

1 Neutralizing antibodies correlate with protection from SARS-CoV-2 in humans during a  
2 fishery vessel outbreak with high attack rate

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19 Running title: SARS-CoV-2 protection in humans

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22

23 **Abstract**

24 The development of vaccines against SARS-CoV-2 would be greatly facilitated by the  
25 identification of immunological correlates of protection in humans. However, to date,  
26 studies on protective immunity have only been performed in animal models and  
27 correlates of protection have not been established in humans. Here, we describe an  
28 outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 on a fishing vessel associated with a high attack rate.  
29 Predeparture serological and viral RT-PCR testing along with repeat testing after return  
30 to shore was available for 120 of the 122 persons on board over a median follow-up of  
31 32.5 days (range 18.8 to 50.5 days). A total of 104 individuals had an RT-PCR positive  
32 viral test with Ct <35 or seroconverted during the follow-up period, yielding an attack  
33 rate on board of 85.2% (104/122 individuals). Metagenomic sequencing of 39 viral  
34 genomes suggested the outbreak originated largely from a single viral clade. Only three  
35 crewmembers tested seropositive prior to the boat's departure in initial serological  
36 screening and also had neutralizing and spike-reactive antibodies in follow-up assays.  
37 None of these crewmembers with neutralizing antibody titers showed evidence of bona  
38 fide viral infection or experienced any symptoms during the viral outbreak. Therefore,  
39 the presence of neutralizing antibodies from prior infection was significantly associated  
40 with protection against re-infection (Fisher's exact test,  $p=0.002$ ).

41

42

43 **Introduction**

44 Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has caused  
45 tens of millions of infections and hundreds of thousands of deaths worldwide since its  
46 emergence in December 2019. Multiple vaccine candidates are currently in Phase III  
47 trials (1–3). The success of these vaccines could be helped by further insights into the  
48 protective nature of neutralizing antibodies in humans.

49 Neutralizing antibodies have been isolated from individuals previously infected  
50 with SARS-CoV-2 (4, 5). These antibodies often target the receptor binding domain  
51 (RBD) of the SARS-CoV-2 spike (S) protein and prevent the binding interaction between  
52 the spike protein and the host's angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) (4, 5),  
53 although neutralizing antibodies that do not inhibit spike's binding to ACE2 have also  
54 been identified (6, 7). In animal models, neutralizing antibodies are protective against  
55 SARS-CoV-2, although the durability of this protection is unknown (8, 9).

56 Vaccines currently in development against SARS-CoV-2 have been shown to  
57 elicit levels of neutralizing antibodies comparable to those observed in naturally infected  
58 persons (1–3). However, the protective nature of both vaccine- and infection-elicited  
59 neutralizing antibodies in humans remains unproven, with animal models being used to  
60 make inferences about protection (10, 11). Human challenge trials, which could provide  
61 rapid information about the protection conferred by neutralizing antibodies (12, 13), are  
62 controversial due to the severity and unknown long-term impacts of SARS-CoV-2  
63 infection and concerns over ethical administration of such trials (14, 15).

64           Given the high number of people exposed to SARS-CoV-2 every day,  
65   retrospective analyses of outbreak events may provide insights into the protective  
66   nature of neutralizing antibodies. In particular, outbreaks on confined shipping vessels  
67   are particularly useful candidates for assessing protection from SARS-CoV-2 infection  
68   (16–18). The high population density and large degree of contact between people on  
69   ships contributes to a high attack rate. In some cases nearly all passengers will have  
70   been exposed (16).

71           Here, we performed a retrospective analysis of a SARS-CoV-2 outbreak on a  
72   fishing vessel that departed from Seattle, Washington in May 2020. Predeparture viral  
73   and serological testing was performed on the near entirety of the ship's crew, allowing  
74   for testing of how pre-existing immunity correlated with subsequent infection during the  
75   outbreak.

76

## 77   **Methods**

### 78   *Clinical diagnostic testing*

79   Nasopharyngeal swabs were collected from patients in 3 mL of viral transport media.  
80   RT-PCR testing was performed on either the Hologic Panther Fusion, Roche cobas  
81   6800, or the University of Washington CDC-based, emergency use authorized  
82   laboratory developed test (19). Clinical testing of serum samples was performed using  
83   the Abbott Architect SARS-CoV-2 IgG assay (20). Index values associated with the  
84   Abbott test are chemiluminescent signal values relative to a calibrator control, and are  
85   broadly similar to O.D. values for an ELISA. An index value  $\geq 1.40$  is qualitatively  
86   reported as positive. The case definition for an individual infected on the boat included

87 anyone with a positive RT-PCR with Ct < 35 or seroconversion by the Abbott test during  
88 the follow-up period. Deidentified clinical testing data is available in Supplemental Table  
89 1. This study was approved by the University of Washington Institutional Review Board.

90

#### 91 *SARS-CoV-2 whole genome sequencing*

92 RNA was extracted from positive SARS-CoV-2 samples using the Roche MagNA Pure  
93 96 (21). Metagenomic sequencing libraries were constructed as previously described  
94 (22). Briefly, RNA was DNase-treated using the Turbo DNA-Free Kit (Thermo Fisher).  
95 First strand cDNA was synthesized using Superscript IV (Thermo Fisher) and 2.5µM  
96 random hexamers (IDT) and second strand synthesis was performed with Sequenase  
97 Version 2.0 DNA Polymerase (Thermo Fisher). The resulting double-stranded cDNA  
98 was purified using 1.6X volumes of AMPure XP beads (Beckman Coulter). Libraries  
99 were constructed using the Nextera DNA Flex Pre-Enrichment kit (Illumina) and cleaned  
100 using 0.7X volumes of AMPure XP beads. The resulting libraries were sequenced on a  
101 1x75 bp Illumina NextSeq run. A median of 509,551 sequencing reads were obtained  
102 for each sample. Sequencing reads are available at NCBI BioProject PRJNA610428  
103 and sequence accessions are available in Supplemental Table 2.

104 Consensus genomes were called using a custom SARS-CoV-2 genome calling  
105 pipeline (<https://github.com/proychou/hCoV19>). Briefly, sequencing reads were adapter-  
106 and quality-trimmed with BBDuk and mapped to the SARS-CoV-2 reference genome  
107 (NC\_045512.2) using Bowtie 2 (23). Reads aligning to the SARS-CoV-2 reference  
108 genome were filtered using BBDuk and assembled with SPAdes (24). The *de novo*  
109 assembled contigs and mapped read assemblies were merged to produce a consensus

110 genome. For samples that did not produce a genome through the automated pipeline,  
111 the mapped read assemblies were visualized in Geneious and a consensus genome  
112 was called manually.

113 A phylogenetic analysis was completed using the 39 consensus genomes  
114 obtained through metagenomic sequencing and 109 other SARS-CoV-2 isolates  
115 downloaded from <https://www.gisaid.org/> (accessed July 17, 2020) reflective of the  
116 global genomic diversity of SARS-CoV-2. To select 109 SARS-CoV-2 isolates, all global  
117 SARS-CoV-2 sequences were downloaded from GISAID. Those composed of >5% Ns,  
118 those with disrupted reading frames, and those with partial genomes were discarded.  
119 The strains were then stratified by Pangolin lineage (A or B) ([https://github.com/cov-](https://github.com/cov-lineages/pangolin)  
120 [lineages/pangolin](https://github.com/cov-lineages/pangolin)) and 49 from lineage A and 59 from lineage B were randomly  
121 selected along with the Wuhan-Hu-1 reference genome (NC\_045512.2) (25).  
122 Sequences were aligned with MAFFT v7.453 (26) and a phylogenetic tree was  
123 constructed using FastTree (version 2.1.1) (27) with the 5' and 3'UTRs masked. The  
124 resulting phylogenetic tree was visualized in R (version 3.6.1) using the ggtree package  
125 (28). Strains most closely related to the major outbreak clade were identified by  
126 searching against a custom BLASTN database containing all SARS-CoV-2 sequences  
127 in GISAID (accessed August 3, 2020).

128

### 129 *Neutralization Assays and Anti-Spike Antibody Testing*

130 The presence of anti-Spike and neutralizing antibodies was analyzed in pre-departure  
131 sera samples from individuals that were positive in the Abbott assay screening through

132 four different methods: Spike IgG ELISA, RBD ELISA, ACE2 blockade of binding  
133 ELISA, and pseudovirus neutralization.

134 RBD and spike protein for the ELISAs were produced as described previously  
135 (29). IgG enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISAs) to spike and RBD were  
136 adapted from published protocol (30, 31), with details described previously (32). Spike  
137 or RBD was diluted to 2 µg/mL in PBS and 50 µL/well was used to coat 96 well  
138 Immunlon 2HB plates (Thermo Fisher; 3455) at 4°C overnight. Plates were washed  
139 three times the next day with PBS containing 0.1% Tween 20 (PBS-T) using a Tecan  
140 HydroFlex plate washer. Plates were blocked for 1 hour with 200 µL/well of 3% non-fat  
141 dry milk in PBS-T at room temperature. Sera were diluted 4-fold in PBS-T containing  
142 1% non-fat dry milk, starting at a 1:25 dilution. Pooled sera collected from 2017-2018  
143 from 75 individuals (Gemini Biosciences, 100-110, lot H86W03J) and CR3022 antibody  
144 (starting at 1/ug/mL, also diluted 4-fold) were included as negative and positive controls,  
145 respectively. After block was thrown off plates, 100µL diluted sera was added to plates  
146 and incubated at room temperature for 2 hours. Plates were again washed three times,  
147 and then 50µL of a 1:300 dilution of goat anti-human IgG-Fc horseradish peroxidase  
148 (HRP)-conjugated antibody (Bethyl Labs, A80-104P) in PBS-T containing 1% milk was  
149 added to each well and incubated for 1 hour at room temperature. Plates were again  
150 washed three times with PBS-T. 100µL of TMB/E HRP substrate (Millipore Sigma;  
151 ES001) was then added to each well, and after a 5-minute incubation, 100 µL 1N HCl  
152 was added to stop the reaction. OD450 values were read immediately on a Tecan  
153 infinite M1000Pro plate reader. Area under the titration curve (AUC) was calculated with  
154 the dilutions on a log-scale.

155 The ACE2 blockage of binding assay was performed using the SARS-CoV-2  
156 Surrogate Virus Neutralization Test Kit (GenScript). The assay was performed following  
157 the manufacturer's recommendations with 10 $\mu$ L serum diluted into 90 $\mu$ L dilution buffer  
158 and read using the DS2 microplate reader (Dynex technologies).

159 Neutralization assays with spike-pseudotyped lentiviral particles were performed  
160 as described previously (33), with a few modifications. Briefly, cells were seeded in  
161 black-walled, clear bottom, poly-L-lysine coated 96-well plates (Greiner, 655936). About  
162 14 hours later, serum samples were diluted in D10 media (DMEM with 10% heat-  
163 inactivated FBS, 2 mM l-glutamine, 100 U/mL penicillin, and 100  $\mu$ g/mL streptomycin)  
164 starting with a 1:20 dilution followed by 6 serial 3-fold dilutions. An equal volume of full-  
165 length spike-pseudotyped lentiviral particles as diluted serum was added to the serum  
166 dilutions and incubated at 37C for 1 hour. 100 $\mu$ L of the virus plus serum dilutions were  
167 then added to the cells ~16 hours after the cells were seeded.

168 About 52 hours post-infection, luciferase activity was measured as described  
169 previously (33) except luciferase activity was read out directly in the assay plates  
170 without transferring to black, opaque bottom plates. Two "no serum" wells were included  
171 in each row of the neutralization plate and fraction infectivity was calculated by dividing  
172 the luciferase readings from the wells with serum by the average of the "no serum" wells  
173 in the same row. After calculating the fraction infectivity, we used the `neutcurve`  
174 Python package (<https://jbloomlab.github.io/neutcurve/>) to calculate the serum dilution  
175 that inhibited infection by 50% (IC50) and 90% (IC90) by fitting a Hill curve with the  
176 bottom fixed at 0 and the top fixed at 1. All serum samples were measured in duplicate.  
177 To calibrate our neutralization assays, we also ran them on the NIBSC reference serum



178 sample (product number 20/130) and measured an IC<sub>50</sub> of 1:2395. Sera with no  
179 neutralizing activity at the lowest titer tested (1:20) were reported as negative.

180

181

## 182 **Results**

### 183 *Predeparture PCR and serology testing*

184 There were a total of 122 people (113 men and 9 women) on the manifest of the ship.

185 Prior to the ship's departure, crewmembers were screened for active SARS-CoV-2

186 infection by RT-PCR, or for serological evidence of prior or ongoing infection using the

187 Abbott Architect assay which detects antibodies against the viral nucleoprotein (N).

188 Predeparture RT-PCR and serology test data were available for 120 crewmembers.

189 This predeparture screening occurred on Day 0 and Day 1 prior to the ship's departure

190 on Day 2. In this predeparture screening, none of the crewmembers tested positive for

191 virus by RT-PCR, and six individuals tested seropositive in the Abbott Architect assay

192 (index value  $\geq 1.40$ ) (Figure 1A).

193 After becoming aware of the subsequent SARS-CoV-2 outbreak on the ship (see

194 next section), we tested residual predeparture serum samples from the six individuals

195 who were seropositive in the Abbott Architect assay to characterize the neutralizing and

196 spike-binding activity of their sera. The sera of three of these six individuals had potent

197 neutralizing activity against SARS-CoV-2 spike pseudotyped lentiviral particles (Table 1,

198 Figure 1B). The neutralizing titers (1:174, 1:161, 1:3082) are in the typical range of titers

199 observed in humans who have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 within the previous few

200 months (29, 34, 35). The sera of the three individuals with neutralizing titers also had

201 high activity in an assay that measure the ability of antibodies to block RBD binding to  
202 ACE2, as well as in IgG ELISAs against spike and RBD (Table 1, Figure 1C). Notably,  
203 the sera of the other three individuals who were seropositive in the Abbott Architect  
204 assay but did not have neutralizing activity had lower index value readings in the Abbott  
205 assay (including two that were close to the cutoff of 1.40; Figure 1A) and readings  
206 comparable to those from negative controls in the RBD and spike ELISA assays (Figure  
207 1C). Therefore, we speculate that the three individuals without neutralizing activity were  
208 false positives in the initial serological screening. However, they could have been in the  
209 early stages of active infection, since the Abbott Architect detects antibodies against N  
210 while all the other assays we used detect antibodies against spike, and anti-N  
211 antibodies appear earlier after infection than anti-spike antibodies (36, 37). Alternatively,  
212 they could have experienced a mild or asymptomatic infection, which can be associated  
213 with transient or low-level seroconversion (38, 39).

214 Overall, assuming that only individuals who were positive in the initial Abbott  
215 Architect assay have neutralizing anti-spike antibodies, then just three of the 120  
216 individuals with pre-departure screening data had neutralizing antibodies prior to  
217 boarding the ship. We consider this assumption to be well supported by several lines of  
218 evidence: large-scale studies have demonstrated that the Abbott Architect has close to  
219 100% sensitivity by two weeks post-symptom onset (20); several studies (36, 37) have  
220 shown that SARS-CoV-2 infected patients usually mount strong and early antibody  
221 responses to the N antigen detected by the Abbott Architect; and a study (32) using the  
222 exact assays described here found that individuals with neutralizing titers to SARS-CoV-  
223 2 also had anti-N antibodies.

224

225 *Testing after ship returned due to outbreak*

226 On Day 18, the ship returned to shore after a crewmember became sick, tested positive  
227 for SARS-CoV-2, and required hospitalization. Testing data after return was available  
228 for all 122 crewmembers for RT-PCR and 114 crewmembers for serology using the  
229 Abbott assay. RT-PCR and serological testing was performed until day 50, leading to a  
230 median follow-up of 32.5 days (range 18.8 to 50.5 days).

231 Of the 118 individuals with RT-PCR results from the week of return, 98 tested  
232 positive with a Ct < 35. Three additional crewmembers tested positive by RT-PCR with  
233 a Ct < 35 within the next 10 days. The median of the strongest/minimum Ct for each of  
234 these 101 crewmembers who tested positive with Ct < 35 was 22.8 (IQR 19.3 – 26.9).  
235 Serological responses among these individuals as measured by Abbott SARS-CoV-2  
236 IgG index value increased for the majority of these individuals (Figure 2A).

237 Among the 21 crewmembers who never had a positive RT-PCR test with Ct < 35,  
238 three individuals seroconverted based on Abbott Architect index value during the follow-  
239 up period. Two of these three crewmembers had positive RT-PCR values with Ct values  
240 > 35, while RT-PCR data was not available for the third until Day 49. These three  
241 individuals were considered infected on the vessel. In addition, three of the 21  
242 crewmembers without a positive RT-PCR result with Ct < 35 were not tested by  
243 serology after returning to shore, though two of the three crewmembers tested negative  
244 3 and 4 times, respectively, by RT-PCR over three weeks after returning.

245

246 *Confirmation of outbreak with whole genome sequencing*

247 Metagenomic recovery of 39 SARS-CoV-2 whole genomes from the outbreak indicated  
248 a major single outbreak clade (FastTree support value: 1.00) covering 38 isolates that  
249 differed by a median of one nucleotide across the genome (range 0-5) (Figure 2B).  
250 Sixteen of these isolates shared completely identical sequence. The closest SARS-  
251 CoV-2 whole genome sequences in GISAID (August 3, 2020) to the major outbreak  
252 clade were strains from Virginia (USA/VA-DCLS-0561/2020), New York City (USA/NY-  
253 NYUMC650, NYUMC624, NYNYUMC474, NYUMC426/2020), Minnesota (USA/MN-  
254 MDH-1288/2020), or Michigan (USA/MI-MDHHS-SC20223/2020) at 2 SNVs apart.  
255  
256 *The three crewmembers with neutralizing antibodies were protected from infection*  
257 We can assess the effects of pre-existing neutralizing antibodies on infection during the  
258 outbreak using the pre-departure serological screening (available for 120 of 122  
259 individuals) and the subsequent testing of all 122 individuals for infection. None of the  
260 three individuals who had neutralizing antibodies prior to departure were infected during  
261 the subsequent outbreak using our case definition of a positive RT-PCR test with Ct <  
262 35 or seroconversion, and none reported any symptoms upon return to shore. In  
263 contrast, among the other 117 of 120 individuals with pre-departure serological data  
264 who were seronegative or lacked spike-reactive antibodies prior to departure, 103 of  
265 117 were infected using the same case definition (of the 2 individuals without pre-  
266 departure serological screening, one tested positive and one tested negative by RT-  
267 PCR on return). Therefore, the overall rate of infection was 0 of 3 among individuals  
268 with neutralizing antibodies, and 103 of 117 among individuals without such antibodies.  
269 This difference is statistically significant (Table 2, Fisher's exact test  $P = 0.002$ ),

270 indicating that pre-existing neutralizing antibodies are significantly associated with  
271 protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection. The three crewmembers who were  
272 seropositive for anti-N antibodies by Abbott but did not have neutralizing antibodies  
273 were all infected during follow-up, with minimum Cts of 17.6, 22.8, and 22.9 and  
274 increases in Abbott index values (Table 1). Sex did not differ between uninfected and  
275 infected, with females composing 5.6% (1 of 18) and 7.7% (8 of 104) of these two  
276 groups, respectively (Fisher's exact test,  $p=1$ ).

277 We also looked in detail at the viral testing results of the three crewmembers who  
278 were positive for neutralizing antibodies to assess the strength of the evidence that they  
279 were not re-infected during this ship outbreak. Two tested fully negative by RT-PCR on  
280 3+ occasions, with negative tests on Days 18, 25, 35, and 36 and Days 18, 35, and 36.  
281 The third individual tested negative on the Roche cobas on Day 21 and Day 28, and  
282 positive only by the E-gene primers/probe set (Ct 37.4) and negative by the orf1ab  
283 primer set on the Roche cobas on Day 25. This individual also tested positive (Ct 38.3)  
284 on Day 31 on the Hologic Panther Fusion. By our case definition (which required a  
285 positive RT-PCR test with Ct < 35), these results are not consistent with being infected  
286 on the boat. The sporadic high-Ct results could be consistent with intermittent, low-level  
287 shedding associated with recent past infection, as low levels of SARS-CoV-2 have been  
288 detected in nasal passages for more than 80 days (40). Of note, only two other  
289 crewmembers had a minimum Ct > 35 in the post-departure follow-up period and both  
290 of these individuals were considered infected due to seroconversion during the follow-  
291 up period. In contrast, Abbott index values decreased for all three of the crewmembers  
292 with predeparture neutralizing antibodies during the follow-up period.

293

294 **Discussion**

295           Here, we report an outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 on a fishing vessel with an attack  
296 rate greater than 85%. Screening with the Abbott Architect anti-nucleocapsid IgG  
297 antibody test followed by confirmation of positives with multiple anti-spike protein  
298 antibody tests including neutralization assays demonstrated the protective nature of  
299 neutralizing antibodies. In particular, none of the three individuals with pre-existing  
300 neutralizing antibodies were infected, whereas the vast majority of other individuals  
301 were infected. These findings are consistent with data from animal models, in which the  
302 elicitation of high titers of neutralizing antibodies was protective against re-challenge  
303 with SARS-CoV-2 (8, 10, 41). In addition, the high attack rate suggests that any pre-  
304 existing cross-reactive immunity caused by prior infection with other seasonal  
305 coronaviruses (e.g., cross-reactive T-cells (42)), provide limited protection against  
306 SARS-CoV-2 infection.

307           An assumption of our analysis is that the only individuals who had pre-existing  
308 neutralizing and anti-spike antibodies were those who tested seropositive in the initial  
309 pre-departure Abbot Architect anti-N serological screening, since only individuals  
310 positive in that screening were subjected to additional serological assays for anti-spike  
311 and neutralizing antibodies. However, this assumption is well supported by the validated  
312 high sensitivity of the Abbott Architect assay (20), plus the well-established fact that  
313 anti-N antibodies appear earlier than anti-spike antibodies (36, 37). Additionally, our four  
314 anti-spike antibody tests showed a high level of consistency among seropositive  
315 samples, and prior work using the exact same assays has found neutralizing antibodies

316 only among individuals who were positive in the Abbott Architect assay (32). As shown  
317 by others, the RBD ELISA and neutralizing antibody assays were highly consistent (43,  
318 44). The ACE2 blockade of binding functional ELISA assay showed excellent  
319 consistency with the more laborious pseudovirus neutralizing antibody assay (45).

320 It is intriguing that one individual who had predeparture neutralizing antibodies  
321 and was classified as uninfected by our case definition nonetheless had a sporadic very  
322 weak signal in viral testing on two different RT-PCR platforms. It is well-established that  
323 SARS-CoV-2 can be detected for multiple weeks in the nasopharyngeal tract, well after  
324 the resolution of symptoms and elicitation of an antiviral immune response (46, 47).  
325 However, it is unclear at this time whether immunity to SARS-CoV-2 will be sterilizing  
326 (10, 48), and it is possible that the sporadic weak signal in viral testing for this individual  
327 was the result of re-exposure to virus on the boat.

328 In prior studies, the Abbott SARS-CoV-2 IgG assay has shown excellent  
329 performance characteristics with high specificity (99.1-99.9%) for prior infection with  
330 SARS-CoV-2 (20, 49, 50). Curiously, the positive predictive value for the Abbott SARS-  
331 CoV-2 IgG assay for neutralizing antibodies or protection in our population was only  
332 50% (3/6 crewmembers). It is difficult to conclusively determine whether these  
333 represented false positives or just anti-N/anti-spike discrepant, particularly given that  
334 anti-N antibodies tend to appear before anti-spike antibodies (36, 37). All three of the  
335 individuals who were Abbott IgG positive prior to departure but lacked neutralizing and  
336 anti-spike antibodies and were RT-PCR positive upon return showed strong increases  
337 in index value. In addition, two of these three individuals had pre-departure Abbott index  
338 values that were close to the positivity cut-off. Unfortunately, we did not have sufficient

339 residual pre-departure serum to run on a separate anti-N platform such as the Roche  
340 Elecsys anti-SARS-CoV-2 (51).

341 This study is limited by lack of information on clinical symptoms for the majority of  
342 crewmembers on the vessel and direct knowledge of contacts on the boat. We cannot  
343 also necessarily know that the three individuals with neutralizing antibodies prior to  
344 departure were exposed directly to SARS-CoV-2 on the vessel. We were unable to test  
345 everyone on the vessel for neutralizing or anti-spike antibodies since negative  
346 serologies are not stored for long in our laboratory. In addition, our study only shows  
347 that neutralizing antibodies are a *correlate* of protection: we cannot be sure that  
348 protection comes from neutralizing antibodies per se rather than some other immune  
349 response with which they correlate, such as T cells. The study is also limited by the low  
350 seroprevalence in the predeparture cohort---which is consistent with the approximate  
351 seroprevalence in May 2020 in the Seattle area, but means that there were only three  
352 individuals with pre-existing neutralizing antibodies. Nonetheless, with an overall attack  
353 rate of >85%, the lack of infection in the three individuals with neutralizing antibodies  
354 was statistically significant compared to the rest of the boat's crew. Overall, our results  
355 provide the first direct evidence anti-SARS-CoV-2 neutralizing antibodies are protective  
356 against SARS-CoV-2 infection in humans.

357

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367

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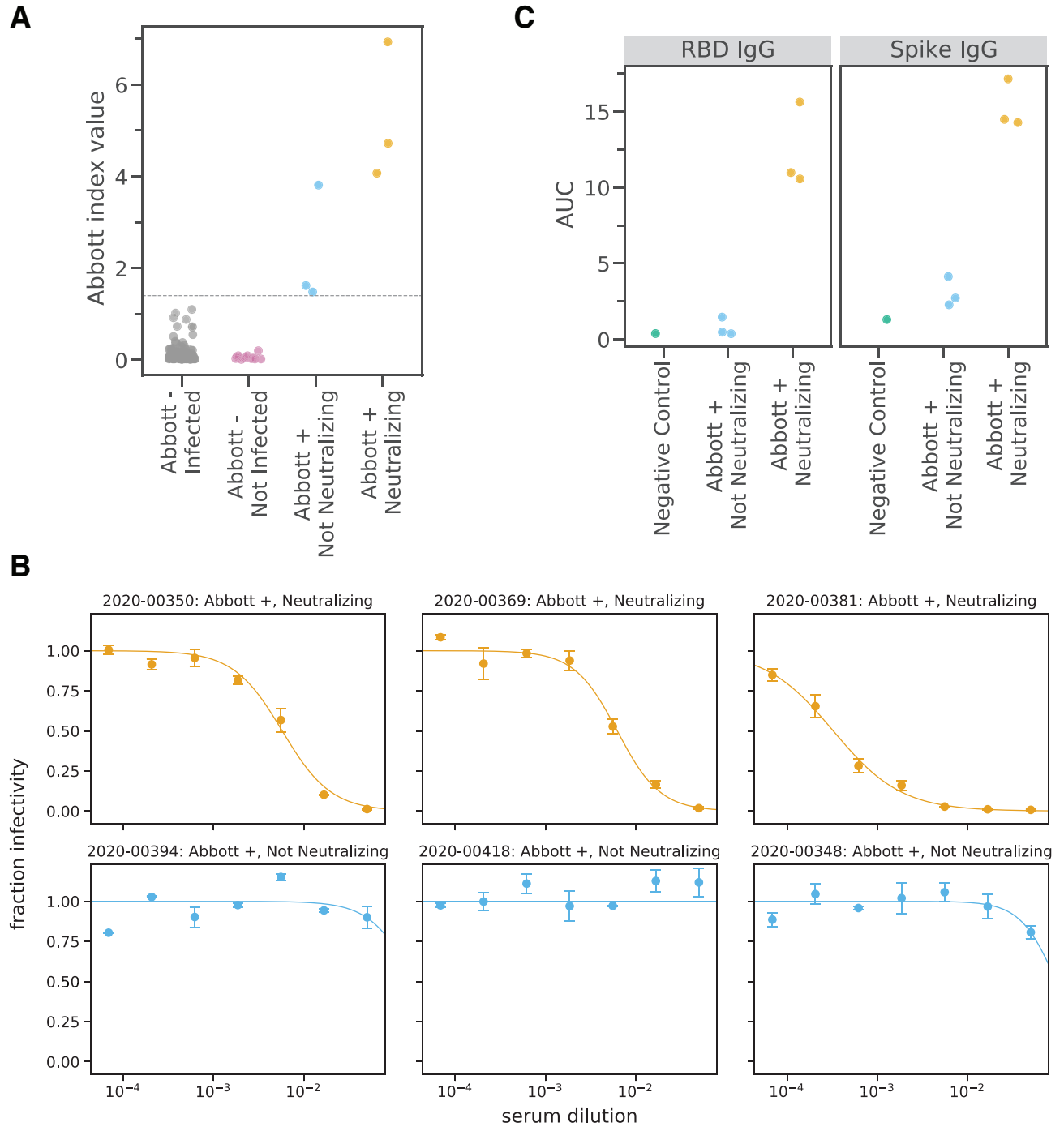
602 **Figure Legends**

603 **Figure 1** – Pre-departure serological assays. A) Abbott Architect index values for all  
604 120 individuals assayed. The grey line indicates the cutoff for a positive Abbott reading  
605 ( $\geq 1.40$ ). Individuals with negative Abbott index values are further classified by whether  
606 they subsequently became infected on the ship. Individuals with positive Abbott index  
607 values are further characterized by whether their pre-boarding serum was neutralizing.  
608 B) Neutralization curves for all 6 pre-boarding samples that were positive in the Abbott  
609 Architect assay. C) Titers of RBD- or Spike-binding IgG antibodies in all 6 Abbott  
610 positive pre-boarding samples as measured by ELISA. The negative control sample is  
611 pooled sera collected in 2017-2018 from 75 individuals (Gemini Biosciences, 100-110, lot  
612 H86W03J).

613

614 **Figure 2** – A) Abbott Architect SARS-CoV-2 index values over time (pre- and post-  
615 departure) are depicted for each individual with at least 2 serum draws. The dashed line  
616 denotes the seropositivity cutoff of the assay (1.40). Individuals who had a positive RT-  
617 PCR with Ct < 35 or who seroconverted during the follow-up period are shown in light  
618 blue. Individuals who were not infected by the above case definition criteria are shown  
619 in green. Individuals who screened positive by the Abbott Architect SARS-CoV-2 IgG  
620 assay but lacked neutralizing antibodies and were infected are shown in brown.  
621 Individuals who had pre-existing neutralizing antibodies and were not infected are  
622 shown in blue. B) SARS-CoV-2 whole genome sequencing of cases from the fishery  
623 vessel confirms outbreak. SARS-CoV-2 genomes from 39 cases with Ct < 26 were  
624 recovered and a phylogenetic tree was made using FastTree along with 109 other  
625 isolates reflective of global diversity. 38 cases are highlighted in red with a median

626 pairwise difference of 1 single nucleotide variant, while one outlier case from the boat is  
627 shown with a red dot. Clade A strains associated with early trans-Pacific transmission  
628 are shown in purple.  
629





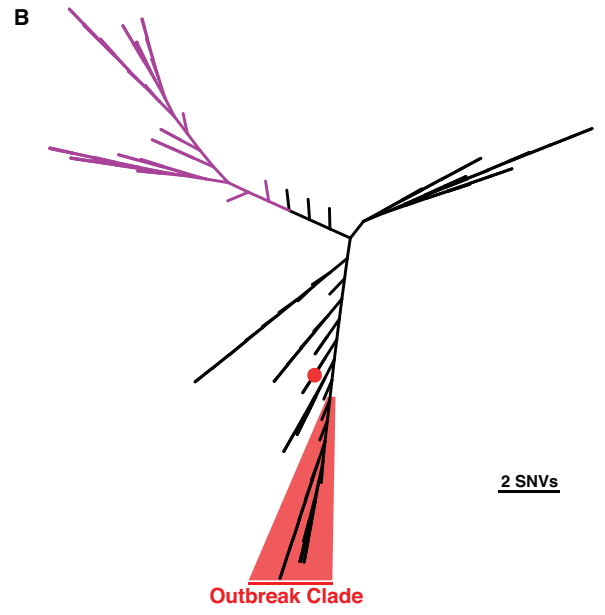
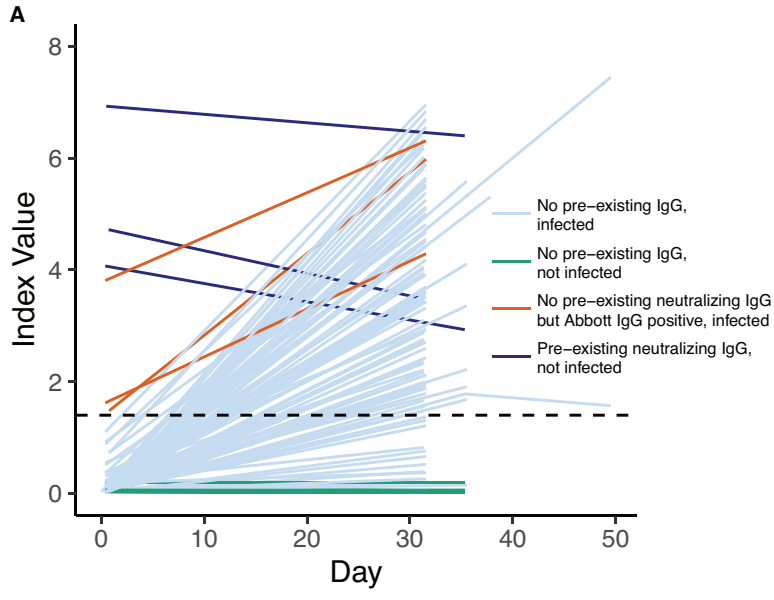


Table 1. Laboratory values for crew members who were pre-departure seropositive by Abbott SARS-CoV-2 IgG assay

Sample	RT-PCR	Day 0-1											
		Abbott IgG index	Neutralization IC50 <sup>1</sup>	Neutralization IC90	ACE2 binding blockade	RBD IgG AUC	spike IgG AUC	Day 18-21 PCR (Ct)	Day 25-26 PCR	Day 28 PCR	Day 31-36 PCR	Day 31-35 Abbott IgG index	Day 31-35 ACE2 binding blockade
2020-00350	negative	6.93	1:174	1:44	89%	15.62	17.15	negative	negative	n.d.	negative	6.40	95%
2020-00369	negative	4.07	1:161	1:48	84%	10.98	14.27	negative	n.d.	n.d.	negative	2.93	68%
2020-00381	negative	4.72	1:3082	1:458	93%	10.56	14.48	negative	37.4	negative	38.3	3.48	90%
2020-00394	negative	1.62	negative	negative	4%	1.46	4.13	22.91	n.d.	n.d.	27.9	4.29	30%
2020-00418	negative	3.81	negative	negative	3%	0.47	2.27	22.84	n.d.	n.d.	30.4	6.31	93%
2020-00348	negative	1.48	negative	negative	0%	0.37	2.72	17.57	n.d.	n.d.	negative	5.98	35%

n.d., not done; BoB, blockade of binding

<sup>1</sup> lowest dilution tested was 1:20

Table 2. Summary table of infection status of crew members for which pre-departure serology testing was performed.

		Pre-departure	
		Neutralizing Ab (+)	Neutralizing Ab (-)
On boat	Infected	0	103
	Not Infected	3	14

p=0.0024