

than for those with SVR (mean HCV-RNA [SD]: 6.8 [0.4] vs. 6.4 [0.7] log<sub>10</sub> IU/mL, respectively).

Changes in the DCV resistance pattern present at relapse through follow-up Week 48 were seen in three of four relapsers; comprising Y93H changing to wild-type (100% of 68 clones) in patient P-32. Clonal analysis of the baseline sequence revealed the presence of Y93H as a minor species (~2%; 1/61 clones). Genotypic changes resulting in a lower level of phenotypic resistance (L31V-Y93H to L31M-Y93H) were detected in patients P-36 and P-37. NS3 substitutions observed at relapse were not detectable by population sequencing by follow-up Week 36. The D168V substitution detected in patient P-37 was replaced by D168E (78-fold ASV resistance [19]) at follow-up Weeks 36 and 48. As with the patients who experienced virologic breakthrough, ASV and DCV trough values in the three drug-compliant patients who relapsed were less than the observed EC<sub>90</sub> values for the respective RAVs.

## Discussion

This study assessed resistance and virologic failure in a difficult-to-treat population of null-responders and alfa/RBV ineligible/intolerant patients treated with the dual oral combination of DCV and ASV. Overall, 77% achieved an SVR [11], with all viral breakthroughs and post-treatment relapses occurring in the ineligible/intolerant subpopulation. It is possible that pharmacokinetics may have played a role in these failures, since patients experiencing failure had DCV and/or ASV trough values below median or documented non-compliance [11]. However, since most patients with troughs below the median achieved SVR, the influence of drug exposure is hard to assess.

NS5A-Y93H was identified as the predominant polymorphism at baseline in all three patients with viral breakthrough and in two of the four patients with relapse. However, three null-responders and two ineligible/intolerant patients also had a pre-existing NS5A-Y93H polymorphism and all achieved SVR, making the significance of Y93H alone for response in the broader patient population difficult to assess. Furthermore, where Y93H polymorphisms existed at baseline, their effects on DCV inhibition were minimal (Y93H  $EC_{50}$  = 49 pM [6] compared with  $C_{trough}$  values that ranged from 75 to 620 nM. The global prevalence of NS5A-Y93H is approximately 4%, based on data from the Los Alamos database [20] and unpublished data from nine DCV studies, and approximately 11% in other recent Japanese DCV studies [21], which is considerably lower than the 23% (10/43) prevalence observed in this study. Further analysis of DCV study data indicates that Y93H pre-exists at higher levels in patients infected with GT1b (10%) than GT1a (1%); however, the link with *IL28B* is not so clear given that most failures to date with DCV have been observed in GT1a patients with no baseline Y93H. Other polymorphisms observed at a higher frequency among this GT1b population included NS3-Q80L (~19%, 8/43), versus Q80K which has been observed more frequently in GT1a populations [18, 19].

Baseline HCV-RNA did not appear to influence virologic response in either population, and response was too rapid to allow successful genomic sequencing after 1 week of treatment. ASV dose (600mg or 200mg twice-daily) did not impact the initial decline in HCV-RNA in null-responders, and the *IL28B* CT allele, present in 86% (18/21) of null-responders, did not prevent patients achieving a very high (90%) SVR. By contrast, although only 27% (6/22) of ineligible/intolerant patients were *IL28B* CT, this genotype was present in all three viral breakthroughs and one of four relapses. While *IL28B* genotype is known to influence

response to alfa/RBV, its apparent impact on virologic suppression in alfa-sparing regimens is unexpected. However, given the small number of patients, any such correlation will require evaluation in a larger dataset.

The emergent RAVs at viral breakthrough or relapse (signature NS5A-L31 and -Y93 substitutions for DCV and NS3-D168 substitutions for ASV) were similar to observations from other clinical studies of DCV, and also with *in vitro* GT1b replicon resistance studies with ASV [19], although this study represents the first demonstration of emergent clinical ASV resistance. It is possible that signature resistance variants to both DCV and ASV pre-existed as minor species and subsequently enriched by selective pressure, as predicted by viral kinetic modeling [22]. Although a combination of these NS3 and NS5A variants were not detected by clonal sequencing at baseline, their low-level pre-existence cannot be ruled out. However, assessment of minor NS3 plus NS5A variants from the same RNA sequence is currently not feasible using available deep-sequencing technologies. Nevertheless, additional studies to assess the presence and dynamics of minority baseline variants under drug selection are indicated.

Interestingly, ASV-resistant NS3-D168 substitutions generally decayed during the off-drug follow-up period, implying a lack of replicative fitness relative to wild-type in the absence of selective drug pressure. Indeed, a reduction in replicative fitness has been observed for D168 variants in replicons [19]. Neither of the secondary variants associated with D168V in this study (Q80L or S122G) had an impact on fitness *in vitro* (replication capacity similar or higher than that observed for parental GT1b [Con1] replicon), with both double variants possessing replicative capacities similar to D168V alone [19]. However, clonal analysis indicated that ASV-resistant variants were still detectable in some post-treatment samples

as minority species, although not detectable by population sequencing. Deeper sequencing techniques will be required to fully establish the dynamics of decay and whether ASV-resistant strains remain enriched for long periods relative to baseline. Since the re-treatment of patients with prior NS3 protease inhibitor failure have only been assessed in small studies [23], it is not clear whether these NS3 RAVs will form a stable minority capable of rapid overgrowth on re-treatment. By contrast, NS5A variants associated with DCV-resistance were observed to be linked and relatively stable through at least 48 weeks post-treatment, although change of DCV-resistance substitutions was noted in four of seven patient samples. As described above, the prevalence of the NS5A variant Y93H, that confers low level resistance to daclatasvir, is approximately 10% in the general HCV genotype 1b population. Linked NS5A RAVs conferring high level resistance to daclatasvir are less prevalent (<1%). While NS3 RAVs (substitutions at positions V36, T54, R155, or D168) associated with first-generation protease inhibitors have been reported to be present at  $\leq 2.7\%$  by population sequencing [5, 24], emergent NS3 RAVs have been shown to persist for up to 4 years in long-term follow-up studies [25]. Therefore, longer-term studies are indicated to assess what, if any, replicative impairment is conferred by these linked NS5A changes and how long these potentially transmissible drug-resistant strains persist without DCV selection pressure.

In conclusion, high response rates were achieved in this small Japanese study comprising GT1b null-responders and alfa/RBV ineligible/intolerant patients with limited treatment options. Among patients experiencing virologic failure, ASV- and DCV-resistant substitutions emerged together at the time of failure, which were similar to those reported previously. An analysis of persistence demonstrated that DCV-resistant substitutions appeared to have

greater fitness over the duration of the study. A loose association with a baseline NS5A polymorphism on virologic outcome was observed; however, further data from larger studies are required. Consequently, a greater understanding of the role and dynamics of pre-existing, emergent and persistent resistance variants to DCV and ASV will be sought from the planned Phase 3 global studies of this combination.

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**Table 1: Baseline viral and host characteristics among genotype-1b null-responders and their virologic outcome**

Patient	IL28B GT	HCV-RNA, log <sub>10</sub> IU/mL	NS5A polymorphism(s) <sup>a</sup>	NS3 polymorphism(s) <sup>a</sup>	Virologic outcome
P-1	CT	7.2	Q54H/Q-Q62Q/E-Y93H/Y	T54S-Q80L	SVR
P-2	CT	7.0		Q80L-V170I/M	SVR
P-3	CT	7.4	Q54H		SVR
P-4	CT	6.7	R30Q		SVR
P-5	CT	7.0	L31L/M-P58P/S		SVR
P-6	CC	5.3	P58P/T-Q62E		D/C at WK2 due to SAE <sup>b</sup>
P-7	CC	7.2		S122S/G	SVR
P-8	CT	7.0	Q54H	Q80L	SVR
P-9	CT	7.1	Q54H-Y93H/Y	S122N	SVR
P-10	CT	6.4	L28M-R30Q		SVR
P-11	CT	6.8			D/C at WK12 due to AE; SVR
P-12	CT	6.4	Q54H-P58S-Q62E		SVR

P-13	CT	7.4	Q54H		D/C at WK6; PDR not achieved <sup>c</sup>
P-14	CT	6.5			SVR
P-15	CT	6.3	R30Q/R-Q62Q/R		SVR
P-16	CT	6.6	Q54H		SVR
P-17	CT	6.6	Q54H-Q62E		SVR
P-18	CT	6.9	Q54Y	Q80L	SVR
P-19	CT	6.6	Q54H-Y93H	N77A	SVR
P-20	CT	7.0	R30Q	S122G	SVR
P-21	CC	6.6	Q54L		SVR

<sup>a</sup>All NS3 and NS5A amino acids were examined with focus on polymorphisms at positions known to be associated with resistance to NS3 protease inhibitors (36,43,54,55,77,78,79,80,122,123,138,155,156,158,168,170,175) and NS5A inhibitors (21,23,24,28,30,31,32,54,58,62,92,93). When a mixture of substitutions is indicated, the most predominant is identified first.

<sup>b</sup>HCV-RNA undetectable at post-treatment week 24

<sup>c</sup>Alfa/RBV added; HCV-RNA undetectable at post-treatment week 24 following 52 weeks' therapy

D/C, discontinued; GT, genotype; HCV, hepatitis C virus; PDR, protocol-defined response; SAE, serious adverse event; SVR, sustained virologic response; WK, Week.

**Table 2: Baseline viral and host characteristics among genotype-1b ineligible/intolerant patients and their virologic outcome**

Patient	<i>IL28B</i> GT	HCV-RNA, log <sub>10</sub> IU/mL	NS5A polymorphism(s) <sup>a</sup>	NS3 polymorphism(s) <sup>a</sup>	Virologic outcome
P-22	CC	7.1			SVR
P-23	CC	6.9	A92T	Q80L-S122G/S	SVR
P-24	CC	6.6	L28M-R30L-Q54H-A92T	Q80L-S122S/G	D/C at WK12 due to AE; SVR
P-25	CT	6.8	L31M/L-Y93H/Y		VBT (WK16)
P-26	CC	5.3			SVR
P-27	CC	6.9	Q54H-Y93H/Y	T54S	SVR
P-28	CC	6.8	Y93H/Y	Q80L	SVR
P-29	CT	6.7	Q54Y-Y93H/Y	Q80L	VBT (WK16)
P-30	CT	6.7	Q54H		SVR
P-31	CC	6.6	P58S/P-Y93Y/H	S122G	Relapse (FUWK12)
P-32	CT	6.7	P58L	S122G	Relapse (FUWK4)
P-33	CT	5.2	Q54H-Q62P/S		D/C at WK12 due to patient request; SVR
P-34	CC	6.6		Q80L	SVR
P-35	CC	6.4	Q54H-Q62E/A-A92T		SVR

P-36	CC	7.1		S122S/C	Relapse (FUWK4)
P-37	CC	6.6	Y93H		Relapse (FUWK4)
P-38	CC	7.5		S122T	SVR
P-39	CC	5.1	R30Q/R		SVR
P-40	CC	6.8	Q54H-A92A/T	Q80L	D/C at WK8 <sup>b</sup>
P-41	CC	6.0		S122G	SVR
P-42	CC	6.5	A92T		SVR
P-43	CT	7.0	Q54Y-Y93H	S122G	VBT (WK10)

<sup>a</sup>All NS3 and NS5A amino acids were examined with focus on polymorphisms at positions known to be associated with resistance to NS3 protease inhibitors (36,43,54,55,77,78,79,80,122,123,138,155,156,158,168,170,175) and NS5A inhibitors (21,23,24,28,30,31,32,54,58,62,92,93). When a mixture of substitutions is indicated, the most predominant is identified first.

<sup>b</sup>Treatment discontinued at patient request; subsequently lost to follow-up

D/C, discontinued; FU, follow-up; GT, genotype; HCV, hepatitis C virus; SVR, sustained virologic response; VBT, viral breakthrough; WK, week.

**Table 3: Emergence of resistance-associated variants among genotype-1b ineligible/intolerant patients experiencing viral breakthrough or relapse**

Patient	Time point	DCV / ASV $C_{\text{trough}}$ range, nM	NS5A RAVs				DCV $EC_{90}$ , nM	NS3 RAVs			ASV $EC_{90}$ , nM
			L31	Q54	P58	Y93		Q80	S122	D168	
<i>VBT patients</i>											
P-25	BL	190–261 / 25–41	M/L	-	-	H/Y	<137	-	-	-	
	WK16 (VBT)		M	-	A	H	>1000	-	-	A	540
	WK20		V	-	A	H		-	-	A	
	WK24		M	-	A	H		-	-	A	
	FUWK4		M	-	A	H		-	-	A	
	FUWK36		M	-	G	H	>5000	-	-	D/A	
	FUWK48		M	-	G/A	H		-	-	-	
P-29	BL	116–198 / 18–33	-	Y	-	H	0.04	L	-	-	1.6
	WK16 (VBT)		ND					ND			
	WK20		M/V	Y	-	H	750	L	-	V	55
	FUWK4		M	Y	-	H		L	-	V	
	FUWK36		M	Y	-	H		L	-	V	
	FUWK48		M	Y	-	H		L	-	V	
P-43	BL	243 / 69	-	Y	-	H	0.49	-	G	-	2.8
	WK10 (VBT)		M	Y	-	H	435	-	G	V	279
	FUWK4		M	Y	-	H		-	G	V	
	FUWK36		M	Y	-	H		-	G	-	
	FUWK48		M	Y	-	H		-	G	-	
<i>Relapse patients</i>											
P-31	BL	573–620 /	-	-	S/P	Y/H	0.02	-	G	-	
	FUWK16	153–327	ND					-	-	A	

	FUWK24		M	-	-	H	351	-	G	-	
	FUWK36		-	-	-	-		-	-	-	
	FUWK48		-	-	-	-		-	-	-	
<b>P-32</b>	BL	151-306 / 19-42	-	-	L	-	0.004	-	G	-	
	FUWK8		M	-	L	H		-	G	V/D	
	FUWK12		M	-	L	H	543	-	G	-	
	FUWK36		M	-	L	-	1.5	-	G	-	
	FUWK48		M	-	L	-		-	G	-	
<b>P-36</b>	BL	138 / 26	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	
	FUWK8		V/M	-	-	H		-	-	V	1190
	FUWK12		V	-	-	H	349	-	-	-	
	FUWK24		M/V	-	-	H		-	-	V/D	
	FUWK36		M	-	-	H	137	-	-	-	
	FUWK48		M	-	-	H		-	-	-	
<b>P-37</b>	BL	75-134 / 40-93	-	-	-	H	0.49	-	-	-	
	FUWK8		V	-	-	H		-	-	V	
	FUWK12		V/I	-	-	H		-	-	V	
	FUWK24		M	-	-	H		-	-	V	
	FUWK36		M	-	-	H		-	-	E/D	
	FUWK48		M	-	-	H		-	-	-	

ASV, asunaprevir; BL, baseline; DCV, daclatasvir; EC<sub>90</sub>, 90% effective concentration; FU, follow-up; ND, not determined as multiple amplifications failed; RAV, resistance-associated variant; VBT, viral breakthrough; WK, week

When a mixture of substitutions is indicated, the most predominant is written first. ASV-resistant variants conferred no cross-resistance to DCV, and vice versa in a replicon assay. Dashes indicate consensus with control sequence GT1b (Con1)



## Figure Legends

**Fig. 1. HCV-RNA levels among genotype-1b null-responders.** Treatment was initiated with (A) asunaprevir 600mg BID or (B) asunaprevir 200mg BID, in combination with daclatasvir 60mg QD. Individual patient HCV-RNA levels are shown in grey. Mean HCV-RNA levels are shown in black. BID, twice-daily; HCV, hepatitis C virus; LLOQ, lower limit of quantitation; QD, once-daily.

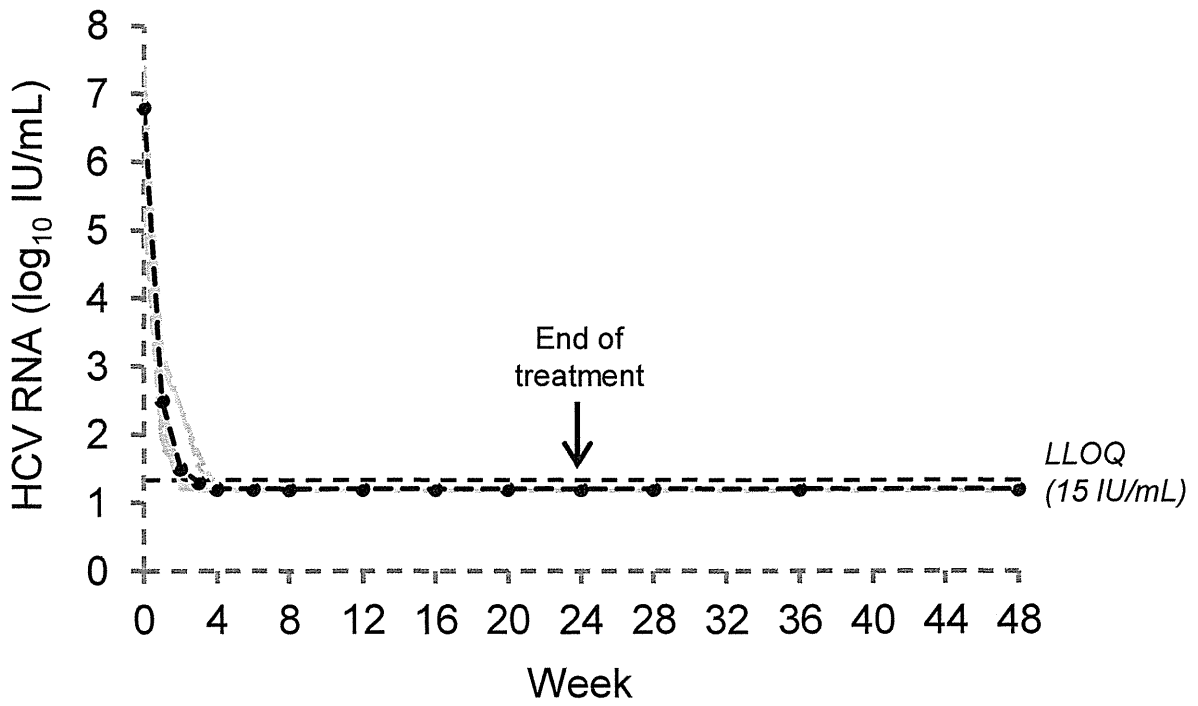
**Fig. 2. Impact of baseline polymorphisms associated with resistance on virologic outcome among genotype-1b (A) null responders or (B) ineligible/intolerant patients.** The ineligible/intolerant analysis excludes one patient (P-40) who discontinued therapy and was subsequently lost to follow-up. SVR, sustained virologic response.

**Fig. 3. Early (Week 1) declines in HCV-RNA were similar among alfa/RBV ineligible or intolerant patients with and without baseline polymorphisms associated with resistance, virologic failure, and *IL28B* CT genotype.** BL, baseline; GT, genotype; HCV, hepatitis C virus; RAV, resistance-associated variant; SVR, sustained virologic response; VBT, viral breakthrough.

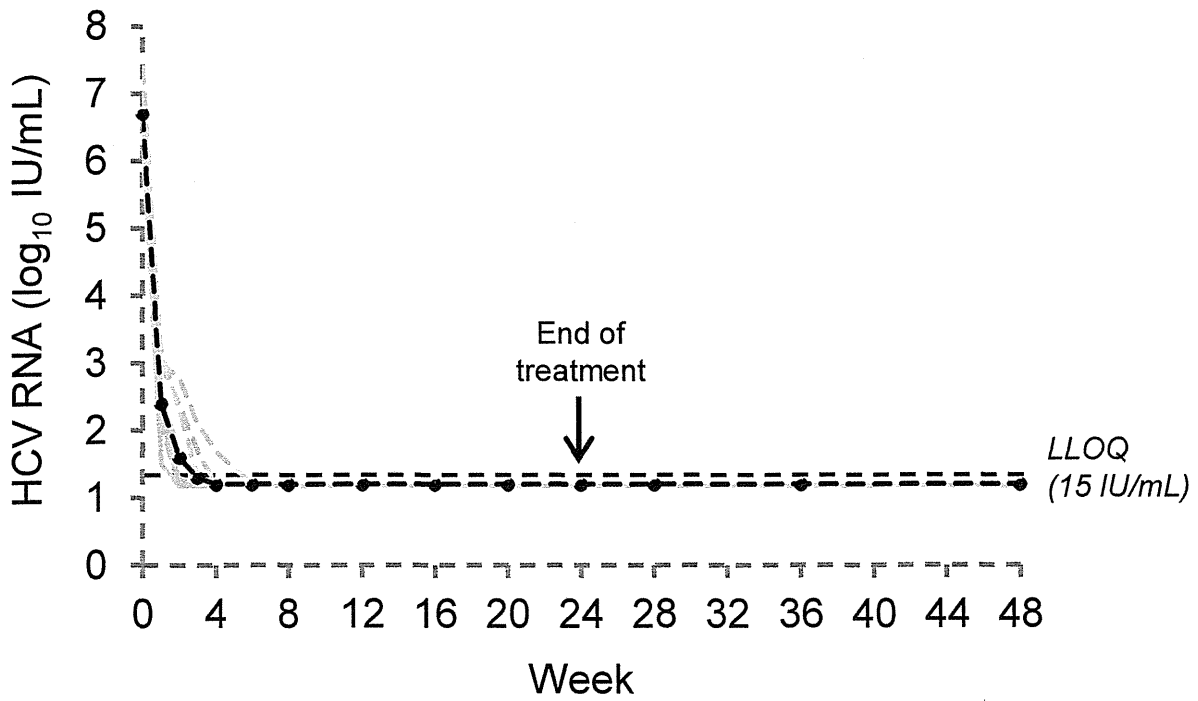
**Fig. 4. HCV-RNA levels on-treatment and during post-treatment follow-up for genotype-1b ineligible/intolerant patients experiencing (A) viral breakthrough or (B) relapse.** Solid lines indicate on treatment period. Dashed lines indicate post-treatment follow-up. HCV, hepatitis C virus; LLOQ, lower limit of quantitation.

**Fig. 5. Clonal analysis of NS3 protease and NS5A resistance-associated variants in patients experiencing virologic breakthrough: (A) Patient P-25, (B) Patient P-29, and (C) Patient P-43.** FU, follow-up; VBT, viral breakthrough.

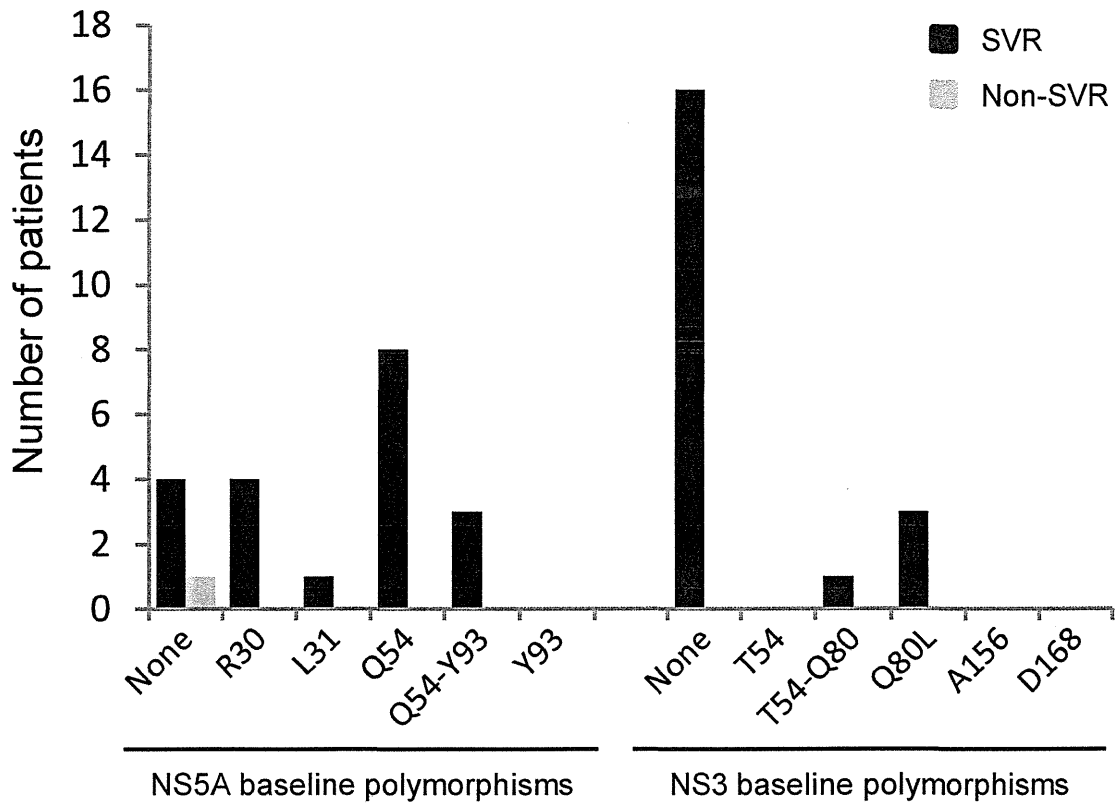
**(A)**



**(B)**



**(A)**



**(B)**

