
Comprehensive Analysis of a Norovirus-Associated Gastroenteritis Outbreak, from the Environment to the Consumer

Françoise S. Le Guyader^{1,*}, Joanna Krol¹, Katia Ambert-Balay², Nathalie Ruvoen-Clouet^{3,4}, Benedicte Desaubliaux⁵, Sylvain Parnaudeau¹, Jean-Claude Le Saux¹, Agnès Ponge⁵, Pierre Pothier², Robert L. Atmar⁶, and Jacques Le Pendu³

¹ IFREMER, Laboratoire de Microbiologie, Nantes, France

² Laboratoire de Virologie et Microbiologie Médicale et Moléculaire, Reference Laboratory for Enteric Viruses, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire, Dijon, France

³ INSERM, U892, University of Nantes, Nantes, France

⁴ Ecole Nationale Vétérinaire de Nantes, Nantes, France

⁵ DDASS, Département Santé, Nantes, France

⁶ Department of Molecular Virology and Microbiology, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas⁶

*: Corresponding author : Françoise S. Le Guyader, Tél. : 33 2 40 37 40 52. Fax: 33 2 40 37 40 27, email address : sleguyad@ifremer.fr

Abstract:

Noroviruses have been recognized to be the predominant agents of nonbacterial gastroenteritis outbreaks in humans, and their transmission via contaminated shellfish consumption has been demonstrated. Norovirus laboratory experiments, volunteer challenge studies, and community gastroenteritis outbreak investigations have identified human genetic susceptibility factors related to histo-blood group antigen expression. Following a banquet in Brittany, France, in February 2008, gastroenteritis cases were linked to oyster consumption. This study identified an association of the norovirus illnesses with histo-blood group expression, and oyster contamination with norovirus was confirmed by qualitative and quantitative analyses. The secretor phenotype was associated with illness, especially for the non-A subgroup. The study showed that, in addition to accidental climatic events that may lead to oyster contamination, illegal shellfish collection and trading are also risk factors associated with outbreaks.

Keywords: oysters, norovirus outbreak, HBGA typing, shellfish outbreak, norovirus quantification.

1 INTRODUCTION

2 Since first identified as the cause of a gastroenteritis outbreak in an elementary school in
3 Norwalk, Ohio, in 1968, noroviruses (NoVs) have come to be recognized as an important
4 agent of non bacterial gastroenteritis in humans (3). NoVs are small non-enveloped viruses
5 containing a single-stranded, positive-sense RNA genome and constitute one of the six genera
6 in the family *Caliciviridae*. Based on genomic sequence and phylogenetic analysis, the NoV
7 genus contains more than 30 genetic types distributed into five genogroups, and they cause
8 infection principally in humans but also in some animals (46). Since the end of the last
9 century, genogroup II (GII) strains have predominated among humans, but numerous strains
10 presenting genomic diversity co-circulate in the population. Many NoV strains bind to histo-
11 blood group antigens (HBGAs) (40). HBGAs are complex glycans present on many cell types
12 including red blood cells and vascular endothelial cells, as well as on the epithelia of the
13 gastrointestinal, uro-genital and respiratory tracts. HBGAs are synthesized from a series of
14 precursor structures by stepwise addition of monosaccharide units via a set of
15 glycosyltransferases. In humans, the pleiotropic interaction of alleles at three loci, *FUT3*,
16 *FUT2* and *ABO* determines the Lewis, Secretor, and ABO phenotypes, respectively (28).
17 Evidence accumulated from volunteers studies and from analysis of outbreaks indicate that
18 binding to these carbohydrates is required for infection (5, 6, 15, 17, 18, 25, 39). Moreover,
19 various human NoV strains that bind to HBGAs present distinct specificities for HBGAs (13,
20 14, 38). As a result, most strains infect only a subset of the population based on HBGAs
21 expression (9, 24, 40). In addition, some strains of either the GI or GII genogroups were
22 shown to specifically attach to oysters tissues through recognition of histo-blood group
23 antigens (21, 30, 43, 44), suggesting that oysters may act as selective filters, specifically
24 concentrating strains that can recognize carbohydrate epitopes shared with humans.

1 NoVs infection is characterized by the sudden onset of vomiting or diarrhea or both
2 symptoms (3). Similar to other viruses causing gastroenteritis, NoVs multiply in the intestines
3 and are excreted in large quantities in human feces. Human waste is processed in sewage
4 treatment plants, but the treatment procedures do not completely remove enteric viruses from
5 the water effluents leaving the plant (8, 16). Strains that cause severe symptomatic infection
6 as well as those that cause subclinical infection are excreted into sewage that may then be
7 discharged into coastal environment (11). As these viruses are very resistant to inactivation,
8 the sanitary consequences can include contamination of drinking water, vegetables or bivalve
9 molluscan shellfish (19). Mollusks such as oysters filter large volume of water as part of their
10 feeding activities and are able to accumulate and concentrate different types of pathogens.
11 Regulations based on measuring levels of bacterial enteric pathogens in shellfish tissues
12 (European regulation 54/2004/EC) or in shellfish growing water (United States National
13 Sanitation Program) have been instituted to protect the consumer. However, despite these
14 control measures, outbreaks linked to shellfish consumption still occur after either accidental
15 contamination or incomplete depuration (22, 34, 45). Illegal shellfish collection and trading
16 represent an additional source of food contamination that has received little attention so far.
17 We report here a norovirus outbreak that was due to a breach of such a regulation. In addition,
18 quantitative data of oyster contamination and of consumed oysters in relation with the genetic
19 susceptibility of exposed consumers are reported.

20

21

MATERIALS AND METHODS

22

23

24

25

Collection of epidemiological data and statistical analysis. All data concerning cases of gastroenteritis were collected using a standardized questionnaire that was completed by each participant and addressed foods consumed, symptoms, and timing of illness. Details on patients and the course of the outbreak are presented in the Results section. Association

1 between food consumption and illness was estimated by calculation of the relative risk (RR)
2 and its 95% confidence interval (CI 95%). Two-by-two comparisons between subgroups were
3 performed using the Fisher' exact test (two-tailed). Analysis of the association between the
4 presence of symptoms and the number of consumed oysters was performed using the
5 Wilcoxon signed ranked test. All statistical analyses were performed using the Prism 5
6 program (GraphPad Software Inc, La Jolla, CA).

7 **Analysis of clinical samples.** Five fecal samples collected from five patients were
8 analyzed. Group A rotaviruses (RV), astroviruses (AV) and adenoviruses (AdV) types 40 and
9 41 were detected as previously described (1). For confirmation, typing and other enteric virus
10 detection, nucleic acids (NA) were extracted and purified using a QIAmp Viral RNA kit
11 (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Noroviruses
12 genogroup I and II (NoV GI, GII), sapoviruses (SaV), Hepatitis A virus (HAV), enteroviruses
13 (EV), and Aichi viruses (AiV) were detected with several RT-PCR assays that amplified
14 regions previously demonstrated suitable for detection and/or typing (1).

15 **Analysis of the shellfish samples.** Seven oyster samples (*Crassostrea gigas*)
16 comprising at least 30 oysters per sample (except 18 oysters for # 79) were collected. One
17 sample (# 75) was collected from leftovers at the caterer, three (# 76, 77, 78) from an
18 approved class A production area (less than 230 E.coli/ 100 g of total flesh according to the
19 European Regulation 54/2004/EC) as identified by the REMI Ifremer Surveillance Network,
20 one (# 79) from the same batch in the producer depuration tank, and the last two (# 82, 83)
21 from an area located 30 km from the approved production area and where collection and
22 trading of shellfish is illegal. Shellfish, kept at 4°C during shipment, were analyzed as
23 previously described. Briefly, the stomach and digestive diverticula (DT) were removed by
24 dissection (1.5 g portions), homogenized, extracted with chloroform-butanol, and treated with
25 Cat-floc (Calgon, Ellwood City, PA, USA), and virus was concentrated by polyethylene

1 glycol 6000 (Sigma, St Quentin, France) precipitation (4). Viral nucleic acids (NA) were
2 extracted using Nuclisens Kit (BioMerieux France), suspended in 100µl of elution buffer with
3 20 units of RNase inhibitor (Invitrogen) and analyzed immediately or kept frozen at -80°C
4 (23).

5 *Real-time RT-PCR:* All shellfish NA extracts were first screened by real-time RT-PCR
6 (*rRT-PCR*) using previously published primers and probe for NoV, HAV, AV and EV (22).
7 *rRT-PCR* was performed on a MX3000 (Stratagene, France) or an ABI Prism 7000 SDS
8 detector (Applied Biosystem, France), using the Ultrasens[®] one step Quantitative RT-PCR
9 System (Invitrogen, France). All samples were analyzed in duplicate on 5 µl of undiluted or
10 ten-fold diluted RNA extracts. Two negative amplification controls (water) were included in
11 each amplification series and no more than six samples were analyzed in a *rRT-PCR* assay.
12 Precautions such as isolated rooms for various steps and the usage of filter tips were taken to
13 prevent false positive results.

14 The cycle threshold (Ct) was defined as the cycle at which a significant increase in
15 fluorescence occurred (i.e. when fluorescence became distinguishable from background). The
16 number of NoV RNA copies present in positive samples was estimated using GI and GII
17 standard curves. To be included in the quantitative analysis, all wells had to yield a Ct value ≤
18 41. The final concentration was then determined based on the NA volume analyzed (5 µl of
19 100µl of NA extract) and measured weight of DT (1.5 g analyzed) (23).

20 The efficiency of virus extraction procedures was determined for each extraction by
21 seeding 10⁴ 50% tissue culture-infective doses of mengovirus prior to sample processing and
22 determining mengovirus recovery by *rRT-PCR*, as previously described (7, 23). NoV
23 concentrations were then corrected for virus loss during extraction by dividing the final
24 norovirus concentration (uncorrected) by the mean mengovirus extraction efficiency.

25 The presence of RT-PCR inhibitors was evaluated by co-amplification of 2.5 µl of each

1 NA extract with 2.5 µl containing 100 copies of GI or GII RNA internal controls in separate
2 experiments (23). Amplification of RNA indicated that no more than partial inhibition was
3 present; no adjustments to quantitative estimates were made for samples with partial
4 inhibition.

5 *Standard RT-PCR:* The viruses that were detected in samples by *rRT-PCR* were typed
6 by sequencing after amplification with a standard, two-step RT-PCR format using 40 cycles
7 of amplification with the same primers as for clinical samples (1, 22).

8 **Sequence analysis.** Amplicons from virus-positive samples were excised from the gel,
9 extracted and purified for sequencing using a QIAex II gel extraction kit (Qiagen) (1).
10 Sequencing with the BigDye® Terminator Cycle Sequencing Kit (Applied Biosystems,
11 Foster City, CA) was performed with the same primers used for amplification (1). Sequences
12 were analyzed through the European Foodborne Viruses Database
13 (<https://hypocrates.rivm.nl/bnwww>; FBVE QLK1-CT-1999-00594) for identification of the
14 NoV genotypes. Sequences of other enteric viruses were checked for homologies using the
15 BLAST-search program in GenBank (April-May 2008).

16 **ABO, secretor and Lewis saliva phenotyping.** Saliva samples were collected from
17 33 out of 34 individuals who had eaten oysters and immediately stored at -20 °C. They were
18 boiled prior to use in order to remove potentially contaminating virus-specific
19 immunoglobulins as well as bacterial glycosidases. Phenotyping of ABO, secretor and Lewis
20 characters was performed by ELISA as previously described using a set of monoclonal anti-
21 A, B, H and Lewis antibodies and peroxidase-conjugated UEA-I lectin (29).

22

23

RESULTS

24 **Epidemiological investigation.** In Brittany (France), on February 5, 2008, a banquet
25 was organized for lunch with 80 participants. They were separated in two rooms and oysters

1 were served in one room only. All sick people had been seated in that room. The menu was a
2 plate with three oysters, three langoustins, and five shrimps, fish and gratin dauphinois,
3 cheese and salad, and fruit tart. As no sign of disease was found among people who did not
4 consumed oysters, the epidemiological study rapidly implicated oysters.

5 A total of 34 people ate oysters, the mean number of oysters consumed per people was
6 3.5 (range 2 to 6, 95% CI 3.1- 3.9). Twenty-three people got sick (Fig. 1) with a mean
7 incubation period of 33.4 hours (range 8 to 50 hours, 95% CI 29.0-37.8). Vomiting was
8 reported in 69% of cases and diarrhea in 87%. The duration of symptoms ranged from half a
9 day up to 6 days with a mean of 4.0 days (95% CI, 3.2-4.9). Two people visited a physician.
10 The mean age of the cohort was 43.4 years (range 23 to 60, 95% CI, 39.6-47.2).

11 **Results of stool analysis.** A total of five stool samples collected from five individual
12 patients were analyzed. All stools were negative for AdV, HAV, RV and EV. No viral
13 pathogen was detected from one stool (E2499). Three stools were positive for NoV GII, one
14 (E2482) of which was also positive for SaV, and a fourth stool (E2455) was positive for AiV
15 (Table 1). After sequencing, a GI.2 strain was identified for the SaV, three GII.4 and a GII.2
16 for the NoVs and a genotype A for AiV.

17 **Results of shellfish analysis.** The first sample (# 75) collected on February 13 in the
18 restaurant from the batch that had been consumed, contained GII NoV RNA. The sample
19 collected from the producer (# 79) on February 14, and kept in a depuration tank for 23 days,
20 was also positive for GII NoV as well as for SaV. Neither of these two samples were found to
21 contain AV, AiV, EV, HAV or RV. Three samples collected on February 12 from the
22 producing area, located in South Brittany in a class A area (less than 230 E.coli/ 100 g of total
23 flesh), were negative for all human enteric viruses evaluated. Two additional samples, were
24 collected on February 25 (# 82) and March 5 (# 83) from a distinct location that was

1 presumptively linked to the outbreak (see discussion). These two samples contained NoV GII,
2 SaV and AV but were negative for AiV, EV, RV and HAV.

3 Positive samples (# 75, 79, 82, 83) were extracted four times (except # 79 which was
4 extracted only three times due to the limited number of oysters available) for quantitative
5 analyses. Extraction efficiencies, as measured by recovery of mengovirus seeded into the
6 shellfish prior sample processing, ranged from 12 to 16% for all extracts (Table 2). The
7 measured NoV concentrations for samples # 75 and 79 were quite variable, ranging from
8 negative (one replicate among four for # 75 and one negative among three for # 79) to
9 thousands of RNA copies per gram of DT (Table 2). The two other samples (#82 and 83)
10 showed a more homogenous contamination for all replicates analyzed (all four replicates
11 positive). The geometric mean virus concentrations for all of these samples were quite
12 similar.

13 **Sequence comparisons.** A short sequence (84 bp) in the NoV polymerase coding
14 region obtained for the sample # 75, corresponded to the GII.4 strain detected in two stool
15 samples (E2457 and E2458). The sequence obtained from oyster sample # 82 was identical to
16 that detected in stool E2482 over a 255 bp sequence amplified from the capsid coding region.
17 The sequence from sample # 83 was identified as that of a GII.3 NoV strain (248 bp in the
18 capsid region) and did not match that of any clinical case directly linked to the outbreak but
19 was identical to a secondary case (daughter of E 2455). No virus sequence (NoV or SaV)
20 could be obtained from sample # 79.

21 **Association between expression of histo-blood group antigens and disease.** ABO,
22 Lewis and secretor phenotypes from 33 individuals who had consumed oysters were obtained
23 from saliva. The phenotyping gave clear-cut results for every case. The frequencies of the
24 various phenotypes in this cohort did not differ from those of the French population (data not

1 shown). Owing to the small number of Lewis negative individuals (3 among secretors and one
2 among nonsecretors), the potential effect of the Lewis phenotype could not be analyzed.
3 No statistically significant associations were found between the ABO, Secretor and Lewis
4 phenotypes and either the incubation time, the type of symptom reported (vomiting or
5 diarrhea) or the duration of symptoms (data not shown). However, the frequency of
6 individuals reporting illness was lower among nonsecretors than among secretors ($p < 0.01$,
7 Fisher's exact test). When evaluated by symptom, both vomiting and nausea were
8 significantly less frequent in the nonsecretor group than in the secretor group. To analyse the
9 effect of the ABO phenotype, the secretor group was split between A, B and O subgroups. A
10 direct comparison of these three subgroups did not show any significant difference between
11 them. However, when compared to the nonsecretor group, only the B and O secretor groups
12 showed a significantly higher frequency of illness (Table 3). The A secretor subgroup did not
13 statistically differ from the nonsecretor group, indicating that most of the effect of the secretor
14 phenotype was borne by the non A subgroups (O and B). This suggests that epithelial
15 expression of the A blood group may have hindered recognition of the carbohydrate NoV
16 receptor and comparison of the A secretor group to the non A secretor group (B+O) indeed
17 showed that among secretors, A blood group individuals were less likely to have diarrhea
18 ($p < 0.05$). This suggest that the A subgroup was not as sensitive as the non-A subgroup though
19 the low number of patients made it difficult to reach statistical significance.

20 Since the age of subjects and the number of consumed oysters could be possible
21 confounding factors, we verified that there was no association between any of the histo-blood
22 group phenotype and these two parameters (data not shown). When considering subjective
23 symptoms such as nausea and abdominal pain in addition to vomiting and diarrhea, more
24 individuals of the cohort were affected. Interestingly, within the group of six nonsecretor
25 individuals, the number of consumed oysters was higher among the three who reported at

1 least one symptom ($p=0,026$, Wilcoxon signed rank test), suggesting that nonsecretors could
2 not become infected below a certain virus dose threshold. Possibly these nonspecific
3 symptoms of nonsecretors were due to infection with viruses other than norovirus.
4 Alternatively, they could be due to the ability of the norovirus strain involved to show some
5 cross-reactivity for carbohydrate motifs shared between secretors and nonsecretors as
6 previously observed for some strains (24, 41). Regardless, collectively these results indicate
7 that the nonsecretor phenotype was a protective factor and that within the secretor group,
8 blood group A was also protective.

9

10

DISCUSSION

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

The institution of regulations to specify acceptable levels of bacterial enteric pathogens in shellfish tissues (European regulation, 54/2004/EC) or in shellfish growing waters (United States National Shellfish Sanitation Program) led to the classification of production areas. In addition to mandatory controls performed by producers, in France, Ifremer has set up a surveillance network to control shellfish quality (REMI) and to collect data from environmental events. In the past this allowed the identification and evaluation of contamination events associated with oyster-related outbreaks (20, 22). In the outbreak described here the producing area was located in South Brittany in a class A area and no environmental event such as rain fall or sewage treatment plant failure was reported in previous months. This was confirmed by the absence of viral contamination in the samples collected for the REMI controls on February 12. It was thus surprising to observe that both samples related to a specific producer from that clean class A area were clearly contaminated by viruses and were the cause of clinical cases. A few days later, police arrested a fisherman collecting oysters illegally from a forbidden area located in a major harbour. After a day in jail, the man admitted selling these illegal oysters to the producer implicated in the outbreak.

1 This was confirmed by sequencing of the NoV strains detected in the sample taken by the
2 police (# 82) and in the forbidden area (# 83). This outbreak therefore clearly illustrates the
3 danger of breaching regulations and refusing to consider the usefulness of the producing area
4 classification as some producers do.

5 The direct detection of viral human pathogens has become the most reliable manner
6 for documenting viral contamination of shellfish, and sensitive methods are now available (4,
7 7, 23). Since the development of molecular methods, the inclusion of quality controls became
8 a priority and was facilitated by the use of real time RT-PCR allowing sample to sample
9 comparisons. Mengovirus (mengovirus strain MC₀, *Picornaviridae* family member) was
10 previously shown to be suitable as an external control for extraction efficiency based on
11 structural characteristics and absence from environmental samples (7, 23). Using the different
12 controls, the method allowed us to be confident that concentrations expressed here reflect
13 correctly the amount of viruses present in the contaminated oysters. No adjustments for PCR
14 amplification efficiency were made since controls showed no effect of nucleic acid extracts
15 on *r*RT-PCR performance (data not shown). The last point that may influence NoV
16 quantification is sequence variation in different NoV genotypes leading to mismatches with
17 the primers used in the real-time assay. This concern was offset by the results of previous
18 studies that demonstrated the broad reactivity of the NoV-specific primers and probes used in
19 the current study and by the fact that the predominant strain detected here is a GII.4
20 corresponding to the strain used to build the standard curve (8). The sample concentration
21 expressed as a minimum and a maximum level (defined by taking account extraction
22 efficiency), is one approach to estimate NoV levels of contamination. The large amount of
23 oysters available allowed us to extract each sample at least four times to evaluate the
24 reliability of our quantitative approach. The sample directly implicated in the outbreak
25 showed the largest variation for NoV concentrations (up to 1000-fold). The high level of

1 variability may be explained by the producer's information who later recognized having
2 mixed several batches of oysters. After almost one month in depuration tank the geometric
3 mean concentration had decreased only approximately two-fold, although variability within
4 replicates was lower. This is another demonstration that virus contamination decreases very
5 slowly within shellfish tissues and that the use of depuration tanks, although efficient in case
6 of bacterial contamination, has little utility in addressing viral contamination (22, 27, 35). The
7 measured levels of virus contamination in the two samples made up of shellfish entirely
8 originating from the forbidden area were more homogenous, suggesting a frequent exposure
9 to fecal contamination, possibly due to the close proximity from a major harbor.

10 The level of NoV contamination in the present report was only slightly higher than the
11 levels of viral shellfish contamination previously described for NoV outbreaks (20, 22, 36), or
12 for an HAV outbreak (7). Although quantitative information on the levels of NoV
13 contamination in shellfish implicated in outbreaks is still limited, it is well above minimal
14 infectious doses estimated from volunteers studies (2, 42).

15 Evidence accumulated over the past six years indicates that HBGAs serve as ligands
16 for NoV infection (5, 6, 15, 17, 18, 25, 26, 39). However some studies showed discrepant
17 results concerning the effect of either the ABO or the secretor phenotype, raising questions
18 about the importance of HBGAs in norovirus infection (10, 12, 31, 32, 37). These
19 discrepancies could be due to several factors, including ill-defined carbohydrate specificity of
20 the causative strain and poor or incomplete phenotyping of the affected peoples. The latter
21 aspect is particularly relevant when variable or no associations with the ABO phenotype were
22 reported. Since distinct strains show different specificities for HBGAs, variable effects of the
23 ABO phenotype are expected to occur in outbreaks caused by different NoV strains.
24 Likewise, since expression of ABH antigens in the gut surface epithelial cells is strictly
25 dependent upon the secretor status (33), a lack of information on the secretor phenotype

1 makes it difficult to observe associations between HBGAs expression and infection by NoVs.
2 In the present study, we observed that the secretor phenotype was a risk factor associated with
3 illness. That was particularly clear when considering individuals of the non A subgroup,
4 indicating that the A blood group antigen, which can be expressed on digestive epithelial cells
5 of secretors only, may have been a protective factor in this particular outbreak. Thus,
6 polymorphisms at both the *FUT2* and *ABO* loci controlled sensitivity to disease in this
7 shellfish-related outbreak, confirming the importance of these polymorphisms in determining
8 susceptibility to NoV infection previously observed from either volunteer studies or
9 communities outbreaks (2, 5, 17, 24, 25). In this study, several strains (NoV, AiV, SaV) were
10 detected either in stool samples or in shellfish. However, NoV genetic sensitivity seems to be
11 predominant, suggesting that they induced most illnesses.

12 The comprehensive approach of our study, consisting of food analysis, viral
13 quantification and HBGA typing of consumers is novel in examination of food safety and
14 provides a new approach for food safety analysis. The importance of the presence of different
15 enteric viruses in stool and shellfish samples raises questions about which viruses were
16 responsible for illness. The impact of HBGA expression in individuals with illness clearly
17 implicates the GII NoVs as the predominant causative agents of the outbreak. When multiple
18 enteric viruses contaminate a food product, genetic analysis of affected individuals can
19 complement data collected from clinical and environmental samples and may provide
20 important information for risk analysis and future food safety regulation.

21

22

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

23 This study was supported in part by the DGAL (Direction Générale de l'Alimentation, French
24 Ministry of Health and Food), by a grant 2006 SEST 0801 'Coquenpath' from the Agence

1 Nationale pour la Recherche, by a grant (CIMATH) from the Région des Pays de la Loire and
2 by the European Commission 'EVENT' (FP6-2002-SSP-1).
3 The authors are grateful to all consumers who provided stool and saliva samples for the study
4 and to J-P. Allenou and P. Camus from IFREMER LER Morbihan /Pays de la Loire for their
5 help in sampling and data collection.

1 **REFERENCES**

- 2 1. **Ambert-Balay, K., M. Lorrot, F. Bon, H. Giraudon, J. Kaplon, M. Wolfer, P.**
3 **Lebon, D. Gendrel, and P. Pothier.** 2008. Prevalence and genetic diversity of Aichi
4 virus strains in stool samples from community and hospitalized patients. *J. Clin.*
5 *Microbiol.* **46**:1252-1258.
- 6 2. **Atmar, R. L., A. R. Opekum, M. A. Gilger, M. K. Estes, S. E. Crawford, F. H.**
7 **Neill, and D. Y. Graham.** 2008. Norwalk virus shedding after experimental human
8 infection. *Emerg. Infect. Dis.* **14**:1553-1557.
- 9 3. **Atmar, R. L., and M. K. Estes.** 2006. The epidemiologic and clinical importance of
10 norovirus infection. *Gastroenterol. Clin. North Am.* **35**:275-290.
- 11 4. **Atmar, R. L., F. H. Neill, J. L. Romalde, F. Le Guyader, C. M. Woodley, T. G.**
12 **Metcalf and M. K. Estes.** 1995. Detection of Norwalk virus and Hepatitis A virus in
13 shellfish tissues with the PCR. *Appl. Environ. Microbiol.* **61**:3014-3018.
- 14 5. **Bucardo, F., E. Kindberg, M. Paniagua, M. Vildevall, and L. Svensson.** 2009.
15 Genetic susceptibility to symptomatic norovirus infection in Nicaragua. *J. Med. Virol.*
16 **81**:728-735.
- 17 6. **Carlsson, B., E. Kindberg, J. Buesa, G. E. Rydell, M. F. Lidon, R. Montava, R.**
18 **Abu Mallouh, A. Grahn, J. Rodriguez-Diaz, J. Bellido, A. Arnedo, G. Larson,**
19 **and L. Svensson.** 2009. The G428A nonsense mutation in FUT2 provides strong but
20 not absolute protection against symptomatic GII.4 Norovirus infection. *PLoS One*
21 **4**:e5593.
- 22 7. **Costafreda, M. I., A. Bosch, and R. M. Pinto.** 2006. Development, evaluation, and
23 standardization of a real-time taqMan reverse transcription-PCR assay for
24 quantification of hepatitis A virus in clinical and shellfish samples. *Appl. Environ.*
25 *Microbiol.* **72**:3846- 3855.

- 1 8. **da Silva, A., J-C. Le Saux, S. Parnaudeau, M. Pommepeuy, M. Elimelech, and Le**
2 **Guyader F.S.** 2007. Evaluation of removal of noroviruses during wastewater
3 treatment, using real-time reverse transcription-PCR: different behaviors of
4 genogroups I and II. *Appl. Environ. Microbiol.* **73**:7891-7897.
- 5 9. **Donaldson, E. F., L. C. Lindesmith, A. D. Lobue, and R. S. Baric.** 2008.
6 Norovirus pathogenesis: mechanisms of persistence and immune evasion in human
7 populations. *Immunol. Rev.* **225**:190-211.
- 8 10. **Fretz, R., P. Svoboda, D. Schorr, M. Tanner, and A. Baumgartner.** 2005. Risk
9 factors for infections with norovirus gastrointestinal illness in Switzerland. *Eur. J.*
10 *Clin. Microbiol. Infect. Dis.* **24**:256-261.
- 11 11. **Gerba, C. P.** 2007. Virus occurrence and survival in the environmental waters. *In*
12 *Human Viruses in water. Pers. Med. Virol.* **17**:91-108.
- 13 12. **Halperin, T., H. Vennema, M. Koopmans, G. K. Bar-Gal, R. Kayouf, T. Sela, R.**
14 **Ambar, and E. Klement.** 2008. No association between histo-blood group antigens
15 and susceptibility to clinical infections with genogroup II norovirus. *J. Infect. Dis.*
16 **197**:63-65.
- 17 13. **Huang, P., T. Farkas, W. Zhong, M. Tan, S. Thornton, A. L. Morrow, and X.**
18 **Jiang.** 2005. Norovirus and histo-blood group antigens: demonstration of a wide
19 spectrum of strain specificities and classification of two major binding groups among
20 multiple binding patterns. *J. Virol.* **79**:6714-6722.
- 21 14. **Huang, P. W., T. Farkas, S. Marionneau, W. M. Zhong, N. Ruvoën-clouet, A.**
22 **Morrow, L. K. Pickering, D. S. Newburg, J. Le Pendu , and X. Jiang.** 2003.
23 Norwalk-like viruses bind to ABO, Lewis and secretor histo-blood group antigens but
24 different strains bind to distinct antigens. *J. Infect. Dis.* **188**:19-31.

- 1 15. **Hutson, A. M., F. Airaud, J. Le Pendu, M. K. Estes, and R. L. Atmar.** 2005.
2 Norwalk virus infection associates with secretor status genotyped from sera. *J. Virol.*
3 **77**:116-120.
- 4 16. **Iwai, M., S. Hasegawa, M. Obara, K. Nakamura, E. Horimoto, T. Takizawa, T.**
5 **Kurata, S-I. Sogen, and K. Shiraki.** 2009. Continuous presence of noroviruses and
6 sapoviruses in raw sewage reflects infections among inhabitants of Toyoma, Japan
7 (2006 to 2008). *Appl. Environ. Microbiol.* **75**:1264-1270.
- 8 17. **Kindberg, E., B. Akerlind, C. Johnsen, J. D. Knudsen, O. Heltberg, G. Larson, B.**
9 **Bottiger, and L. Svensson.** 2007. Host genetic resistance to symptomatic Norovirus
10 (GGII.4) infections in Denmark. *J. Clin. Microbiol.* **45**:2720-2722.
- 11 18. **Larsson, M. M., G. E. Rydell, A. Grahn, J. Rodriguez-Diaz, B. Akerlind, A. M.**
12 **Hutson, M. Estes, G. Larson, and L. Svensson.** 2006. Antibody prevalence and titer
13 to norovirus (genogroup II) correlate with secretor (FUT2) but not with ABO
14 phenotype or Lewis (FUT3) genotype. *J. Infect. Dis.* **194**:1422-1427.
- 15 19. **Le Guyader F.S., and R. L. Atmar.** 2008. Binding and inactivation of viruses on and
16 in food, with a focus on the role of the matrix. p.189-208. *In* M. Koopmans, A. Bosch,
17 and D. Cleaver (ed), *Food-borne viruses: progress and challenges.* ASM Press,
18 Washington, DC.
- 19 20. **Le Guyader, F. S., F. Bon, D. DeMedici, S. Parnaudeau, A. Bertone A., S.**
20 **Crudeli, A. Doyle, M. Zidane, E. Suffredini, E. Kholi, F. Maddalo, M. Morini, A.**
21 **Gallay, M. Pommeputy, P. Pothier, and F. M. Ruggeri.** 2006. Detection of multiple
22 noroviruses associated with an international gastroenteritis outbreak linked to oyster
23 consumption. *J. Clin. Microbiol.* **44**:3878-3882.

- 1 21. **Le Guyader, F. S., F. Loisy, R. L. Atmar, A. M. Hutson, M. K. Estes, N. Ruvoen-**
2 **Clouet, M. Pommepuy, and J. Le Pendu.** 2006. Norwalk virus specific binding to
3 oyster digestive tissues. *Emerg. Infect. Dis.* **12**:931-936.
- 4 22. **Le Guyader, F. S., J-C. Le Saux, K. Ambert-Balay, J. Krol, O. Serais, S.**
5 **Parnaudeau, H. Giraudon, G. Delmas, M. Pommepuy, P. Pothier, and R. L.**
6 **Atmar.** 2008. Aichi virus, norovirus, astrovirus, enterovirus and rotavirus involved in
7 clinical cases from a French oyster-related gastroenteritis outbreak. *J. Clin. Microbiol.*
8 **46**:4011-4017.
- 9 23. **Le Guyader, F. S., S. Parnaudeau, J. Schaeffer, A. Bosch, F. Loisy, M.**
10 **Pommepuy, and R. L. Atmar.** 2009. Detection and quantification of noroviruses in
11 shellfish. *Appl. Environ. Microbiol.* **74**:618-624.
- 12 24. **Le Pendu, J., N. Ruvoen-Clouet, E. Kindberg, and L. Svensson.** 2006. Mendelian
13 resistance to human norovirus infections. *Sem. Immunol.* **18**:375-386.
- 14 25. **Lindsmith, L., C. Moe, S. Marionneau, N. Ruvoens, X. Jiang, L. Lindblad, P.**
15 **Stewart, J. Le Pendu, and R. S. Baric.** 2003. Human susceptibility and resistance to
16 norwalk virus infection. *Nat. Med.* **9**:548-553.
- 17 26. **Lindsmith, L. C., E. F. Donaldson, A. D. LoBue, J. L. Cannon, D-P. Zheng, J.**
18 **Vinje, and R. S. Baric.** 2008. Mechanisms of GII.4 norovirus persistence in human
19 populations. *Plos Med.* **5**:e31.
- 20 27. **Loisy, F., R. L. Atmar, J-C. Le Saux, J. Cohen, M-P. Caprais, M. Pommepuy,**
21 **and S. F. Le Guyader.** 2005. Use of Rotavirus virus like particles as surrogates to
22 evaluate virus persistence in shellfish. *Appl. Environ. Microbiol.* **71**:6049-6053.
- 23 28. **Marionneau, S., A. Cailleau-Thomas, J. Rocher, B. Le Moullac-Vaidye, N.**
24 **Ruvoën-Clouet, M. Clément, and J. Le Pendu.** 2001. ABH and Lewis histo-blood

- 1 group antigens, a model for the meaning of oligosaccharide diversity in the face of a
2 changing world. *Biochimie* **83**:565-573.
- 3 29. **Marionneau, S., F. Airaud, N. Bovin, J. Le Pendu, and N. Ruvoen-Clouet.** 2005.
4 Influence of the combined ABO, Fut2 and Fut3 polymorphism on susceptibility to
5 Norwalk virus attachment. *J. Infect. Dis.* **192**:1071-1077.
- 6 30. **McLeod, C., B. Hay, C. Grant, G. Greening, and D. Day.** 2009. Localization of
7 norovirus and poliovirus in Pacific oysters. *J. Appl. Microbiol.* **106**:1220-1230.
- 8 31. **Meyer, E., W. Ebner, R. Scholz, M. Dettenkofer, and F. D. Daschner.** 2004.
9 Nosocomial outbreak of norovirus gastroenteritis and investigation of ABO histo-
10 blood group type in infected staff and patients. *J. Hosp. Inf.* **56**:64-66.
- 11 32. **Miyoshi, M., S. Yoshizumi, C. Sato, T. Okui, H. Ogawa, and H. Honma.** 2005.
12 Relationship between ABO histo-blood group type and an outbreak of norovirus
13 gastroenteritis among primary and junior high school students: results of
14 questionnaire-based study. *Kansenshogaku Zasshi.* **79**:664-671.
- 15 33. **Mollicone, R., J. Bara, J. Le Pendu, and R. Oriol.** 1985. Immunohistologic pattern
16 of Type 1 (Lea, Leb) and type 2 (X, Y, H) blood group-related antigens in the human
17 pyloric and duodenal mucosae. *Lab. Invest.* **53**:219-227.
- 18 34. **Nakagawa-Okamoto, R., T. Arita-Nishida, S. Toda, H. Kato, H. Iwata, M.**
19 **Akiyama, O. Nishio, H. Kimura, M. Noda, N. Takeda, and T. Oka.** 2009.
20 Detection of multiple sapovirus genotypes and genogroups in oyster-associated
21 outbreaks. *Jpn. J. Inf. Dis.* **62**:63-66.
- 22 35. **Nappier, S. P., T. K. Graczyk, and K. J. Schwab.** 2008. Bioaccumulation, retention,
23 and depuration of enteric viruses by *Crassostrea virginica* and *Crassostrea ariakensis*
24 oysters. *Appl. Environ. Microbiol.* **74**:6825-6831.

- 1 36. **Nishida, T., O. Nishio, M. Kato, T. Chuma, H. Kato, H. Iwata, and H. Kimura.**
2 2007. Genotyping and quantitation of norovirus in oysters from two distinct sea areas
3 in Japan. *Microbiol. Immunol.* **51**:177-184.
- 4 37. **Rockx, B., H. Vennema, C. J. P. A. Hoebe, E. Duizer, and M. P. G. Koopmans.**
5 2005. Association of histo-blood group antigens and susceptibility to norovirus
6 infections. *J. Infect. Dis.* **191**:749-754.
- 7 38. **Shirato, H., S. Ogawa, H. Ito, T. Sato, A. Kameyama, H. Narimatsu, Z. Xiaofan,**
8 **T. Miyamura, T. Wakita, K. Ishii, and N. Takeda.** 2008. Noroviruses distinguish
9 between type 1 and type 2 histo-blood group antigens for binding. *J. Virol.*
10 **82**:10756-10767.
- 11 39. **Tan, M., M. Jin, H. Xie, Z. Duan, X. Jiang, and Z. Fang.** 2008. Outbreak studies of
12 a gII.3 and a gII.4 norovirus revealed an association between HBGA phenotypes and
13 viral infection. *J. Med. Virol.* **80**:1296-1301.
- 14 40. **Tan, M., and X. Jiang.** 2005. Norovirus and its histo-blood group antigen receptors:
15 an answer to a historical puzzle. *Trends Microbiol.* **13**:285-293.
- 16 41. **Tan, M., and X. Jiang.** 2007. Norovirus-host interaction: implications for disease
17 control and prevention. *Expert Rev. Mol. Med.* **9**:1-22.
- 18 42. **Teunis, P. F. M., C. L. Moe, P. Liu, S. E. Miller, L. Lindesmith, R. S. Baris, J. Le**
19 **Pendu, and R. L. Calderon.** 2008. Norwalk virus: how infectious is it? *J. Med. Virol.*
20 **80**:1468-1476.
- 21 43. **Tian, P., A. L. Engelbrekton, X. Jiang, W. Zhong, and R. E. Mandrell.** 2007.
22 Norovirus recognizes histo-blood group antigens on gastrointestinal cells of clams,
23 mussels, and oysters: a possible mechanism of bioaccumulation. *J. Food Prot.*
24 **70**:2140-2147.

- 1 44. **Wang, D., Q. Wu, X. Kou, L. Yao, and J. Zhang.** 2008. Distribution of norovirus in
2 oyster tissues. *J. Appl. Microbiol.* **105**:1966-1972.
- 3 45. **Xerry, J., C. J. Gallimore, M. Iturriza-Gomara, and J. J. Gray.** 2009. Tracking the
4 transmission routes of genogroup II noroviruses in suspected food borne or
5 environmental outbreaks of gastroenteritis through sequence analysis of the P2
6 domain. *J. Med. Virol.* **81**:1298-1304.
- 7 46. **Zheng, D.-P., T. Ando, R. L. Fankhauser, R. S. Beard, R. Glass, and S. S.**
8 **Monroe.** 2006. Norovirus classification and proposed strain nomenclature. *Virology*
9 **346**:312-323.
- 10

1

2 TABLE 1: Patient symptoms and viruses detected from stool samples.

Stool sample	Saliva phenotype	Clinical signs		Virus detected	Oysters consumed ^a
		vomiting	diarrhea		
E2455	SEC, B, Le+	+	+	AiV	6
E2457	SEC, B, Le+	+	+	NoV <u>GII.4</u> ^b	3
E2458	SEC, O, Le+	+	+	NoV <u>GII.4</u>	3
E2482	<i>No saliva</i>	+	+	NoV GII.4, GII.2, SaV GI.2	3
E2499	No sec, Le+	-	+	none	6

3 ^a number of oysters consumed during the lunch,4 ^bGII.4 underlined identifies strains with identical sequences detected in the oyster samples.

1 TABLE 2: Detection and quantification of NoV in oyster samples.

Sample	Date	Mean extraction efficiency (%) ^a	Number of Positive Replicates/Number analyzed	Genogroup II NoV geometric mean concentration (range) ^b	
				uncorrected	corrected
Caterer (#75)	02/13	16.1	3/4	229 (48-2548)	1727 (89- 23162)
Producer (#79)	02/14	13.7	2/3	144 (63- 273)	957 (476- 2054)
Harvested illegally (#82)	02/25	12.9	4/4	301 (35- 913)	2361 (273- 7509)
Forbidden area (#83)	03/05	12.6	4/4	776 (273-1885)	6076 (211-14839)

2 ^aMean percentage of mengovirus RNA copy number recovered in shellfish extracts relative to
3 the amount of mengovirus added to samples prior to extraction

4 ^bGeometric mean concentration of positive samples expressed in RNA copies per g of DT,
5 (range of concentrations detected), before (uncorrected) and after (corrected) correction for
6 the mean extraction efficiency

7

1 TABLE 3: Effect of the blood group phenotype on illness and symptom frequency

HBGA	nonsec (N= 6)	Sec (N= 27)	A Sec (N=10)	B Sec (N=4)	O Sec (N=12)	non A Sec (N= 16)
Illness ^a	1 ^b	21 ^c	6	4 ^d	10 ^e	14 ^f
Vomiting	0	15 ^d	4	4 ^f	7 ^d	11 ^e
Diarrhea	1	18 ^e	4	4 ^d	9 ^d	13 ^e

2 ^aTotal number of individuals in each group3 ^bIndividuals who had either vomiting or diarrhea.

4 ^{c,d,e,f}Comparisons by two tailed Fisher's exact test between the nonsecretor (nonsec) group
5 and either the secretor (Sec) group or the secretor group split by A, B and O phenotypes: A
6 Sec, B Sec, O Sec, non A Sec (O or B Sec phenotypes). A single AB blood group secretor
7 individual with diarrhea was not included in the analysis of A or B phenotypes. ^dp<0.05,

8 ^ep<0.02, ^cp<0.01, ^fp<0.005.

9

1 FIGURE LEGEND

2

3 Figure 1: Onset of symptoms for banquet participants.

4

5 Oysters were consumed on February 5 for lunch (arrow). Each box represents one new

6 clinical case identified in 4 hour intervals (x axis), and the number of cases is recorded (y

7 axis). The number in each box corresponds to the number of consumed oysters, and the circle

8 identify peoples from whom stool was collected for analysis.

9 Black box: type A secretor, grey: type O secretor, horizontal stripe: type AB secretor,

10 diagonal stripe: type B secretor, and dots: non secretor individual. The empty box: no

11 saliva collected.

12

1

