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MOLECULAR DOCKING AND ADMET EVALUATION OF HETEROCYCLIC COMPOUNDS AGAINST PARKINSON-RELATED GENES

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1. ABSTRACT

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a neurodegenerative disorder effecting both motor and nonmotor activities with symptoms like tremors, rigidity, bradykinesia and postural instability. Unusual clumps of the proteins were found in the brain of people with PD, scientist assume that they are the deposits of protein alpha-synuclein called Lewy bodies. The accumulation of alpha-synuclein as clumps in the neurons in some part of the brain prevents neurotransmission there by affecting the functionality of brain. The actual cause of it is not known, attributing to various reasons like the environmental, genetic. If we consider genetics of the disease, literature talks that there are approximately 23 PARK genes, of which we have considered PARK7, PINK, LRRK2 and their interactions with few active Thio heterocyclic compounds. And it is found that the LRRK2 and (4-aminophenyl) sulfanyl-4-hydroxychromen-2-one interacts well and holds a promising compound for further an invitro analysis.

2. KEYWORDS: Parkinson disease, alpha-synuclein, PARK, LRRK, PINK genes, heterocyclic compounds.

1. INTRODUCTION

Parkinson's disease (PD is the second most common neurodegenerative disease, affecting 1% of the population over the age of 50. Although the exact cause of PD remains unclear, researchers suggests that it is because of a combination of genetic and environmental factors that contributes to the neuronal dysfunction and death, particularly in the substantia nigra, a region of the brain responsible for dopamine production. (Bloem et al., 2021)

1.1. Causes and Causative Agents

The hallmark of Parkinson's disease is the degeneration of dopaminergic neurons leading to a significant reduction in dopamine levels there by reducing the muscle movements. The accumulation of misfolded alpha-synuclein (α-syn) protein in the form of Lewy bodies is another critical feature of PD pathology. Environmental toxins, oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, and neuroinflammation have significantly contributed for the disease progression. Certain pesticides, such as rotenone and paraquat, and heavy metals like manganese, have been associated with an increased risk of PD. (Morris et al., 2024)

1.2. Genetic Basis: DNA, RNA, and Protein Involvement

To date, 23 PARK genes are associated, mutations in the PARK genes demonstrate either autosomal dominant (e.g., *SCNA, LRRK2*, and *VPS32*) or autosomal recessive inheritance (e.g., *PRKN, PINK1*, and *DJ-1*). The involvement of some of these genes has not been conclusively confirmed (PARK5, PARK11, PARK13, PARK18, PARK21, and PARK23), while others are considered risk factors (PARK3, PARK10, PARK12, PARK16, and PARK22) (Freschi, 2022)

- SNCA (Alpha-Synuclein Gene): Also called PARK4, located on chr4.p14, belonging to the synuclein family, which also includes beta- and gamma-synuclein. This is abundantly expressed in the brain and alpha- and beta-synuclein which inhibits phospholipase D2 selectively (Magistrelli et al., 2021) It also integrates in presynaptic signalling and in membrane trafficking. SNCA peptides are major components of amyloid plaques in the brains of patients with Alzheimer's disease. Alternatively spliced transcripts encoding different isoforms have been identified for this gene mutations and duplications in SNCA lead to excessive or misfolded alpha-synuclein protein, which aggregates to form Lewy bodies. (Compta & Revesz, 2021)

- LRRK2 (Leucine-Rich Repeat Kinase 2): Found on the chr12q11, provides machinery for synthesis of dardarin (having kinase activity), mutations result in increased kinase activity, which disrupts cellular

homeostasis and contributes to neurodegeneration. (Rocha et al., 2022)

- PARK2 (Parkin): located on the chr6q25, gene responsible for encoding an E3 ubiquitin ligase that helps degrade damaged proteins. Mutations in PARK2 result in the accumulation of toxic proteins in neurons. (Gerasimova et al., 2024)
- PINK1 (PTEN-Induced Kinase 1): This gene is on 1p36.12 and makes a protein called PTEN induced putative kinase 1, which is in total involved in mitochondrial quality control. Mutations in PINK1 impair the cell's ability to remove damaged mitochondria, leading to increased oxidative stress and neuronal death. (Gonçalves & Morais, 2021)

1.3. Mutations and Their Effects

Genetic factors play a crucial role in the development of Parkinson's disease. Mutations in several genes, including SNCA, LRRK2, and PARK, PINK have been identified as contributors to PD pathogenesis. These genes encode proteins that are involved in critical cellular functioning such as in protein degradation, mitochondrial function, and oxidative stress response. Mutations in genes associated with Parkinson's disease can be inherited in an autosomal dominant or recessive manner.

- Dominant mutations in SNCA and LRRK2 tend to lead to protein aggregation and toxic gain-of-function effects.
- Recessive mutations in PARK2, PINK1, and DJ-1 typically result in a loss of function, affecting mitochondrial function and protein degradation.(Tan & Skipper, 2007a)

These genetic alterations contribute to the cellular stress that ultimately leads to dopaminergic neuron loss. The study of these mutations has not only provided insights into PD pathogenesis but has also opened avenues for targeted therapies, including gene therapy and small-molecule inhibitors aimed at modifying disease progression. (Tan & Skipper, 2007b)

1.4. Ligands

Levodopa, dopamine agonists, MAO-B inhibitors are used to manage symptoms of this disease. Aryl sulphides are ubiquitous structural motifs that frequently occur in many natural products, in pharmaceutically active compounds and in material science. Many drugs having aryl sulphide units in their core structure are employed to manage Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, cancer, inflammatory ad HIV diseases. (Gray et al., 2022)

1.5. Pharmacological Importance of Heterocyclic Compounds

Heterocyclic compounds are cyclic structures that have at least one heteroatom, which is usually nitrogen, oxygen, or sulphur, present in the ring. Other heteroatoms like phosphorus, selenium, iron, and magnesium are also commonly integrated to heterocyclic scaffolds. Heterocycles are essential and versatile biological scaffolds with increasing potential for use in medicinal, antimicrobial and industrial applications and thus are a basic class of organic compounds. (Kabir & Uzzaman, 2022)

These types of ring systems are found in many natural biomolecules—DNA, RNA, chlorophyll, haemoglobin, and various vitamins. They also form part of the structure of essential amino acids such as proline, and pigments participating to photosynthesis and oxygen transport. Diverse heterocyclic scaffolds are present in many pharmaceutical drugs, including triazine analogues (urinary antiseptics, anti-inflammatory agents), and benzimidazole derivatives with antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, and anthelmintic activities.

In addition, heterocyclic cores are common in amino acids (e.g., histidine, tryptophan), vitamins (e.g., thiamine, riboflavin, folic acid, B12), and cofactors such as pyridoxine. Besides therapeutic application, synthetic heterocycles are used in agrochemicals, dyes, fungicides, corrosion inhibitors, and other industrial materials.

Anti-Inflammatory Activity: Anti-inflammatory agents are drugs that reduce inflammation and comprise a group of drugs known as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), including aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), ibuprofen, or naproxen. Although effective, chronic use of NSAIDs may lead to gastrointestinal complications and raise cardiovascular risk. New classes of heterocycles, like furan, pyrrole, or pyridazinone derivatives, have demonstrated interesting anti-inflammatory activities. For instance, some compounds that were synthesized by Hameed et al. pyrano[2,3-d] pyrimidine derivatives synthesized by Abdel Azim et al. (Abd El-Hameed et al., 2021) displayed considerable suppression of COX-2, LOX, and TNF-α, demonstrating possible clinical significance.

Antibacterial Activity: Broad-spectrum antibacterial agents can inhibit or kill pathogenic bacteria, and a large number of effective antibiotics are derived from heterocyclic compounds (e.g., β-lactams). Mustafa et al.089 Novel coumacin-based heterocycles. (Mustafa, 2018)exerted broad-spectrum antibacterial activity against both aerobic and anaerobic strains, comparable to ciprofloxacin and metronidazole. Some coumacin analogues (i.e. 23e, 24f, 25e) were found to effectively inhibit methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in a synergistic manner when combined with antibiotics like vancomycin and oxacillin, indicating their potential for drug development.

Antipyretic Activity: Antipyretics lower fever by inhibiting cyclooxygenase (COX) enzymes, indirectly reducing prostaglandin synthesis. Frequently used agents are acetaminophen and NSAIDs. A new pyrazole 1,5-diphenyl-1H-pyrazole-3-carbohydrazide (1.5-DHP) was prepared by Malvar et al. (Malvar et al., 2014)possess dose-dependent anti-phosphatidic effects in models of

lipopolysaccharide-induced fever in rats, which provides further evidence for the possibility of it being a therapeutic antipyretic.

In this study, we have synthesized (Ch. Anjaiaha, 2018) and evaluated a series of novel Thio-heterocyclic compounds, aiming to explore their potential for enhanced bioactivity and therapeutic relevance.

S. No.	Name of the compound
1	4-hydroxy-3-phenylsulfanylchromen-2-one
2	4-hydroxy-3-(4-methylphenyl) sulfanylchromen-2-one
3	4-hydroxy-3-(4-methoxyphenyl)sulfanylchromen-2-one
4	4-hydroxy-3-(4-bromophenyl)sulfanylchromen-2-one
5	4-chlorophenyl)sulfanyl-4-hydroxychromen-2-one
6	4-aminophenyl)sulfanyl-4-hydroxychromen-2-one
7	4-hydroxy-3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)sulfanylchromen-2-one
8	naphthalene 3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)sulfanylchromen-2-one 6-Hydroxythiochromeno[2,3-b]chromen-5-one

2. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Bioinformatics and Computational Tools Used

Various bioinformatics and computational tools were employed in this study to analyze Parkinson's disease-related proteins, predict molecular interactions, and evaluate drug-like properties of potential therapeutic compounds. These tools included NCBI databases, FASTA sequence retrieval, protein sequencing, and homology modelling using Swiss Model, molecular docking using Swiss Dock, and ADMET (Absorption, Distribution, Metabolism, Excretion, and Toxicity) analysis.

Protocols for Computational Analyses:

1. Sequence Retrieval (NCBI & FASTA):
   - Access NCBI database and search for target protein (e.g., SNCA).
   - Download protein sequence in FASTA format.
   - Use BLASTp to compare sequences and identify homologs.

2. Homology Modeling (SwissModel):
   - Upload FASTA sequence to SwissModel.
   - Identify templates and generate 3D model.
   - Validate model using Ramachandran plot and quality assessment tools.

3. Molecular Docking (SwissDock):
   - Prepare protein structure (remove water, add hydrogen atoms).
   - Input ligand structure and optimize geometry.
   - Perform docking and analyze binding sites and affinities.

4. ADMET Analysis:
   - Use tools like SwissADME to assess pharmacokinetic properties.
   - Evaluate drug-likeness and potential toxicity.
   - Filter out non-viable candidates based on ADMET parameters.

These computational approaches enable a comprehensive understanding of Parkinson's disease-related molecular mechanisms and assist in identifying potential therapeutic strategies.

5. RESULTS

S. No	Molecular Weight	Log P	Hydrogen Bond Doners	Hydrogen Bond Accceptors	Canonical Smiles	AC Score	SwissParam Score
1	270.30g/mol	2.52	1	3	OC1=C(SC2=CC=CC=C2)C(=O)OC2=C1C=CC=C2	41.455528	-6.2724
2	284.33g/mol	2.8	1	3	CC1=CC=C(SC2=C(O)C3=C(OC2=O)C=CC=C3)C=C1	51.865371	-5.6843
3	300.33g/mol	2.72	1	4	COC1=CC=C(SC2=C(O)C3=C(OC2=O)C=CC=C3)C=C1	46.86727	-6.0712
4	349.2g/mol	2.9	1	3	OC1=C(SC2=CC=C(Br)C=C2)C(=O)OC2=C1C=CC=C2	40.089654	-6.1332
5	304.75g/mol	2.99	1	3	OC1=C(SC2=CC=C(Cl)C=C2)C(=O)OC2=C1C=CC=C2	45.352459	-6.1847
6	285.32g/mol	2.21	2	3	NC1=CC=C(SC2=C(O)C3=C(OC2=O)C=CC=C3)C=C1	34.859168	-6.401
7	286.3g/mol	2.17	2	4	OC1=CC=C(SC2=C(O)C3=C(OC2=O)C=CC=C3)C=C1	39.894717	-5.7938
8	320.36g/mol	2.92	1	3	OC1=C(SC2=CC3=C(C=CC=C3)C=C2)C(=O)OC2=C1C=CC=C2	59.119007	-5.8478

The above table is docking results of LRRK2 with all the 8 heterocyclic compounds mentioned.

a. The best ligand is selected based on two key factors

1. AC Score (Affinity Score) – Higher values indicate better binding affinity to the protein.
2. SwissParam Score (Estimated Drug-Likeness & Stability) – Less negative values are generally better because they indicate favorable drug-like properties.

b. Best Ligand Selection Criteria

- High AC Score → Indicates strong binding to LRRK2.
- Less Negative SwissParam Score → Suggests better pharmacokinetic properties.

Top Contender Based on Data

- Molecule 8 has the highest AC score (59.1190) and a reasonably good SwissParam score (-5.8478), but its molecular weight (320.36 g/mol) is slightly higher than most.
- Molecule 2 has the second-highest AC score (51.8653) and a better SwissParam score (-5.6843), with a molecular weight of 284.33 g/mol (which is quite ideal).
- Molecule 6 has the lowest AC score (34.8591) and the most negative SwissParam score (-6.401), which might suggest better stability but lower activity.
- Molecule 7 has a balanced profile with a moderate AC score (39.8947), low Log P (2.17), and an acceptable molecular weight (286.3 g/mol).

Best Ligand

- Molecule 8 is the best ligand overall, with the highest AC score (65.67) and a SwissParam score of -5.13 (indicating good drug-likeness).
- Among the ligands in the current table, Molecule 8 remains the best choice with an AC score of 59.1190 and a SwissParam score of -5.8478.
- Molecule 2 is the next best option with an AC score of 51.8653 and a SwissParam score of -5.6843, making it a balanced choice.

Final Interpretation

Cluster 9, Ligand H (Molecule 8) - Best Overall

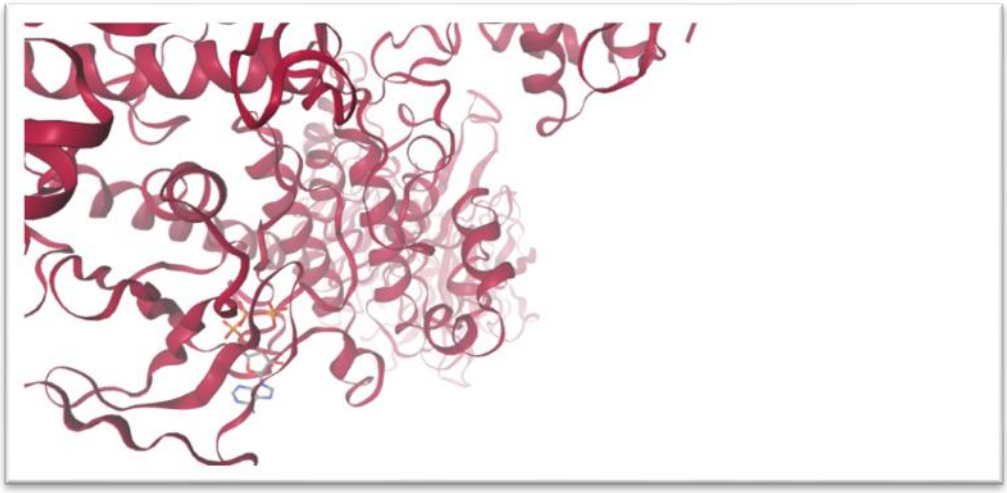
- AC Score: 65.67 (Highest)
- SwissParam Score: -5.13 (Indicating good drug-likeness)

Molecule 8 (Best from Current Table)

- AC Score: 59.1190
- SwissParam Score: -5.8478

Molecule 2 (Balanced Choice)

- AC Score: 51.8653
- SwissParam Score: -5.6843
- **Molecule 8 (AC Score 65.67, SwissParam Score -5.13) is likely the best ligand for LRRK2 docking.**
- Other ligands with **high AC Scores (~59-65)** could also be promising candidates.
- Lower AC Score ligands (~40-50) from other images may have weaker interactions with LRRK2.
-



Protein LRRK2 docked with molecule 8.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Medicinal chemistry is a branch that draws traditional sciences such as organic chemistry, biology and physics. However, a large number of natural and synthetic heterocyclic compounds show significant medicinal properties. Heterocyclic compounds have greater chemical adaptability, and are also able to respond to the diverse demands of biological systems. According to the survey of literature, heterocycles play significant role in medicinal chemistry having a variety of physiological

functions- biologically acting as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), Antibacterial, Antifungal, and Antipyretic. Here we have established that these heterocyclic compounds can play a role in managing Parkinson disease using docking.

This research used 8 different Thio-heterocyclic compounds (having coumarin ring), to identify which best docks to the LRRK2 gene (playing a vital role in disease) and found that **naphthalene 3-(4-hydroxyphenyl) sulfanyl chromen-2-one 6-Hydroxythiochromeno [2,3-b]chromen-5-one(molecule 8) docks well when compared to all others.**

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