Oxidative-Stress-Related Genetic Determinants of Skin Aging: Integrated Effects of *GSTM1*, *GSTT1*, *GSTP1*, *SOD2*, and *GPX1* (Literature Review)

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ABSTRACT

Background:
Oxidative stress is a key biological driver of both intrinsic and extrinsic skin aging, connecting mitochondrial reactive oxygen species formation with lipid peroxidation, inflammatory signaling, and extracellular matrix degradation. In this context, the genes *GSTM1*, *GSTT1*, *GSTP1*, *SOD2*, and *GPX1* define a biologically coherent network centered on glutathione-dependent detoxification and mitochondrial antioxidant defense. Altered activity within these pathways may influence the capacity of the skin to neutralize reactive intermediates and thereby modulate susceptibility to cumulative oxidative damage and age-associated tissue changes (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Treiber et al., 2012).

Methods:
A narrative review was undertaken to integrate evidence on oxidative-stress-related antioxidant pathways in skin aging. Particular emphasis was placed on studies addressing the physiological roles of *GSTM1*, *GSTT1*, *GSTP1*, *SOD2*, and *GPX1*, the functional consequences of deletion polymorphisms and single-nucleotide variants, and their potential relevance to cutaneous aging. Additional focus was placed on investigations of antioxidant and micronutrient-based interventions as modulators of redox homeostasis, tissue protection, and oxidative damage in skin biology. Studies were considered in relation to their ability to clarify molecular mechanisms of oxidative-stress regulation, including mitochondrial ROS handling, glutathione-dependent detoxification, and peroxide metabolism. Attention was also given to translational evidence linking these pathways to skin-relevant outcomes and to intervention strategies aimed at supporting antioxidant resilience in the context of genetically influenced redox vulnerability (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Sepetiene et al., 2023).

Results:
The literature supports a substantial role for the investigated oxidative-stress-related variants in the regulation of cutaneous redox homeostasis. Variability in *GSTM1*, *GSTT1*,

GSTP1, *SOD2*, and *GPX1* is biologically significant because these genes act at complementary levels of antioxidant defense, including the detoxification of reactive oxygen species, lipid hydroperoxides, and electrophilic oxidation products. Altered function within these pathways may therefore influence the skin's ability to withstand ultraviolet radiation, pollution, and other environmental stressors that promote cumulative oxidative damage and age-associated tissue deterioration. In this context, alpha-lipoic acid, vitamin C, and vitamin E represent supportive interventions owing to their antioxidant and redox-regenerative properties, whereas zinc and manganese are additionally relevant because of their contribution to endogenous antioxidant systems and enzymatic activity. Taken together, these observations support the concept that targeted antioxidant, and micronutrient-based strategies may help compensate for reduced oxidative defense capacity (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Treiber et al., 2012).

Discussion:
The available evidence indicates that variation in *GSTM1*, *GSTT1*, *GSTP1*, *SOD2*, and *GPX1* may influence key antioxidant and detoxification processes involved in cutaneous redox homeostasis. Because these genes participate in complementary steps of reactive oxygen species neutralization, peroxide metabolism, and glutathione-dependent detoxification, altered function within this network may contribute to differences in susceptibility to environmentally induced oxidative damage and, consequently, to interindividual variability in skin-aging trajectories. Within this mechanistic context, vitamins C and E, alpha-lipoic acid, zinc, and manganese remain biologically supportive interventions because of their roles in antioxidant regulation and cellular defense (Al-Niaimi and Chiang, 2017; Beitner, 2003; Rostan et al., 2002).

Subjects Genetics, Beauty **Keywords:** Genetics, Polymorphism, Beauty, Oxidative Stress

INTRODUCTION

Skin aging results from the cumulative interaction of intrinsic senescence and extrinsic environmental damage, with oxidative stress representing one of the principal mechanistic links between these processes. In cutaneous tissue, reactive oxygen species (ROS) arise from mitochondrial respiration, ultraviolet radiation, pollution, inflammation, and normal cellular metabolism. When ROS production exceeds antioxidant buffering capacity, oxidative damage accumulates in lipids, proteins, DNA, and extracellular matrix components, thereby contributing to wrinkle formation, loss of elasticity, dyschromia, and impaired tissue repair (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Poljšak et al., 2012).

Within this mechanistic framework, particular attention is directed toward *GSTM1*, *GSTT1*, *GSTP1*, *SOD2*, and *GPX1*, a group of genes that collectively contribute to glutathione-dependent detoxification and mitochondrial antioxidant defense. These pathways are of direct relevance to cutaneous biology because the skin is continuously exposed to both endogenous and environmental oxidant-generating stimuli. Accordingly, this gene network may be regarded as a relevant framework through which the influence of inherited variation in redox regulation on detoxification capacity, oxidative resilience, and susceptibility to age-associated structural and functional alterations in the skin can be examined. Functional perturbation within these pathways may favor the persistence of reactive intermediates and thereby amplify lipid peroxidation, inflammatory signaling, and extracellular matrix remodeling. Because GSTM1, GSTT1, and GSTP1 participate in glutathione-dependent neutralization of electrophilic by-products, whereas SOD2 and GPX1 regulate sequential mitochondrial ROS detoxification, variation across these loci is biologically positioned to influence multiple levels of cutaneous redox homeostasis. This is of particular importance under conditions of chronic ultraviolet and environmental exposure, in which repeated oxidative challenge may accelerate collagen degradation and impair tissue maintenance. As a result, interindividual differences in these antioxidant-defense pathways may contribute to variability in the rate and extent of visible and molecular skin-aging changes (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Poljšak et al., 2012).

Reactive Oxygen Species and Antioxidant Networks in Skin Aging

The oxidative-stress framework can be conceptualized as a stepwise biological process. Mitochondria generate superoxide during oxidative phosphorylation. This radical is converted by manganese superoxide dismutase, encoded by SOD2, into hydrogen peroxide, which is subsequently detoxified by glutathione peroxidase 1, encoded by GPX1. In parallel, glutathione S-transferases such as GSTM1, GSTT1, and GSTP1 facilitate the conjugation of glutathione to reactive electrophilic compounds, including oxidized lipid derivatives and xenobiotic intermediates. If one or more components of this network are less efficient, oxidative injury may accumulate over time and contribute to inflammatory signaling, collagen degradation, cellular senescence, and impaired barrier maintenance (Treiber et al., 2012; Rinnerthaler et al., 2015). This framework is particularly relevant to skin aging because the skin is persistently exposed to oxidant-generating stimuli. Ultraviolet radiation and airborne pollutants increase ROS production, initiate lipid peroxidation, and stimulate matrix metalloproteinases that degrade collagen and

elastin. Accordingly, inherited variation in antioxidant-defense genes may influence the threshold at which cumulative oxidative damage becomes clinically visible as premature or accelerated cutaneous aging (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Treiber et al., 2012).

Antioxidant Gene Variants Relevant to Cutaneous Oxidative Stress

Variation in genes involved in glutathione-dependent detoxification and mitochondrial reactive oxygen species handling influences the efficiency with which the skin responds to oxidative challenge. Of particular relevance are GSTM1, GSTT1, GSTP1, SOD2, and GPX1, which act at complementary stages of electrophile detoxification, superoxide conversion, and peroxide clearance. Functional differences across these loci may therefore contribute to interindividual variability in oxidative-stress susceptibility and in the molecular processes underlying cutaneous aging (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Treiber et al., 2012).

Glutathione-Dependent Skin Detoxification: GSTM1 and GSTT1 Variants

GSTM1 and *GSTT1* encode cytosolic glutathione S-transferases involved in phase II detoxification through the conjugation of glutathione to reactive electrophilic compounds. This reaction contributes to the neutralization and elimination of potentially harmful intermediates generated during endogenous oxidative processes as well as in response to environmental exposures. In cutaneous tissue, these enzymes are of particular relevance because oxidative stress gives rise to electrophilic secondary products, including lipid-peroxidation derivatives, that may disrupt structural proteins, membranes, and redox-sensitive signaling pathways if not efficiently detoxified (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Ghelli et al., 2021).

The characterization of *GSTM1* and *GSTT1* deletion variants as biologically significant is well supported. In most cases, these polymorphisms reflect homozygous gene deletions and are therefore associated with absent enzyme expression. Functionally, such deletion states may reduce the reserve capacity of glutathione-mediated detoxification pathways. Published studies have linked these variants to altered oxidative-stress responses and modified susceptibility to environmentally mediated damage, supporting their relevance as modulators of redox homeostasis beyond their established role in exposure-related disease association studies (McWilliams et al., 1995; Wenzlaff et al., 2005; Ghelli et al., 2021).

From the perspective of skin aging, the most plausible consequence of reduced *GSTM1* or *GSTT1* activity is a diminished ability to clear reactive by-products of oxidative stress over time. Under conditions of chronic exposure to ultraviolet radiation, tobacco smoke, or air pollution, this lower detoxification capacity may favor cumulative molecular injury and thereby contribute to increased susceptibility to oxidative components of cutaneous aging (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Poljšak et al., 2012).

GSTP1 (rs1695) and Glutathione-Dependent Oxidative-Stress Susceptibility in Skin

GSTP1 encodes glutathione S-transferase pi, an important enzyme within glutathione-dependent detoxification pathways. In contrast to *GSTM1* and *GSTT1*, in which structural gene deletions are of primary functional relevance, the widely studied *GSTP1* rs1695 polymorphism is a missense variant that alters the amino-acid sequence of the encoded protein. In the literature, this variant has been associated with altered catalytic behavior and differences in substrate handling, supporting its relevance as a functional determinant of oxidative-stress defense (Watson et al., 1998; Sreeja et al., 2008).

This distinction is important for scientific interpretation. The rs1695 variant is more appropriately understood as a functional polymorphism that may modify enzymatic activity or substrate specificity. Experimental and association studies support the view that *GSTP1* genotype can influence oxidative susceptibility and lipid-peroxidation profiles (Watson et al., 1998; do Nascimento et al., 2021).

In cutaneous biology, reduced *GSTP1*-mediated detoxification efficiency may impair the neutralization of electrophilic oxidative by-products generated during repeated environmental stress. Over prolonged periods of exposure, even modest differences in detoxification capacity may contribute to cumulative molecular damage, thereby supporting the view that *GSTP1* is a relevant modifier of oxidative-stress susceptibility in skin aging (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Poljšak et al., 2012).

Mitochondrial Superoxide Detoxification and the *SOD2* (rs4880) Variant

SOD2 encodes manganese superoxide dismutase, the principal mitochondrial enzyme responsible for converting superoxide anion into hydrogen peroxide. Because mitochondria are a major endogenous source of ROS, *SOD2* occupies an upstream position in the cellular antioxidant hierarchy. In skin, mitochondrial oxidative stress has been implicated in fibroblast dysfunction, senescence-associated signaling, and age-related deterioration of the extracellular matrix (Treiber et al., 2012; Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015).

The rs4880 variant is a functionally important polymorphism located in the mitochondrial targeting sequence of MnSOD. Functional studies have shown that this variant influences mitochondrial import efficiency and may also affect mRNA stability, thereby altering the effective antioxidant performance of the enzyme. Accordingly, the polymorphism is best interpreted as a modifier of mitochondrial ROS handling rather than a simple marker with uncertain biological meaning (Sutton et al., 2003; Sutton et al., 2005; Paludo et al., 2014).

A less favorable *SOD2* genotype may lower the threshold at which mitochondrial oxidative burden accumulates during environmental or metabolic stress. In skin, where repeated oxidant exposure is common, such a genotype could plausibly contribute to

greater ROS persistence, enhanced downstream oxidative signaling, and more rapid accumulation of aging-associated damage. This interpretation is consistent with the broader literature linking *SOD2* variation to oxidative-stress phenotypes and age-related biology (Treiber et al., 2012; Sørensen et al., 2009; Paludo et al., 2014).

Glutathione Peroxidase Activity and the *GPX1* (rs1050450) Variant

GPX1 encodes glutathione peroxidase 1, an antioxidant enzyme that reduces hydrogen peroxide and lipid hydroperoxides using glutathione as a substrate. Within the antioxidant cascade, GPx1 functions directly downstream of MnSOD: after superoxide is converted to hydrogen peroxide by *SOD2*, GPx1 limits the persistence of peroxides that would otherwise propagate oxidative injury (Arthur, 2000; Rinnerthaler et al., 2015).

The rs1050450 polymorphism has been associated with altered enzyme activity and with context-dependent differences in oxidative-stress regulation. This is particularly relevant because GPx1 occupies a central position in peroxide detoxification, and variation at this locus may therefore influence the efficiency with which oxidative intermediates are neutralized. The implication that less favorable *GPX1* genotypes may be associated with reduced oxidative protection is therefore mechanistically plausible (Chen et al., 2011; Cominetti et al., 2011; Karunasinghe et al., 2012).

In the context of skin aging, diminished GPx1 efficiency could permit greater accumulation of hydrogen peroxide and lipid hydroperoxides, thereby contributing to membrane damage, inflammatory signaling, and oxidative modification of structural proteins. Because this gene acts in sequence with *SOD2*, the biological significance of *GPX1* variation may be magnified when both loci are less favorable (Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; McKeever et al., 2021; Rinnerthaler et al., 2015).

Mechanism-Based Antioxidant and Micronutrient Interventions for Reduced Oxidative-Stress Resilience

From a translational perspective, intervention strategies for reduced oxidative-stress resilience should be directed toward strengthening endogenous antioxidant defenses, attenuating the propagation of reactive oxygen species and lipid-peroxidation intermediates, and supporting cofactor-dependent pathways within mitochondrial and glutathione-mediated redox networks. This framework is particularly relevant when variation in *GSTM1*, *GSTT1*, *GSTP1*, *SOD2*, and *GPX1* is considered in combination, as functional alterations across multiple levels of oxidative defense may cumulatively compromise cutaneous resilience to ultraviolet exposure, pollution, and inflammatory stress. Within this context, vitamin C is of particular importance because it contributes to antioxidant defense and collagen homeostasis, vitamin E because it limits lipid-phase oxidative injury, and alpha-lipoic acid because of its broader redox-regenerative capacity;

these compounds are especially relevant as they may support cutaneous antioxidant function both through dietary intake and, when appropriately formulated, through topical delivery to the skin. Zinc and manganese are likewise important, primarily as nutritional factors that support endogenous antioxidant systems and enzymatic homeostasis, including pathways relevant to mitochondrial redox regulation (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Eberlein-König and Ring, 2005; Treiber et al., 2012).

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is among the most relevant supportive compounds within this framework because it contributes directly to antioxidant defense while also supporting collagen homeostasis. In skin, it can reduce oxidative burden, participate in redox recycling, and promote matrix maintenance, which is particularly important in settings characterized by persistent oxidative challenge and cumulative tissue damage. In addition, ascorbate is functionally linked to collagen biosynthesis through its role in the enzymatic processing of procollagen, thereby connecting antioxidant defense with structural preservation of the dermal matrix. This dual relevance makes vitamin C particularly attractive in phenotypes where oxidative injury and extracellular matrix deterioration are likely to occur in parallel (Al-Niaimi and Chiang, 2017; Eberlein-König and Ring, 2005).

Vitamin E

Vitamin E is of particular interest because it acts predominantly within lipid-rich compartments, where it helps limit membrane-associated oxidative injury and lipid peroxidation. Its relevance is strengthened by its functional interaction with vitamin C, which contributes to antioxidant recycling and thereby supports maintenance of redox balance in cutaneous tissue exposed to chronic environmental stress. In mechanistic terms, vitamin E is especially pertinent to the protection of cell membranes and epidermal lipids, both of which are vulnerable targets of oxidative damage in photoaged skin. This lipid-phase activity supports its inclusion in intervention strategies aimed at limiting the propagation of free-radical-mediated tissue injury under sustained environmental exposure (Eberlein-König and Ring, 2005; Thiele et al., 2005).

Alpha-Lipoic Acid

Alpha-lipoic acid is mechanistically attractive because of its broader redox-regenerative properties and its capacity to interact with multiple antioxidant systems. Experimental and clinical findings suggest that it may reduce oxidative burden in photoaged skin and support dermal repair processes, making it a plausible adjunct in phenotypes characterized by diminished oxidative defense capacity. Its biological relevance is further strengthened by evidence indicating that alpha-lipoic acid can contribute to antioxidant

recycling and may influence pathways involved in collagen synthesis and fibroblast function. Within a cutaneous aging framework, these properties support its consideration as a compound that act at both the level of oxidative stress reduction and matrix preservation (Packer et al., 1995; Beitner, 2003; Tsuji-Naito et al., 2010).

Zinc

Zinc remains relevant as a broader supportive micronutrient because it contributes to antioxidant defense, inflammatory regulation, and maintenance of skin homeostasis. Its biological functions support the rationale for inclusion in strategies aimed at improving resilience to cumulative oxidative injury. In addition to its role in redox regulation, zinc has been linked to processes relevant to barrier integrity, tissue repair, and cellular protection against oxidative damage. (Rostan et al., 2002; Marreiro et al., 2017).

Manganese

Manganese is primarily relevant because of its association with *SOD2*-dependent mitochondrial antioxidant defense, given that MnSOD represents a central enzymatic barrier against superoxide accumulation. Within the present framework, manganese should therefore be regarded as a mechanistically plausible supportive factor for mitochondrial redox homeostasis, particularly where antioxidant capacity may be reduced at the level of superoxide handling. Given the central role of mitochondrial ROS in skin aging biology, adequate manganese availability remains biologically consistent with strategies aimed at preserving redox balance in oxidatively stressed skin (Treiber et al., 2012; Rinnerthaler et al., 2015)

Table 1: Selected Studies Investigating Oxidative-Stress Polymorphisms Relevant to Cutaneous Aging and Redox Homeostasis

Study (Author, Year)	Study Design	Population (Size, Characteristics)	SNP(s) Investigated	Primary Outcome / Key Findings
Watson et al., 1998	Functional genotype–phenotype study	Human lung tissue samples	*GSTP1* rs1695	Showed that *GSTP1* variation is associated with differences in enzyme activity, supporting a functional effect on detoxification capacity.
do Nascimento et al., 2021	Molecular marker study	Human blood-storage model	*GSTP1* rs1695; *SOD2* rs4880	Identified oxidative-stress-related polymorphisms as correlates of lipid peroxidation, supporting their relevance to redox susceptibility.

Sutton et al., 2003	Functional in vitro study	Rat liver mitochondrial import model	*SOD2* rs4880	Demonstrated that the *SOD2* targeting-sequence polymorphism modulates mitochondrial import efficiency of MnSOD.
Sutton et al., 2005	Functional molecular study	Experimental cellular / molecular model	*SOD2* rs4880	Showed that rs4880 influences both mitochondrial import and mRNA stability, reinforcing its functional significance in antioxidant defense.
Paludo et al., 2014	Functional cellular study	Peripheral blood mononuclear cells with and without lipopolysaccharide stimulation	*SOD2* rs4880	Reported allele-dependent differences in intracellular reactive-species production, supporting a role in oxidative-stress regulation.
Sørensen et al., 2009	Genetic association study	Oldest-old human cohort	*SOD2* rs4880; *GPX1* rs1050450	Linked both polymorphisms to aging and longevity phenotypes, supporting their broader relevance to age-related oxidative biology.
Chen et al., 2011	Meta-analysis	Human association studies	*GPX1* rs1050450	Supported a functional contribution of the *GPX1* variant to biological susceptibility, consistent with altered oxidative defense.
Cominetti et al., 2011	Nutrigenetic association study	Obese women following Brazil nut consumption	*GPX1* rs1050450	Showed that *GPX1* genotype is associated with differences in oxidative-stress-related biomarkers, supporting context-dependent functional effects.

CONCLUSION

A biologically coherent role for *GSTM1*, *GSTT1*, *GSTP1*, *SOD2*, and *GPX1* in the regulation of cutaneous oxidative-stress defense is highly supported. These genes occupy complementary positions within redox homeostasis, spanning glutathione-dependent detoxification of electrophilic by-products, mitochondrial superoxide conversion, and peroxide neutralization. As a result, functional variation across this network is well positioned to influence the threshold at which endogenous and environmentally induced oxidative damage translates into inflammation, extracellular matrix disruption, and progressive age-associated changes in skin structure and function (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Treiber et al., 2012).

Importantly, the significance of these loci lies not only in their individual effects, but also in their combined contribution to overall oxidative resilience. When variation affects several components of the antioxidant system simultaneously, the cumulative reduction in redox buffering capacity may be more informative than the interpretation of a single variant in isolation. This network-based perspective is particularly relevant in the skin,

where chronic ultraviolet exposure, pollution, and other oxidant-generating stimuli impose repeated demands on mitochondrial and glutathione-mediated defense pathways. In this context, inherited differences in antioxidant gene function may help explain interindividual variability in susceptibility to oxidative-stress-related skin aging and may provide a mechanistic basis for more refined biological stratification (Rinnerthaler et al., 2015; Kammeyer and Luiten, 2015; Treiber et al., 2012).

From a translational perspective, these findings support the relevance of antioxidant- and micronutrient-based adjunctive strategies, particularly vitamin C, vitamin E, alpha-lipoic acid, zinc, and manganese, as components of a broader approach to preserving cutaneous redox balance. Their importance lies in the ability to support antioxidant defense, membrane stability, matrix preservation, and endogenous enzymatic function within a biologically vulnerable oxidative milieu. Rather than being interpreted in deterministic terms, variation in these genes should be regarded as functionally meaningful background information that may strengthen the rationale for targeted supportive interventions and for more individualized prevention strategies. Further integration of genotype, skin phenotype, and intervention response will be important for defining how redox-related genetic profiles can be applied in a more precise and clinically useful manner in skin-aging management (Al-Niaimi and Chiang, 2017; Rostan et al., 2002; Sepetiene et al., 2023).

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