

# **Molecular Modeling**

## **Basic Principles and Applications**

by Hans-Dieter Höltje and Gerd Folkers

in collaboration with Thomas Beier,  
Wolfgang Sippl and Didier Rognan



Weinheim · New York · Basel · Cambridge · Tokyo

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# **Methods and Principles in Medicinal Chemistry**

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# Preface

The fifth volume of the series “Methods and Principles in Medicinal Chemistry” focuses on molecular modeling. Progress in modern ligand design is intimately coupled with the access to and the continuous refinement of molecular modeling techniques. They allow the computer-aided generation of molecular structures as well as the computation of molecular properties. Predictions of the three-dimensional structures of drug and receptor molecules, visualizations of their molecular surface properties and optimizations of drug–receptor interactions by visual inspection can be realized today.

The present volume offers an introduction to the field of molecular modeling. The book is organized in two parts: the first deals with the modeling of small molecules whereas the second examines biological macromolecules, in particular proteins.

The first part describes in detail the basic know-how necessary for generating 3D coordinates of small molecules, the computational tools for geometry optimization and conformational analysis, the determination of molecular interaction potentials, approaches for the identification of pharmacophores and last but not least the use of databases. The application of this spectrum of methodical approaches is exemplified by a case study dealing with pharmacophore definition in the field of serotonin receptor (5 HT<sub>2A</sub>) ligands.

The second part gives an introduction to protein modeling. After a description of terminology and the principles governing protein structures, approaches for knowledge-based protein modeling are summarized, followed by chapters on refinement and validation of protein models and on methods for the description of structural properties of proteins. The case study in the second part illustrates the application of experimental procedures to the modeling of protein–ligand complexes (design of non-natural peptides as high-affinity ligands for a MCH I protein).

The editors would like to thank the contributors for their encouragement in compiling this volume. We are sure that scientists entering the fascinating field of computer-aided ligand design will find in this volume the adequate support they need to apply molecular modeling techniques successfully.

April 1996

Düsseldorf  
Ludwigshafen  
Amsterdam

Raimund Mannhold  
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Hendrik Timmerman

# Methods and Principles in Medicinal Chemistry

Edited by  
R. Mannhold  
H. Kubinyi  
H. Timmerman

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Hans-Dieter Höltje, Gerd Folkers  
*Molecular Modeling*



# A Personal Foreword

“A Model must be wrong, in some respects, else it would be the thing itself. The trick is to see where it is right.”

*Henry A. Bent*

We humans receive our data through the senses of vision, touch, smell, hearing and taste. Therefore, when we have to understand things that happen on the submicroscopic scale, we have to devise a way of simulating this activity. The most immediate and accessible way to represent the world that is unobservable is to make a model that is on our scale and that uses familiar forms.

Many physical and chemical properties and behaviors of molecules can be predicted and understood only if the molecular and electronic structures of these species are conceived and manipulated in three-dimensional (3D) models. As a natural follow up nowadays the computer is used as a standard tool for generating molecular models in many research areas.

The historical process of developing concepts leading to molecular modeling started with the quantum chemical description of molecules. This approach yields excellent results on the *ab initio* level. But the size of the molecular systems which can be handled is still rather limited. It is therefore that the introduction of molecular modeling as a routine tool owes its beginning to the development of molecular mechanics some 25 years ago together with the appearance of new technologies in computer graphics.

The goal of this book is to show how theoretical calculations and 3D visualization and manipulation can be used not simply to look at molecules and take pretty pictures of them, but actually to be able to gain new ideas and reliable working hypotheses for molecular interactions such as drug action.

It is our intention to reach this goal by giving examples from our own research fields more than reporting literature's success stories. This is because stepwise procedures avoiding pitfalls and overinterpretation can at best be demonstrated by data from our own laboratory notebooks.

Most of the contents will therefore reflect our own ideas and personal experiences, but nevertheless represent, what we believe to be an independent view of molecular modeling.

We gratefully acknowledge the technical assistance of Matthias Worch, Frank Alber and Oliver Kuonen. Finally we wish to express our sincere gratitude to Heide Westhusen for her excellent secretarial and organizational help.

Spring 1996

Berlin  
Zürich

Hans-Dieter Höltje  
Gerd Folkers

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# Contents

<b>Preface</b>	V
<b>A Personal Foreword</b>	VII
<b>1 Introduction</b>	1
1.1 Modern History of Molecular Modeling	2
1.2 Do Today's Molecular Modeling Methods Illustrate only the Lukretian World?	3
1.3 What are Models Used for?	4
1.4 Molecular Modeling Uses All Four Types for Model Building	4
1.5 The Final Step is <i>Design</i>	4
1.6 The Scope of the Book	5
<b>2 Small Molecules</b>	9
2.1 Generation of 3D Coordinates	9
2.1.1 Crystal Data	9
2.1.2 Fragment Libraries	10
2.1.3 Sketch Approach	12
2.2 Computational Tools for Geometry Optimization	13
2.2.1 Force Fields	13
2.2.2 Geometry Optimization	15
2.2.3 Energy-Minimizing Procedures	16
2.2.3.1 Steepest Descent Minimizer	17
2.2.3.2 Conjugate Gradient Method	17
2.2.3.3 Newton-Raphson Minimizer	17
2.2.4 Use of Charges, Solvation Effects	18
2.2.5 Quantum Mechanical Methods	19
2.2.5.1 Ab initio Methods	19
2.2.5.2 Semiempirical Molecular Orbital Methods	21
2.3 Conformational Analysis	23
2.3.1 Conformational Analysis Using Systematic Search Procedures	25
2.3.2 Conformational Analysis Using Monte Carlo Methods	29
2.3.3 Conformational Analysis Using Molecular Dynamics	29

2.4	Determination of Molecular Interaction Potentials . . . . .	37
2.4.1	Molecular Electrostatic Potentials (MEPs) . . . . .	37
2.4.1.1	Methods for Calculating Atomic Point Charges . . . . .	38
2.4.1.2	Methods for Generating MEPs . . . . .	42
2.4.2	Molecular Interaction Fields . . . . .	43
2.4.2.1	Calculation of GRID Fields . . . . .	45
2.4.2.2	How GRID Fields can be Exploited . . . . .	47
2.4.2.3	Use of Chemometrics: The CoMFA Method . . . . .	49
2.4.3	Hydrophobic Interactions . . . . .	49
2.4.3.1	Log <i>P</i> as a Measure of Lipophilicity . . . . .	50
2.4.3.2	The Hydropathic Field . . . . .	50
2.4.3.3	Display of Properties on a Molecular Surface . . . . .	51
2.5	Pharmacophore Identification . . . . .	55
2.5.1	Molecules to be Matched . . . . .	55
2.5.2	Atom-by-Atom Superposition . . . . .	56
2.5.3	Superposition of Molecular Fields . . . . .	58
2.6	The Use of Data Bants . . . . .	60
2.6.1	Conversion of 2D Structural Data into 3D Form . . . . .	60
2.6.2	3D Searching . . . . .	61
<b>3</b>	<b>Example for Small Molecule Modeling: Serotonin Receptor Ligands . . . . .</b>	<b>65</b>
3.1	Definition of the Serotonergic Pharmacophore . . . . .	65
3.2	The Molecular Interaction Field . . . . .	69
3.3	Construction of a 5-HT <sub>2a</sub> Receptor Binding Site Model . . . . .	71
3.4	Calculation of Interaction Energies . . . . .	73
3.5	Validation of the Model . . . . .	74
<b>4</b>	<b>Introduction to Protein Modeling . . . . .</b>	<b>77</b>
4.1	Where and How to get Information on Proteins . . . . .	77
4.2	Terminology and Principles of Protein Structure . . . . .	81
4.2.1	Conformational Properties of Proteins . . . . .	81
4.2.2	Types of Secondary Structural Elements . . . . .	84
4.2.2.1	The $\alpha$ -Helix . . . . .	84
4.2.2.2	The $\beta$ -Sheet . . . . .	85
4.2.2.3	Turns . . . . .	87
4.2.3	Homologous Proteins . . . . .	88
4.3	Knowledge-Based Protein Modeling . . . . .	91
4.3.1	Procedures for Sequence Alignments . . . . .	92
4.3.2	Determination and Generation of Structurally Conserved Regions (SCRs) . . . . .	96
4.3.3	Construction of Structurally Variable Regions (SVRs) . . . . .	98
4.3.4	Side Chain Modeling . . . . .	99

4.3.5	Distance Geometry Approach . . . . .	101
4.3.6	Secondary Structure Prediction . . . . .	101
4.3.7	Energy-Based Modeling Methods . . . . .	103
4.4	Optimization Procedures — Model Refinement — Molecular Dynamics . .	109
4.4.1	Force Fields for Protein Modeling . . . . .	109
4.4.2	Geometry Optimization . . . . .	110
4.4.3	The Use of Molecular Dynamics Simulations in Model Refinement . . . . .	111
4.4.4	Treatment of Solvated Systems . . . . .	113
4.4.5	Ligand-Binding Site Complexes . . . . .	113
4.5	Validation of Protein Models . . . . .	115
4.5.1	Stereochemical Accuracy . . . . .	116
4.5.2	Packing Quality . . . . .	120
4.5.3	Folding Reliability . . . . .	122
4.6	Properties of Proteins . . . . .	127
4.6.1	Electrostatic Potential . . . . .	127
4.6.2	Interaction Potentials . . . . .	130
4.6.3	Hydrophobicity . . . . .	130
<b>5</b>	<b>Example for the Modeling of Protein–Ligand Complexes:</b>	
	<b>Antigen Presentation by MHC Class I . . . . .</b>	<b>133</b>
5.1	Biochemical and Pharmacological Description of the Problem . . . . .	133
5.1.1	Antigenic Proteins are Presented as Nonapeptides . . . . .	134
5.1.2	Pharmacological Target: Autoimmune Reactions . . . . .	134
5.2	Molecular Modeling of the Antigenic Complex	
	Between a Viral Peptide and a Class I MHC Glycoprotein . . . . .	135
5.2.1	Modeling of the Ligand . . . . .	135
5.2.2	Homology Modeling of the MHC Protein . . . . .	136
5.2.2.1	Preparation of the Coordinates . . . . .	137
5.2.2.2	Building the H-2L <sup>d</sup> Molecule . . . . .	137
5.3	Molecular Dynamics Studies of MHC-Peptide Complexes . . . . .	146
5.3.1	HLA-A2 — The Fate of the Complex during	
	Molecular Dynamics Simulations . . . . .	146
5.3.2	HLS-B*2705 . . . . .	148
5.3.2.1	The Fate of the Complex during Molecular Dynamics Simulations . . . . .	150
5.4	Analysis of Models that Emerged from	
	Molecular Dynamics Simulations . . . . .	153
5.4.1	Hydrogen Bonding Network . . . . .	153
5.4.2	Atomic Fluctuations . . . . .	154
5.4.3	Solvent-Accessible Surface Areas . . . . .	157
5.4.4	Interaction Energies . . . . .	158
5.5	SAR of the Antigenic Peptides from Molecular	
	Dynamics Simulations and Design of Non-natural Peptides	
	as High-Affinity Ligands for a MHC I Protein . . . . .	160

XII      *Contents*

5.5.1	The Design of New Ligands . . . . .	160
5.5.2	Experimental Validation of the Designed Ligand . . . . .	163
5.6	Summary and Conclusion . . . . .	164
<b>Appendices</b> . . . . .		165
<b>Index</b> . . . . .		177

# 1 Introduction

“Dear Venus that beneath the gliding stars ...” Lukrez (Titus Lucretius Carus, 55 B.C.) starts his most famous poem *De Rerum Natura* with the wish to the Goddess of love to reconcile the wargod Mars, which in this time when the Roman Empire starts to pass over its zenith, ruled the world.

*Explanation* is the vision of Lukrez. His aim is in odd opposition to his introductory wish to the goddess of love: the liberation of people from his fear of God, from the dark power of unbelievable nature.

The explanation of mechanism from the common is the measure with which Lukrez will take away the fear from the ancient people, the fear of the gods and their priests, the fear of the want of nature and the power of the stars.

Lightning, fire and light, wine and olive oil have been perhaps the simple things of daily experience, which people needed, which people was afraid of, whom has been dear to him:

“... again, light passes through the horn  
of the lantern’s side, while rain is dashed away.  
And why? – unless those bodies of light should be  
finer than those of water’s genial showers.  
We see how quickly through a colander  
the wines will flow; how, on the other hand  
the sluggish olive oil delays: no doubt  
because ‘tis wrought of elements more large,  
or else more crook’d and intertangled ...”

The atom theory of Demokrit leads Lukrez to the description of the quality of light, water and wine. For this derivation of structure–quality relationships he uses models. The fundamental building stones of Lukretian models look a little like our atoms, called *primodials* by Lukrez, elementary individuals, which were not cleavable anymore. Those elementary building stones could associate. Lukrez even presupposes recognition and interaction. He provides his building stones with mechanic tools that guarantee recognition and interaction. The most important of these conceptual tools are the complementary structure (sic!) and the barked hook. With these primordials Lukrez built his world.

How well the modeling fits is shown in his explanation of the fluidity of wine and oil. A comparison of the space-filling models of the fatty acid and water molecules amazes, because of its similarity with the 2000-years old image of Lukrez.