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Researchers identify common cold antibody that can also fight COVID

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Americans who have had prior exposure to various coronaviruses since before the current pandemic may benefit from a particular common cold antibody that is triggered if they are infected with COVID-19, a new scientific study has found.

A peer-reviewed study published in the academic journal Nature Communications investigated how the body's immune system reacted to COVID-19 after it had already been exposed to other coronaviruses that are prevalent in the US and trigger the common cold. At least four such coronaviruses are known to exist in the US.

The study found that the antibody in question reacts not only to SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, but also to SARS-CoV-1, which causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

This antibody is likely produced by a memory "b" cell that was previously exposed to the common cold, according to Raiees Andrabi, the study's senior author and an investigator in the Scripps Research Institute's Department of Immunology and Microbiology.

These cells are essential parts of the immune system and function by remembering diseases that had entered the body already.

The study's findings are significant because they could help pave the way for better vaccines and treatments and combat future types of coronaviruses that may emerge.

"Another deadly coronavirus will likely emerge again in the future, and when it does, we want to be better prepared," Prof. Dennis Burton, one of the study's authors, was quoted as saying by News Medical, an online provider of medical information.

"Our identification of a cross-reactive antibody against SARS-CoV-2 and the more common coronaviruses is a promising development on the way to a broad-acting vaccine or therapy," he said.