Title: Intestinal organoids expose heterogeneity in SARS-CoV-2 susceptibility

Kyung Ku Jang[1], Maria E Kaczmarek[2][#], Simone Dallari[1], Ying-Han Chen[1], Jordan Axelrad[3], Kenneth A Stapleford[2][*] and Ken Cadwell[1,2,3][*]

[1] Kimmel Center for Biology and Medicine at the Skirball Institute, New York Grossman University School of Medicine, New York, NY, USA

[2] Department of Microbiology, New York University Grossman School of Medicine, New York, NY 10016, USA.

[3] Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, Department of Medicine, New York University Grossman School of Medicine, New York, NY 10016, USA.

#Present address: EcoHealth Alliance in New York, NY 10018

*Correspondence:
Ken Cadwell
Email: ken.cadwell@med.nyu.edu
Kenneth Stapleford
Email: kenneth.stapleford@nyulangone.org

ABSTRACT

Organoids generated from primary human specimens facilitate investigation of the intestinal barrier by recreating the complex cellular composition of the epithelium. Although the significance remains unclear, intestinal organoid lines display heterogeneity in their growth and morphology. We hypothesized that organoids will also display variability in the degree to which they are susceptible to infectious agents. Using SARS-CoV-2 as a model, we found orders of magnitude differences in the amount of SARS-CoV-2 recovered from small intestinal and colonic organoids generated from different donors. SARS-CoV-2 burden did not correlate with demographic or clinical features associated with donors, but rather reflected the expression level of the virus receptor *ACE2*. Remarkably, organoid *ACE2* transcript levels matched the amount of ACE2 detected in primary tissue from the same individual, indicating that certain properties of the intestinal epithelium are retained during *ex vivo* differentiation. Longitudinal transcriptomics of organoids identified a delayed yet robust interferon signature, the magnitude of which corresponded to the degree of SARS-CoV-2 infection. These results suggest that intestinal organoids display substantial heterogeneity in their ability to support viral infections and can potentially inform mechanisms behind interindividual differences in susceptibility to infectious disease.

MAIN TEXT

Intestinal organoid cultures have transformed our ability to investigate properties of the human

intestinal epithelium. Consisting of organized epithelial cell clusters differentiated from somatic

stem cells, intestinal organoids generated from endoscopic pinch biopsies are capable of self-

renewal and recreate many of the structural, functional, and molecular characteristics of the

tissue of origin (1). Investigators have exploited these versatile properties of intestinal organoids

to study infectious agents that are otherwise difficult to examine, including viruses such as

noroviruses (2-4). Intestinal organoids can also inform our understanding of inter-individual

differences in disease susceptibility, such as elucidating the mechanisms by which mutations

accumulate in patients with colorectal cancer (5, 6). Additionally, we and others have

documented substantial heterogeneity in the growth, morphology, viability, and susceptibility to

cytokine toxicity of human intestinal organoid lines (1, 6-8). However, how this heterogeneity

relates to resistance of the intestinal epithelium to infectious agents remains unclear.

Although severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection is

primarily associated with dysfunction of the respiratory system, the gastrointestinal (GI) tract is

also an established target organ in patients with COVID-19. As many as 60% of patients present

with diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain, anorexia, and/or nausea (9-16). Also, SARS-CoV-2

antigen in intestinal biopsies and viral RNA in the stool are readily detected, even after the virus

is undetectable in respiratory samples (17-27). To a limited extent, virions and infectious

particles have been detected in patient intestinal and stool specimens (17, 25, 28, 29). Although

the pathophysiological significance of these observations has not been resolved, the prolonged

presence of viral antigens in the gut is likely to impact antibody evolution (17). Consistent with

a potential intestinal tropism, intestinal epithelial cells display robust expression of the SARS-

CoV-2 receptor angiotensin I converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) and transmembrane proteases

TMPRSS2 and TMPRSS4 that facilitate viral entry (30-32). Further, human intestinal organoids

derived from either somatic stem cells or inducible pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) support SARS-

CoV-2 reproduction (32-35). These studies have shown that *ACE2* expression levels can differ

based on the differentiation state and anatomical region from which the organoids are derived,

but whether this affects the degree of SARS-CoV-2 infection is debated. A broader comparison

of gene expression patterns and SARS-CoV-2 infection across organoids from different donors

and culture conditions may help interpret the studies that have highlighted the extreme range

of *ACE2* expression in intestinal tissues associated with demographic and clinical features of

individuals, which could have consequences for susceptibility to both viral infections and

inflammatory conditions (36-42)

To determine the degree to which *ACE2*, *TMPRSS2*, and *TMRPSS4* were differentially

expressed between donors and culture conditions, we established and differentiated 3D organoid

lines from small intestinal and colonic biopsies procured from 8 and 10 donors, respectively

(Supplemental Table 1). Consistent with previous observations (32, 33), the expression of *ACE2*,

TMPRSS2, and the enterocyte marker of differentiation *APOA1* were significantly higher in small

intestinal and colonic organoid lines cultured in 3D differentiation media (3DD) compared with

those cultured in expansion media (3DE) that maintains organoids in an undifferentiated state

(Supplemental Fig. 1A, B and D). *TMRPSS4* expression was similar in both conditions

(Supplemental Fig. 1C). Donor-to-donor variability in expression was apparent for all four genes.

Intestinal organoids can be grown as differentiated monolayers to expose the apical side and

facilitate viral entry. We found that the level of *ACE2*, *TMPRSS2*, *TMPRSS4*, and *APOA1*

expression in monolayer organoids correlated well with 3DD organoids generated from the same

donor (Fig. 1A), suggesting that organoid lines retain their intrinsic gene expression patterns

independent of these two culturing conditions. In addition, we found that monolayer organoids

exhibited the highest *ACE2* and *TMPRSS2* expression among the culture conditions we examined

(Fig. 1B and C). Therefore, we used the monolayer model to perform all subsequent analyses.

Finally, we investigated whether *ACE2*, *TMPRSS2*, or *TMPRSS4* expression differed between

small intestinal and colonic biopsy monolayers. Although *ACE2* expression did not differ between

organoids derived from the small intestine versus colon, *TMPRSS*2 and *TMRPSS4* expression

were higher and *APOA1* was decreased in colonic organoids (Fig. 1F-I). The lack of correlation

between *ACE2* or *TMPRSS2* expression and *APOA1* expression suggested that heterogeneous

ACE2 and *TMPRSS2* levels were not an artifact caused by insufficient differentiation

(Supplemental Fig. 2A and B).

Given that organoids were derived from healthy donors and patients with inflammatory

bowel disease (IBD) of both sexes, we examined whether these donor attributes contribute to

differences in gene expression patterns. When we segregated the data based on disease status

or sex in either small intestinal or colonic organoids, we did not observe significant differences in

ACE2, TMPRSS2, *TMPRSS4*, or *APOA1* (Supplemental Fig. 2C-E). The expression of

representative interferon stimulated genes (ISGs) *ISG15*, *OASL,* and *MX2* were also not

correlated with disease status or sex, although we note that *ISG15* and *OASL* transcripts were

higher in colonic versus small intestinal organoids (Supplemental Fig. 3A and B). These

transcripts generally did not correlate with the age of subjects (Supplemental Table 2).

ACE2 expression differed by as much as 6.5-fold when comparing organoids with the

highest and lowest expression of this gene (Fig. 2A). To test whether such differences lead to

heterogeneity in viral infection, we infected organoids with SARS-CoV-2 at a multiplicity of

infection (MOI) of 4 for 72 hrs. Remarkably, the amount of virus detected in the supernatant of

culture media by plaque assay differed by as much as 423-fold (Fig. 2B-C). Immunofluorescence

microscopy analyses of ACE2 and SARS-CoV-2 nucleoprotein (NP) in representative organoids

confirmed these findings – SI1 and C1 (susceptible small intestinal and colonic organoids,

respectively, with high *ACE2* transcript levels) displayed higher degrees of ACE2 and NP staining

compared with SI7 and C8 (resistant small intestinal and colonic organoids, respectively) (Fig. 2D

and E). Indeed, SARS-CoV-2 infection correlated with *ACE2* gene expression levels, but not

TMPRSS2, TMPRSS4, and *APOA1* expression (Fig. 2F-I). The amount of virus recovered from

organoids were comparable when the data was segregated by the disease status and sex of the

donors (Supplemental Fig. 3D). Similarly, virus production did not correlate with donor age

(Supplemental Fig. 3E).

The association between susceptibility of organoids to SARS-CoV-2 infection and *ACE2*

expression was clear in most cases, but there were outliers for the colonic organoids. For instance,

C5 and C8 have moderate to high levels of ACE2 but low levels of virus production (Fig. 2A and

B). Thus, we investigated whether other factors may contribute to differential SARS-CoV-2

infectivity. Several polymorphisms are predicted to alter the stability of ACE2 or alter its affinity to

the SARS-CoV-2 S protein (43-46). However, the sequence of the *ACE2* coding region of C5 and

C8 were identical to other donors (Supplemental Table 1). Differences in interferon responses

may also contribute to SARS-CoV-2 infectivity, where higher ISG levels are predicted to confer

protections against viral infection (47-49). Baseline *ISG15*, *OASL*, and *MX2* expression did not

correlate with lower virus production. Instead, we noticed a positive correlation between *OASL*

and SARS-CoV-2 susceptibility (Supplemental Fig. 3F-H). Next, we examined ISG expression

following stimulation with interferon-beta (IFNβ) or interferon-lambda 2 (IFNλ2). Although we

observed varied levels of ISG induction, they were not associated with reduced viral infection

(Supplemental Fig. 4A; Supplemental Table 3). Generally, we did not detect an association

between the degree to which these ISGs were induced and properties of the donor tissue location,

disease status, and age (Supplemental Fig. 4A to C and Supplemental Table 3). However, small

intestinal organoids from female donors displayed higher ISG expression than male donors

following IFNλ2 stimulation (Supplemental Fig. 4D and E). *ACE2* and *TMPRSS2* expression were

not altered by IFNβ or IFNλ2 (Supplemental Fig. 5), indicating that *ACE2* and *TMPRSS2* are not

ISGs in monolayer organoids.

Our results thus far are consistent with the possibility that *ACE2* gene expression is a key

determinant of the degree to which the intestinal epithelium of an individual is susceptible to

SARS-CoV-2 infection. As organoids are differentiated from primary stem cells and expanded in
culture (50, 51), it was unclear whether inter-donor differences reflect ACE2 levels in the primary
tissues. Therefore, we measured ACE2 protein by immunofluorescence microscopy in small
intestinal and colonic sections from the same donors corresponding to individual lines of
organoids (Fig. 3). ACE2 staining was restricted to the epithelium and most intense along the
apical brush boarder (villi in the small intestine and top of the crypts in the colon; Fig. 3A and B
and Supplemental Fig. 6), consistent with our data and previous studies showing that *ACE2*
expression is enriched in differentiated enterocytes (32, 33). Primary tissue specimens also
displayed heterogeneous ACE2 protein levels (Fig.3C and Supplemental Fig. 6C). Remarkably,
the mean intensity of ACE2 in intestinal tissue sections strongly correlated with *ACE2* transcript
and SARS-CoV-2 levels in organoids derived from the same individual, and not with age, sex, or
disease status (Fig. 3E). Therefore, organoids retain the variable ACE2 levels from its original
tissue.

To further investigate how susceptible and resistant organoids differ from each other, we
selected the three colonic organoid lines that each displayed high infection (HI; C1, C2, and C7)
or low infection (LI; C8, C9, and C10) for RNA-seq analysis. We validated the transcriptional and
microscopy analyses (Fig. 2A, C, and D) by Western blot, which showed higher levels of ACE2
protein in HI compared with LI organoids, and comparable levels of TMPRSS2 protein (Fig. 4A).
We then infected the organoids with SARS-CoV-2 for 24 and 72 hrs (I24 and I72, respectively),
and compared these samples with mock infected organoids harvested at 0 and 72 hrs (UI0 and
UI72, respectively). Because these six organoid lines were prepared from independently thawed
batches of frozen stocks, we quantified virus and confirmed that higher amounts of SARS-CoV-2
were recovered from HI compared with LI organoids at both time points (Fig. 4B and C). Similar
to our findings with IFN-stimulated organoids (Supplemental Fig. 5), *ACE2* and *TMPRESS2*
transcripts in both HI and LI organoids were stable during the course of infection (Supplemental
Fig. 7A and B).

The number of transcripts displaying >2-fold changes (adjusted *P*-value <0.05) in 12
pairwise comparisons are summarized in Supplemental Fig. 7C. The conditions that displayed
the most differences from one another were those comparing early time points to 72 hrs post-
infection. Uninfected organoids at 0 and 72 hrs displayed no differences, indicating that the
transcriptome of uninfected HI and LI organoids remained stable over time. This result increased
our confidence that organoids were fully differentiated at the onset of our experiments. Also, few
genes displayed differential expression when comparing uninfected HI and LI organoids. Principal
component analysis (PCA) showed that infection (at 72 hrs) separated samples on PC1 and

susceptibility to infection (HI versus LI) separated samples on PC2 (Supplemental Fig. 7D). PCA

also confirmed observations from the pairwise comparison indicating that uninfected organoids

and those infected for 24 hrs were transcriptionally similar.

At the 72 hr time point, where the largest transcriptional changes occurred between

conditions, we found that the majority of the differentially expressed genes (DEGs) when

comparing uninfected and infected conditions (55 of 71) were common to LI and HI organoids,

while most DEGs (65 of 81) when comparing infected HI and LI organoids were unique to this

comparison (Fig. 4D). Gene ontology analyses and Ingenuity Pathway Analysis (IPA) showed

that SARS-CoV-2 infection impacts antiviral pathways, especially those related to the interferon

response, and that this signature was more pronounced in HI organoids compared with LI

organoids following infection (Fig. 4E-G and Supplemental Fig. 7E). Indeed, differentially

expressed genes related to the *response to type I IFN* (*SAMHD1*, *NLRC5*, *USP18*, *IFIT1*, *ZBP1*,

SHFL, *STAT2*, *IRF7*, *SP100*, *MX1*, *OAS3*, *STAT1*, *ISG15*, and *OAS2*) and *JAK-STAT* (*STAT5A*,

STAT1, *STAT2*, *CCL2*, and *NMI*) included common ISGs, and although these were upregulated

in both HI and LI organoids infected by SARS-CoV-2, they were induced to a higher degree in HI

organoids (Supplement Fig. 7F and G). Because these ISGs are more highly expressed in HI

organoids and not detected at 24 hrs, they are likely a response to the increased degree of

infection in these organoids. These results are consistent with other studies suggesting that the

interferon response to SARS-CoV-2 is delayed (33, 49, 52, 53). Unexpectedly, multiple genes

associated with pathways related to zinc and copper homeostasis were specifically upregulated

in LI organoids compared to HI organoids after 72 hrs of infection (Fig 4E, H and Supplemental

Fig. 7H). The increased expression of *MT1* genes encoding metallothionines in LI organoids was

particularly striking and may be indicative of a stress response activated by viral perturbations in

the epithelium (54, 55). Collectively, longitudinal transcriptome analyses identified robust yet late

transcriptional changes induced by SARS-CoV-2, the magnitude of which corresponded to the

levels of viral infection.

When taken together, our results show that human intestinal organoids reveal

interindividual differences in responses to viral infection. Organoids showed substantial

differences in their susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 infection, and ACE2 levels were the strongest

correlate of susceptibility, agreeing with the finding that the virus preferentially infects mature

enterocytes with high *ACE2* expression (32). Although transcriptome analysis identified many

differentially expressed genes upon SARS-CoV-2 infection when comparing organoid lines, these

differences were not apparent at 24 hrs post-infection, a time point at which the degree of virus

infection already diverged between resistant and susceptible organoids. Therefore, these gene

expression patterns are unlikely to account for differential susceptibility, and instead, provide a

glimpse as to how increased viral replication can affect properties of the intestinal epithelium.

Although the presence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA in the gut has been associated with diarrhea in

patients with COVID-19 (27), the consequence of intestinal epithelial infection remains largely

unclear and an important area of investigation. Extensive experiments in animal models predict

that activation of viral RNA sensors trigger immune responses including ISGs that impact the

intestinal barrier (56-66).

Finally, it is notable that organoids retained the differential ACE2 levels observed in intact

primary tissue sections from the same donor. These results indicate that at least some

transcriptional properties of the original intestinal epithelium that are individual-specific are

retained following *ex vivo* differentiation. If this finding is generalizable, then organoids can be a

powerful platform to investigate interindividual differences in infectious disease susceptibility.

METHODS

Human intestinal tissue specimen collection:

Patients with and without IBD were recruited at outpatient colonoscopy performed for colon
cancer screening, surveillance, or IBD activity assessment at NYU Langone Health's
Ambulatory Care Center, New York, under an NYU Grossman School of Medicine Institutional
Review Board–approved study (Mucosal Immune Profiling in Patients with Inflammatory Bowel
Disease; S12-01137). Approximately 6 pinch biopsies were obtained from the ascending colon
of each patient using a 2.8-mm standard endoscopic biopsy forceps. The inflammation status
of tissue was confirmed by endoscopic and histopathological examination. All pinch biopsies
were collected in ice-cold complete RPMI (RPMI 1640 medium supplemented with 10% fetal
bovine serum (FBS), penicillin/streptomycin/glutamine, and 50 µM 2-mercaptoethanol). Pinch
biopsies were then transferred to freezing media (90% FBS + 10% DMSO) in Cryogenic Tubes
and stored in liquid nitrogen.

Culture of human small intestinal and colonic organoids:

Human organoids were cultured as described previously (7, 58). Pinch biopsies were thawed in
PBS and then incubated in Gentle Cell Dissociation Reagent (Stemcell Technologies) on ice for
30 min, followed by vigorous pipetting to isolate crypts. The crypts were embedded in 30 µl of
Matrigel and cultured with Human IntestiCult™ Organoid Growth Medium (OGM) (Basal Medium
and Organoid Supplement, Stemcell Technologies) supplemented with 100 IU Penicillin and 100
µg/ml Streptomycin (Corning) and 125 µg/ml Gentamicin (ThermoFisher), herein referred to as
expansion medium. The culture medium was changed every 2-3 days. For passaging human
organoids, 10 µM Y-27632 were added for the first 2 days. For differentiation, the human
organoids were cultured with 1:1 mix of Human IntestiCult™ OGM Basal Medium and DMEM/F-
12 (ThermoFisher) in the presence of 100 IU Penicillin and 100 µg/ml Streptomycin, 125 µg/ml
Gentamicin and 2 mM L-Glutamine (Corning), herein referred to as differentiation medium. To
generate monolayers, mature human small intestinal colonic organoids grown with the expansion
media were digested into single cells using TrypLE Express (ThermoFisher) and seeded into
Matrigel-coated 96-well culture plate (Corning) in Y-27632-supplemented expansion medium at
150,000 cells/well for the first 2 days. The culture media were changed every day. In experiments
in which organoids were treated with recombinant interferons, monolayers grown with the
differentiation media for 7 days were stimulated with human IFNβ (100 or 300 IU/ml, R&D systems)
or IFNλ2 (10 or 30 ng/ml, R&D systems) for 12 h.

Transcript analysis:

Total RNA was extracted from human organoids using RNeasy Mini Kit with DNase treatment (QIAGEN), and synthesis of cDNA was conducted with High-Capacity cDNA Reverse Transcription Kit (ThermoFisher) according to the manufacturer's protocol. RT-PCR was performed using SybrGreen (Roche) on a Roch480II Lightcycler using the following primers: *ACE2*, Fwd 5'-TCAAGGAGGCCGAGAAGTTC-3' and Rev 5'-TTCCTGGGTCCGTTAGCATG-3'; *TMPRSS2*, Fwd 5'-ACCTGATCACACCAGCCATG-3' and Rev 5'-CTTCGAAGTGACCAGAGGCC-3'; *TMPRSS4*, Fwd 5'-CCGATGTGTTCAACTGGAAG-3' and Rev 5'-GAGAAAGTGAGTGGGAACTG-3'; *APOA1*, Fwd 5'-TGGATGTGCTCAAAGACAGC-3' and Rev 5'-AGGCCCTCTGTCTCCTTTTC-3'; *ISG15*, Fwd 5'-GAGAGGCAGCGAACTCATCT-3' and Rev 5'-CTTCAGCTCTGACACCGACA-3'; *OASL*, Fwd 5'-AAAGAGAGGCCCATCATCC-3' and Rev 5'-ATCTGGGTAACCCCTCTG C-3'; *MX2*, Fwd 5'-CAGCCACCACCAGGAAACA-3' and Rev 5'-TTCTGCTCGTACTGGCTGTACAG-3'; *GAPDH*, Fwd 5'-GATGGGATTTCCATTGAT GACA-3' and Rev 5'-CCACCCATGGCAAATTCC-3'; SARS-CoV-2 NP, Fwd 5'-ATGCTGCAATCGTGCTACAA-3'; SARS-CoV-2 N, Rev 5'- GACTGCCGCCTCTGCTC-3'. Relative expression of the respective genes to *GAPDH* expression was calculated using the $\Delta\Delta C_T$ method. Where indicated, the values were expressed as fold change from uninfected or untreated organoids.

Virus infection and plaque assay:

The organoid monolayers grown with the differentiation media for 7 days were infected with icSARS-CoV-2-mNG (isolate USA/WA/1/2020) obtained from the UTMB World Reference Center for Emerging Viruses and Arboviruses (67). A working stock of SARS-CoV-2-mNG was generated by infecting a 90-95% confluent monolayer of Vero E6 cells (ATCC CRL-1586) for 48 hrs at 37°C. Following incubation, the supernatant was collected, centrifuged at 1,200 rpm for 5 mins, aliquoted and stored at -80°C. Viral titers were quantified by plaque assay as described below. For the infection, organoid monolayers were infected with SARS-CoV-2-mNG at a MOI of 4 for 1 hr at 37°C. Following incubation, organoids were washed 4 times with phosphate buffered saline (PBS) and differentiation media was added for the indicated time. Total virus in the 3rd or 4th wash was also quantified to ensure excess virus was removed. Thus, virus quantified at the end of the experiment can be assessed as replicative particles rather than residual particles persisting in culture. Viral titers in the monolayer supernatants were quantified by plaque assay.

To quantify infectious virus by plaque assay, 10-fold serial dilutions of each sample
were made in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM). Each dilution was added to a
monolayer of Vero E6 cells for 1 hr at 37°C. Following incubation, DMEM supplemented with
2% fetal bovine serum and 0.8% agarose was added and the incubated for 72 hrs at 37°C. Cells
were then fixed with 10% formalin, the agarose plug removed, and wells stained with crystal
violet (10% crystal violet, 20% ethanol). Virus titers (PFU/ml) were determined by counting the
number of plaques on the lowest countable dilution.
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ACE2 **sequencing:**
A 2418-bp region containing the *ACE2* coding region was amplified from cDNA prepared from
organoids (see above) by PCR using a pair of primers (Fwd 5'-ATGTCAAGCTCTTCCTGGCTCC-
3' and Rev 5'-CTAAAAGGAGGTCTGAACATCATCAGTG-3'). Amplicons were cloned into
pCR™2.1-TOPO® (Invitrogen). The plasmids were sequenced by Sanger sequencing from
Psomagen using 4 primers: M13F, 5'-GTAAAACGACGGCCAGT-3'; M13R, 5'-
CAGGAAACAGCTATGAC-3'; ACE2_600F, 5'- GGGGATTATTGGAGAGGAGACT-3';
ACE2_1800R, 5'- GTCGGTACTCCATCCCACA-3'.
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Immunofluorescence:
ACE2 staining were performed as described previously (68). Briefly, pinch biopsies of the terminal
ileum and ascending colon were fixed in 10% formalin and embedded in paraffin blocks. Sections
were cut to 5 µm thickness at the NYU Center for Biospecimen Research and Development and
mounted on frosted glass slides. For deparaffinization, slides were baked at 70°C for 1.5 h,
followed by rehydration in descending concentration of ethanol (100%, 95%, 80%, 70%, ddH$_2$O
twice; each step for 30 s). HIER was performed in a pressure cooker (Biocare Medical) using
Dako Target Retrieval Solution, pH 9 (Dako Agilent) at 97°C from 10 min and cooled down to
65°C. After further cooling to room temperature for 20 min, slides were washed for 10 min 3 times
in Tris-Buffered Saline (TBS), containing 0.1% Tween 20 (Sigma; TBS-T). Sections were blocked
in 5% normal donkey serum (Sigma) in TBS-T at room temperature (RT) for 1 hr, followed by
incubation with rabbit anti-ACE2 antibody (1:100, Abcam, ab15348) in the blocking solution at
4°C overnight. Sections were washed 3 times with TBS-T and stained with the Alexa Flour 555
conjugated with donkey anti-rabbit IgG (1:500, ThermoFisher, A-31572) in PBS with 3% bovine
serum albumin (BSA) (ThermoFisher), 0.4% saponin, and 0.02% sodium azide at RT for 1 hr.
Following this, sections were washed 3 times with TBS-T and mounted with ProLong™ Glass
Antifade Mountant with NucBlue™ Stain (ThermoFisher, P36918). Images were acquired using

an EVOS FL Auto Cell Imaging System (ThermoFisher) and then processed and quantified using
ImageJ.

SARS-CoV-2-infected monolayers were fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde (Electron
Microscopy Sciences) for 3 hrs at RT. Following fixation, cells were washed 3 times with PBS
then blocked and permeabilized in PBS with 0.1% Triton-X100 and 3% BSA for 0.5 hr at RT. The
permeabilized organoids were washed 3 times with PBS and incubated with mouse anti-SARS-
CoV-2 N antibody (1:1,000, ProSci, 10-605) and rabbit anti-ACE2 antibody (1:500, Abcam,
ab15348) diluted in PBS containing 3% BSA overnight at 4°C. The monolayers were washed 3
times with PBS and stained with Alexa Flour 647 conjugated with goat anti mouse IgG (1:2,000,
ThermoFisher, A32728) and Alexa Flour 594 conjugated with donkey anti rabbit IgG (1:1,000,
ThermoFisher, 21207) diluted in PBS with 3% BSA and 4'6-diamidino-2-phenylindole (DAPI) for
1 hr at RT. The monolayers were then washed 3 times with PBS and imaged using the CellInsight
CX7 High-content Microscope (ThermoFisher).

Immunoblotting:

Organoids were processed for immunoblotting as previously described (66). Briefly, monolayers
were incubated in lysis buffer (20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.4), 150 mM NaCl, 1% Triton X-100, 10%
glycerol, and 2x Halt Protease and Phosphatase Inhibitor Cocktail (ThermoFisher) on ice for 5
min and centrifuged at 14,000 rpm for 20 min. Samples were resolved on Bolt 4-12% Bis-Tris
Plus Gels (Invitrogen), transferred onto PVDF membranes, and blocked using 5% skim milk.
The following antibodies were used for immunoblotting studies: mouse anti-β-actin (1:5,000,
Sigma, AC-15), rabbit anti-ACE2 (1:1,000, Abcam, ab15348), mouse anti-TMPRSS2 (1:1,000,
Santa Cruz, sc-515727). Secondary antibodies (mouse anti-rabbit and goat-anti mouse, 211-
032-171 and 115-035-174, respectively) were purchased from JacksonImmunoResearch

RNA deep sequencing and analysis:

Organoid monolayers were cultured in differentiation media for 7 days and then were infected
with SARS-CoV-2 at MOI of 4 for 24 hrs or 72 hrs before RNA extraction with 2-3 technical
duplicates per line. CEL-seq2 was performed on 53 human organoids RNA samples.
Sequencing was performed on Illumina NovaSeq 6000 (Illumina). RNA-seq results were
processed using the R package "DESeq2" to obtain variance stabilized count reads, fold
changes relative to specific condition, and statistical *P*-value. Analysis of the organoid

transcriptome focused on differentially expressed genes, defined as the genes with an absolute

fold change relative to specific condition >2 and an adjusted *P*-value <0.05.

Computational and statistical analysis

Gene ontology analysis was performed using the R package "clusterProfiler". Principal

Component Analysis was performed using the R package "stats". Heatmaps were generated

using the R package "pheatmap". Upstream regulators analysis was performed by uploading

the differentially expressed genes to Ingenuity Pathway Analysis software (Qiagen).

Statistical differences were determined as described in figure legend using either R or

GraphPad Prism 9 software (La Jolla, CA, USA).

Data availability

The accession number for the gene expression raw data reported in this paper is GSE179949.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION
Conceptualization: Kyung Ku Jang, Kenneth Stapleford, Ken Cadwell
Data curation: Kyung Ku Jang, Kenneth Stapleford, Ken Cadwell
Formal analysis: Kyung Ku Jang, Maria E Kaczmarek, Ying-Han Chen, Simone Dallari
Funding acquisition: Kenneth Stapleford, Ken Cadwell
Investigation: Kyung Ku Jang, Maria E Kaczmarek, Ying-Han Chen, Simone Dallari, Kenneth Stapleford
Methodology: Kyung Ku Jang, Maria E Kaczmarek, Ying-Han Chen, Simone Dallari, Kenneth Stapleford
Project administration: Kenneth Stapleford, Ken Cadwell
Resources: Kyung Ku Jang, Maria E Kaczmarek, Ying-Han Chen, Simone Dallari, Jordan Axelrad
Supervision: Kenneth Stapleford, Ken Cadwell
Validation: Kyung Ku Jang, Maria E Kaczmarek, Ying-Han Chen, Simone Dallari
Visualization: Kyung Ku Jang, Maria E Kaczmarek, Simone Dallari
Writing – original draft: Kyung Ku Jang, Simone Dallari, Jordan Axelrad, Kenneth Stapleford, Ken Cadwell
Writing – review & editing: Kyung Ku Jang, Maria E Kaczmarek, Ying-Han Chen, Simone Dallari, Jordan Axelrad, Kenneth Stapleford, Ken Cadwell

Figure 1. Heterogeneous expression of *ACE2, TMPRSS2,* and *TMPRSS4* in small intestinal and colonic organoids.

(A) Correlation analysis of *ACE2* and *TMPRSS2* (left) or *TMPRSS4* and *APOA1* (right) expression in human intestinal (circle) and colonic (rectangle) organoids cultured as monolayers grown in differentiation media for 7 days with those cultured as human 3D organoids grown in differentiation media (3DD) for 7 days. **(B-E)** RT-PCR data comparing *ACE2* (B)*, TMPRSS2* (C)*, TMPRSS4* (D)*, APOA1* (E)*,* expression in human 3D organoids grown with expansion media (3DE), 3DD, and monolayers grown in differentiation media for 7 days. **(F-I)** RT-PCR analysis of *ACE2* (F)*, TMPRSS2* (G)*, TMPRSS4* (H)*,* and *APOA1* (I) expression among human small intestine (SI)- or colon-derived monolayers grown in differentiation media for 7 days. Data points are mean of 3 technical replicates of individual organoid lines. Bars represent mean ± SEM, and at least 2 independent experiments were performed. r, Pearson correlation coefficient. *$P \leq 0.05$, **$P \leq 0.01$, ***$P \leq 0.001$, and ****$P \leq 0.0001$ by simple regression analysis in A, paired *t* test, two tailed in B-E, and unpaired *t* test, two-tailed in F-I.

Figure 2. Differential susceptibility of intestinal organoids correlates with *ACE2* expression.

(A) RT-PCR analysis of *ACE2* expression in small intestinal (SI1-SI8) and colonic (C1-C10) organoid monolayers. **(B)** Plaque forming units (PFU) determined by virus titration on Vero E6 cells of supernatant from monolayers at 72 hrs post-infection with SARS-CoV-2. **(C)** PFU of SARS-CoV-2 according to tissue location. **(D)** Representative immunofluorsence microscopy images showing co-staining of DAPI (blue), ACE2 (green), and SARS-CoV-2 nucleoprotein (NP) (red) in SARS-CoV-2 infected SI1, SI7, C1, and C8 organoid lines. An image of uninfected C1 is shown as a representative uninfected condition and a Matrigel-coated well without organoids is shown as a control for background fluorescence. **(E)** Total intensity of NP and ACE2 normalized with cell counts of SI1, SI7, C1 and C8. **(F-I)** Correlation of SARS-CoV2 PFU with *ACE2* (F), *TMPRSS2* (G), *TMPRSS4* (H), or *APOA1* (I) expression among organoid monolayers. Data points in A, B, and E are each technical replicate, and data points in C and F-I are the mean of 3 technical replicates of individual organoid lines. Bars represent mean ± SEM, and at least 2 independent experiments were performed. SI, small intestine; r, Pearson correlation coefficient. *$P \leq 0.05$ and ***$P \leq 0.001$ by simple regression analysis in F-I.

Figure 3. Differential *ACE2* expression observed in individual intestinal organoid lines are conserved in primary tissue from the same donor.

(A and B) Representative ACE2 staining images in primary tissues of terminal ileum (A) and ascending colon (B) from which SI1, SI7, C1, and C10 organoids were established. **(C)** Mean intensity of ACE2 per area (right) in each field of view from the primary tissues from which small intestinal and colonic organoids were established. **(D)** Mean intensity of ACE2 by disease (left) or sex (right). **(E)** Correlation of ACE2 mean intensity with *ACE2* expressions (left) and SARS-CoV-2 PFU (middle) among organoids or subject age (right). Data points in C are the field of views, and data points in D and E are mean of 3 technical replicates of individual organoid lines. Bars represent mean ± SEM, and at least 2 independent experiments were performed. Bars: 200 μm. SI, small intestine; r, Pearson correlation coefficient. *$P \leq 0.05$, **$P \leq 0.01$, and ***$P \leq 0.001$ by unpaired *t* test, two-tailed in D and simple regression analysis in E.

Figure 4. Transcriptome analysis reveals a heighted and delayed interferon response to SARS-CoV-2 infection in susceptible organoids.

(A) Western blot analysis of ACE2, TMPRSS2, and ACTB in high infection (HI; C1, C2, and C7) and low infection (LI; C8, C9, and C10) lines. Blots are representative of at least 3 independent repeats. **(B)** PFU determined by virus titration on Vero E6 cells of supernatant of HI and LI at 24 and 72 hrs after infection with SARS-CoV-2. **(C)** RT-PCR analysis of SARS-CoV-2 expression in HI and LI organoids upon 24 and 72 hrs infection with SARS-CoV-2. **(D)** Venn diagram depicting the number and overlap of differentially expressed genes (DEGs) according to RNA-Seq analysis (see Supplemental Fig. 7) of HI or LI organoids infected with SARS-CoV-2 for 72 hrs. **(E)** Highly enriched biological process GO terms for the DEGs in HI and LI infected with SARS-CoV-2. **(F and G)** Ingenuity pathway analysis (IPA) of the transcriptome of SARS-CoV-2-infected HI or LI for upstream regulators. Interferon-related genes (F) or Top 5 molecules within the classes *cytokine, transcription regulator, transmembrane receptor, ligand-dependent nuclear receptor, and others* (G) commonly associated with HI infected/uninfected and LI infected/uninfected conditions. **(H)** DEGs of LI infected/HI infected condition were analyzed by IPA for upstream regulators. Top 5 upstream regulators related to Zn ion homeostasis and interferons for the LI. Data points in B and C represent the mean of technical replicates of individual organoids lines. Bars represent mean ± SEM, and at least 2 independent experiments were performed. *$P \leq 0.05$, and **$P \leq 0.01$, by unpaired *t* test, two-tailed in B and C.

Supplemental figure 1. Transcriptional analysis of *ACE2, TMPRSS2, TMPRSS4,* and *APOA1* in 3D intestinal organoids cultured in different media conditions.

(A-D) RT-PCR analysis of *ACE2 (A)*, *TMPRSS2* (B), and *TMPRSS4* (C), and *APOA1* (D)

expression among small intestinal (SI) or colonic (C) 3D organoids grown in expansion media

(3DE) or differentiation media (3DD) for 7 days. Data points are mean of 3 technical replicates of

individual organoid lines. Bars represent mean, and at least 2 independent experiments were

performed. $**P \leq 0.01$, $***P \leq 0.001$, and $****P \leq 0.0001$ by paired *t* test, two-tailed.

Supplemental figure 2. Transcript analysis of organoid monolayers according to tissue

location, disease, and sex of subjects.

(A and B) Correlation of *ACE2* (A) and *TMPRSS2* (B) expression with *APOA1* expression among

organoid monolayers grown in differentiation media for 7 days. **(C)** RT-PCR analysis of *ACE2*

expression among organoid monolayers grown in differentiation media according to the disease

status or sex of subjects. **(D and E)** RT-PCR data depicting *ACE2*, *TMPRSS2*, *TMPRSS4*,

APOA1, *ISG15*, *OASL*, and *MX2* expression of organoid monolayers grown in differentiation

media for 7 days according to disease (D) or sex (E). Data points are mean of 3 technical

replicates of individual organoid lines. Bars represent mean ± SEM, and at least 2 independent

experiments were performed. SI, small intestine; r, Pearson correlation coefficient. The indicated

P-values by unpaired *t* test, two-tailed in C.

Supplemental figure 3. Analysis of gene expression and viral replication in organoids by

intestinal region, disease, sex, or age of subjects.

(A-C) RT-PCR analysis of *ISG15* (A)*, OASL* (B)*,* and *MX2* (C) expression in organoid monolayers.

(D) PFU of SARS-CoV-2 according to disease status or sex (right) of subjects. **(E-H)** Correlation

of PFU of SARS-CoV-2 with age of subjects (E) or *ISG15* (F), *OASL* (G), and *MX2* (H) expression.

Data points are mean of 3 technical replicates of individual organoid lines. Bars represent mean

± SEM, and at least 2 independent experiments were performed. SI, small intestine; r, Pearson

correlation coefficient. $*P \leq 0.05$ and $***P \leq 0.001$ by unpaired *t* test, two-tailed in A-D and simple

regression analysis in E-H.

Supplemental figure 4. Transcript analysis of IFNβ- or IFNλ2-stimulated organoids

according to intestinal region, disease status, or sex of subjects.

(A-E) RT-PCR data depicting fold change in *ISG15*, *OASL*, and *MX2* expression in small intestinal

and colonic organoid monolayers stimulated with IFNβ (100 or 300 IU/ml) or IFNλ2 (10 or 30

ng/ml) for 12 hrs according to intestinal region (A), disease status (B and C) or sex (D and E) of

subjects. Each value is normalized to non-stimulated organoid lines. Data points are mean of 3

technical replicates of individual organoid lines. Bars represent mean ± SEM, and at least 2

independent experiments were performed. SI, small intestine. *$P ≤ 0.05$ and **$P ≤ 0.01$ by

unpaired *t* test, two-tailed.

Supplemental figure 5. Stimulation with IFNβ or IFNλ2 does not alter *ACE2* and *TMPRSS2*

expression in organoids.

(A and B) RT-PCR depicting *ACE2* (A) and *TMPRSS2* (B) expression in organoid monolayers

stimulated with IFNβ (100 or 300 IU/ml) or IFNλ2 (10 or 30 ng/ml) for 12 hrs. Data points are mean

of 3 technical replicates of individual organoid lines. Bars represent mean ± SEM, and at least 2

independent experiments were performed. SI, small intestine.

Supplemental figure 6. Representative images of ACE2 staining in primary intestinal tissue.

(A and B) Representative ACE2 staining images in primary tissues of terminal ileum from which

small intestinal (SI2-SI6 and S8, A) or colonic (C2-C9, B) monolayers were established. Images

of remaining organoids are included in main Figure 3. **(C)** Quantification of the total intensity of

ACE2 staining and surface area in each visual field from the primary tissues from which the

indicated organoid lines were established. Data points in C are the visual field. Bars in A and B:

200 μm. Bars in C represent mean ± SEM.

Supplemental figure 7. Transcriptome of SARS-CoV-2-infected organoids.

(A and B) RT-PCR data depicting *ACE2* (A) and *TMPRSS2* (B) expression in high infection (HI;

C1, C2, and C7) and low infection (LI; C8, C9, and C10) lines with or without SARS-CoV-2

infection. **(C)** Number of up- and down-regulated genes identified by RNA-Seq analysis in the

indicated pair-wise comparison of HI and LI organoids lines at different time point post infection.

n = 3 organoid lines per group and at least 2 technical replicates per individual organoid line. **(D)**

Unsupervised clustering based on expression of most variable genes by organoids lines and

infection with SARS-CoV-2 at 24 and 72 hrs. **(E)** Highly enriched molecular function GO terms for

the differentially expressed genes (DEGs) in HI and LI infected with SARS-CoV-2 for 72 hrs. **(F**

and G) Heatmaps displaying normalized expression values of DEGs in HI infected/uninfected and

LI infected/uninfected conditions (average fold-change ≥ 2 and adjusted *P*-value ≤ 0.05)

annotated in GO:0060338 and GO:0034340 (F) and GO0:07259 (G) **(H)** Heatmap displaying

normalized expression values of DEGs in LI infected/HI infected conditions (average fold-change

≥ 2 and adjusted *P*-value ≤ 0.05) annotated in GO:0006882. Data points are mean of at least 2

technical replicates of individual organoid lines. Bars represent mean ± SEM. UI0, uninfected 0

hr; UI72, uninfected 72 hrs; I24, infected for 24 hrs, I72, infected for 72 hrs.

Table S1

Name	Tissue	Sex	Age	Disease type	Inflammation	*ACE2* SNP
SI1	Terminal ileum	F	47	Non-IBD	Non-inflamed	ND
SI2	Terminal ileum	M	23	CD	Non-inflamed	ND
SI3	Terminal ileum	M	37	CD	Non-inflamed	NA
SI4	Terminal ileum	F	25	Non-IBD	Non-inflamed	NA
SI5	Terminal ileum	M	29	Non-IBD	Non-inflamed	ND
SI6	Terminal ileum	M	47	CD	Non-inflamed	ND
SI7	Terminal ileum	F	67	CD	Non-inflamed	ND
SI8	Terminal ileum	M	37	CD	Non-inflamed	NA
C1	Ascending colon	M	34	Non-IBD	Non-inflamed	ND
C2	Ascending colon	M	25	Non-IBD	Non-inflamed	NA
C3	Ascending colon	F	27	UC	Non-inflamed	NA
C4	Ascending colon	M	33	UC	Non-inflamed	NA
C5	Ascending colon	M	33	UC	Non-inflamed	ND
C6	Ascending colon	M	29	Non-IBD	Non-inflamed	ND
C7	Ascending colon	F	55	UC	Non-inflamed	NA
C8	Ascending colon	F	23	Non-IBD	Non-inflamed	ND
C9	Ascending colon	M	21	UC	Non-inflamed	NA
C10	Ascending colon	F	20	UC	Non-inflamed	ND

560 **Supplemental Table 1**. Subject information for human endoscopic specimens

561 M; Male, F; Female, CD; Crohn's disease; UC; Ulcerative colitis; SNP, Single nucleotide

562 polymorphism; ND, not detected; NA, not attempted

566 **Table S2**

Gene expression	Age					
	SI + Colon		SI		Colon	
	r	*P*	r	*P*	r	*P*
ACE2	-0.100	0.694	-0.509	0.197	0.456	0.186
TMPRSS2	-0.208	0.408	-0.186	0.659	0.066	0.857
TMPRSS4	0.203	0.420	0.195	0.644	0.023	0.950
APOA1	0.318	0.199	0.10	0.813	-0.285	0.425
ISG15	-0.297	0.232	-0.287	0.490	-0.118	0.745
OASL	0.113	0.656	0.018	0.967	0.690	0.027*
MX2	0.033	0.896	0.064	0.881	-0.148	0.684

568 **Supplemental Table 2**. Correlation between subject age and gene expression among the

569 organoid monolayers grown in differentiation media for 7 days. *r*, Pearson correlation coefficient;

570 *P*, *P*-value; SI, small intestine. *$P \leq 0.05$ by simple regression analysis

572 **Table S3**

Gene induction	Age				SARS-CoV-2 replication			
	SI		Colon		SI		Colon	
	r	*P*	*r*	*P*	*r*	*P*	*r*	*P*
ISG15								
100 IU/ml IFNβ	0.190	0.652	-0.202	0.576	0.213	0.612	0.104	0.775
300 IU/ml IFNβ	0.239	0.569	-0.118	0.745	0.146	0.731	-0.149	0.682
10 ng/ml IFNλ2	0.208	0.622	-0.271	0.449	0.012	0.977	-0.305	0.391
30 ng/ml IFNλ2	0.295	0.478	-0.167	0.645	-0.261	0.533	-0.118	0.745
OASL								
100 IU/ml IFNβ	0.884	0.004**	-0.293	0.412	-0.436	0.281	-0.227	0.529
300 IU/ml IFNβ	0.796	0.018*	0.196	0.412	-0.173	0.682	-0.143	0.694
10 ng/ml IFNλ2	0.458	0.254	-0.078	0.830	-0.412	0.31	-0.486	0.154
30 ng/ml IFNλ2	0.554	0.155	0.616	0.058	-0.341	0.409	-0.360	0.307
MX2								
100 IU/ml IFNβ	-0.211	0.616	-0.104	0.775	0.483	0.226	-0.078	0.831
300 IU/ml IFNβ	0.032	0.941	-0.050	0.892	0.499	0.208	-0.196	0.587
10 ng/ml IFNλ2	-0.464	0.247	-0.147	0.687	0.032	0.939	-0.337	0.342
30 ng/ml IFNλ2	0.247	0.556	0.075	0.837	0.019	0.965	-0.129	0.722

574 **Supplemental Table 3**. Correlation of subject age or PFU of SARS-CoV-2 with ISG induction in
575 organoids stimulated with IFNβ (100 or 300 IU/ml) or IFNλ2 (10 or 30 ng/ml) for 12 hrs. *r*, Pearson
576 correlation coefficient; *P*, *P*-value; SI, small intestine. *$P \leq 0.05$ and **$P \leq 0.01$ by simple
577 regression analysis.

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