

1 **Title: Observed Antibody Space: a resource for data mining next generation sequencing antibody**
2 **repertoires.**

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13 **Abstract.** Antibodies are immune system proteins that recognize noxious molecules for elimination.
14 Their sequence diversity and binding versatility have made antibodies the primary class of
15 biopharmaceuticals. Recently it has become possible to query their immense natural diversity using
16 next-generation sequencing of immunoglobulin gene repertoires (Ig-seq). However, Ig-seq outputs are
17 currently fragmented across repositories and tend to be presented as raw nucleotide reads, which
18 means nontrivial effort is required to reuse the data for analysis. To address this issue, we have
19 collected Ig-seq outputs from 53 studies, covering more than half a billion antibody sequences across
20 diverse immune states, organisms and individuals. We have sorted, cleaned, annotated, translated and
21 numbered these sequences and make the data available via our Observed Antibody Space (OAS)
22 resource at antibodymap.org. The data within OAS will be regularly updated with newly released Ig-seq
23 datasets. We believe OAS will facilitate data mining of immune repertoires for improved understanding
24 of the immune system and development of better biotherapeutics.

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26 **1. Introduction**

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28 Antibodies (or B-cell receptors) are protein products of B-cells and primary actors of adaptive immunity
29 in jawed vertebrates¹. They are highly malleable molecules that can bind to virtually any antigen. An
30 organism holds a great variety of these molecules increasing the probability that an arbitrary antigen
31 can be recognized by an antibody, initiating an immune response². Owing to their binding malleability

32 they are the most prominent class of reagents and biotherapeutics^{3,4}. Continued successful exploitation
33 of these molecules relies on our ability to discern the functional diversity of antibody repertoires⁵⁻⁷.
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35 Next-generation sequencing of immunoglobulin gene repertoires (Ig-seq) has enabled researchers to
36 take snapshots of millions of sequences at a time across individuals, diverse organisms and different
37 immune states^{8,9}. The ability to analyze millions of antibody sequences has the potential to uncover the
38 mechanics of the immune response to any antigen^{10,11} and dysfunctions of the immune system itself¹².
39
40 Many previous studies have addressed the issue of antibody diversity, contributing invaluable evidence
41 to the dynamics of human immune systems¹³. Numerous analyses have focused on the frequencies of
42 V(D)J gene usages, which can offer insights into creating biased antibody libraries for therapeutic
43 applications¹⁴⁻¹⁶. Another therapeutic application of antibody repertoire analysis is advancing vaccine
44 design by comparative longitudinal studies of pre- and post-antigen challenge experiments^{10,11,17-22}.
45 Such comparative studies have shown that different individuals can converge on the same antibody
46 sequence against a given vaccine^{11,19}. Due to sequencing limitations, these analyses have focused on
47 heavy or light chains separately, whereas one ought to study the paired repertoire to obtain a deeper
48 insight of the antibody diversity²³.
49
50 Technical advances in sequencing technology have outpaced storage and analysis pipelines^{24,25}. This has
51 meant that the outputs of Ig-seq studies are fragmented across repositories making it difficult to
52 perform large-scale data mining of antibody repertoires²⁵. Metadata such as isotype, age or subject
53 identifiers are not typically standardized, therefore extraction of specific subsets of antibody repertoires
54 for comparative analyses is challenging. Furthermore, the data are typically deposited as raw nucleotide
55 reads. It requires non-trivial *ad hoc* effort to convert such raw reads to amino acid sequences that
56 ultimately dictate the molecular structure and antigen-recognition. Some of these issues are addressed
57 by services that provide Ig-seq-specific data deposition and analysis pipelines such as Immport
58 (<http://immport.org>)^{26,27}, or ImmunoseqAnalyzer (<http://clients.adaptivebiotech.com/>), IReceptor
59 (<http://ireceptor.irmacs.sfu.ca/>) or VDJSerVer (<http://vdjserver.org>)²⁸. The IReceptor and the VDJSerVer
60 are the main resources that fall under the umbrella of the organized effort by the Adaptive Immune
61 Receptor Repertoire (AIRR) Community to provide standardized deposition and analysis pipelines for the
62 Ig-seq outputs²⁴. These services chiefly focus on facilitating bulk deposition of raw data to perform
63 standardized sequencing analyses. Ultimately, because immunoinformatics is not the chief focus of such

64 services, bulk data download from such websites is limited and converting the raw nucleotide data
65 obtained into format suitable for analysis still requires non-trivial effort.

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67 To address these issues, we have created the Observed Antibody Space (OAS) resource that allows large-
68 scale data mining of antibody repertoires. We have collected the raw outputs of 53 Ig-seq experiments
69 covering over half a billion sequences. We have organized the sequences by metadata such as organism,
70 isotype, B-cell type and source, and the immune status of B-cell donors to facilitate bulk retrieval of
71 specific subsets for comparative analyses. We have converted all of the Ig-seq sequences to amino acids
72 and numbered them using the IMGT scheme. The data is available for querying or bulk download at
73 <http://antibodymap.org>. We believe that OAS will facilitate data mining antibody repertoires for
74 improved understanding of the dynamics of the immune system and thus better engineering of
75 biotherapeutics.

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77 **2. Materials and Methods**

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79 A list of study accession codes of publically available Ig-seq datasets were obtained via a literature
80 review. The majority of raw reads were downloaded from the European Nucleotide Archive (ENA)²⁹ and
81 the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) websites³⁰. In a small number of cases,
82 another public Ig-seq repository was specified e.g.^{14,31-33}. Metadata were manually extracted from the
83 deposited datasets and arranged in a reproducible format.

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85 The downloaded FASTQ files were processed depending on the sequencing platform. Paired raw
86 Illumina reads were assembled with FLASH³⁴. The assembled antibody sequences were converted to the
87 FASTA format using FASTX-toolkit³⁵. As raw reads from Roche 454 are not paired, these FASTQ files
88 were directly converted to the FASTA format with the FASTX-toolkit.

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90 The heavy chain sequences were automatically annotated with isotype information unless such data was
91 given in the corresponding publication. Automatic isotype annotation was performed by aligning the
92 constant heavy domain 1 (CH1) of any given antibody sequence against the IMGT isotype reference³⁶ of
93 the respective species using the Smith-Waterman algorithm³⁷. We assigned score of two for a
94 nucleotide match, and a score of minus one for a nucleotide mismatch or a gap in our Smith-Waterman
95 scoring function. The IMGT isotype references comprised 21 nucleotide-long fragments of the CH1

96 domain of the antibody isotypes. To ensure a high confidence of correct isotype identification, we
97 employed a conservative threshold of 30 in the Smith-Waterman algorithm scoring function. Sequences
98 whose Smith-Waterman algorithm score was below the threshold for all isotypes were assigned as
99 'bulk'. The robustness of this protocol was confirmed on the author-annotated Ig-seq datasets³⁸⁻⁴⁰
100 where it resulted in 99% accurate annotations. Around 1% of the Ig-seq data had a very short (or
101 missing) sequence of CH1 domain. Such sequences were also assigned as 'bulk'.

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103 IgBlastn⁴¹ was used to convert the FASTA files of antibody nucleotide sequences to amino acids. The
104 amino acid sequences were then numbered with ANARCI⁴² using the IMGT scheme⁴³. ANARCI does not
105 number a sequence if it does not align to a suitable Hidden Markov Model⁴⁴. ANARCI therefore ensures
106 that antibody sequences do not harbor unusual indels or stop codons in the antibody regions, that V and
107 J genes align to respective species amino acid IMGT germlines³⁶, and that the length of CDR-H3 is not
108 greater than 37 residues in human, mouse, rat, rabbit, alpaca and rhesus antibodies. Due to technical
109 limitations of sequencing platforms, certain reads were missing significant portions of the variable
110 region (e.g. portions of CDR1), sequences that did not have all three CDRs were discarded as incomplete.
111 The V and J genes are identified during the ANARCI numbering step.

112
113 Using the protocol above we annotated Ig-seq results of 53 independent studies. In order to streamline
114 updating OAS with new data, we have generated a procedure to automatically identify Ig-seq datasets
115 from raw sequence read archives. We apply our antibody annotation protocol to each raw nucleotide
116 dataset deposited in the NCBI/ENA repositories, if we find more than 10,000 antibody sequences in any
117 given dataset, it is set aside for manual inspection. It is still necessary to manually inspect raw datasets
118 to efficiently assign metadata as these are currently deposited in a non-standardized manner. This
119 procedure allows for automatic identification of new Ig-seq datasets, which will enable us to semi
120 automatically update OAS.

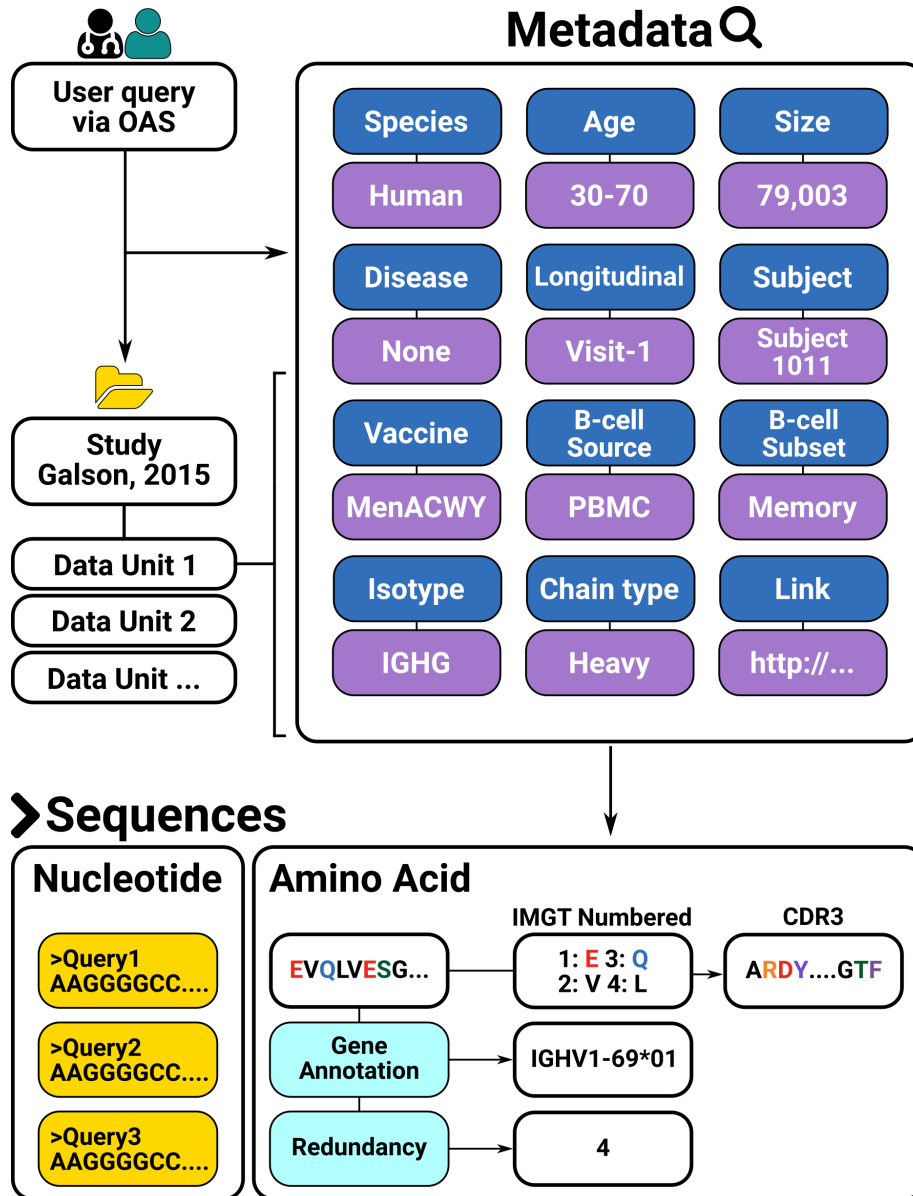
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122 **3. Results**

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124 We collected raw sequencing outputs from 53 Ig-seq studies. All raw nucleotide reads were converted
125 into amino acids using IgBlastn⁴¹. The full amino acid sequences were then IMGT numbered using
126 ANARCI⁴². As well as providing IMGT and gene annotations, ANARCI acts as a broad-brush filter of
127 antibody sequences that are likely to be erroneous (see Materials and Methods). Applying the same

128 retrieval, amino acid conversion, gene annotation and numbering protocol to all sequences assures the
 129 same point of reference across the 53 heterogeneous Ig-seq datasets⁴⁵. This protocol produces the full
 130 IMGT-numbered sequences together with gene annotations for each of the 53 datasets.
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 133 **Figure 1. The Observed Antibody Space database.** The data from 53 studies is sorted into Data
 134 Units. Each Data Unit is a set of antibody sequences that share the same set of meta-data. Each
 135 sequence in a Data Unit is further associated with sequence-specific annotations.

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138 The numbered amino acid sequences in each dataset are sorted by metadata e.g. individuals, age,
139 vaccination regime, B-cell type and source *etc.* (Figure 1). Deposition of such metadata is currently not
140 standardized and requires *ad hoc* manual curation for each dataset. In an effort to organize the antibody
141 sequences using such metadata, we have grouped the sequences within each dataset into Data Units.
142 Each Data Unit represents a group of sequences within a given dataset with a unique combination of
143 metadata values. The metadata values are summarized in Table 1.
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Metadata name	Metadata description
Chain	Heavy/light chain annotation.
Isotype	Identified or deposited isotype information.
Age	Information on the age of the human B-cell donors.
Disease	Indication of whether the donor was sick at the time of B-cell extraction.
Vaccine	Indication if the B-cell donor was purposely immunized prior to B-cell extraction.
B-cell subset	Indication if a particular B-cell subset was sorted for Ig-seq
Species	Organism of the B-cell donor
B-cell source	Which organ/tissue the B-cells were extracted from.
Subject	Indication of a particular B-cell donor the B-cells were sourced from.
Longitudinal	If the study was longitudinal, an indicator of the time point.
Size	Number of non-redundant sequences in the dataset.
Link	Link to the source publication.

145 Table 1. Metadata descriptors of each Data Unit in OAS. Each Data Unit is uniquely identified by the
146 study and a collection of the metadata values.

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155 As of April 29th 2018, 53 Ig-seq studies are included in OAS totaling 608,651,423 sequences (552,824,460
156 VH and 55,826,963 VL sequences). The majority of these sequences are murine (~50.4%) and human
157 (~47.4%). Twenty-two of the Ig-seq studies interrogate the immune system of diseased individuals, the
158 most common ailment being HIV (13 studies). The database also contains 22 Ig-seq studies of the naive
159 antibody gene repertoires (the collection of B-cells from donors who are healthy and not purposefully
160 vaccinated). The main source of B-cells in the OAS database is peripheral blood (~231m of sequences)
161 followed by spleen/splenocytes (~198m) and bone marrow (~124m). The database holds isotype
162 information for each individual heavy sequence and the two most common isotypes are IgM (~312m)
163 and IgG (~139m). For ~65m sequences we were not able to assign isotypes with high confidence. The
164 median total redundant size of the Ig-seq studies in the OSA database is 2,006,196 sequences, while the
165 largest Ig-seq study was that by Greiff et al., (246,449,189 redundant sequences)¹⁴. Detailed statistics on
166 each dataset are given in Table 2. All the data may be bulk downloaded or individual Data Units queried,
167 at <http://antibodymap.org>.

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Study	Species	Disease	Vaccine	B-cell source	B-cell subset	Total ANARCI parsed sequences
Banerjee et al., ⁴⁶	Rabbit	None	HIV	PBMC	Unsorted	4,334,088 (2,926,727)
Bashford-Rogers et al., ⁴⁷	Human	CLL/None	None	PBMC	Unsorted	129,013 (86,166)
Bhiman et al., ⁴⁸	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	785,751 (187,067)
Bonsignori et al., ⁴⁹	Human	HIV/None	None	PBMC	Memory/ Unsorted	210,377 (57,374)
Collins et al., ⁵⁰	Mouse	None	None	Splenocytes	Unsorted	812,439 (194,752)
Corcoran et al., ⁵¹	Human/ Mouse/ Rhesus	None	None	PBMC	Unsorted	5,307,880 (2,840,877)
Cui et al., ⁵²	Mouse	None	NP-CGG/None	Splenocytes	Memory	5,513,816 (935,646)
Doria-Rose et al., ¹³	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	2,164,901 (549,544)
Fisher et al., ⁵³	Mouse	None	Plasmodium	Spleen	Unsorted	175,015 (113,594)
Galson et al., ³⁸	Human	None	Hepatitis-B	PBMC	Unsorted/ Plasma cells/ HepB-specific	21,755,739 (10,442,291)
Galson et al., ³⁹	Human	None	Hepatitis-B	PBMC	Unsorted/ Plasma cells/ HepB-specific	26,687,394 (14,343,236)
Galson et al., ²¹	Human	None	Meningitis	PBMC	Naïve/ Plasma cells/ Memory/ Marginal zone	7,918,197 (3,282,907)
Galson et al., ¹⁷	Human	None	Flu	PBMC	Plasma cells	13,685,210 (5,065,786)
Greiff et al., ⁴⁰	Mouse	None	NP-CGG	Bone marrow/ Spleen	Plasma cells/ Plasmablasts	7,955,739 (2,891,649)
Greiff et al., ³³	Mouse	None	NP-CGG	Spleen	ASCs/Plasma cells/ Naïve	788,787 (523,716)
Greiff et al., ¹⁴	Mouse	None	OVA/Hepatitis-B/ NP-HEL/None	Spleen/ Bone marrow	Plasma cells/ Pre-B-cells/ Naïve	246,449,189 (129,417,638)
Gupta et al., ⁵⁴	Human	None	Flu/Hepatitis-A/ Hepatitis-B	PBMC	Unsorted	25,134,322 (9,966,175)
Halliley et al., ⁵⁵	Human	None	Flu/Tetanus	Bone marrow	Plasma cells	2,348,164 (1,208,616)
Huang et al., ⁵⁶	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Memory	11,693,783 (5,701,433)
Jiang et al., ⁵⁷	Human	None	Flu	PBMC	Naïve/ Plasmablasts	3,199,271 (1,809,306)
Joyce et al., ⁵⁸	Human	None	None	PBMC	Unsorted	2,747,688 (1,463,421)
Khan et al., ⁵⁹	Mouse	None	OVA	Spleen	Unsorted	24,175,033 (7,113,411)
Levin et al., ⁶⁰	Human	Allergy	None	PBMC/ Nasal biopsy	Unsorted	528,173 (370,465)
Levin et al., ⁶¹	Human	Allergy	None	PBMC/	Unsorted	29,643,305

				Bone marrow		(9,557,586)
Li et al., ⁶²	Camel	None	None	PBMC	Unsorted	1,152,359 (1,127,651)
Liao et al., ⁶³	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	1,420,314 (619,492)
Lindner et al., ⁶⁴	Mouse	None	E.Coli/ Clostridia/ Lactobacillus	Biopsy of small intestine	Unsorted	1,686,350 (544,061)
Meng et al., ⁶⁵	Human	CMV/ EBV/None	None	PBMC/Lung/ Spleen/Bone marrow/Colon/ Jejunum/Lymph node/Ileum	Unsorted	45,576,606 (21,738,501)
Menzel et al., ⁶⁶	Mouse	None	NP-CGG	Spleen/Bone marrow	ASCs	14,355,151 (6,058,480)
Mroczek et al., ⁶⁷	Human	None	None	PBMC	Immature/ Transitional/ Mature/ Plasmacytes/ Memory	104,154 (85,525)
Ota et al., ⁶⁸	Mouse	None	None	Spleen/Lymph	Unsorted	21,505 (9,619)
Palanichamy et al., ⁶⁹	Human	MS	None	CSF/PBMC	Unsorted	776,895 (292,801)
Parameswaran et al., ¹¹	Human	Dengue/None / Non-dengue febrile illness/	None	PBMC	Unsorted	26,584 (23,606)
Prohaska et al., ⁷⁰	Mouse	None	None	Spleen/ Peritoneum	B-1/ B-2/ Marginal Zone/ Follicular	336,723 (198,983)
Rettig et al., ³²	Mouse	None	None	Spleen/ Splenocytes	Unsorted	41,908 (24,908)
Rubelt et al., ⁷¹	Human	None	None	PBMC	Naïve/Memory	2,320,947 (1,719,507)
Schanz et al., ³¹	Human	HIV/None	None	PBMC	Unsorted	12,734,958 (5,412,549)
Zhu et al., ⁷²	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	1,962,643 (532,350)
Stern et al., ⁷³	Human	MS	None	Cervical lymph node/ White matter lesion/ Pia mater/ Choroid plexus/ Cortex/ Spleen	Unsorted	8,550,247 (3,321,530)
Sundling et al., ⁷⁴	Rhesus	None	HIV	PBMC	Unsorted	40,960 (26,298)
Tipton et al., ⁷⁵	Human	SLE/None	Flu/Tetanus	PBMC	Unsorted	28,204,742 (13,301,396)
Turchaninova et al., ⁷⁶	Human	None	None	PBMC	Memory/Plasma cells/Naive	183,949 (176,441)
Vander Heiden et al., ⁷⁷	Human	MG/None	None	PBMC	Memory/Naïve/ Unsorted	13,939,166 (5,170,299)
VanDuijn et al., ⁷⁸	Rat	None	DNP/HuD	Splenocytes	Unsorted	6,359,396 (4,234,597)
Vergani et al., ⁷⁹	Human	None	None	PBMC	Unsorted	14,161,949 (5,987,086)

Wasemann et al., ⁸⁰	Mouse	None	NP-CGG	Lamina propria/ Bone marrow/ Spleen	Unsorted	146,370 (40,132)
Wu et al., ⁸¹	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	394,144 (198,468)
Wu et al., ⁸²	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	5,545,910 (1,370,109)
Wu et al., ⁸³	Human	Allergy/ None	None	PBMC/ Nasal biopsy	Unsorted	35,034 (23,923)
Zhou et al., ²²	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	1,541,645 (458,227)
Zhou et al., ⁸⁴	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	722,112 (291,670)
Zhu et al., ⁸⁵	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	874,930 (174,435)
Zhu et al., ⁸⁶	Human	HIV	None	PBMC	Unsorted	1,290,499 (699,828)

186 **Table 2. Summary of Ig-seq studies that are incorporated into the Observed Antibody Space database.**

187 We organized the datasets among studies related to a given Ig-seq experiment. Each study in the OAS
188 database is subdivided into Data Units. Each Data Unit is a collection of IMGT-numbered amino acid
189 sequences uniquely identified by the metadata descriptors given in Table 1, five of which (species,
190 disease, vaccine, B-cell source and B-cell type) are given in this Table. The ‘total ANARCI parsed
191 sequences’ field indicates the total number of redundant sequences in our database, with the non-
192 redundant numbers in parentheses. Abbreviations: PBMC, peripheral blood mononuclear cell; CLL,
193 chronic lymphocytic leukemia; NP-CGG, chicken gamma globulin; ASC, antibody secreting cell; OVA,
194 ovalbumin; NP-HEL, hen egg lysozyme; CSF, cerebrospinal fluid; MS, multiple sclerosis; SLE, systemic
195 lupus erythematosus; MG, myasthenia gravis; DNP, dinitrophenyl; HuD, paraneoplastic
196 encephalomyelitis antigen.

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209 4. Discussion

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211 Here, we describe the Observed Antibody Space (OAS) database, a unified repository to facilitate large-
212 scale data mining of antibody repertoires in both their amino acid and nucleotide forms. Absence of well
213 established repositories in Ig-seq deposition space required us to perform a combination of literature
214 search and manual curation of the datasets in order to organize the data into OAS. The current lack of
215 widely-adopted deposition standards hampers automatic updating of OAS, as datasets where we find
216 large number of antibodies still require manual curation to perform metadata annotation correctly.
217 Hopefully, efforts such as that by the AIRR community will result in standardization of Ig-seq outputs
218 and will further streamline deposition procedures facilitating large-scale data mining of antibody
219 repertoires²⁴. Devising unified antibody repertoire repositories is challenging due to both the size of the
220 datasets as well as the diverse data descriptors and analytical pipelines desired by bioinformaticians,
221 wetlab scientists and clinicians³³.

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223 OAS is the first organized collection of a large body of Ig-seq outputs. In order to allow comparative
224 bioinformatics analyses across different subsets of the antibody repertoires, we have annotated the
225 datasets by commonly used metadata descriptions such as organism, isotype, B-cell type and source,
226 and the immune state of B-cell donors. To facilitate research about particular antibody sequences or
227 regions, we make full IMGT-numbered high-quality amino acid sequences available together with gene
228 annotations, as well as raw nucleotide data.

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230 This data should aid in-depth comparative analyses across different studies to discern the commonalities
231 observed between independent samples as well as directing Ig-seq experiments on not yet interrogated
232 antibody repertoires. Revealing shared preferences can be invaluable in identifying the portions of the
233 theoretically allowed antibody space that are strategically used to start an immune response⁶.

234 Furthermore, such comparative studies can offer a way of deconvoluting the various degrees of freedom
235 of immune repertoires such as differences between diversity of isotypes⁶⁷ or organisms⁸⁷. Charting the
236 differences between repertoires of human/mouse is of particular interest for engineering better
237 humanized biotherapeutics⁸⁸.

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239 Beyond identifying broad commonalities across repertoires, data mining Ig-seq outputs provides novel
240 avenues for designing better antibody-based therapeutics. The plethora of currently available Ig-seq

241 data offers a glimpse at a set of sequences that should be able to fold and function in an organism.
242 Aligning therapeutic candidates to sequences in Ig-seq repertoires can reveal mutational choices that
243 might be naturally acceptable hence providing shortcuts for antibody engineering such as humanization
244 ⁸⁹. Furthermore, contrasting the naturally observed antibodies with therapeutic ones can offer insight as
245 to the naturally favored biophysical properties of these molecules ^{4,90,91}. All such future applications rely
246 on the availability of well-structured datasets that can offer a unified point of reference for
247 bioinformatics analyses. We hope that OAS will aid data mining antibody repertoires, help identify
248 strategic preferences of our immune systems and will ultimately improve how we engineer antibodies
249 into better therapeutics.

250

251 **Acknowledgment:**

252 We would like to thank all members of Oxford Protein Informatics Group for testing our OAS resource.
253 In particular, we are grateful to Garret M. Morris and Matthew Raybould for their comments, which
254 significantly improved the quality of our work.

255

256 **Funding:**

257 This work was supported by funding from Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
258 (BBSRC) [BB/M011224/1] and UCB Pharma Ltd awarded to AK.

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