1   **Delineating antibody escape from Omicron variants**

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Summary

SARS-CoV-2-neutralizing antibodies play a critical role for protection and treatment of

COVID-19. Viral antibody evasion therefore threatens essential prophylactic and

therapeutic measures. The high number of mutations in the Omicron BA.1 sublineage

results in markedly reduced neutralization susceptibility. Consistently, Omicron is

associated with lower vaccine effectiveness and a high re-infection rate. Notably, newly

emerging Omicron sublineages (BA.1.1, BA.2) have rapidly become dominant. Here, we

determine polyclonal serum activity against BA.1, BA.1.1 and BA.2 in 50 convalescent or

vaccinated individuals as well as delineate antibody sensitivities on a monoclonal level

using 163 antibodies. Our study reveals a significant but comparable reduction of serum

activity against Omicron sublineages which markedly increases after booster

immunization. However, notable differences in sensitivity to individual antibodies

demonstrate distinct escape patterns of BA.1 and BA.2 that also affect antibodies in

clinical use. The results have strong implications for vaccination strategies and antibody

use in prophylaxis and therapy.

Introduction

Following its emergence two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 has resulted in a global surge of infections (Viana et al., 2022). Although Omicron is associated with reduced pathogenicity, its high transmissibility poses a considerable threat to individuals at risk and the public health system (Madhi et al., 2022; Meng et al., 2022; Shuai et al., 2022). Moreover, high rates of breakthrough infections in immunized individuals are clinical manifestations of its immune evasive properties (Altarawneh et al., 2022; Andrews et al., 2022; Madhi et al., 2022; Tseng et al., 2022). Omicron's marked resistance to neutralizing antibodies induced by vaccination or previous infection is mediated by a high number of mutations in the spike protein (Cao et al., 2022; Carreno et al., 2022; Cele et al., 2022; Garcia-Beltran et al., 2022; Gruell et al., 2022; Hoffmann et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022; Planas et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2022; VanBlargan et al., 2022). These include mutations that have rendered several therapeutic monoclonal antibodies ineffective (Gruell et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022; VanBlargan et al., 2022). Prolonged vaccine dosing intervals and booster immunizations based on the ancestral Wu01 strain of SARS-CoV-2 elicit Omicron-neutralizing serum activity (Cheng et al., 2022; Garcia-Beltran et al., 2022; Gruell et al., 2022; Perez-Then et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2022; Wratil et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2022). However, serum titers against Omicron remain lower compared to those against other variants and Omicron breakthrough infections are frequently observed (Kuhlmann et al., 2022). Most experimental evidence on the resistance of the Omicron variant to antibody-mediated neutralization is limited to analyses of the initial BA.1 strain. However, as additional sublineages emerge (Qassim et al., 2022; Yamasoba et al., 2022), determining their escape properties is of critical importance to effectively guide preventive and therapeutic measures. Therefore, we

determined in detail antibody-mediated neutralization of the prevalent Omicron

sublineages (BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2), both on a polyclonal and monoclonal level.

Results

Rapid spread of Omicron sublineages

Compared to the Wu01 strain of SARS-CoV-2, the spike protein of BA.1 differs in 39 amino

acid residues (**Figure 1A**). While recently emerged sublineages of Omicron share several

BA.1 mutations, they differ at various amino acid positions and therefore can alter critical

epitopes (**Figures 1A** and **1B**). For example, the spike protein of sublineage BA.1.1

contains an additional R346K substitution in the receptor-binding domain (RBD) that was

previously observed in the Mu variant of SARS-CoV-2 and has been associated with escape

from neutralizing antibodies (**Figure 1A**) (Greaney et al., 2021). Moreover, BA.2 shares

only 21 (68%) of its 31 spike protein amino acid changes with BA.1 (**Figure 1A**).

Therefore, BA.2 differs considerably from BA.1 and BA.1.1 in both the N-terminal domain

(NTD) and the RBD, regions targeted by the most potent SARS-CoV-2-neutralizing

antibodies (**Figure 1A**). While BA.1 and BA.1.1 dominated the initial surge of Omicron

infections, they have already been outcompeted by BA.2 in numerous countries (**Figure**

1C). Therefore, the BA.2 omicron sublineage is likely to dominate the SARS-CoV-2

pandemic in the near future.

Comparable reduction of serum neutralizing activity against Omicron sublineages

We analyzed serum neutralizing activity using lentivirus-based pseudovirus assays

against the ancestral Wu01 strain as well as BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 Omicron sublineages

(Crawford et al., 2020; Vanshylla et al., 2021). To this end, we collected samples from two

longitudinal cohorts of i.) SARS-CoV-2-convalescent individuals (n=20) and ii.) vaccinated

health care workers (n=30) (**Table S1**) (Hillus et al., 2021; Vanshylla et al., 2021). In both

cohorts, individuals received an mRNA booster immunization (BNT162b2) after a median

of 14 and 9 months following infection or two doses of BNT162b2, respectively.

Convalescent individuals had a median age of 51 years (interquartile range [IQR]

35-58) and were diagnosed with mild or asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection. Early post-

infection samples (V1) were collected at a median of 48 days (IQR 35-58) after disease

onset and neutralizing activity was assessed by determining the 50% inhibitory serum

dilutions (ID_{50}s) (**Figure 2A**). Neutralization of the Wu01 strain was detected in all

samples (100%) obtained early after infection, with individual ID_{50} values ranging from

16 to 3,200 (geometric mean ID_{50} [GeoMeanID_{50}] of 322) (**Figure 2B**). In contrast, serum

activity against Omicron sublineages was strongly reduced and only detectable in 15%,

0%, and 50% for BA.1., BA1.1, and BA.2 respectively (**Figure 2B**). However, following

booster immunization at a median of 33 days (IQR 27-54) in convalescent individuals,

Omicron-neutralizing activity was elicited in all individuals (**Figures 2B**, **2C**, **S1A** and

S1B), reaching GeoMeanID_{50}s of 1,688, 1,578, and 2,388 against BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2,

respectively (**Figure 2B**).

In addition, we determined Omicron sublineage-neutralizing activity induced only

by vaccination (**Figure 2D**). At a median of 28 days (IQR 27-32) after completion of the

initial two-dose course of BNT162b2 (V1), Wu01-neutralizing serum activity was

detected in all 30 individuals with a GeoMeanID_{50} of 585 (**Figure 2E**). Although Omicron

sublineage-neutralization was detectable in 43-73% of vaccinated individuals,

GeoMeanID_{50}s against BA.1, BA.1.1., and BA.2 were low at 11, 8, and 15, respectively

(**Figure 2E**). Follow-up samples obtained at a median of 29 days (IQR 26-35) after booster

immunization showed 8-fold higher activity against Wu01 (GeoMeanID_{50} of 4,817) and

strongly increased Omicron activity in all individuals with GeoMeanID$_{50}$s of 648 against

BA.1, 557 against BA.1.1, and 592 against BA.2 (**Figures 2E**, **S1C**, and **S1D**). We conclude

that booster immunizations are critical to elicit neutralizing serum activity against all

prevalent Omicron sublineages in vaccinated as well as convalescent individuals. Notably,

despite the differences in the spike proteins, Omicron sublineages were similarly affected

on the level of serum neutralization.

Dissecting viral escape of Omicron sublineages

To decode Omicron escape from neutralizing antibodies, we produced and tested 158

monoclonal antibodies isolated from SARS-CoV-2-convalescent individuals against all

Omicron sublineages. These included 67 randomly selected antibodies from the CoV-

AbDab (Raybould et al., 2021), 79 antibodies isolated in our previous work (Kreer et al.,

2020; Vanshylla et al., 2022), as well as 12 clinically evaluated antibodies. In total, this

antibody panel originated from at least 43 different individuals out of 19 independent

studies (**Figure 3A**, **Table S2**). The selection covered a broad spectrum of diverse SARS-

CoV-2 neutralizing antibodies encompassing 92 V_H/V_L combinations. Most of these

antibodies targeted the RBD (96.8 %) and included previously described public

clonotypes such as the $V_H3-53/3-66$ subgroup (**Figure 3A**).

While all antibodies neutralized the Wu01 strain, only 18%, 17%, and 22%

remained active against BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2, respectively (**Figure 3B**). Moreover,

neutralization against Omicron sublineages was overall lower with GeoMeanIC$_{50}$s of

0.431 (BA.1), 0.506 (BA.1.1), and 0.178 (BA.2) compared to Wu-01-neutralizing

antibodies (GeoMeanIC$_{50}$ of 0.030 µg/mL; **Figure 3C**). However, our analysis identified a

small number of antibodies with high potency against all Omicron sublineages, including

antibodies isolated from individuals with outstanding serum activity (Vanshylla et al.,

2022). For example, antibodies R207-2F11 and R568-1G9 both neutralized BA.1, BA.1.1,

and BA.2 with $IC_{50}s$ <0.01 μg/ml (**Table S2**). Notably, antibodies maintaining Omicron-

neutralizing activity carried a modest but significantly higher (5.2 vs. 6.9) number of V_H

amino acid mutations (*p*=0.002), suggesting that a higher sequence diversification might

be favorable for Omicron neutralization (**Figure S2**). Importantly, while antibody

neutralization strongly correlated between BA.1 and BA.1.1 (r_s=0.858), a more divergent

neutralization profile was observed when comparing BA.1 and BA.2 (r_s=0.763; **Figures**

3D and **3E**). Based on the analysis of the sublineage neutralization profiles, two prevalent

classes of Omicron-neutralizing antibodies became apparent: i.) antibodies with

comparable activity against BA.1 and BA.2 lineages (72.5% of antibodies), and ii.)

antibodies with higher potency against BA.2 compared to BA.1 (25%) (**Figures 3E**, **3F**,

and **3G**). While only a single (2.5%) out of the 40 Omicron-neutralizing antibodies showed

>10-fold higher activity against BA.1 than BA.2, 10 out of 40 antibodies showed a 1.1 to

3.9 $\log_{10}$-fold higher potency against BA.2 (**Figure 3G**). This indicates that based on the

antibody panel tested, immune escape of BA.2 was less pronounced when compared to

BA.1 and BA.1.1.

Finally, antibody responses against SARS-CoV-2 have previously been

demonstrated to be highly convergent across individuals by the identification of several

public clonotypes, which are conserved in terms of sequence characteristics and

mechanisms of neutralization (Barnes et al., 2020; Nielsen et al., 2020; Robbiani et al.,

2020; Yuan et al., 2020). Among the analyzed antibody panel, we identified 18 sequences

from 11 individuals that could be assigned to a prominent $V_H3-53/3-66|V_K1-9$ clonotype

(**Figure 3H**) (Cao et al., 2020; Vanshylla et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021). Interestingly,

although these antibodies are highly conserved on a sequence level, they substantially

differed in their Omicron neutralizing capacity (**Figure 3H**). For example, antibodies

R207-1C4 and R568-2G5 showed similar neutralizing activity against Wu01 and harbor

eight amino acid mutations in their V_H gene segment (without CDRH3) of which five are

at the same position and three are identical. However, R207-1C4 was not capable of

neutralizing any Omicron variant, while R568-2G5 retained neutralizing activity against

all variants. Notably, another member of this clonotype, C140, which has the identical

CDRH3 motif as R568-2G5, did not neutralize any Omicron variant. These results indicate

that minimal differences in antibody sequence characteristics can tip the scale between

Omicron neutralization and resistance.

We conclude that the majority of Wu01-neutralizing antibodies lose activity

against Omicron sublineages. While most BA.1-neutralizing antibodies were reactive

against BA.1.1 and BA.2, the subset of antibodies with Omicron-neutralizing potency

restricted towards BA.2 indicates differences in sublineage antigenicity. Moreover, the

higher rate of BA.2- compared to BA.1-neutralizing monoclonal antibodies in our panel

suggests that the BA.2 spike protein incorporates fewer features associated with

resistance.

Impact of Omicron sublineages on clinical monoclonal antibodies

SARS-CoV-2-neutralizing monoclonal antibodies can reduce morbidity and mortality in

infected individuals. Moreover, they are critical for passive immunization to protect

individuals that do not mount an adequate immune response upon vaccination (Cohen et

al., 2021; Corti et al., 2021; Dougan et al., 2021; Group, 2022; Gupta et al., 2021; O'Brien

et al., 2021; Weinreich et al., 2021). To determine how spike protein mutations of Omicron

sublineages affect antibodies in clinical use, we analyzed 9 monoclonal antibodies that

received authorization for clinical use (**Figure 4A**) and 9 that are advanced in clinical

development (**Figure S3**). All tested antibodies targeted the RBD of the SARS-CoV-2 spike

protein and were tested in parallel against Wu01 and the Omicron sublineages (**Figure 4B**).

Most antibodies showed highly potent neutralizing activity against Wu01 with IC$_{50}$s below 0.005 µg/ml (**Figure 4B**). Less potent and incomplete Wu01-neutralizing activity was observed for sotrovimab, which is consistent with previous reports showing reduced activity against pseudoviruses lacking the dominant D614G spike mutation (**Figure 4A**) (Liu et al., 2021; Weissman et al., 2021). In contrast to the high Wu01 activity, only 5 (28%) out of the 18 tested antibodies neutralized BA.1 with IC$_{50}$s <10 µg/ml. Moreover, in 2 out of these 5 antibodies, neutralizing activity was decreased by >2 log$_{10}$ against BA.1 relative to Wu01 (**Figure 4B**). While the antibody neutralization profile against the BA.1.1 lineage was generally similar to that of BA.1, a few differences were detected. For example, DZIF-10c neutralized BA.1 with an IC$_{50}$ of 0.046 µg/ml but completely lost activity against BA.1.1 (**Figure 4B**). Although the number of antibodies in clinical use with neutralizing activity against BA.2 remained small (5 out 18, 28%), the neutralization profile of BA.2 differed from that of BA.1 and BA.1.1 (**Figure 4B**). For example, antibody COV2-2130 (cilgavimab) neutralized BA.2 with high potency (IC$_{50}$ of 0.008 µg/ml) that was similar to its activity against Wu01 and >800-fold higher than against BA.1 and BA.1.1 (**Figures 4A** and **4B**). In addition, while antibody imdevimab showed no appreciable activity against BA.1 and BA.1.1, neutralization of BA.2 was detectable at low levels (**Figures 4A** and **4B**). Out of all clinical antibodies tested, the recently authorized LY-CoV1404 (bebtelovimab) showed the highest levels of neutralizing activity against all Omicron sublineages (**Figures 4A** and **4B**).

We conclude that the prevalent Omicron sublineages are resistant to most monoclonal antibodies in clinical use and/or under investigation. Omicron sensitivity to these antibodies can, however, strongly differ on the sublineage level. Selection of

monoclonal antibodies for treatment or prevention of Omicron infection should therefore

take sublineage identification and/or epidemiology into account.

Discussion

Neutralizing antibody-mediated immunity is a critical component of prophylactic and

therapeutic measures against SARS-CoV-2 infection (Corti et al., 2021; Feng et al., 2021;

Khoury et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has been characterized by ongoing viral

evolution and periodic emergence of dominant variants in the context of increasing levels

of population immunity that can drive selection of antibody resistance (Harvey et al.,

2021). Soon after its appearance and explosive spread, considerable immune evasion of

the highly mutated BA.1 sublineage of Omicron was confirmed both experimentally and

clinically (Altarawneh et al., 2022; Andrews et al., 2022; Cao et al., 2022; Carreno et al.,

2022; Cele et al., 2022; Garcia-Beltran et al., 2022; Gruell et al., 2022; Hoffmann et al.,

2022; Liu et al., 2022; Madhi et al., 2022; Planas et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2022; Tseng et

al., 2022; VanBlargan et al., 2022). However, novel Omicron sublineages with differing

spike proteins have since become increasingly prevalent, suggesting higher immune

escape and/or higher transmissibility (Lyngse et al., 2022; Qassim et al., 2022; Yamasoba

et al., 2022). Establishing the impact of the new Omicron sublineages on polyclonal and

monoclonal immunity is therefore critical to guide antibody-mediated strategies for

prevention and treatment.

Our results demonstrate that Wu01-based mRNA vaccine boosters are effective in

eliciting activity against the Omicron sublineages and result in comparable neutralizing

titers against BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2. Although neutralizing activity against Omicron was

considerably lower than against the ancestral strain, booster immunizations will

therefore continue to be a critical component of vaccination strategies. In addition, our

analyses of a large antibody panel revealed similarities and differences in the sensitivity of Omicron sublineages to antibodies isolated from SARS-CoV-2-convalescent individuals. While the resistance profiles of BA.1 and BA.1.1 were largely overlapping, a substantial fraction of antibodies with poor or no BA.1/BA.1.1-neutralizing activity showed high activity against BA.2. Therapeutic monoclonal antibodies authorized for prevention or treatment of SARS-CoV-2 infection were differentially affected, with some showing increased and some showing reduced activity against BA.2 compared to BA.1, confirming similar observations (Iketani et al., 2022). As the majority of tested antibodies failed to neutralize any of the Omicron sublineages, highly potent antibodies identified by our analysis may provide novel options for treatment and prevention in the Omicron era.

Our observations of higher pre-boost activity against BA.2, comparable neutralization titers after booster immunization, as well the higher fraction of BA.2- than BA.1-neutralizing monoclonal antibodies isolated from convalescent individuals suggest that BA.2 overall does not have higher levels of antibody escape compared to BA.1. Outcompetition of BA.1 by BA.2 therefore appears to driven rather by higher transmissibility and/or other virological characteristics than by immune evasion. However, as the rapid emergence of the highly resistant Omicron variant illustrated the challenges posed by viral evolution, continuous genomic surveillance and assessments of viral sensitivity will be critical for informing antibody-based prophylactic and therapeutic measures.

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Figure legends

Figure 1. Omicron sublineage differences.

(A) Spike amino acid changes in the BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 Omicron sublineages relative

to Wu01. **(B)** Locations of changed amino acids in Omicron sublineages highlighted on the

SARS-CoV-2 spike (PDB: 6XR8). Representations on the right show RBD and NTD outlined

in black. Changes exclusive to BA.2 are indicated in dark red (visible on surface) and light

red (not visible). In **(A)** and **(B),** mutations shared between BA.1 and BA.1.1 are shown in

orange, mutations shared between BA.1, BA.1.1 and BA.2 are shown in blue, the R346K

mutation exclusive to BA.1.1 is shown in green, and mutations exclusive to BA.2 are

shown in red. **(C)** Proportion of sequences submitted to the GISAID SARS-CoV-2 database

per variant and week (accessed on April 2, 2022). NTD, N-terminal domain; RBD,

receptor-binding domain; PDB, Protein Data Bank.

Figure 2. Omicron sublineage-neutralizing serum activity in vaccinated and

convalescent individuals.

(A) Study scheme in COVID-19-convalescent individuals. Samples were collected after

infection occurring between February and April, 2020 (V1), and after a BNT162b2

booster immunization (V2). **(B)** Fifty-percent inhibitory serum dilutions (ID_{50}s) against

Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 determined by pseudovirus neutralization assays in

convalescent individuals. Bars indicate geometric mean ID_{50}s with 95% confidence

intervals (CIs) at V1 (left) and V2 (right). Numbers indicate geometric mean ID_{50}s and

percentage of individuals with detectable neutralizing activity (ID_{50} >10) in parentheses.

(C) Correlation plots of log_{10} serum ID_{50}s against Wu01 (top) and BA.1 (bottom) versus

BA.2 at V2 in convalescent individuals. r_s indicates Spearman's rank correlation

coefficients. **(D)** Study scheme in vaccinated individuals. Samples were collected after the

second dose of BNT162b2 (V1) and after the third dose of BNT162b2 (V2). **(E)** Serum

ID_{50}s against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 determined by pseudovirus neutralization

assays in vaccinated individuals. Bars indicate geometric mean ID_{50}s with 95% CIs at V1

(left) and V2 (right). Numbers indicate geometric mean ID_{50}s and percentage of

individuals with detectable neutralizing activity (ID_{50} >10) in parentheses. **(F)** Correlation

plots of log_{10} serum ID_{50}s against Wu01 (top) and BA.1 (bottom) versus BA.2 at V2 in

vaccinated individuals. r_s indicates Spearman's rank correlation coefficients. In **(B)** and

(E), ID_{50}s below the lower limit of quantification (LLOQ, ID_{50} of 10; indicated by black

dotted lines) were imputed to ½ LLOQ (ID_{50}=5). In **(B)** and **(C)**, ID_{50}s above the upper

limit of quantification (21,870) were imputed to 21,871.

Figure 3. Determining Omicron sublineage immune escape using monoclonal

antibodies.

(A) SARS-CoV-2-neutralizing monoclonal antibodies (*n*=158) derived from 19 studies and

isolated from ≥43 convalescent individuals were analyzed. Bar charts indicate number of

antibodies per heavy chain variable gene segment (V_H), amino acid (aa) length of the

heavy chain complementarity-determining region 3 (CDRH3), and number of V_H aa

mutations relative to the V_H germline gene. Pie chart indicates antibody epitopes with

slice sizes proportional to the number of antibodies. **(B)** Fraction of monoclonal

antibodies neutralizing (IC$_{50}$ <10 μg/ml) Wu01 (green), BA.1 (light red), BA.1.1 (dark

red), and BA.2 (blue) in pseudovirus neutralization assay. **(C)** IC$_{50}$s of antibodies with

neutralizing activity (IC$_{50}$ <10 μg/ml) against the individual variants (Wu01, *n*=158; BA.1,

n=29; BA.1.1, *n=27*; BA.2, *n=34*). Bars depict geometric mean IC$_{50}$s and dotted line

indicates lower limit of quantification (LLOQ, 0.005 μg/ml). **(D)** Spider plot of IC$_{50}$s for all

antibodies against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2. Antibodies are sorted arbitrarily but

equally for each virus. **(E)** Correlation plots of IC$_{50}$s of all antibodies against BA.1.1 (left)

and BA.2 (right) versus BA.1. Colors indicate epitopes as in **(A)**. Dashed lines represent

identity lines and dotted lines indicate limits of quantification. **(F)** Bar charts of antibodies

with neutralizing activity (IC$_{50}$ <10 μg/ml) against any Omicron sublineage (*n*=40).

Antibodies in each chart are sorted by BA.1-neutralizing activity (black outline) and bars

show IC$_{50}$s against indicated sublineages. Dotted lines show LLOQ (0.005 μg/ml) and

upper limit of quantification (ULOQ; 10 μg/ml). **(G)** Ratio (log$_{10}$) of IC$_{50}$s against BA.1 and

BA.2 for all neutralizing antibodies with any Omicron sublineage-neutralizing activity

(IC$_{50}$ <10 μg/ml; *n*=40). Ratios >1 log$_{10}$ are highlighted in green and percentage of

antibodies with ratio >1 log$_{10}$ is indicated. In **(E)-(G)**, IC$_{50}$ <LLOQ were imputed to ½ LLOQ

(IC$_{50}$=0.0025) and IC$_{50}$ values >ULOQ were imputed to 2x ULOQ (IC$_{50}$=20). **(H)**

Phylogenetic tree and sequence alignment of antibodies of the V$_H$3-53/3-66|V$_K$1-9 public

clonotype. Letters indicate aa mutations relative to the V$_H$ germline gene. Number of aa

mutations compared to the corresponding germline allele and neutralizing activity

against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 are indicated on the right. Germline V$_H$ represents

the consensus of all identified germline alleles of depicted antibodies (V$_H$3-53*01, V$_H$3-

53*04, and V$_H$3-66*01).

Figure 4. Omicron sublineage-neutralizing activity of monoclonal antibodies in clinical use.

(A) Dose response curves showing % neutralization of monoclonal antibodies against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 in pseudovirus neutralization assay. Circles show averages and error bars indicate standard deviation. Dotted lines indicate 50% neutralization (IC_{50}). **(B)** IC_{50}s against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 of monoclonal antibodies with current or previous authorization for clinical use or in clinical development. Symbols indicate whether clinical products or parental antibodies produced as human IgG1 were used.

Supplementary figure legends

Figure S1. Serum neutralization of Omicron sublineages.

(A) Serum ID_{50}s against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 in the cohort of convalescent individuals after infection (V1) and BNT162b2 booster immunization (V2) as in **Figure 2**. Lines connect ID_{50}s of individual participants at V1 and V2. **(B)** Correlation plots of $\log_{10}$ serum ID_{50}s against indicated viruses in convalescent individuals at V2. r_s indicates Spearman's rank correlation coefficients. **(C)** Serum ID_{50}s against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 in the cohort of BNT162b2-vaccinated individuals after the second (V1) and the third vaccine dose (V2) as in **Figure 2**. Lines connect ID_{50}s of individual participants at V1 and V2. **(D)** Correlation plots of $\log_{10}$ serum ID_{50}s against indicated viruses in vaccinated individuals at V2. r_s indicates Spearman's rank correlation coefficients.

Figure S2. Sequence mutations in Omicron-neutralizing antibodies.

Number of antibody V_H amino acid mutations compared to V_H germline sequence for antibodies not neutralizing (IC_{50} >10 µg/ml) any of the Omicron sublineages (left) or neutralizing at least one of the Omicron sublinages (right). Lines indicate mean and error bars indicate standard deviation. Statistical significance was determined using a two-sided Mann-Whitney U test.

Figure S3. Omicron sublineage-neutralizing activity of monoclonal antibodies in clinical testing.

Dose response curves showing % neutralization of monoclonal antibodies against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 in a pseudovirus neutralization assay. Circles show averages and error bars indicate standard deviation. Dotted lines indicate 50% neutralization (IC_{50}).

Supplementary tables

Table S1: Study cohorts

Table S2: Monoclonal antibody panel analyses

Methods

Study cohort and sample collection

Serum samples from COVID-19-convalescent individuals were collected at the University Hospital Cologne under study protocols approved by the ethics committee (EC) of the Medical Faculty of the University of Cologne (16-054 and 20-1187). Between April and May, 2020, individuals with a history of SARS-CoV-2 infection confirmed by polymerase

chain reaction (documented through a written test certificate or as reported to study investigators by the participants) were enrolled within eight weeks of symptom onset and/or diagnosis. As all participants were enrolled early during the pandemic (i.e., prior to the emergence of variants of concern, as designated by the World Health Organization), most individuals are likely to have been infected with an early viral strain similar to Wu01. Participants were followed longitudinally to analyze long-term immunity to SARS-CoV-2.

Serum samples from vaccinated individuals were collected under protocols approved by the EC of Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin (EICOV, EA4/245/20) as well as the EC of the Federal State of Berlin and the Paul Ehrlich Institute (COVIM, EudraCT-No. 2021-001512-28). Study participation irrespective of medical conditions was offered to health-care workers vaccinated at the Charité – Universitätsmedizin (Berlin, Germany). All serum samples were tested for antibodies targeting the SARS-CoV-2 nucleocapsid using the SeraSpot Anti-SARS-CoV-2 IgG microarray-based immunoassay (Seramun Diagnostica). Samples from individuals with a history of SARS-CoV-2 infection, a positive SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid amplification test (performed at sampling), or detectable anti-nucleocapsid antibodies were not included in this analysis.

All study participants provided written informed consent. Vaccinations in both cohorts were performed as part of routine care outside of the observational studies. Selection of participants and samples for analysis was based on receipt of identical vaccines and comparable sampling time points relative to vaccinations. Serum samples were collected after centrifugation and stored at -80°C until analysis.

SARS-CoV-2 pseudovirus constructs

All SARS-CoV-2 spike proteins were expressed using codon-optimized expression plasmids. Wu01 (EPI_ISL_406716) pseudoviruses were produced using an expression

plasmid that incorporated a C-terminal deletion of 21 cytoplasmic amino acids that result

in increased pseudovirus titers. Expression plasmids for Omicron sublinage spike

proteins were produced by assembling and cloning codon-optimized overlapping gene

fragments (Thermo Fisher) into the pCDNA3.1/V5-HisTOPO vector (Thermo Fisher)

using the NEBuilder HiFi DNA Assembly Kit (New England Biolabs), and included the full

spike protein amino acid sequences with the following amino acid changes relative to

Wu01:

BA.1: A67V, Δ69-70, T95I, G142D, Δ143-145, N211I, Δ212, ins215EPE, G339D, S371L,

S373P, S375F, K417N, N440K, G446S, S477N, T478K, E484A, Q493R, G496S, Q498R,

N501Y, Y505H, T547K, D614G, H655Y, N679K, P681H, N764K, D796Y, N856K, Q954H,

N969K, and L981F.

BA.1.1: As for BA.1 with an additional R346K mutation.

BA.2: T19I, Δ24-26, A27S, A67V, G142D, V213G, G339D, S371F, S373P, S375F, T376A,

D405N, R408S, K417N, N440K, S477N, T478K, E484A, Q493R, Q498R, N501Y, Y505H,

D614G, H655Y, N679K, P681H, N764K, D796Y, Q954H, N969K.

All plasmid sequences were verified by sequencing.

Monoclonal antibodies

Monoclonal antibodies previously isolated in our lab had been obtained by single cell-

sorting of SARS-CoV-2 spike-specific B cells followed by reverse transcription, PCR

amplification and cloning of antibody variable regions (Kreer et al., 2020; Vanshylla et al.,

2022). For monoclonal antibodies derived from the CoV-AbDab (Raybould et al., 2021),

variable region amino acid sequences were reverse translated with the reverse translate

tool from the Sequence Manipulation Suite (Stothard, 2000) using the *Homo sapiens*

codon table obtained from the Codon Usage Database (Nakamura et al., 2000), and

sequences were ordered as gene fragments from Integrated DNA Technologies (IDT) with

5' and 3' overhangs. The variable regions were inserted into heavy and light chain

expression plasmids (Tiller et al., 2008) by sequence- and ligation-independent cloning

(SLIC). For antibodies ADG-2, COV2-2130, COV2-2196, COV2-2381, MAD0004J08, and

P2C-1F11, gene fragments based on the nucleotide sequences published in GenBank were

ordered at IDT and cloned as above. For antibodies C135, CT-P59, and LY-CoV1404, gene

fragments based on antibody structures deposited in the Protein Data Bank (accession

nos. 7K8Z, 7CM4, and 7MMO) were ordered at IDT after codon optimization using the IDT

Codon Optimization Tool and cloned as above. For antibodies 47D11, BD-368-2, C144,

and P2B-2F6, amino acid sequences were derived from CoV-AbDaB, corresponding

nucleotide sequences generated and codon-optimized using the IDT Codon Optimization

Tool, and gene fragments cloned as above.

Monoclonal antibody production was performed using 293-6E cells (National

Research Council of Canada) by co-transfection of heavy and light chain expression

plasmids using 25 kDa branched polyethylenimine (Sigma-Aldrich). Culture supernatants

were harvested after an incubation period of 6-7 days at 37°C and 6% CO_2 under constant

shaking in FreeStyle Expression Medium supplemented with penicillin (20 U/ml) and

streptomycin (20 µg/ml) (all Thermo Fisher). Clarified cell supernatants were incubated

with Protein G Sepharose 4 FastFlow (Cytiva) overnight at 4°C . After centrifugation,

antibodies bound to Protein G beads were eluted in chromatography columns (Bio-Rad)

using 0.1 M glycine (pH=3.0) and buffered in 1 M Tris (pH=8.0). Buffer exchange to PBS

was performed using centrifugal filter units (Millipore). For antibodies bamlanivimab,

casirivimab, DZIF-10c, etesevimab, imdevimab, and sotrovimab, aliquots from clinical

stocks were used.

Pseudovirus neutralization assays

Neutralization assays were performed using lentivirus-based pseudoviruses and ACE2-expressing 293T cells (Crawford et al., 2020; Vanshylla et al., 2021). Pseudovirus particle production was performed in HEK293T cells by co-transfection of individual expression plasmids encoding for the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, HIV-1 Tat, HIV-1 Gag/Pol, HIV-1 Rev, and luciferase-IRES-ZsGreen using FuGENE 6 Transfection Reagent (Promega). Culture supernatants were exchanged with fresh medium (high glucose DMEM supplemented with 2 mM L-glutamine, 100 IU/ml penicillin, 100 µg/ml streptomycin, 1 mM sodium pyruvate (all Thermo Fisher), and 10% FBS (Sigma-Aldrich)) 24 h post transfection. Pseudovirus-containing supernatants were harvested between 48-72 h after transfection, centrifuged, clarified using a 0.45 µm filter, and stored at -80°C. Pseudoviruses were titrated by infection of 293T-ACE2 cells and luciferase activity was determined after a 48-hour incubation at 37°C and 5% CO_2 by addition of luciferin/lysis buffer (10 mM $MgCl_2$, 0.3 mM ATP, 0.5 mM coenzyme A, 17 mM IGEPAL CA-630 (all Sigma-Aldrich), and 1 mM D-Luciferin (GoldBio) in Tris-HCL) using a microplate reader (Berthold).

Serum samples were heat-inactivated at 56°C for 45 min before use. Three-fold serial dilutions of serum (starting at 1:10) and monoclonal antibodies (starting at 10 µg/ml) were prepared in culture medium and co-incubated with pseudovirus supernatants for one hour at 37°C and 5% CO_2 prior to addition of 293T-ACE2 cells. Following a 48-hour incubation at 37°C and 5% CO_2, luciferase activity was determined as described above. Average background relative light units (RLUs) of non-infected cells were subtracted, and serum ID_{50}s and antibody IC_{50}s were determined as the serum dilutions and antibody concentrations resulting in a 50% RLU reduction compared to the average of virus-infected untreated controls cells using a non-linear fit model plotting an agonist vs. normalized dose response curve with variable slope using the least squares

fitting method in Prism 7.0 (GraphPad). All serum and monoclonal antibody samples were

tested in duplicates. Imputation rules for values outside the limits of quantification are

described below (see Statistical methods).

SARS-CoV-2 neutralizing antibody panel and sequence analysis

The panel of 158 SARS-CoV-2-neutralizing monoclonal antibodies isolated from SARS-

CoV-2 convalescent individuals included in the analysis in **Figure 3** is based on 79

antibodies obtained in our previous work (Kreer et al., 2020; Vanshylla et al., 2022), 67

randomly selected (retrieved on January 1, 2021) human SARS-CoV-2-neutralizing

antibodies deposited at CoV-AbDab (Raybould et al., 2021), and 12 antibodies in clinical

use or development. We did not include five of the antibodies in clinical development

shown in **Figure 4** into this analysis, as they were obtained from individuals infected with

SARS-CoV (ADG-2, sotrovimab), from immunized mice harboring human immunglobulin

gene repertoires (47D11, casirivimab), or using phage display technology that does not

ensure native pairing of antibody heavy and light chains (CT-P59). For antibody DZIF-10c,

the parental antibody (HbnC3t1p1_F4) was included in the analysis in **Figure 3**, while the

clinical product is included in **Figure 4**.

Antibody amino acid sequences were annotated with IgBLASTp (Ye et al., 2013)

based on the IMGT database (Lefranc, 2011). For sequence statistics, top V gene calls were

counted without individual alleles, CDR3 lengths are reported according to the IMGT

numbering system and numbers of V_H mutations refer to the top V gene call from

IgBLASTp. Phylogenetic analysis of antibodies belonging to the V_H3-53/3-66|V_K1-9 public

clonotype was performed by alignment of amino acid sequences with the MAFFT

algorithm (Katoh et al., 2002) via the EMBL-EBI search and sequence analysis tools API

(Madeira et al., 2019) and the Tree Builder tool from Geneious Prime 2020.0.4

(Biomatters) using the Jukes-Cantor distance model for tree building with the neighbour-

joining method without resampling. Data aggregation and visualization was performed

with the Python libraries pandas (v1.1.5), NumPy (v1.19.2), SciPy (v1.5.2), Matplotlib

(v3.3.4) with Python (v3.6.8), as well as Microsoft Excel 2011 for Mac (v14.7.3), and

Adobe Illustrator.

Visualization of SARS-CoV-2 spike amino acid changes

Amino acid changes relative to the Wu01 spike protein were visualized on a cryo-electron

microscopy 3D-reconstruction of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein (PDB ID: 6XR8) (Cai et al.,

2020) using ChimeraX (v. 1.3) (Goddard et al., 2018; Pettersen et al., 2021).

SARS-CoV-2 variant distribution

GISAID-curated clade and lineage statistics of sequences submitted to the GISIAD

database (Elbe and Buckland-Merrett, 2017; Khare et al., 2021; Shu and McCauley, 2017)

were retrieved from GISAID (accessed on April 2, 2022) and frequency of individual

variants was plotted as fraction of all submitted sequences per week and variant.

Statistical Methods

For graphical representation and statistical evaluation of serum samples in **Figures 2** and

S1, samples that did not achieve 50% inhibition at the lowest tested dilution of 10 (lower

limit of quantification, LLOQ) were imputed to ½ of the LLOQ ($ID_{50}=5$) and serum samples

with ID_{50} >21,870 (upper limit of quantification) were imputed to $ID_{50}=21871$. For

graphical representation and statistical analysis of monoclonal neutralizing antibodies in

Figure 3, IC_{50} values of antibodies with an IC_{50} <0.005 µg/ml (LLOQ) were imputed to ½

LLOQ ($IC_{50}=0.0025$) and IC_{50} values >10 µg/ml (ULOQ) were imputed to 2x ULOQ ($IC_{50}=20$

μg/ml). Spearman's rank correlation coefficients were determined using Prism 7.0

(GraphPad; serum samples) or the spearmanr() function of the SciPy-package (v 1.5.2)

stats-module (monoclonal antibodies). For the comparison of the number of V_H amino

acid mutations relative to germline between antibodies neutralizing Wu01 or any

Omicron sublineage, a two-sided Mann-Whitney U test was performed using the

mannwhitneyu() function of the SciPy-package (v 1.5.2) stats-module.

Data and code availability

Requests for data or materials should be directed to the corresponding author and may

be subject to restrictions based on data and privacy protection regulations and/or may

require a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA). The paper does not report original code.

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Figure 1

Figure 1. Omicron sublineage differences.
(A) Spike amino acid changes in the BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 Omicron sublineages relative to Wu01. **(B)** Locations of changed amino acids in Omicron sublineages highlighted on the SARS-CoV-2 spike (PDB: 6XR8). Representations on the right show RBD and NTD outlined in black. Changes exclusive to BA.2 are indicated in dark red (visible on surface) and light red (not visible). In (A) and (B), mutations shared between BA.1 and BA.1.1 are shown in orange, mutations shared between BA.1, BA.1.1 and BA.2 are shown in blue, the R346K mutation exclusive to BA.1.1 is shown in green, and mutations exclusive to BA.2 are shown in red. **(C)** Proportion of sequences submitted to the GISAID SARS-CoV-2 database per variant and week (accessed on April 2, 2022). NTD, N-terminal domain; RBD, receptor-binding domain; PDB, Protein Data Bank.

Figure 2

Figure 2. Omicron sublineage-neutralizing serum activity in vaccinated and convalescent individuals.
(A) Study scheme in COVID-19-convalescent individuals. Samples were collected after infection occurring between February and April, 2020 (V1), and after a BNT162b2 booster immunization (V2). **(B)** Fifty-percent inhibitory serum dilutions (ID_{50}s) against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 determined by pseudovirus neutralization assays in convalescent individuals. Bars indicate geometric mean ID_{50}s with 95% confidence intervals (CIs) at V1 (left) and V2 (right). Numbers indicate geometric mean ID_{50}s and percentage of individuals with detectable neutralizing activity ($ID_{50} > 10$) in parentheses. **(C)** Correlation plots of $\log_{10}$ serum ID_{50}s against Wu01 (top) and BA.1 (bottom) versus BA.2 at V2 in convalescent individuals. r_s indicates Spearman's rank correlation coefficients. **(D)** Study scheme in vaccinated individuals. Samples were collected after the second dose of BNT162b2 (V1) and after the third dose of BNT162b2 (V2). **(E)** Serum ID_{50}s against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 determined by pseudovirus neutralization assays in vaccinated individuals. Bars indicate geometric mean ID_{50}s with 95% CIs at V1 (left) and V2 (right). Numbers indicate geometric mean ID_{50}s and percentage of individuals with detectable neutralizing activity ($ID_{50} > 10$) in parentheses. **(F)** Correlation plots of $\log_{10}$ serum ID_{50}s against Wu01 (top) and BA.1 (bottom) versus BA.2 at V2 in vaccinated individuals. r_s indicates Spearman's rank correlation coefficients. In (B) and (E), ID_{50}s below the lower limit of quantification (LLOQ, ID_{50} of 10; indicated by black dotted lines) were imputed to ½ LLOQ ($ID_{50}=5$). In (B) and (C), ID_{50}s above the upper limit of quantification (21,870) were imputed to 21,871.

Figure 3

Figure 3. Determining Omicron sublineage immune escape using monoclonal antibodies.

(A) SARS-CoV-2-neutralizing monoclonal antibodies (n=158) derived from 19 studies and isolated from ≥43 convalescent individuals were analyzed. Bar charts indicate number of antibodies per heavy chain variable gene segment (V_H), amino acid (aa) length of the heavy chain complementarity-determining region 3 (CDRH3), and number of V_H aa mutations relative to the V_H germline gene. Pie chart indicates antibody epitopes with slice sizes proportional to the number of antibodies. (B) Fraction of monoclonal antibodies neutralizing (IC_{50} <10 µg/ml) Wu01 (green), BA.1 (light red), BA.1.1 (dark red), and BA.2 (blue) in pseudovirus neutralization assay. (C) IC_{50}s of antibodies with neutralizing activity (IC_{50} <10 µg/ml) against the individual variants (Wu01, n=158; BA.1, n=29; BA.1.1, n=27; BA.2, n=34). Bars depict geometric mean IC_{50}s and dotted line indicates lower limit of quantification (LLOQ, 0.005 µg/ml). (D) Spider plot of IC_{50}s for all antibodies against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2. Antibodies are sorted arbitrarily but equally for each virus. (E) Correlation plots of IC_{50}s of all antibodies against BA.1.1 (left) and BA.2 (right) versus BA.1. Colors indicate epitopes as in (A). Dashed lines represent identity lines and dotted lines indicate limits of quantification. (F) Bar charts of antibodies with neutralizing activity (IC_{50} <10 µg/ml) against any Omicron sublineage (n=40). Antibodies in each chart are sorted by BA.1-neutralizing activity (black outline) and bars show IC_{50}s against indicated sublineages. Dotted lines show LLOQ (0.005 µg/ml) and upper limit of quantification (ULOQ; 10 µg/ml). (G) Ratio ($\log_{10}$) of IC_{50}s against BA.1 and BA.2 for all neutralizing antibodies with any Omicron sublineage-neutralizing activity (IC_{50} <10 µg/ml; n=40). Ratios >1 $\log_{10}$ are highlighted in green and percentage of antibodies with ratio >1 $\log_{10}$ is indicated. In (E)-(G), IC_{50} <LLOQ were imputed to ½ LLOQ (IC_{50}=0.0025) and IC_{50} values >ULOQ were imputed to 2x ULOQ (IC_{50}=20). (H) Phylogenetic tree and sequence alignment of antibodies of the V_H3-53/3-66|V_K1-9 public clonotype. Letters indicate aa mutations relative to the V_H germline gene. Number of aa mutations compared to the corresponding germline allele and neutralizing activity against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 are indicated on the right. Germline V_H represents the consensus of all identified germline alleles of depicted antibodies (VH3-53*01, VH3-53*04, and VH3-66*01).

Figure 4

A

B

	Antibody		IC$_{50}$ (µg/ml)			
	Clinical ID	Parental ID	Wu01	BA.1	BA.1.1	BA.2
Approved	Bamlanivimab*	LY-CoV555	<0.005	>10	>10	>10
	Etesevimab*	CB6/JS016	0.018	>10	>10	>10
	Bebtelovimab	LY-CoV1404[†]	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005
	Imdevimab*	REGN10987	<0.005	>10	>10	4.173
	Casirivimab*	REGN10933	<0.005	>10	>10	>10
	Sotrovimab*	S309	0.685	0.105	0.127	1.488
	Tixagevimab	COV2-2196[†]	<0.005	>10	>10	>10
	Cilgavimab	COV2-2130[†]	<0.005	6.848	>10	0.008
	Regdanvimab	CT-P59[†]	<0.005	>10	>10	>10
In trials	DZIF-10c*	HbnC3t1p1_F4	<0.005	0.046	>10	0.033
	BRII-196	P2C-1F11[†]	<0.005	>10	>10	>10
	BMS-986414	C135[†]	<0.005	>10	>10	>10
	BMS-986413	C144[†]	<0.005	>10	>10	>10
	ADM03820[§]	COV2-2381[†]	0.008	>10	>10	>10
	ADG-20	ADG-2[†]	<0.005	0.212	0.194	>10
	ABBV-47D11	47D11[†]	0.386	>10	>10	>10
	BGB-DXP593	BD-368-2[†]	<0.005	>10	>10	>10
	n.a.	MAD0004J08[†]	<0.005	>10	>10	>10

* Clinical product used.

[†] Parental antibody (Fc-unmodified IgG1) used.

[§] Combination product of COV2-2381 and COV2-2130.

Figure 4. Omicron sublineage-neutralizing activity of monoclonal antibodies in clinical use.
(A) Dose response curves showing % neutralization of monoclonal antibodies against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 in pseudovirus neutralization assay. Circles show averages and error bars indicate standard deviation. Dotted lines indicate 50% neutralization (IC$_{50}$). **(B)** IC$_{50}$s against Wu01, BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2 of monoclonal antibodies with current or previous authorization for clinical use or in clinical development. Symbols indicate whether clinical products or parental antibodies produced as human IgG1 were used.