
156 are listed in **Table S2**) and purified by QIAGEN columns. Allele-specific PCR products were then  
157 quantified using a custom TaqMan SNP genotyping assay for rs61938093 (Life Technologies) on  
158 the Rotor-Gene 6000 platform. Purified PCR products were Sanger sequenced by the Australian  
159 Genome Research Facility (AGRF). The results showed a preference for the protective *t*-allele  
160 (**Figures 3D, 3E and S2B-S2E**), indicating that risk alleles may abrogate looping between the  
161 enhancer and *NTN4* which in turn may reduce *NTN4* expression.

162

163 Electrophoretic mobility shift assays (EMSAs) then assessed transcription factor (TF) binding for the  
164 protective and risk alleles of the CCVs. Nuclear lysates were prepared from Bre80-TERT1 and  
165 MCF10A breast cells using the NE-PER nuclear and cytoplasmic protein extraction kit  
166 (ThermoFisher). Biotinylated oligonucleotides representing either the risk or protective allele were  
167 synthesized (Integrated DNA Technologies; **Table S2**) and annealed to form double-stranded  
168 duplexes. Duplex-bound complexes were resolved by electrophoresis in 10% (w/v) Tris-borate-  
169 EDTA polyacrylamide (Lonza) and transferred to positively-charged nylon membranes by semi-dry  
170 transfer (Bio-Rad). Membranes were processed using the LightShift Chemiluminescent EMSA kit  
171 (ThermoFisher) and visualized with the C-DiGit blot scanner. The EMSAs showed that rs61938093  
172 and rs17356907 altered protein binding *in vitro* in Bre80-TERT1 and MCF10A cell lysates (**Figures**  
173 **3F**, **S3A** and **S3B**). *In silico* prediction tools including HaploReg<sup>20</sup> and Alibaba<sup>221</sup> predicted both  
174 CCVs to alter TF binding. However, EMSAs using competitor DNA against predicted and other  
175 breast-relevant TFs were unable to identify the specific protein(s) binding to the alleles (**Figures**  
176 **S3C** and **S3D**).

177  
178 We examined expression of *NTN4* in matched normal and cancerous breast tissues using TCGA  
179 RNA-seq data. *NTN4* was more highly expressed in normal tissue, a mixture of cell types, compared  
180 to adjacent tumor samples (**Figure 4A**) and is expressed across the histological subtypes, albeit  
181 with lower expression in the basal subtype (**Figure 4B**). To explore the effect of reduced *NTN4* on  
182 breast cancer cell proliferation, MCF7 cells were transfected with ON-TARGETplus negative control  
183 or *NTN4* siRNA smartpools (Dharmacon) using RNAiMAX (Life Technologies). *NTN4* silencing was  
184 confirmed by TaqMan qPCR gene expression assay 72 h post-transfection (**Figures S3E** and **S3F**).  
185 Notably, *NTN4* depletion promoted anchorage-dependent and -independent cell growth in MCF7  
186 cells (**Figures 4C** and **4D**). To assess the effect of reduced *NTN4* on tumor growth, we stably  
187 depleted *NTN4* in MCF7 cells by targeting dCAS9-KRAB to the promoter of *NTN4*, and injected the  
188 cells in the mammary fat pad of nude mice. Female BALB/c-Foxn1<sup>nu</sup>/Arc mice were first  
189 subcutaneously implanted with 17 $\beta$ -estradiol (0.72 mg/pellet, 90 day release; Innovative Research  
190 of America) at 8 weeks of age. MCF7 control-CRISPRi or *NTN4*-CRISPRi cells were orthotopically  
191 injected into mammary fatpads 3 days later at 10<sup>7</sup> cells per mouse (6-7 mice per cell line). Tumor



192 volumes were measured every 2 days until experimental end, at which point mice were euthanized  
193 and their tumors excised and weighed. All animal procedures were conducted in accordance with  
194 Australian National Health and Medical Research regulations on the use and care of experimental  
195 animals, and approved by the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute Animal Ethics Committee  
196 (P1499). Compared to control MCF7 cells containing non-targeting sgRNA, *NTN4* depletion led to a  
197 marked increase in tumor growth (**Figures 4E, 4F and S3G**), which was reflected in increased tumor  
198 weight (**Figure 4G**).

199  
200 *NTN4* encodes the Netrin-4 secreted protein which has been implicated in various developmental  
201 processes including axon guidance, angiogenesis, mammary and lung morphogenesis<sup>22</sup>. Several  
202 studies show that *NTN4* is involved in cancer, but the exact role of *NTN4* appears to be dependent  
203 on the cancer type. For example, *NTN4* knockdown reduces cell proliferation and motility in gastric  
204 cancer [MIM: 613659] and melanoma [MIM: 155600]<sup>23; 24</sup>, but promotes cell migration and invasion  
205 in colorectal cancer [MIM: 114500] and breast cancer<sup>25; 26</sup>. *NTN4* has also been implicated in breast  
206 cancer progression. For example, reduced *NTN4* is reported to promote migration and invasion of  
207 breast cancer cells through epithelial to mesenchymal transition<sup>26</sup>. In addition, *NTN4* has been  
208 shown to be an independent biomarker for prognosis of survival in breast cancer<sup>27; 28</sup>. We and others  
209 have demonstrated that SNPs can alter chromatin loop formation between promoters and  
210 enhancers<sup>29; 30</sup>. Here, we provide evidence that the same mechanism may explain how breast cancer  
211 CCVs alter *NTN4* expression and that suppressed *NTN4* increases cancer-related processes  
212 including cell proliferation and tumor growth. However, we acknowledge that further functional  
213 studies will be required to clarify how *NTN4* contributes to breast tumor initiation.

214  
215 Seven additional colocalized target genes have prior evidence for a functional role in cancer. For  
216 example, *PIDD1* (p53-induced death domain protein 1) is implicated in DNA-damage-induced  
217 apoptosis and tumorigenesis<sup>31</sup>. *CBX8* is overexpressed in breast cancer and correlates with poor  
218 survival<sup>32</sup>. *CBX8* functions by interacting with the H3K4 methyltransferase complex component  
219 *WDR5* to activate genes involved in Notch signaling and promote breast tumorigenesis<sup>32</sup>.  
220 Furthermore, Guo et al showed ectopic *ATG10* (autophagy related 10) overexpression decreases

221 colony formation of MDA-MB-231 breast cancer cells, suggesting it may play a role in breast  
222 tumorigenesis<sup>5</sup>. Notably, ten genes have no reported involvement in breast tumorigenesis and may  
223 represent new genes that influence the susceptibility to breast cancer. This list includes five lncRNAs  
224 which are arguably more challenging to investigate as they can have multiple functions. However,  
225 there is increasing evidence that dysregulated lncRNAs contribute to breast cancer etiology<sup>29; 33; 34</sup>.

226

227 In summary, we used eQTL colocalization to link breast cancer risk variants to seventeen target  
228 genes, including some potential cancer driver genes, but many with no reported role in breast cancer  
229 etiology. However, even with demonstration of shared genetic signals, it is as yet unknown how  
230 genes implicated by statistical colocalization analyses reflect true molecular mechanisms. It is  
231 therefore important to perform functional assays, as we have done for *NTN4*, to provide evidence  
232 that the variant affects gene expression and the gene plays a role in the disease etiology. Future  
233 work confirming the role of these genes or associated pathways in breast cancer development could  
234 ultimately lead to new avenues for breast cancer prevention or therapy.

235

## 236 **SUPPLEMENTAL DATA**

237 Supplemental Data include three figures and two tables.

238

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252

## 253 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

254 The authors declare no conflict of interests.

255

## 256 **WEB RESOURCES**

257 Breast Cancer Association Consortium,

258 [http://bcac.ccge.medschl.cam.ac.uk/bcacdata/oncoarray/gwas-icogs-and-oncoarray-summary-  
259 results/](http://bcac.ccge.medschl.cam.ac.uk/bcacdata/oncoarray/gwas-icogs-and-oncoarray-summary-<br/>259 results/)

260 GTEx Portal, <https://gtexportal.org/home/>

261 LDlink, <https://ldlink.nci.nih.gov/>

262 Bioconductor, <https://www.bioconductor.org/>

263

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373

## 374 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

### 375 **Figure 1. Comparison of association signals from BCAC and GTEx v8 for breast tissue.**

376 LocusCompare plots<sup>35</sup> for eleven high-probability colocalized signals. Gene names and the relevant  
377 breast cancer phenotypes are shown in the plot headings. Points are coloured based on linkage  
378 disequilibrium (LD) bins relative to the candidate SNP prioritized by HyPrColoc (purple diamond  
379 labelled with rsID; red:  $\geq 0.8$ , orange: 0.6 – 0.8, green: 0.4 – 0.6, light blue: 0.2 – 0.4, and dark blue:  
380  $< 0.2$ ). LD data from 1000 Genomes phase 3, version 5 were retrieved from the LDlink portal<sup>36</sup>.  
381 Strong candidate causal variants for breast cancer risk are annotated as small diamonds and weaker  
382 secondary risk variants as squares.

383

### 384 **Figure 2. Regional association plots at the 12q22 breast cancer risk locus.**

385 Single variant associations with overall breast cancer risk (top panel) and with *NTN4* expression in normal breast  
386 tissue from GTEx v8 (lower panel). Variants are represented by points colored relative to linkage  
387 disequilibrium (LD) with the candidate variant detected by HyPrColoc (rs17356907; red:  $\geq 0.8$ ,  
388 orange: 0.6 – 0.8, green: 0.4 – 0.6, light blue: 0.2 – 0.4, and dark blue:  $< 0.2$ ).

389

### 390 **Figure 3. Breast cancer CCVs distally regulate *NTN4*.** (A) WashU genome browser showing

391 topologically associating domains (TADs) as horizontal gray bars above GENCODE annotated

392 coding genes (blue). The promoter capture Hi-C (PCHi-C) baits are depicted as black boxes. The  
393 putative regulatory element (PRE) containing the CCVs is shown as red colored vertical lines. The  
394 ATAC-seq tracks for B80T5 and MCF10A breast cells are shown as blue histograms. PCHi-C  
395 chromatin interactions are shown as black arcs. Red arcs depict chromatin looping between CCVs  
396 and the *NTN4* promoter region. (B) dCAS9-KRAB was targeted to the PRE using two different  
397 sgRNAs (sgPRE1 and sgPRE2) in Bre80-TERT1 breast cells. SgCON contains a non-targeting  
398 control guide RNA. Gene expression was measured by qPCR and normalized to *beta-glucuronidase*  
399 (*GUSB*) expression. Error bars, SEM (n=3). *P*-values were determined by one-way ANOVA followed  
400 by Dunnett's multiple comparisons test (\*\**p* < 0.01). (C) Luciferase reporter assays following  
401 transient transfection of MCF10A and Bre80-TERT1 breast cells. A PRE1 containing the protective  
402 (Prot.) or risk alleles of rs61938093 and a PRE2 containing the protective (Prot.) or risk alleles of  
403 rs1735907 were cloned into *NTN4*-promoter driven luciferase constructs. Error bars, SEM (n=3). *P*-  
404 values were determined by two-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's multiple comparisons test (\*\**p* <  
405 0.01, \*\*\*\**p* < 0.0001). (D,E; left panels) 3C interaction profiles between the *NTN4* promoter and the  
406 genomic region containing the PRE in MCF10A (D) and T47D (E) 3C libraries generated with HindIII.  
407 A physical map of the region interrogated by 3C is shown above; the blue shading represents the  
408 position of the PRE and the anchor point set at the *NTN4* promoter. Representative 3C profiles are  
409 shown. Error bars, SD (n=3). (D,E; right panels) Allele-specific qPCR to quantify the allelic ratio at  
410 CCV rs61938093. Error bars, SEM (n=3). *P*-values were determined using a Student's t-test (\*\**p* <  
411 0.001). (F) EMSA for oligonucleotide duplexes containing CCVs rs61938093 or rs17356907 with  
412 either the risk allele (R) or protective allele (P) as indicated, assayed using Bre80-TERT1 nuclear  
413 extracts. Competitor oligonucleotides are listed above each panel and were used at 100-fold molar  
414 excess: (-) no competitor; (Neg) a non-specific competitor; (Self) an identical oligonucleotide with no  
415 biotin label. Red arrowheads indicate band mobility differences between alleles.

416

417 **Figure 4. *NTN4* depletion promotes breast cell proliferation and tumor formation.** (A) Boxplot  
418 showing *NTN4* expression in normal breast and paired tumor tissue samples from TCGA. Boxplots  
419 indicate median (centre line), interquartile range (box limits) and range (whiskers). *P*-value was  
420 determined using a two-tailed t-test. (B) Boxplot showing *NTN4* expression in breast tumors from



421 TCGA stratified by PAM50 molecular subtypes (n=841). Boxplots indicate median (centre line),  
422 interquartile range (box limits) and range (whiskers). **(C)** Proliferation of MCF7 cells transfected with  
423 a non-targeting control (siCON) or *NTN4* (siNTN4) ON-TARGETplus siRNAs. Cells were grown in  
424 24-well plates and confluency of the wells was measured by the IncuCyte live-cell imaging system.  
425 Results represent relative cell growth rates. Error bars, SD (n=2). P-value was determined by  
426 Student's t-test comparing confluency at the last time point measured (\*\*p < 0.001). **(D)** MCF7 cells  
427 were transfected with the siCON or siNTN4 and grown over 7 days in ultra low-attachment  
428 conditions. Cell growth was assessed using the CellTiter-Glo luminescent cell viability assay. Graph  
429 shows fold change in luminescence of siNTN4 treated cells relative to siCON treated cells. Error bar,  
430 SEM (n=3). P-value was determined by Student's t-test test (\*\*p < 0.01). **(E)** MCF7-control (PgCON)  
431 or MCF7-dCas9-KRAB *NTN4* repressed cells (SgNTN4-P1/P2) were orthotopically injected into the  
432 mammary fat pads of nude mice. Tumor growth curves for each group are shown. Values are shown  
433 as average tumor volumes at each time point. Error bars, SEM (n=6-7 mice per group). **(F)** Tumors  
434 of individual mice were dissected at day 38 post-injection. The scale bars represent 1 cm. **(G)** Plot  
435 of the individual weights of tumors with mean and SEM shown by cross-bar and error bars. **(E, G)**  
436 Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to compare differences between groups (\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p  
437 < 0.001).

438 **Table 1.** Candidate breast cancer risk genes identified by eQTL colocalization analyses.  
 439

Ensembl ID	Gene symbol	Breast cancer risk association	Genomic coordinates (hg19)	Posterior probability	Candidate SNP	Posterior explained by SNP	GTEx eQTL P value	Breast cancer risk P value
ENSG00000074527.11	<i>NTN4</i>	Overall risk	chr12:95527759-96527759	0.9466	rs17356907	0.97	8.01E-09	1.02E-39
ENSG00000141570.10	<i>CBX8</i>	Overall risk	chr17:77281387-78281725	0.9178	rs9905914	0.49	7.92E-23	4.00E-09
ENSG00000198945.7	<i>L3MBTL3</i>	Overall risk	chr6:129849119-130849119	0.7998	rs7740107	1.00	5.88E-40	2.90E-11
ENSG00000183654.8	<i>MARCH11</i>	Overall risk	chr5:15687358-16687528	0.8369	rs1013018	0.16	3.05E-09	1.65E-11
ENSG00000177595.17	<i>PIDD1</i>	Overall risk	chr11:303017-1303017	0.9695	rs6597981	0.22	6.53E-27	1.35E-12
ENSG00000166965.12	<i>RCCD1</i>	Overall risk	chr15:91009215-92009215	0.9633	rs113343095	0.60	2.44E-24	3.37E-15
ENSG00000130511.15	<i>SSBP4</i>	Overall risk	chr19:18050434-19071141	0.7800	rs7258465	0.09	7.87E-08	2.79E-28
ENSG00000172748.13	<i>ZNF596</i>	ER- risk	chr8:0-670692	0.9059	rs35346588	0.79	2.17E-08	1.39E-08
ENSG00000258725.1	<i>PRC1-AS1*</i>	Overall risk	chr15:91009215-92009215	0.9302	rs2290202	0.22	5.89E-10	1.87E-15
ENSG00000251141.5	<i>RP11-53019.1*</i>	Overall risk	chr5:44013304-45206498	0.9347	rs10941679	1.00	4.41E-07	5.61E-73
ENSG00000272812.1	<i>RP5-855D21.3*</i>	ER- risk	chr8:0-670692	0.9769	rs3008281	0.81	6.11E-08	6.23E-09
ENSG00000152348.15	<i>ATG10#</i>	Overall risk	chr5:80928261-82038046	0.7904	rs144580806	0.36	2.56E-40	8.07E-12
ENSG00000015133.18	<i>CCDC88C#</i>	Overall risk	chr14:91341069-92368623	0.9465	rs8018155	0.50	9.15E-11	4.03E-12
ENSG00000163644.14	<i>PPM1K#</i>	Overall risk	chr4:88743818-89743818	0.9935	rs10022462	0.58	1.60E-08	1.55E-09
ENSG00000233967.6	<i>RP11-250B2.3*#</i>	Overall risk	chr6:80594287-81594287	0.8473	rs9448940	0.22	4.65E-11	9.85E-09
ENSG00000260645.1	<i>RP11-250B2.5*#</i>	Overall risk	chr6:80594287-81594287	0.8227	rs1436864	0.08	1.97E-08	3.89E-09
ENSG00000219392.1	<i>RP1-265C24.5*#</i>	Overall risk	chr6:26180698-27180698	0.9901	rs35768595	0.38	5.95E-10	3.16E-09

440  
 441 \* Noncoding RNAs  
 442 # Weaker secondary signals<sup>14</sup>  
 443  
 444  
 445