

VariantFiltering: filtering of coding and non-coding genetic variants

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1 Overview

The aim of this software package is to facilitate the filtering and annotation of coding and non-coding genetic variants from a group of related or unrelated individuals among which at least one of them is affected by a genetic disorder. When working with related individuals, [VariantFiltering](#) can search for variants from the affected individuals that segregate according to a particular inheritance model acting on autosomes (dominant, recessive homozygous or recessive heterozygous -also known as compound heterozygous) or allosomes (X-linked), or that occur *de novo*. When working with unrelated individuals, no mode of inheritance is used for filtering but it can be used to search for variants shared among individuals affected by a common genetic disorder.

[VariantFiltering](#) exploits the R/Bioconductor infrastructure to annotate the sought variants with a number of functional annotations. Many of these annotations come from annotation packages, such as [MafDb.ALL.wgs.phase1.release.v3.20101123](#), which stores and exposes to the user minimum allele frequency (MAF) values frozen from the latest release of the 1000 Genomes project.

The main input are Variant Call Format (VCF) files which are parsed using the functionality from the [VariantAnnotation](#) package for that purpose.

This package contains a toy data set for illustrative purposes only, consisting of a multisample VCF file with variants from chromosomes 20, 21, 22 and allosomes from a trio of CEU individuals from the 1000 Genomes project. To further reduce the execution time of this vignette, only the code for the first analysis that searches for autosomal recessive homozygous variants is actually called and its results reported.

2 Using the package with parallel execution

Functions in [VariantFiltering](#) to annotate and filter variants leverage the functionality of the Bioconductor package [BiocParallel](#) to perform in parallel some of the tasks and calculations and reduce the overall execution time. These functions have an argument called BPPARAM that allows the user to control how this parallelism is exploited. In particular the user must give as value to this argument the result from a call to the function `bpparam()`, which actually is its default behavior. Here below we modify that behavior to force a call being executed without parallelism. The interested reader should consult the help page of `bpparam()` and the vignette of the [BiocParallel](#) for further information.

3 Setting up the analysis

To start using *VariantFiltering* the user should consider installing the packages listed in the `Suggests:` field from its DESCRIPTION file. After loading *VariantFiltering* the first step is to build a parameter object, of class *VariantFilteringParam* which requires at least a character vector of VCF filenames, as follows:

```
> library(VariantFiltering)
> CEUvcf <- file.path(system.file("extdata", package="VariantFiltering"), "CEUtrio.vcf.bgz")
> CEUped <- file.path(system.file("extdata", package="VariantFiltering"), "CEUtrio.ped")
> param <- VariantFilteringParam(vcfFileNames=CEUvcf, pedFilename=CEUped)
> param
```

VariantFiltering parameter object

```
VCF file(s): CEUtrio.vcf.bgz
PED file: CEUtrio.ped
Gene-centric annotation package: org.Hs.eg.db
Transcript-centric annotation package: TxDb.Hsapiens.UCSC.hg19.knownGene
SNP-centric annotation package: SNPlocs.Hsapiens.dbSNP.20120608 (dbSNP Build 137)
Radical/Conservative AA changes file: AA_chemical_properties_HanadaGojoboriLi2006.tsv
Other annotation pkg/obj: MafDb.ESP6500SI.V2.SSA137.dbSNP138,
                        MafDb.ALL.wgs.phase1.release.v3.20101123,
                        PolyPhen.Hsapiens.dbSNP131,
                        SIFT.Hsapiens.dbSNP137,
                        phastCons100way.UCSC.hg19,
                        humanGenesPhylostrata

All transcripts: FALSE
Filter tag: NA
```

In this case, we are also providing a PED file because the analysis illustrated below works on a trio filtering variants with a particular inheritance model.

4 Autosomal recessive inheritance analysis: Homozygous

Homozygous variants responsible for a recessive trait in the affected individuals can be identified calling the `autosomalRecessiveHomozygous()` function. This function takes a *VariantFilteringParam* object as main argument and selects homozygous variants that are present in all the affected individuals and occur in heterozygosity in the unaffected ones. We change the default value of the `BPPARAM` argument to the object returned by a call to `bpparam("SerialParam")` to disable the parallel execution of this function when building this vignette. For this reason, we need to load the *BiocParallel* package first and perform the call to the function as follows:

```
> library(BiocParallel)
> reHo <- autosomalRecessiveHomozygous(param, BPPARAM=bpparam("SerialParam"))
> reHo
```

VariantFiltering results object

```
Variants segregate according to a/an autosomal recessive homozygous inheritance model
Functional annotation filters
  No filtering on presence in dbSNP Build 137
  Variant type: Any
  Amino acid change type: Any
  Populations used for MAF filtering: AFESP, EA_AFESP, AA_AFESP, AFKG, AMR_AFKG, ASN_AFKG, AFR_AFKG, EUR
  Include MAF NA values: yes
```

```

Maximum MAF: 1.00
No filtering on nucleotide conservation
No filtering on gene conservation
No filtering on cryptic 5'ss
No filtering on cryptic 3'ss

```

```

Total number of variants: 127
 30 (23.6%) are coding non-synonymous
 49 (38.6%) are coding synonymous
  0 (0.0%) located in known splice sites
  9 (7.1%) located in promoter regions
  8 (6.3%) located in 5' UTR regions
 10 (7.9%) located in 3' UTR regions
 21 (16.5%) located in intronic regions

```

The resulting object belongs to the *VariantFilteringResults* class of objects which eases the task of applying further functional annotation filters to select and prioritize variants. The help page of the *VariantFilteringResults* class contains a list of available accessor methods. Here we illustrate the use of a few of them:

```

> maxMAF(reHo) <- 0.05
> MAFmask <- MAFpop(reHo)
> MAFmask

      AFESP EA_AFESP AA_AFESP      AFKG AMR_AFKG ASN_AFKG
      TRUE      TRUE      TRUE      TRUE      TRUE      TRUE
AFR_AFKG EUR_AFKG
      TRUE      TRUE

> MAFpop(reHo) <- !MAFmask
> MAFpop(reHo, "ASN_AFKG") <- TRUE
> MAFpop(reHo)

      AFESP EA_AFESP AA_AFESP      AFKG AMR_AFKG ASN_AFKG
      FALSE  FALSE  FALSE      FALSE  FALSE      TRUE
AFR_AFKG EUR_AFKG
      FALSE  FALSE

> minCRYP5ss(reHo) <- 0
> reHo

```

VariantFiltering results object

Variants segregate according to a/an autosomal recessive homozygous inheritance model

Functional annotation filters

```

No filtering on presence in dbSNP Build 137
Variant type: Any
Amino acid change type: Any
Populations used for MAF filtering: ASN_AFKG
Include MAF NA values: yes
Maximum MAF: 0.05
No filtering on nucleotide conservation
No filtering on gene conservation
Minimum score for cryptic 5'ss: 0.00
No filtering on cryptic 3'ss

```

```

Total number of variants: 1
 0 (0.0%) are coding non-synonymous
 1 (100.0%) are coding synonymous

```

```

0 (0.0%) located in known splice sites
0 (0.0%) located in promoter regions
0 (0.0%) located in 5' UTR regions
0 (0.0%) located in 3' UTR regions
0 (0.0%) located in intronic regions

```

```
> filteredVariants(reHo)
```

```
GRanges with 1 range and 37 metadata columns:
```

```

      seqnames      ranges strand | LOCATION
      <Rle>      <IRanges> <Rle> | <factor>
rs916425   chr22 [26388337, 26388337] + | coding
      REF      ALT      FILTER
      <DNAStringSet> <DNAStringSetList> <character>
rs916425      C      T      .
      dbSNP      varAllele      CDSLOC
      <character> <DNAStringSet>      <IRanges>
rs916425   rs916425      T [6165, 6165]
      PROTEINLOC      TXID      CDSID      GENEID
      <IntegerList> <character> <integer> <character>
rs916425      2055      73793      214772      84700
      CONSEQUENCE      REFCODON      VARCHODON
      <factor> <DNAStringSet> <DNAStringSet>
rs916425   synonymous      TAC      TAT
      REFAA      VARAA      TYPE CRYP5ssREF
      <AStringSet> <AStringSet> <factor> <numeric>
rs916425      Y      Y      SNV      1.45
      CRYP5ssALT CRYP5ssPOS CRYP3ssREF CRYP3ssALT
      <numeric> <numeric> <numeric> <numeric>
rs916425      1.52      4      -5.64      -5.32
      CRYP3ssPOS      GENE      OMIM      TXNAME
      <numeric> <character> <character> <character>
rs916425      5      MYO18B      607295 uc003abz.1
      CDS      AChange AChangeType ASN_AFKG
      <character> <character> <character> <numeric>
rs916425      C6165T      Y2055Y Conservative      0.002
      PolyPhen2      PROVEAN phastCons
      <character> <character> <numeric>
rs916425      NA      Neutral      0.1
      GenePhylostratumTaxID GenePhylostratumIndex
      <character>      <integer>
rs916425      2759      2
      GenePhylostratum      maxMAF
      <character> <numeric>
rs916425      Eukaryota      0.002
---
seqlengths:
      chr20      chr21      chr22 ...      chr18      chr19
      63025520 48129895 51304566 ... 78077248 59128983

```

5 Autosomal recessive inheritance analysis: Heterozygous

To filter by this mode of inheritance, also known as compound heterozygous, we need two unaffected parents/ancestors and at least one affected descendant. Variants are filtered in five steps: 1. select heterozygous variants in one of the parents and homozygous in the other; 2. discard previously selected variants that are common between the two parents; 3. group variants by gene; 4. select those genes, and the variants that occur within them, which have two or more variants and there is at least one from each parent; 5. from the previously selected variants, discard those that do not occur in the affected descendants. This is implemented in the function `autosomalRecessiveHeterozygous()`.

```
> compHet <- autosomalRecessiveHeterozygous(param)
```

6 Autosomal dominant inheritance analysis

The function `autosomalDominant()` identifies variants present in all the affected individual(s) discarding the ones that also occur in at least one of the unaffected subjects.

```
> dom <- autosomalDominant(param)
```

7 X-Linked inheritance analysis

The function `xLinked()` identifies variants that appear only in the X chromosome of the unaffected females as heterozygous, don't appear in the unaffected males analyzed and finally are present (as homozygous) in the affected male(s). This function is currently restricted to affected males, and therefore, it cannot search for X-linked segregating variants affecting daughters.

```
> xlid <- xLinked(param)
```

8 De Novo variants analysis

The function `deNovo()` searches for *de novo* variants which are present in one descendant and present in both parents/ancestors. It is currently restricted to a trio of individuals.

```
> deNovo <- deNovo(param)
```

9 Variants analysis for all possible inheritance models

Sometimes more than one mode of inheritance may be compatible with the phenotype of the individuals. To facilitate exploring the different inheritance models we provide a function called `allInheritanceModels()` which does not filter upfront for any mode of inheritance but it allows the user to switch among them by using the shiny app launched by the function `reportVariants()`. As a consequence, the object returned by `allInheritanceModels()` will have a larger memory footprint. This analysis can be currently performed to a number of related individuals between one and four with at least one of them being affected.

```
> aim <- allInheritanceModels(param)
> aim <- reportVariants(aim)
```

10 Variants analysis on unrelated individuals

When the individuals to analyze are unrelated, and therefore, there is no mode of inheritance to use as a filter, we can filter variants using the function `unrelatedIndividuals()`. Thus, the goal here will be to identify variants that are responsible for a phenotype common to all the individuals.

Similarly to `allInheritanceModels()`, no variants are filtered out upfront, and therefore, the main memory requirements may be larger.

```
> uind <- unrelatedIndividuals(param)
```

11 Create a report from the filtered variants

The function `reportVariants()` allows us to easily create a report from the filtered variants into a CSV or a TSV file as follows:

```
> reportVariants(reHo, type="csv", file="reHo.csv")
```

However, the default value on the `type` argument ("`shiny`") starts a shiny web app which allows one to interactively filter the variants, obtaining an updated *VariantFilteringResults* object and downloading the filtered variants and the corresponding full reproducible R code, if necessary.

This `reportVariants()` function is designed to provide for different options according to the exact type of *VariantFilteringResults* object is dispatching. For example, for results objects resulting from the function `allInheritanceModels()`, it will show a tab named "Inheritance" where the user can allocate the individuals present in the VCF file according to different inheritance models.

```
> aim <- reportVariants(aim)
```

The previous call should open a browser window with a web app similar to the one in Figure 1. The button "Save & Close" will close the web app and return the results object updated according to the filters switched on or off at the web app.

12 Current limitations of the package

The package has a number of limitations and shortcomings which we will list here and update with feedback from users. We will make our best to try to address these issues in forthcoming releases of the package:

- Only SNVs are identified to a particular version of dbSNP using a Bioconductor `SNPlocs.*` package.
- Multi-allelic variants, i.e., variants with more than one alternate allele, are not yet supported and can prompt errors.
- Filtering by the autosomal recessive heterozygous mode of inheritance is currently restricted to coding variants.
- The X-linked mode of inheritance is currently restricted to affected sons, and therefore, it cannot search for X-linked segregating variants from affected daughters.
- The *de novo* mode of inheritance is currently restricted to a trio with two parents and one descendant.
- The function `allInheritanceModels` is currently restricted to a maximum of four individuals.
- The "Generate Report" button from the shiny app does not provide the full reproducible code when using `allInheritanceModels()` function for the analysis.
- Scoring of splice sites is currently restricted to human and the whole package is currently pretty much human-oriented.

13 Session information

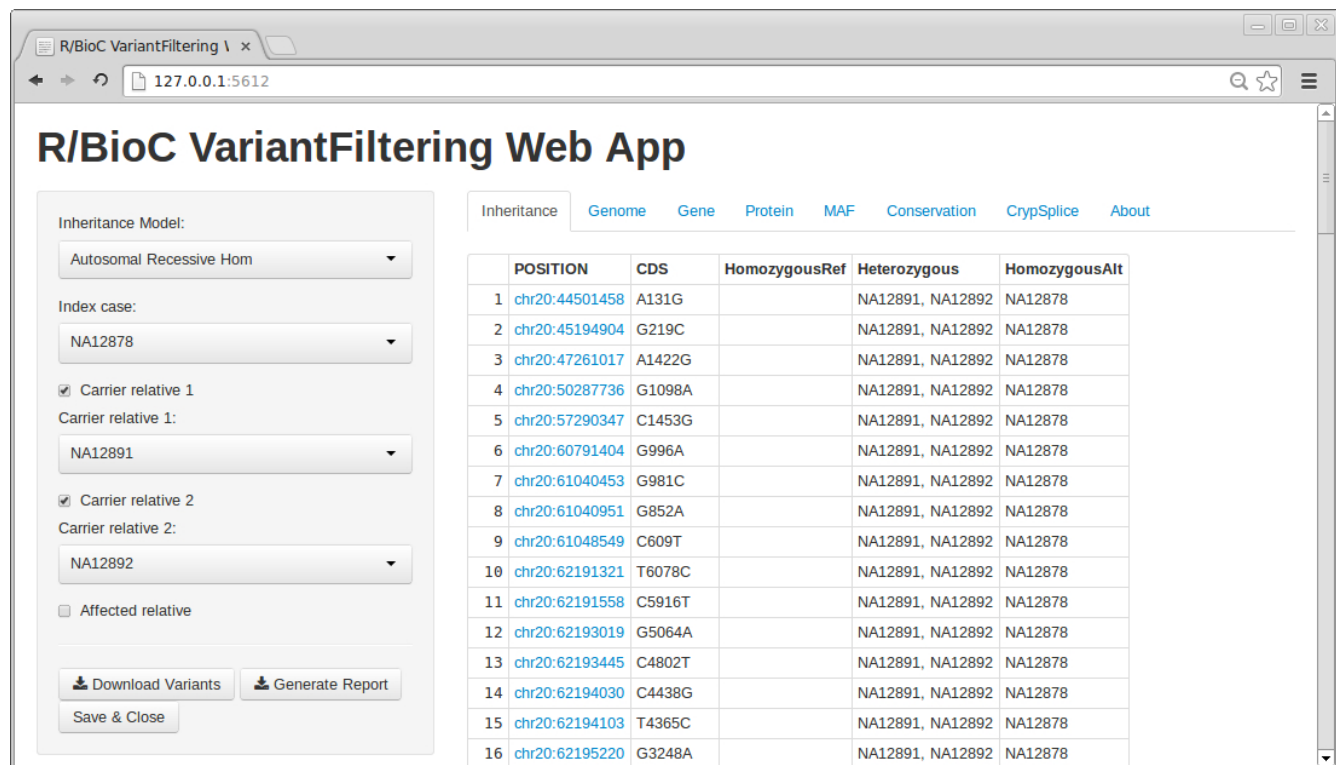


Figure 1: Snapshot of the shiny web app run from VariantFiltering with the function `reportVariants()`. Some of the parameters has been filled for illustrative purposes.

```
> toLatex(sessionInfo())
```

- R version 3.1.0 RC (2014-04-02 r65358), i386-w64-mingw32
- Locale: LC_COLLATE=C, LC_CTYPE=English_United States.1252, LC_MONETARY=English_United States.1252, LC_NUMERIC=C, LC_TIME=English_United States.1252
- Base packages: base, datasets, grDevices, graphics, methods, parallel, stats, utils
- Other packages: AnnotationDbi 1.26.0, BSgenome 1.32.0, Biobase 2.24.0, BiocGenerics 0.10.0, BiocParallel 0.6.1, Biostrings 2.32.0, DBI 0.2-7, GenomInfoDb 1.0.2, GenomicFeatures 1.16.2, GenomicRanges 1.16.3, IRanges 1.22.9, MafDb.ALL.wgs.phase1.release.v3.20101123 1.0.0, MafDb.ESP6500SI.V2.SSA137.dbSNP138 1.0.0, PolyPhen.Hsapiens.dbSNP131 1.0.2, RSQLite 0.11.4, Rsamtools 1.16.1, SIFT.Hsapiens.dbSNP137 1.0.0, SNPlocs.Hsapiens.dbSNP.20120608 0.99.9, TxDb.Hsapiens.UCSC.hg19.knownGene 2.14.0, VariantAnnotation 1.10.2, VariantFiltering 1.0.4, XVector 0.4.0, org.Hs.eg.db 2.14.0, phastCons100way.UCSC.hg19 1.0.0
- Loaded via a namespace (and not attached): BBmisc 1.6, BSgenome.Hsapiens.UCSC.hg19 1.3.99, BatchJobs 1.2, BiocStyle 1.2.0, GenomicAlignments 1.0.1, RCurl 1.95-4.1, RJSONIO 1.2-0.2, Rcpp 0.11.2, XML 3.98-1.1, biomaRt 2.20.0, bitops 1.0-6, brew 1.0-6, caTools 1.17, codetools 0.2-8, digest 0.6.4, fail 1.2, foreach 1.4.2, htmltools 0.2.4, httpuv 1.3.0, iterators 1.0.7, plyr 1.8.1, rtracklayer 1.24.2, sendmailR 1.1-2, shiny 0.10.0, stats4 3.1.0, stringr 0.6.2, tools 3.1.0, xtable 1.7-3, zlibbioc 1.10.0