

How to Use the Docking Software GOLD to Perform Virtual Screening Simulations

CCDC Virtual Workshop

4th November 2025

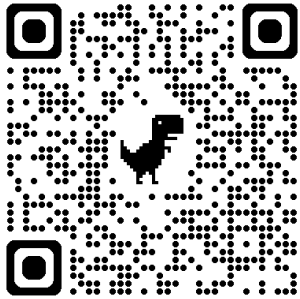
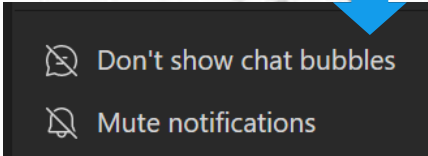
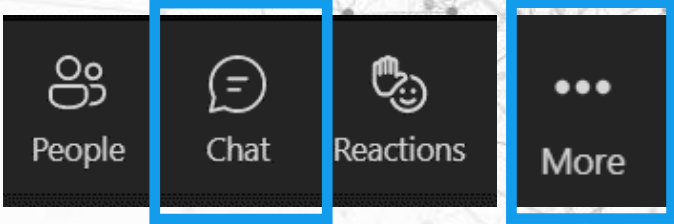


Things you need to know for today

- We will be **recording** part of today's session
 - We will **not** be recording the hands-on part
- If you have a **question**:
 - Type your question in the chat box
 - **Use the chat box now** by telling us where you are joining from and what the weather is like there today!
- To do the hands-on part you need:
 - **Hermes and GOLD installed** with an active **license**
 - **The workshop hand-out**
 - More information in the emails we sent you
- Prerequisites
 - None!

We will make the recording available to you in the next few days

REC



Extra tip: when someone is sharing screen, **hover on their name** in the corner of the screen to bring up the **+ and -** symbols to zoom in and out

Learning outcomes

- Brief overview of [structure-based virtual screening](#).
- Basics of the [Hermes](#) interface, the CCDC's 3D visualizer for proteins.
- [Cavity detection and extraction](#) in Hermes.
- Step-by-step set-up of a [virtual screening simulation in GOLD](#).
- [Analysis](#) of virtual screening results.
- Protein-ligand interactions insights using hotspots via [Superstar](#).

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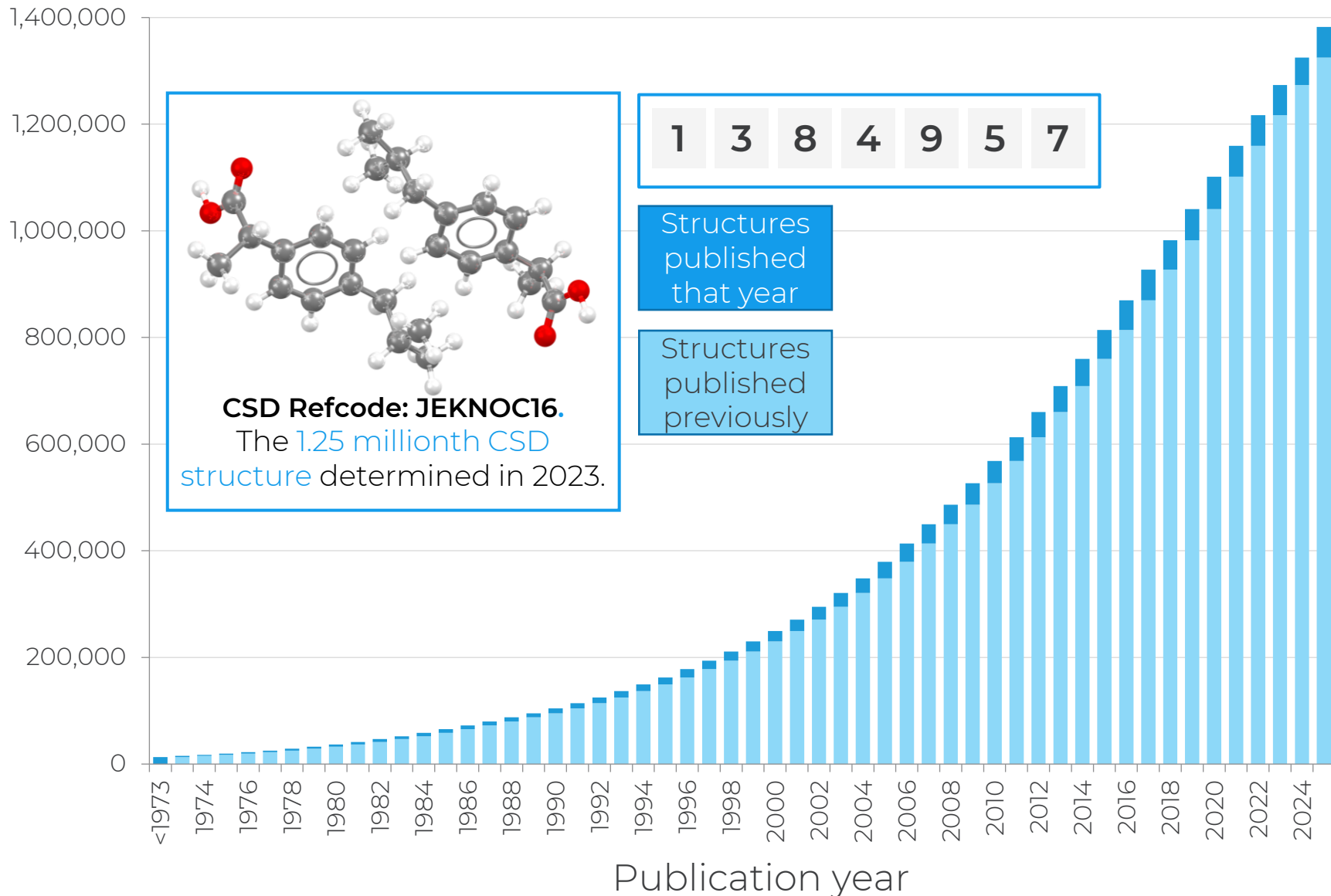
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Agenda

- *Show One: Introduction to the CSD*
- *Show One: Virtual screening overview*
- *Show One: Case studies from Prof. Armando Albert*
- *Show One: GOLD overview and demonstration of Virtual Screening using GOLD*
- *Try One: Hands-on exercise*
- *Explore More: Advanced functionality and use cases*
- *Explore More: Quiz and summary*
- *Extra time: More time for hands-on and Q&A*

The Cambridge Structural Database

Number of structures in the CSD

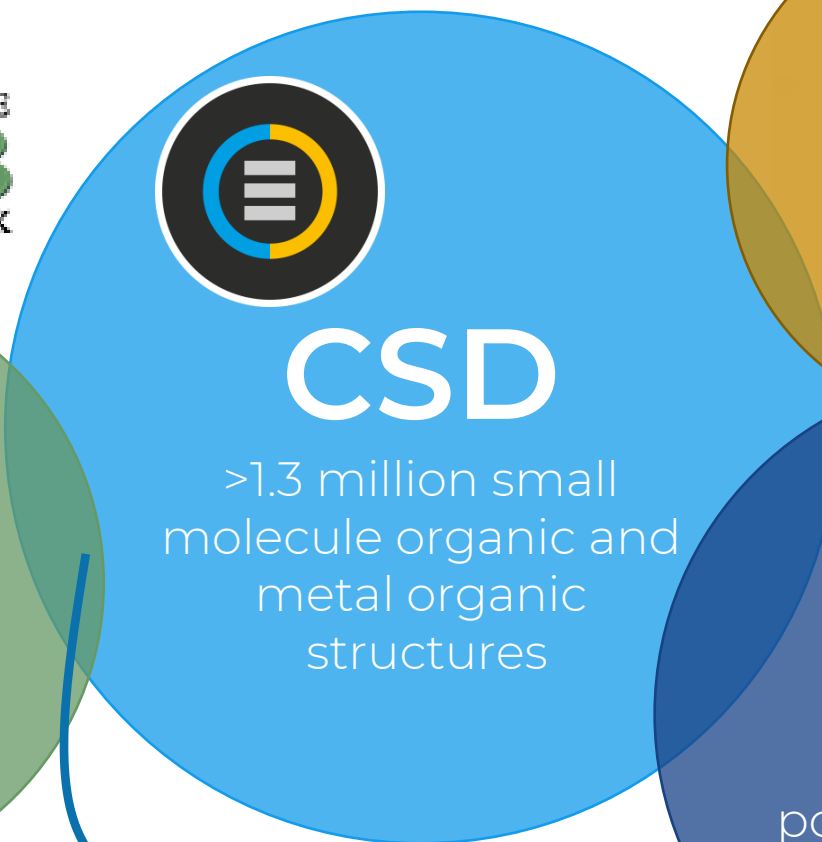
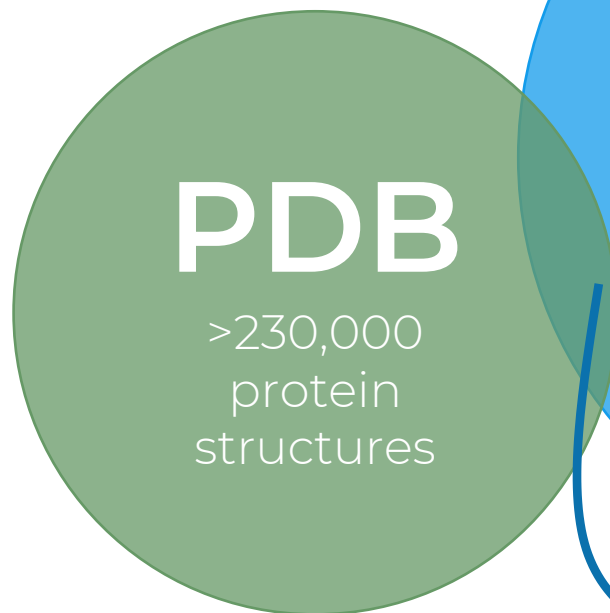


- Small molecule organic and metal-organic structures
- Every published structure
 - Inc. ASAP & early view
 - *CSD Communications*
 - Patents
 - University repositories
 - Thesis
- Every entry enriched and annotated by experts
- Discoverability of data and knowledge
- Sustainable for 60 years
- A trusted CoreTrustSeal repository



Certified as Trustworthy by CoreTrustSeal

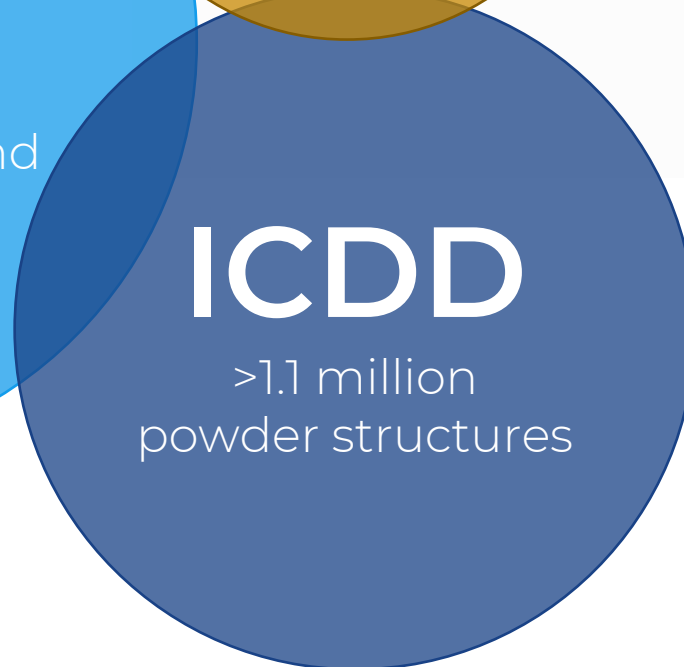
Integrated structural databases



~2,000 ligands
in both the
CSD and PDB

ICSD

>290,000
inorganic
structures

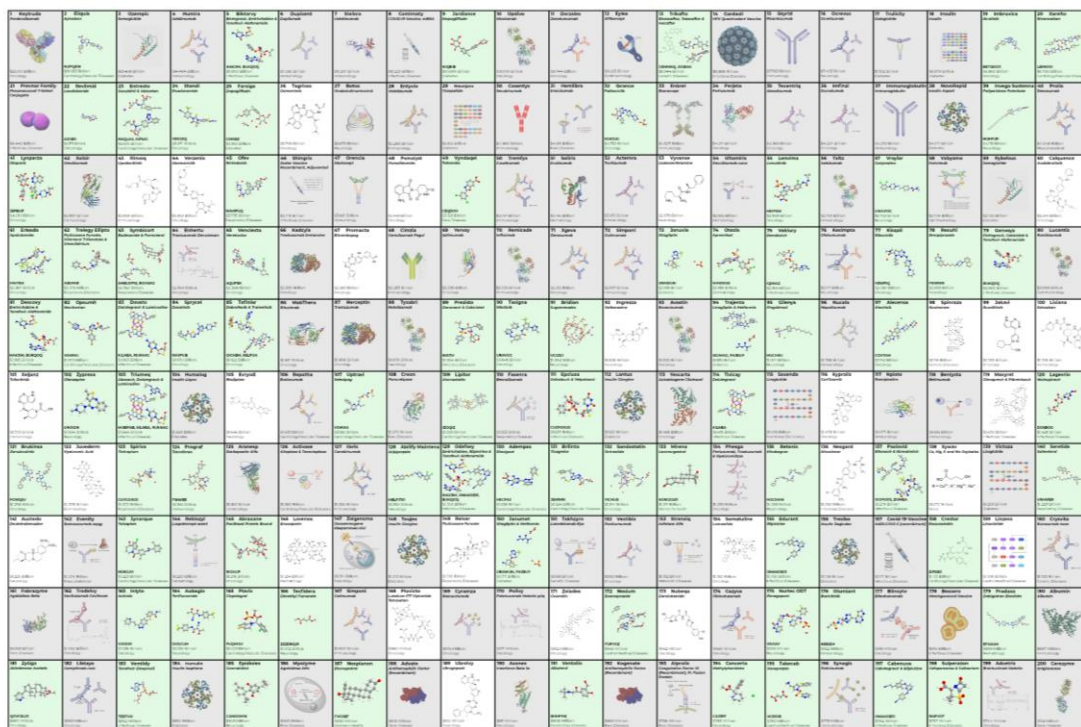
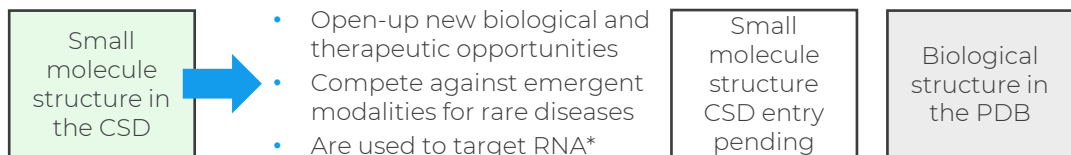


CCDC

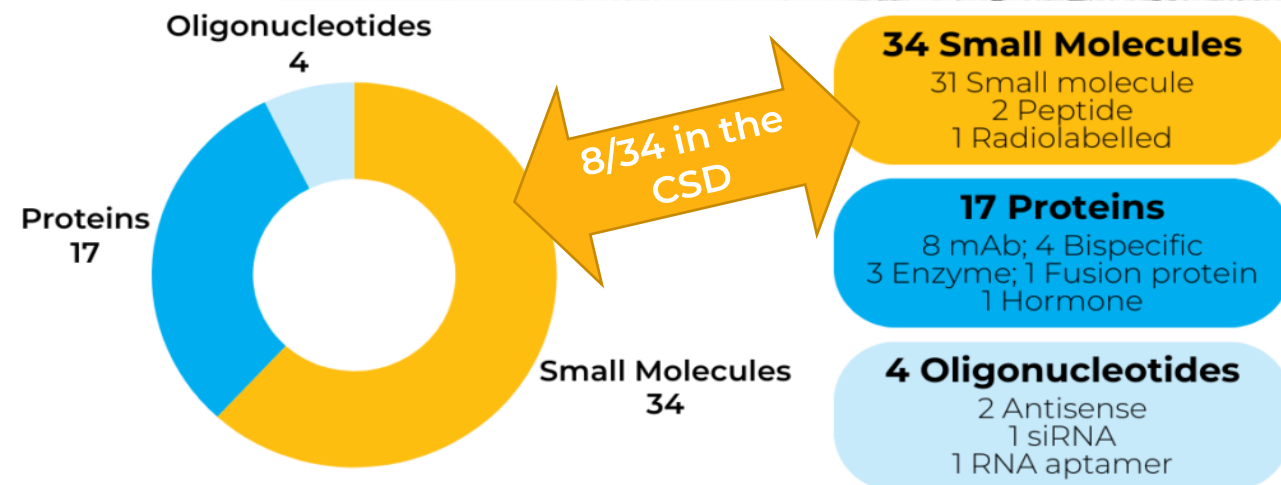


Small molecules, big impact

200 top drugs by retail sales in 2023



FDA novel drug approvals 2023

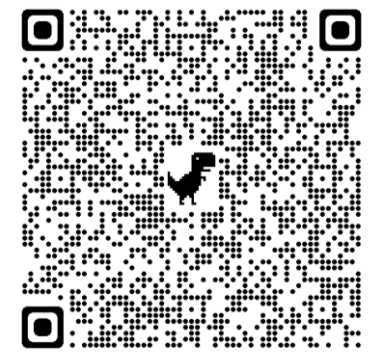


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Small Molecule Drugs Continue to be Crucial in Advancing Healthcare with 34 New Approvals in 2023 Compared to 21 in 2022

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved 55 new drugs in 2023, an increase of nearly 50% from the 37 approvals in 2022, the second highest number in the past 30 years [1].

34 out of the 55 approved new drugs are small molecules, representing 62% of the total. The growing number of small molecules from the previous years, corresponding to the 56% in 2021 (28 out of 50) and 57% in 2022 (21 out of 37), shows how this class of drugs continues to be crucial in advancing health care.

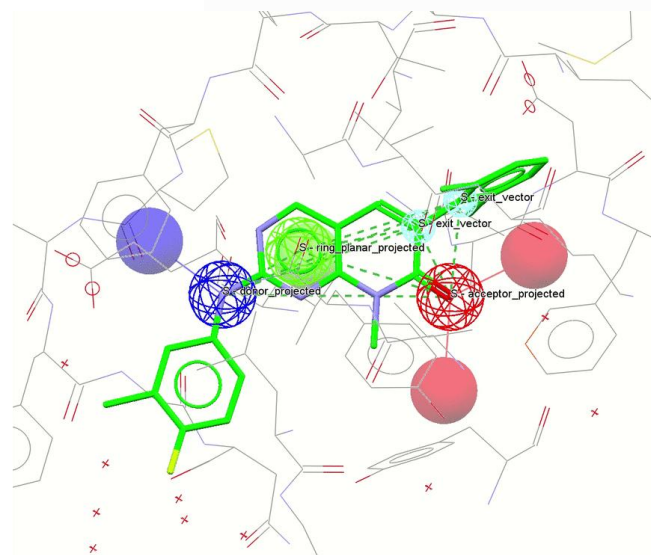
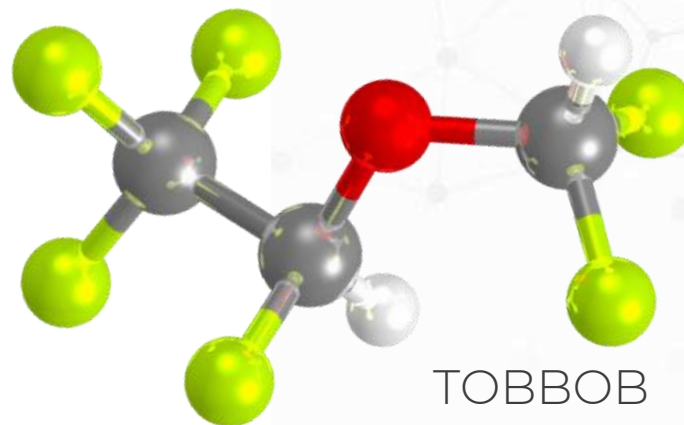
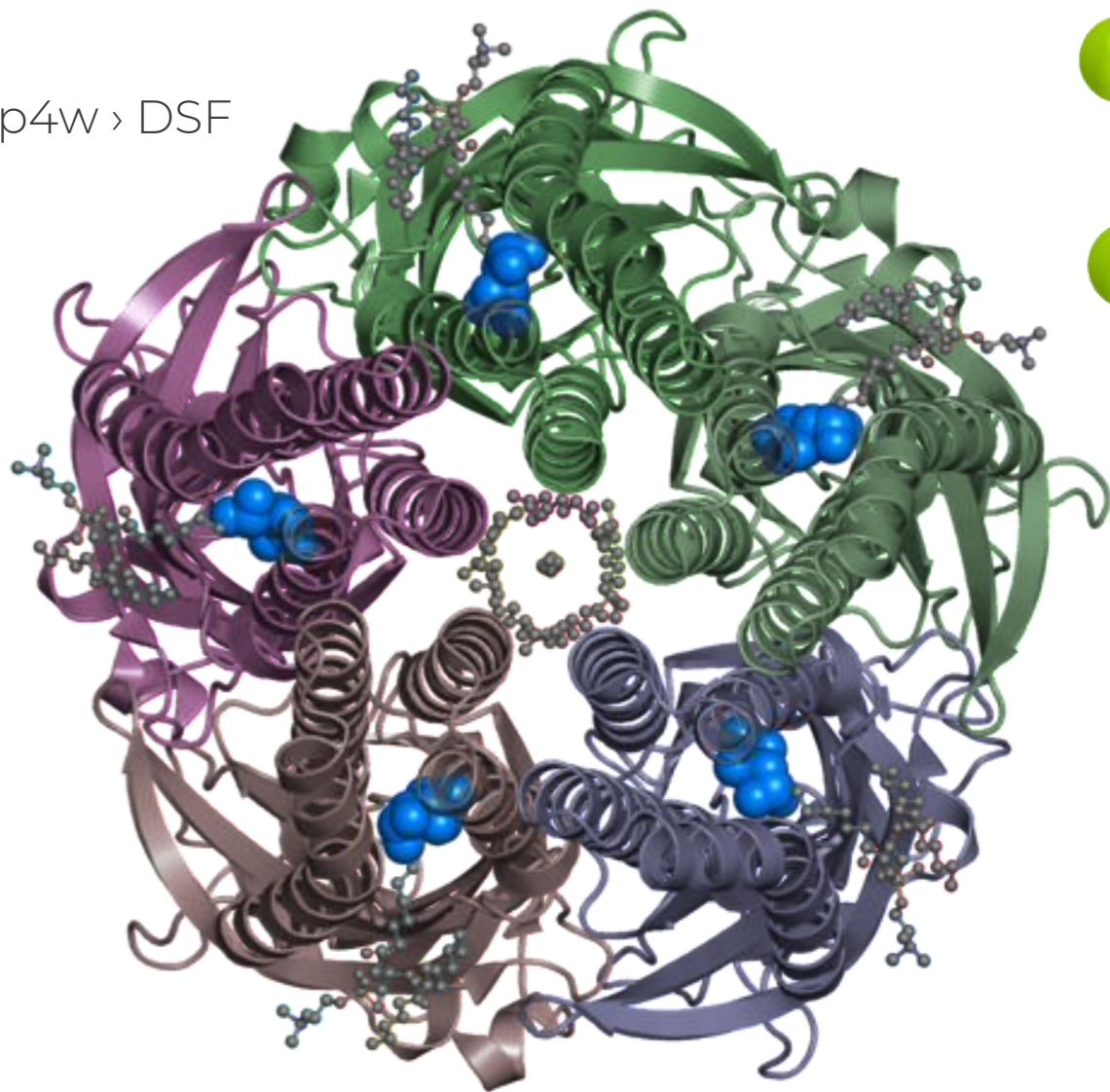


Adapted from poster compiled and produced by the Njardarson Group (The University of Arizona)

*Nature Reviews Drug Discovery 20, 85-90 (2021)

Connecting chemistry and biology

3p4w > DSF



Results Hit#1

1st in cluster Settings... Tanimoto: 0.70 Number of hits: 100 Show all

mark	identifier	cluster	rmsd	diagram

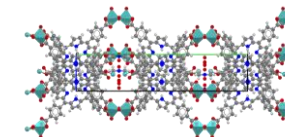
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The CSD Portfolio today

CSDEnterprise.

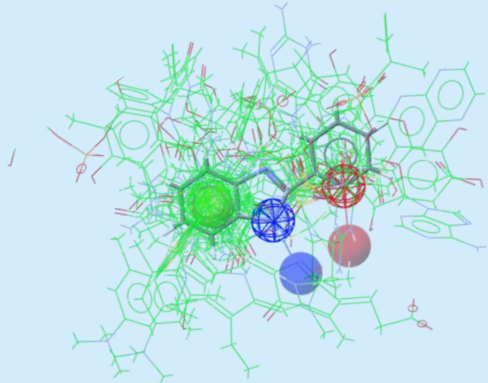
CSDCore.

*Search, visualise, analyse and communicate structural data
Insights into molecular and crystal shape and interactions*



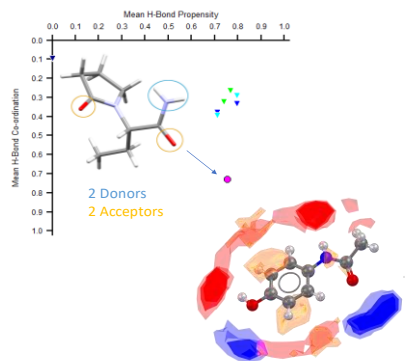
CSDDiscovery.

Design of new molecules



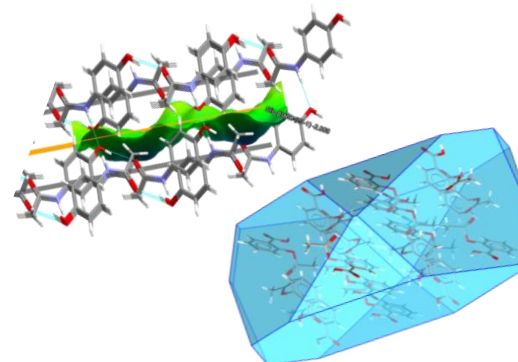
CSDMaterials.

Assessment of solid form stability and properties



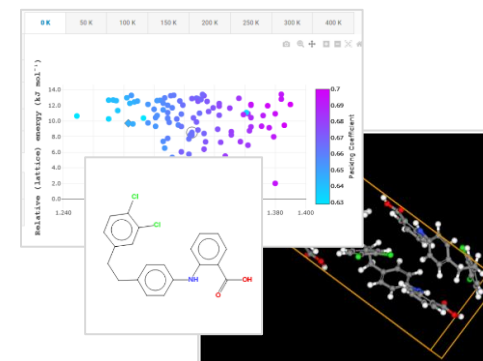
CSDParticle.

Anticipate particle properties and behaviour



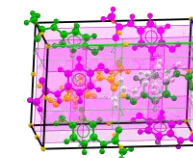
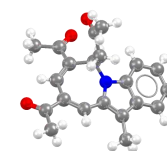
CSDTheory.

Insights from predicted structure landscapes



CSDCommunity.

*Deposit, publish, access and visualise structural data
Free functionality to share and learn from structures*



Medicinal & Computational Chemists ♦ Crystallographers & Structural Biologists ♦ Solid Form & Crystallisation Scientists ♦ Functional Materials Scientists ♦ Educators ♦ Industry and Academia

CCDC

CSDCore.

Exploring structures and interactions



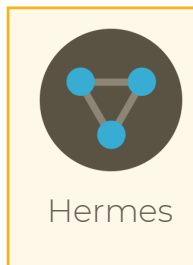
CSD

ConQuest



WebCSD

Mercury



Hermes

Mogul



Isostar

CSD-Editor



CSD Python API

CSDDiscovery.

Design of new molecules



GOLD



Mercury



CrossMiner



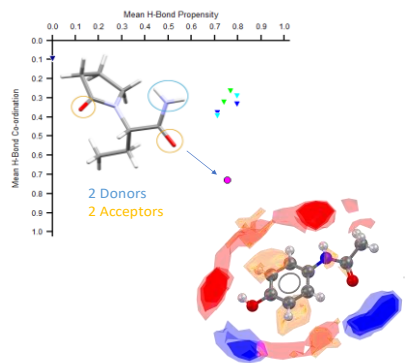
API



SuperStar

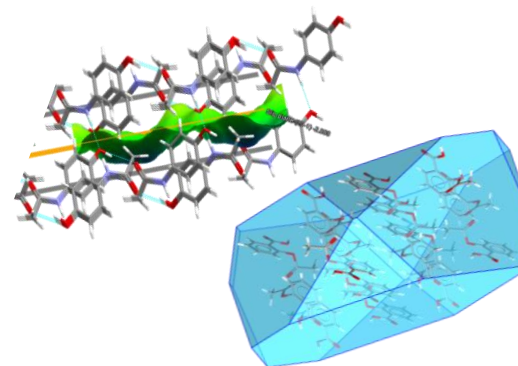
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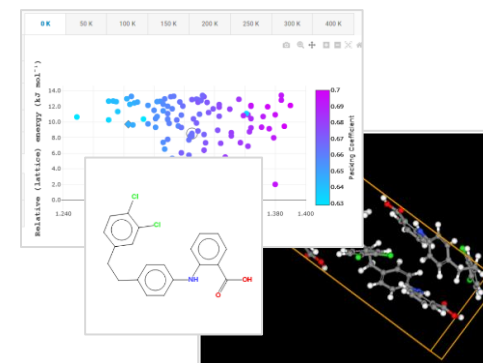
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Anticipate particle properties and behaviour



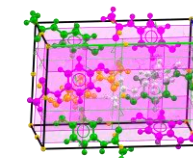
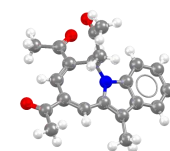
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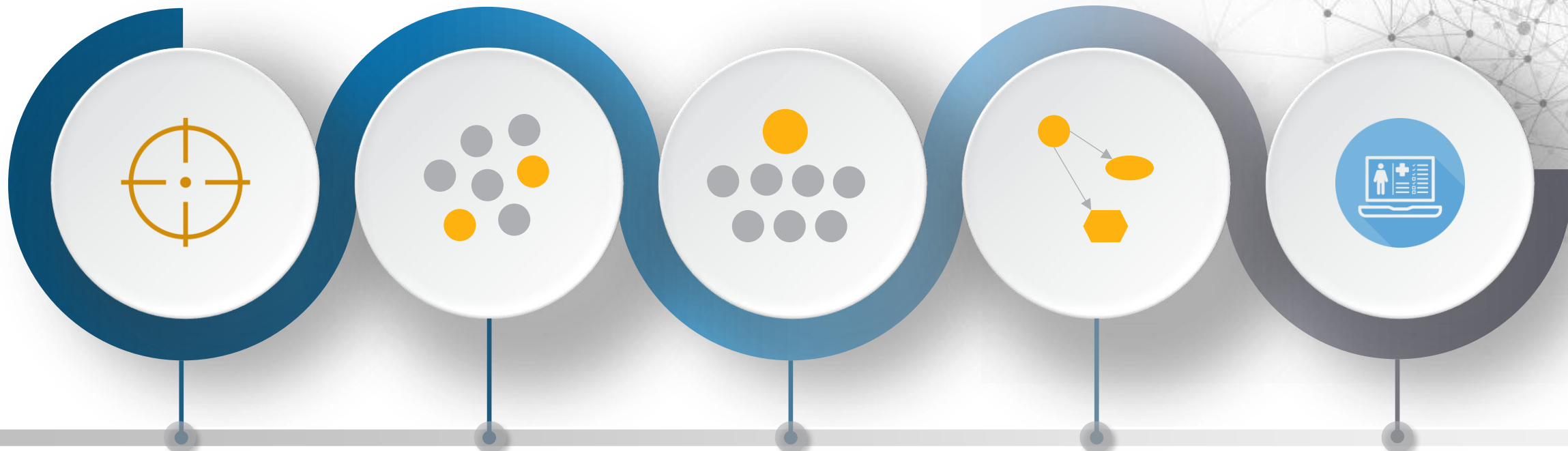
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Drug Discovery Pipeline



Target selection

Hit-identification

Hit to lead

Lead optimisation

Drug development

Structure- based virtual screening.

Assess how changes affect binding. Optimize compound [geometry](#). Predict [binding](#) of small molecules to active pockets in proteins.

Check the impact of changes with [docking](#) pose prediction. Understand how changes affect [conformations](#).

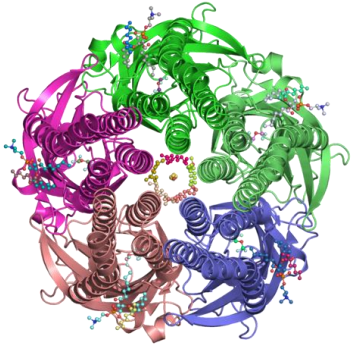


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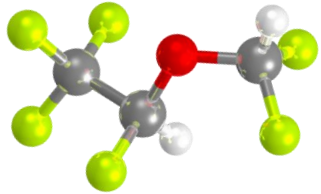
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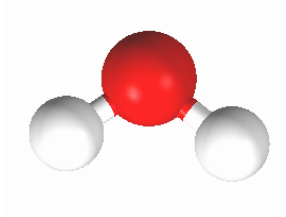
Proteins and ligands – the basics



Proteins are large biomolecules and macromolecules made up of one or more long chains of amino acids.



Ligands are small molecules that bind to the protein and can change the protein function.



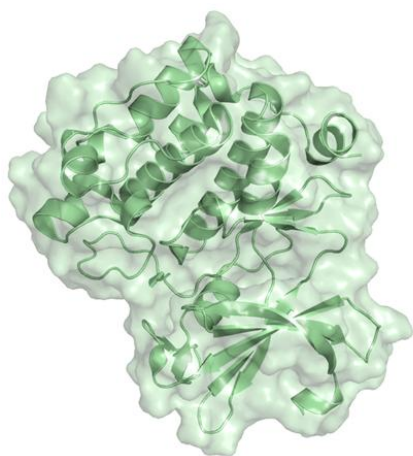
Functional waters are found in the binding site of a protein and mediate the interactions between the ligand and the protein.

Docking and its importance

- Docking is a **computational technique** for the exploration of the possible binding modes of a substrate (ligand) to a given receptor, enzyme or other binding site.

Glossary of Terms Used In Computational Drug Design,
Pure&Appl. Chem., Vol. 69, No. 5, pp. 1137-1152, 1997

- An efficient strategy to identify bioactive conformations.
- To identify possible compounds that binds to specific target of interest.
- Quick screen library of compounds.
- Many docking programs have been developed and applied in drug discovery.

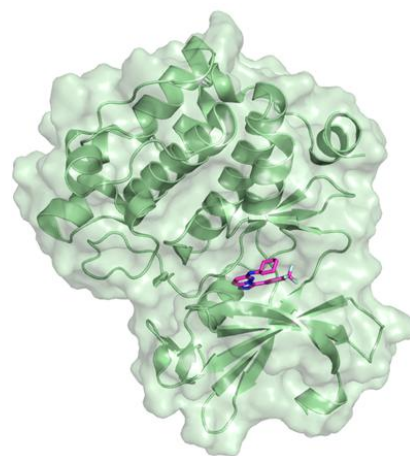


Protein

+



=



Protein-Ligand Complex

Other useful terminology



- **Ensemble** - A group of things or people acting or taken together as a whole.



- **Ensemble Docking** - Aims to address the issue of protein flexibility by adding multiple protein structures into a single Genetic Algorithm (GA) run.

Glossary of Terms Used In Computational Drug Design, *Pure&Appl. Chem.*, Vol. 69, No. 5, pp. 1137-1152, 1997



- **Pharmacophore** – “**Ensemble** of **steric** and **electronic features** that is **necessary** to ensure the optimal supramolecular **interaction** with a specific **biological target** structure and to trigger (or block) its **biological response**”.

C.G.Wermuth, C.R.Ganellin, P.Lindberg, L.A. Mitscher (1998). "Glossary of terms used in medicinal chemistry (IUPAC Recommendations 1998)"

What is *in silico* virtual screening?

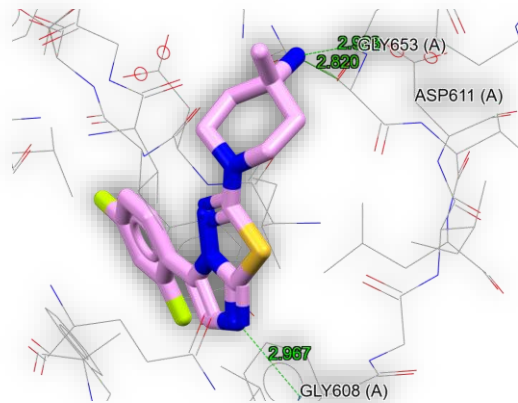
Commonly used computational method to search libraries of small molecules

- Hit identification
- Lead optimization
- Scaffold hopping

Why perform virtual screening rather than HTS?

- To reduce research time
- To reduce chemical waste
- To reduce cost

In silico virtual screening approaches

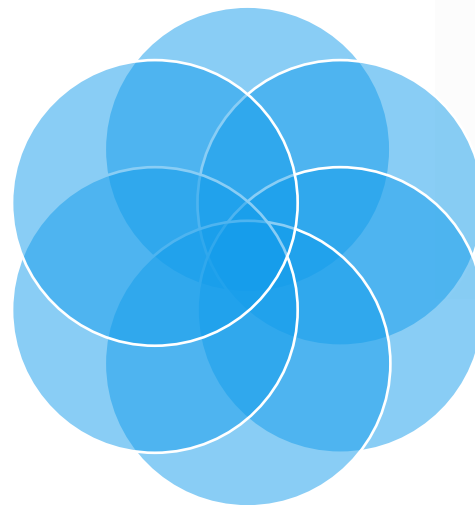


Structure-based drug design

AI-based methods

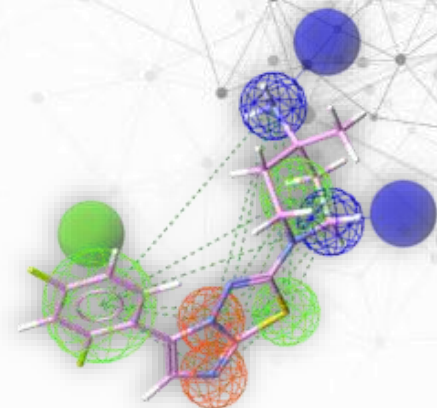


In silico Virtual screening



Fragment-based drug design

Ligand-based drug design



Ultra large libraries



CCDC

In silico virtual screening approaches



Target-focused libraries

High quality screening collections

Fewer compounds to be screened to obtain potential hit candidates

Reduce costs (computational and financial resources)

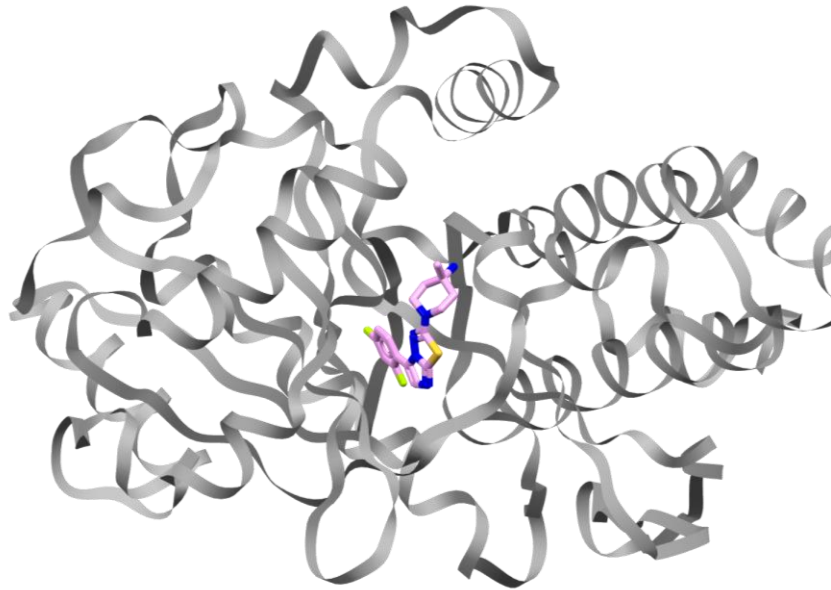
Focused libraries can be selected from a larger, more diverse collections using computational methods (such as *in silico* docking or similarity calculations)

Selection of a suitable scaffold / core with one or two attachment points for functional groups /side chains

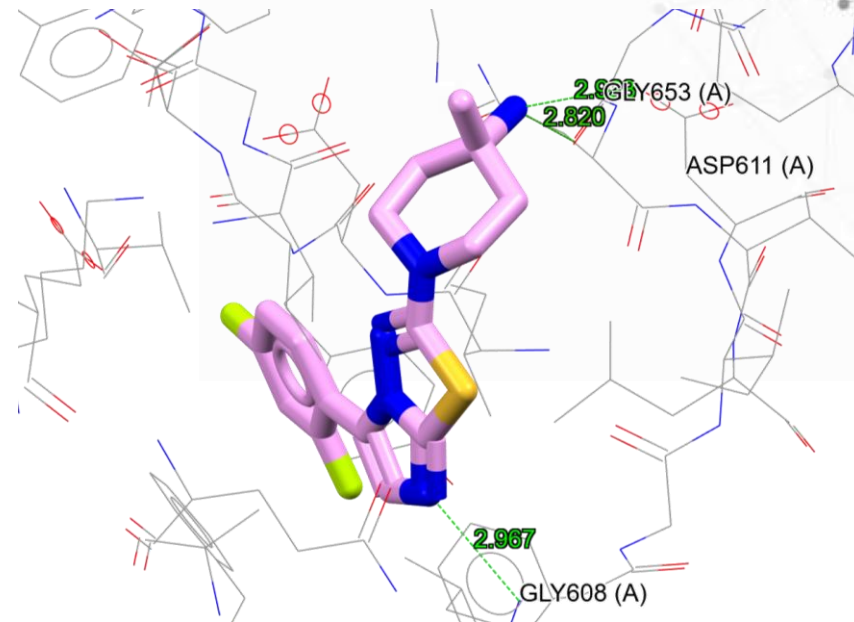
Look at synthetic accessibility

Structure-Based Drug Design (SBDD)

Receptor selection and preparation



Binding site identification

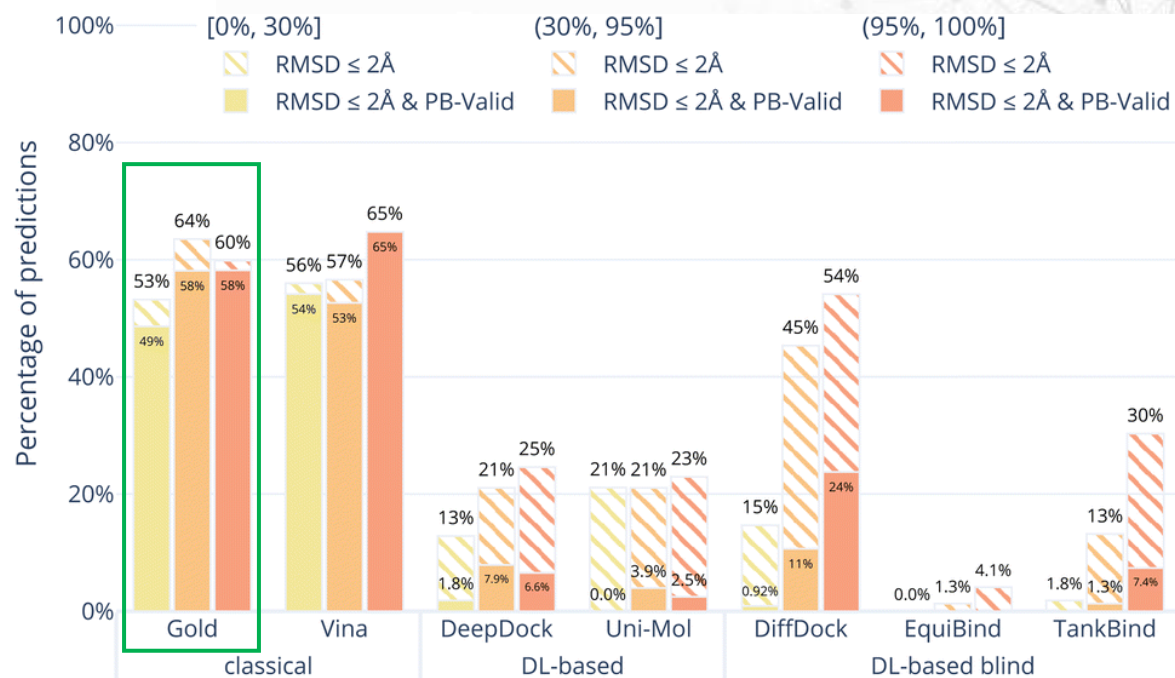
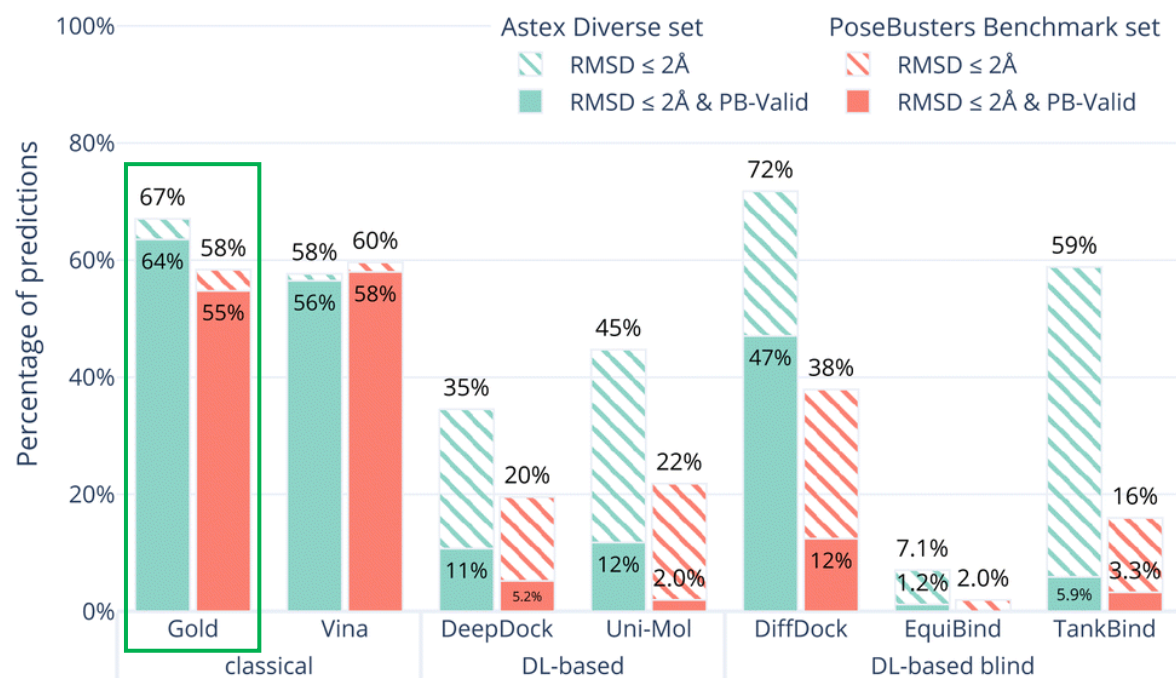


Additional notes: literature research, UNIPROT, PDB searching for similar structures, alignment / superimposition with other co-crystal structures

AI- vs Physically-based docking methods in 2025

PoseBusters: AI-based docking methods fail to generate physically valid poses or generalise to novel sequences [1]

No DeepLearning-based (DL-based) docking method yet outperforms standard docking methods when both physical plausibility and binding mode RMSD is taken into account.



[1] Martin Buttershohn et al. *Chem. Sci.*, 2024, 15, 3130-3139

Agenda

Please add your questions for Prof. Albert in the chat and he will answer either in writing or verbally during the hands-on part.

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Prof. Armando Albert
Instituto de Química
Física "Blas Cabrera",
Consejo Superior de
Investigaciones Científicas

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GOLD: Protein-Ligand Docking Software

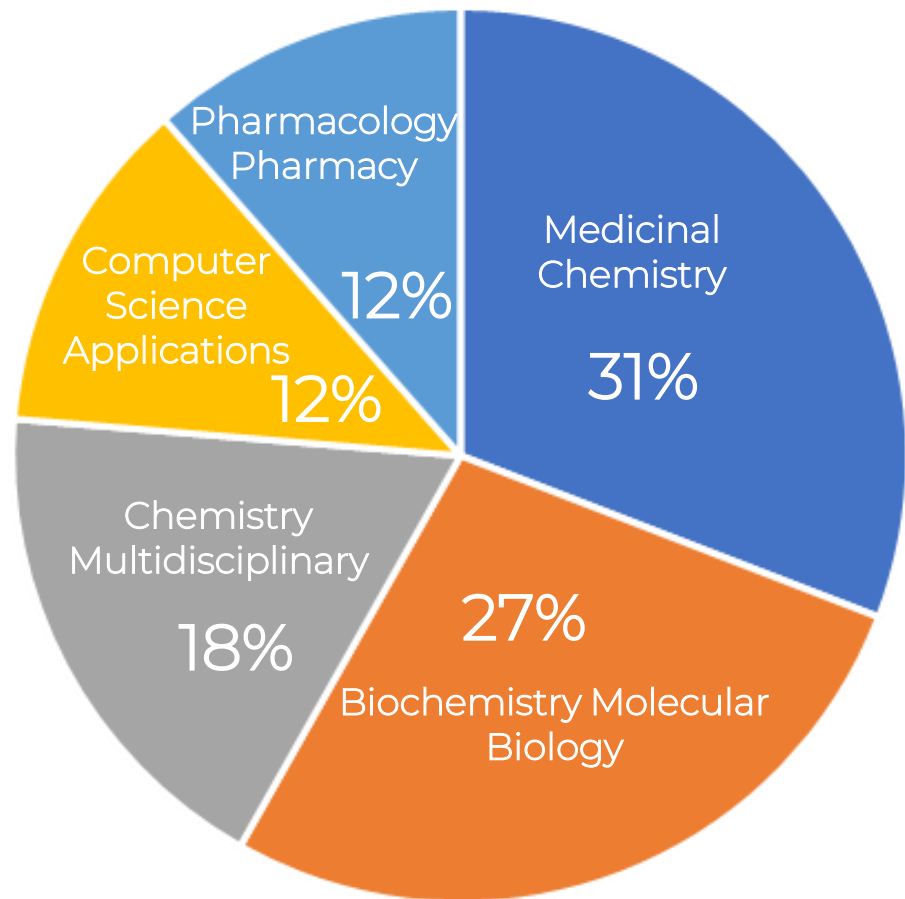
- **GOLD (Genetic Optimisation for Ligand Docking)** is a genetic algorithm for docking flexible ligands into protein binding sites.
- **GOLD** has proven success in *virtual screening*, *lead optimisation*, and *identifying* the correct *binding mode* of active molecules.
- *Relied on* by researchers in *academia* and *industry* worldwide.



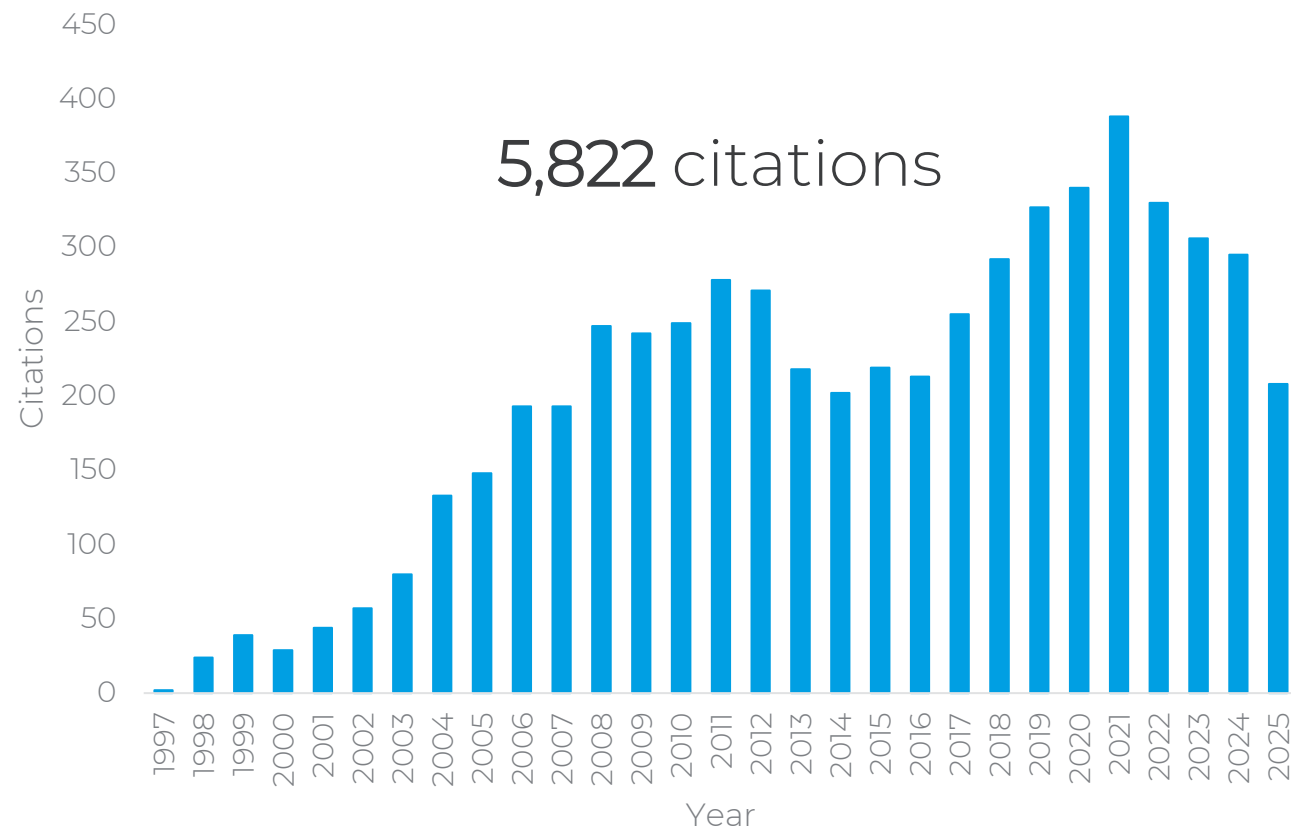
- Reliable
- Flexible
- Configurable

GOLD docking in research

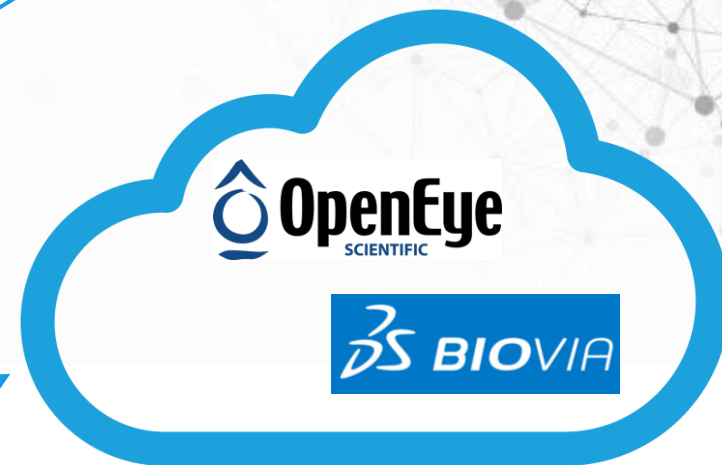
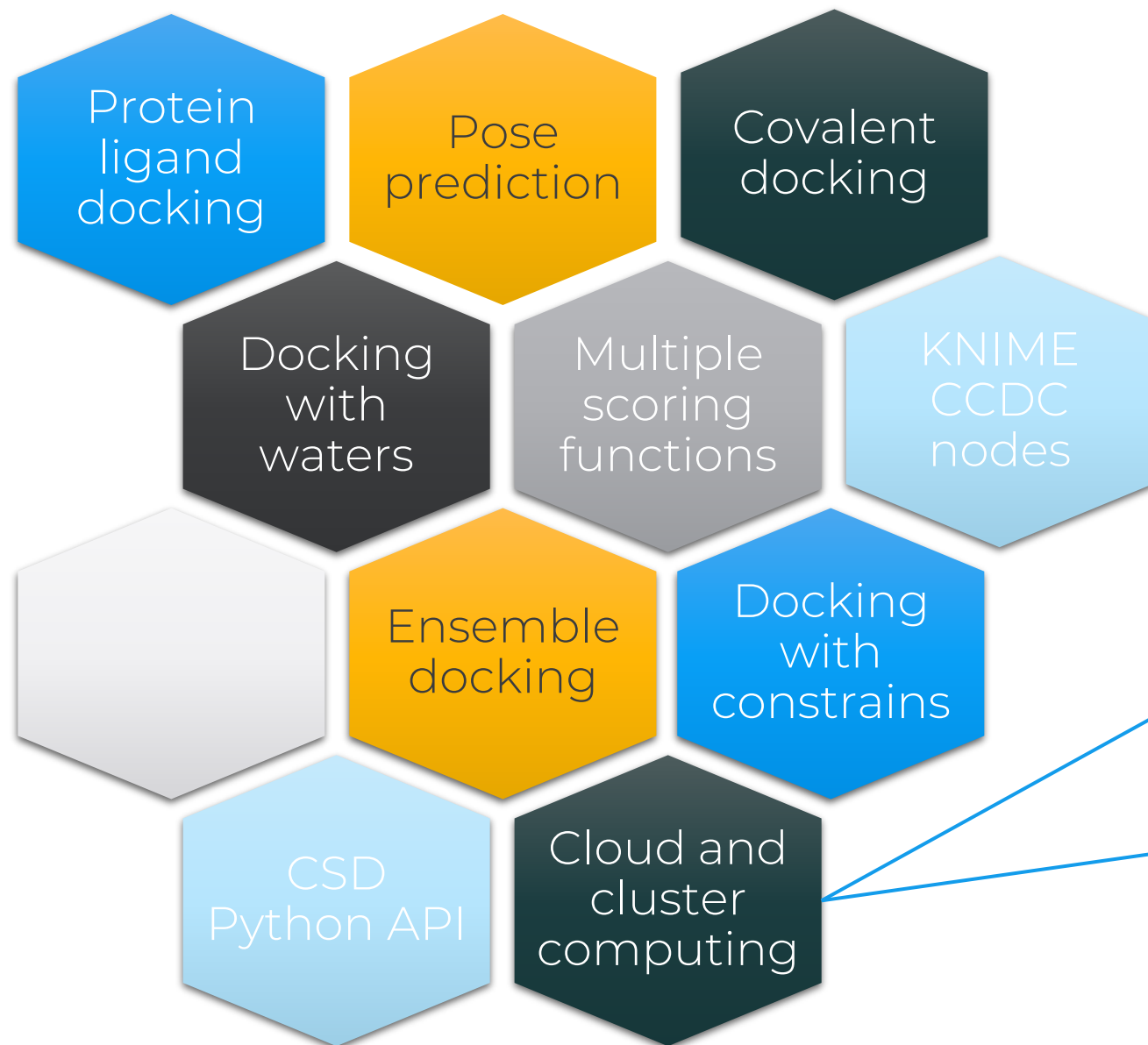
Top 5 citation categories



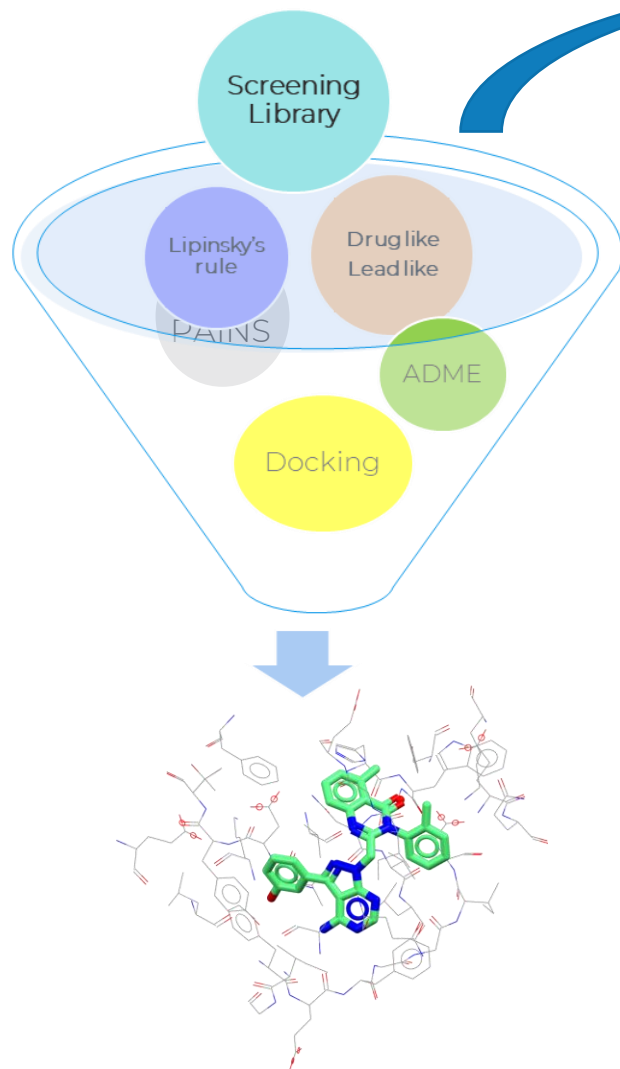
Gold Citations by Year



GOLD: All in one molecular docking package



SBDD virtual screening using GOLD



Input files SDF, MOL2

Ligands preparation

Knowledge-base
CSD-Conformer Generator
(3D coordinates)

GOLD setting

Docking
(Re-ranking)

Docking solutions analysis

Post processing

Selected ligands are tested in
validated biological assay

Hits to
assay

SBDD = Structure-Based Drug Design

CCDC

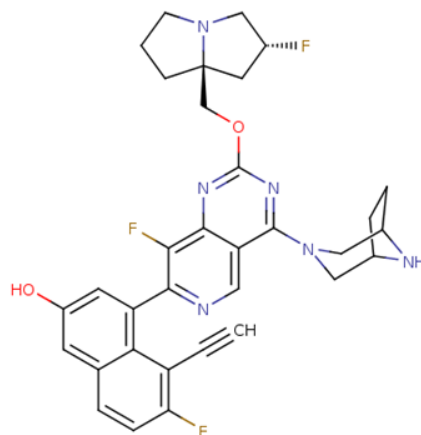
Using GOLD for *in silico* virtual screening

Today we will be using:

KRAS Hydrolase
(GPTase) enzyme (X-ray
structure, PDB 7RPZ)



Ligand MRTX-1133 [4-(4-[(1R,5S)-3,8-diazabicyclo[3.2.1]octan-3-yl]-8-fluoro-2-[[[(2R,4R,7aS)-2-fluorotetrahydro-1H-pyrrolizin-7a(5H)-yl]methoxy]pyrido[4,3-d]pyrimidin-7-yl)-5-ethynyl-6-fluoronaphthalen-2-ol]



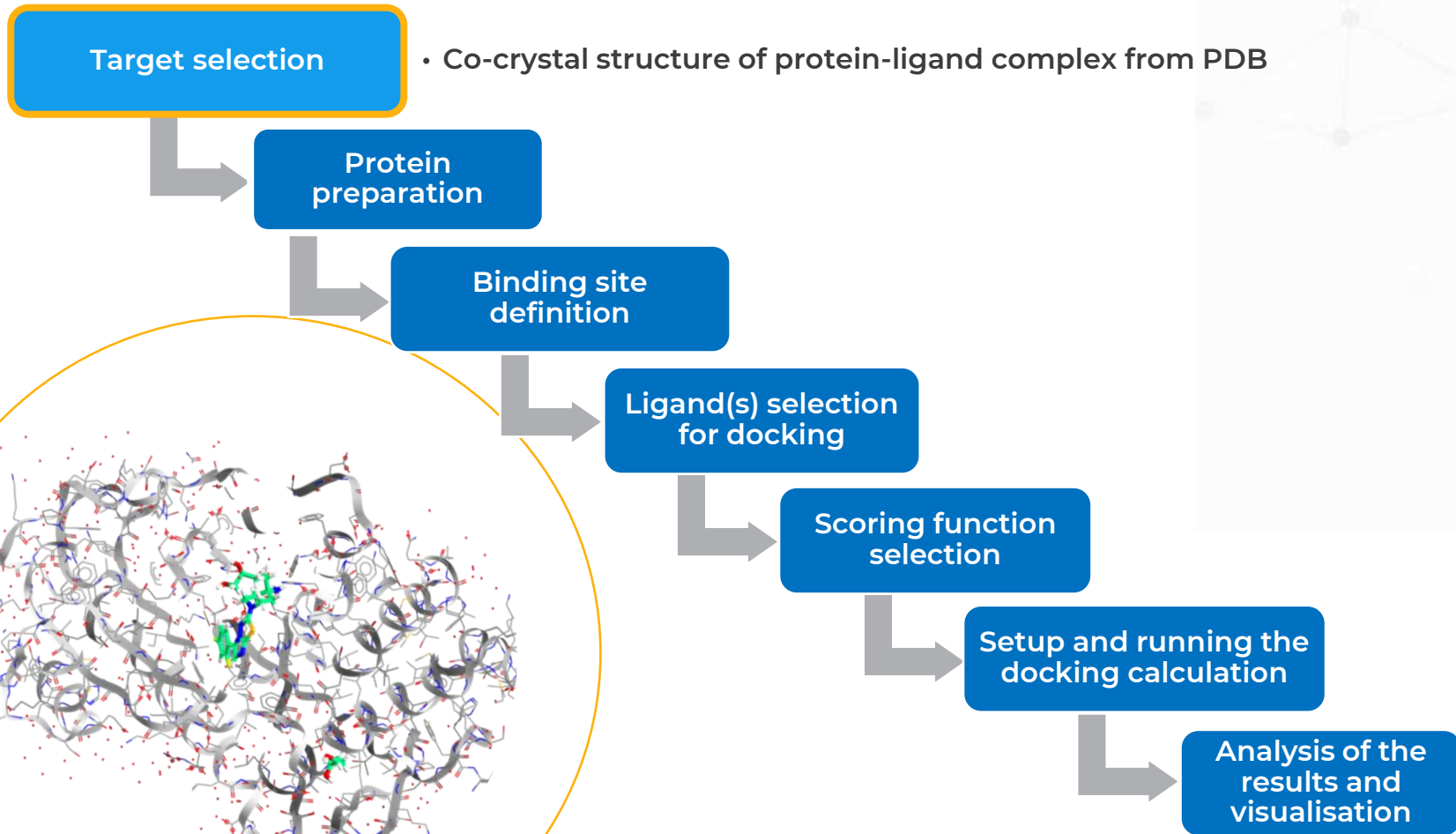
Target-focused curated
from ChEMBL
<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/chembl/>



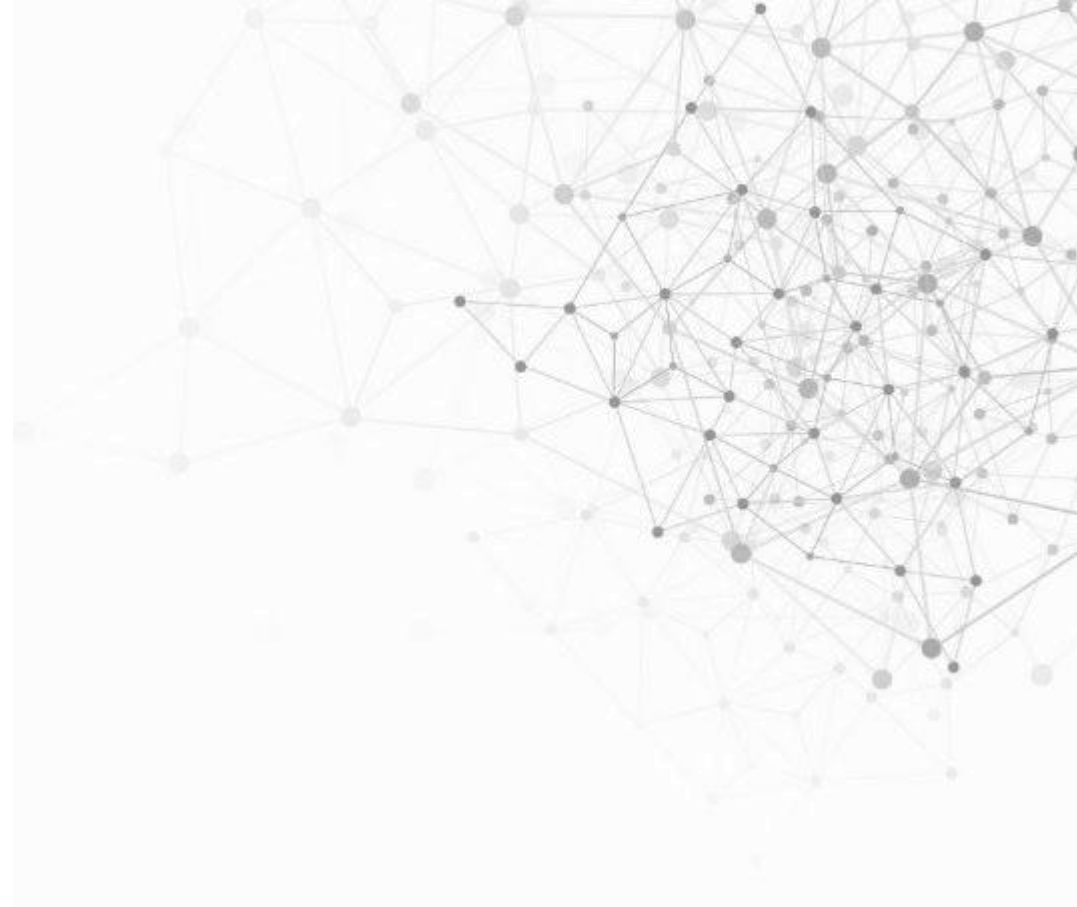
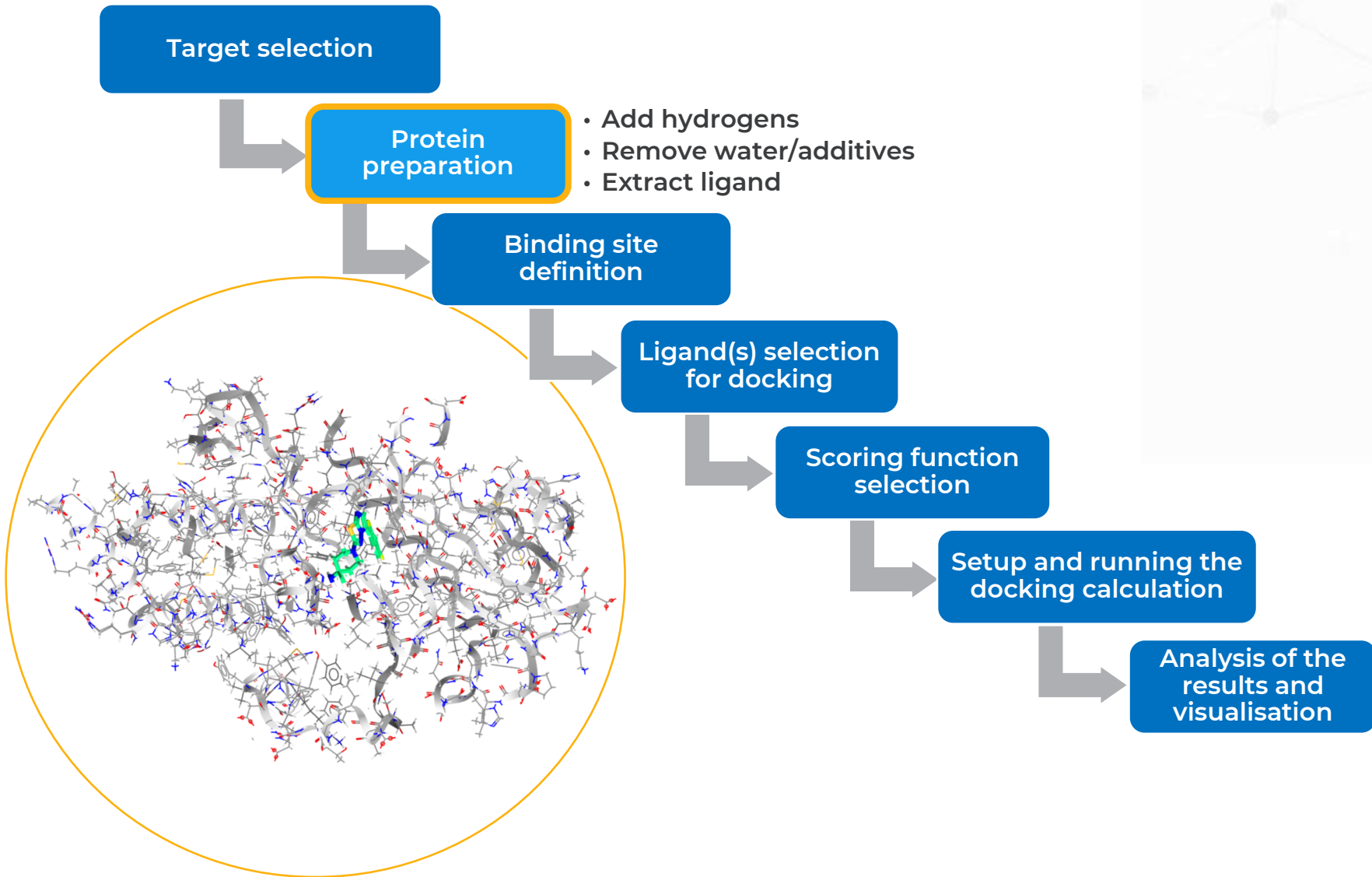
We will use the KRAS inhibitors library for performing structure-based virtual screening, identify potential new protein-ligands interactions, insight to design novel potential inhibitors.

For the hands-on part
we prepared the files
for you.

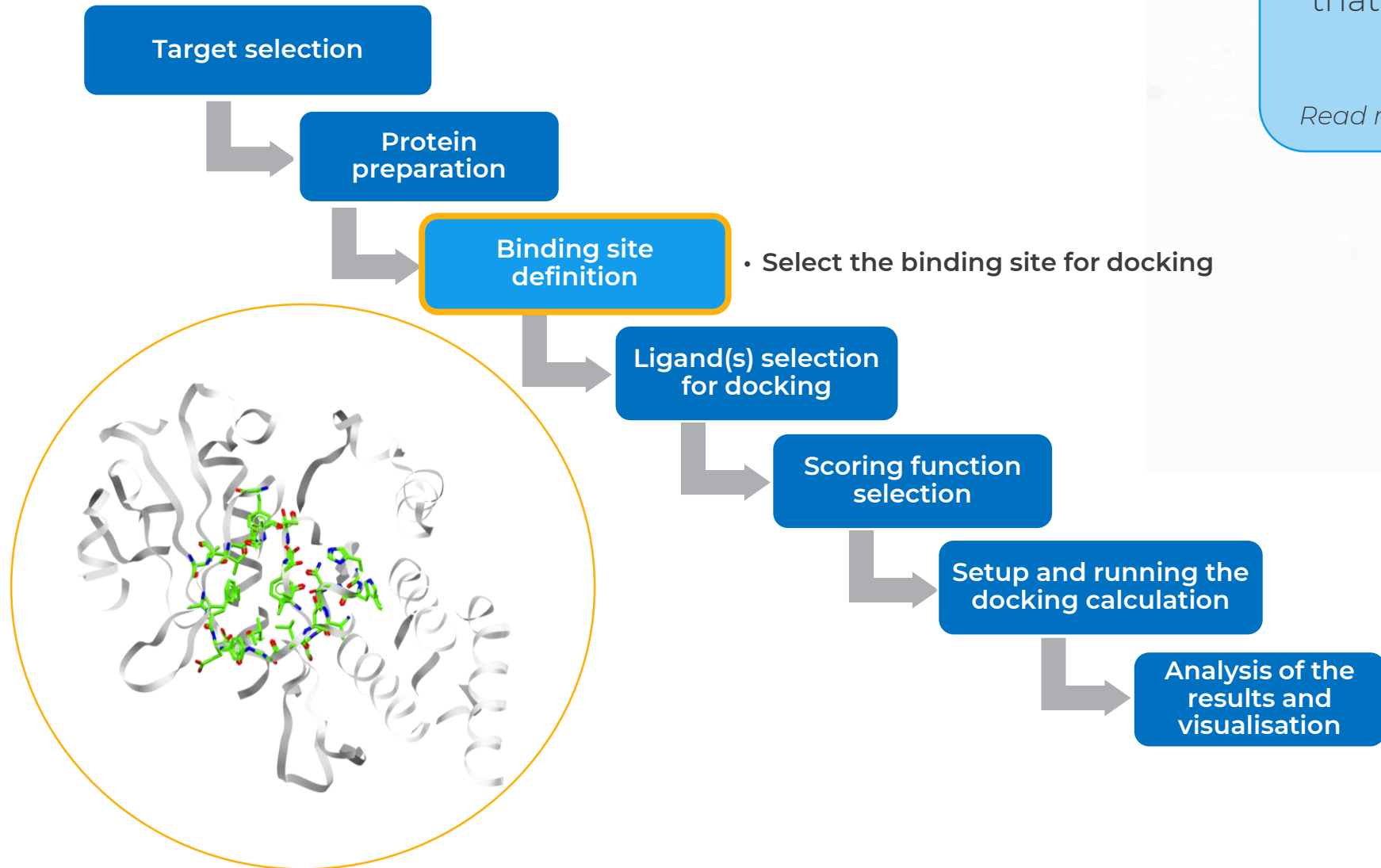
Steps in GOLD docking



Steps in GOLD docking



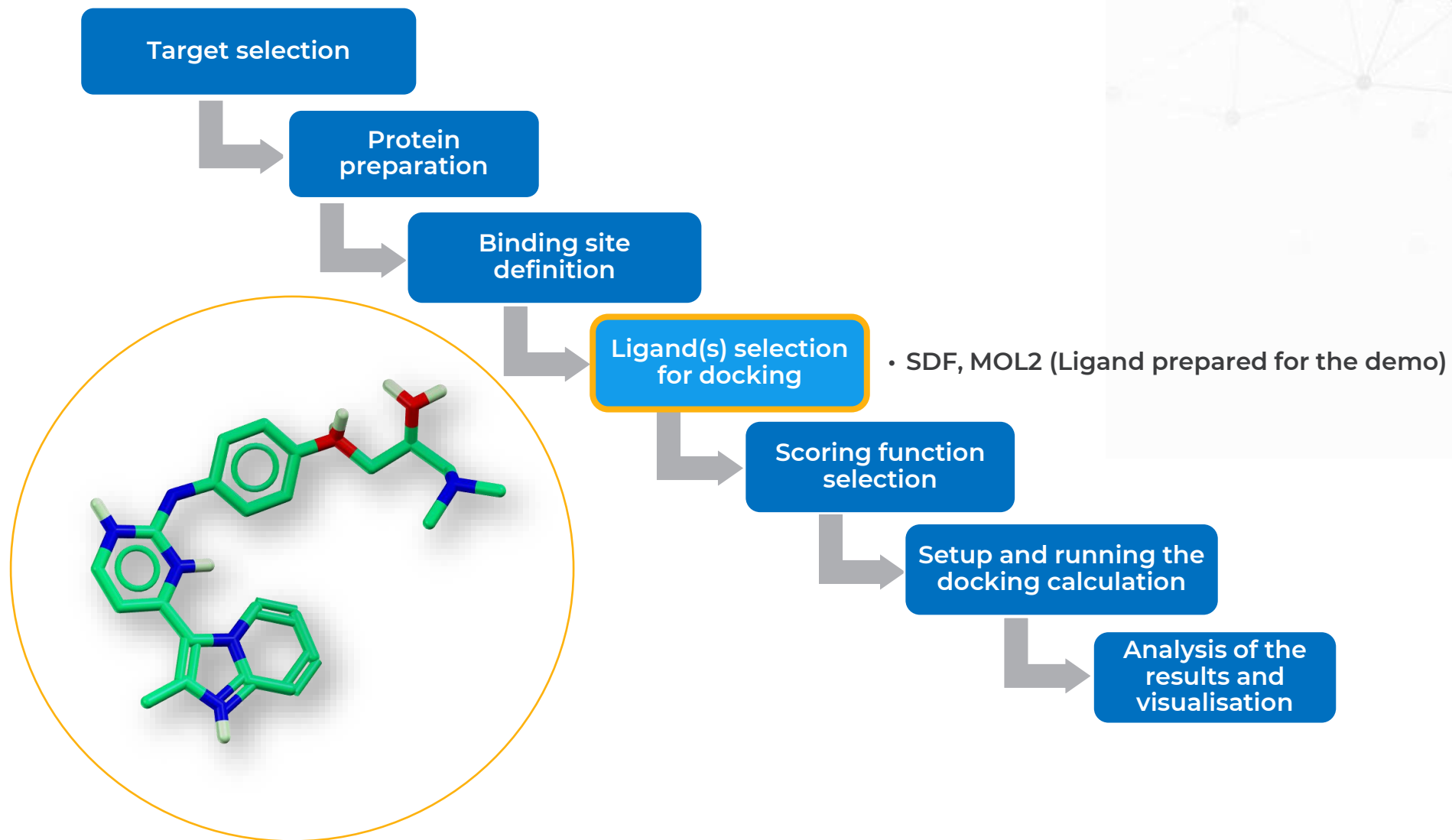
Steps in GOLD docking



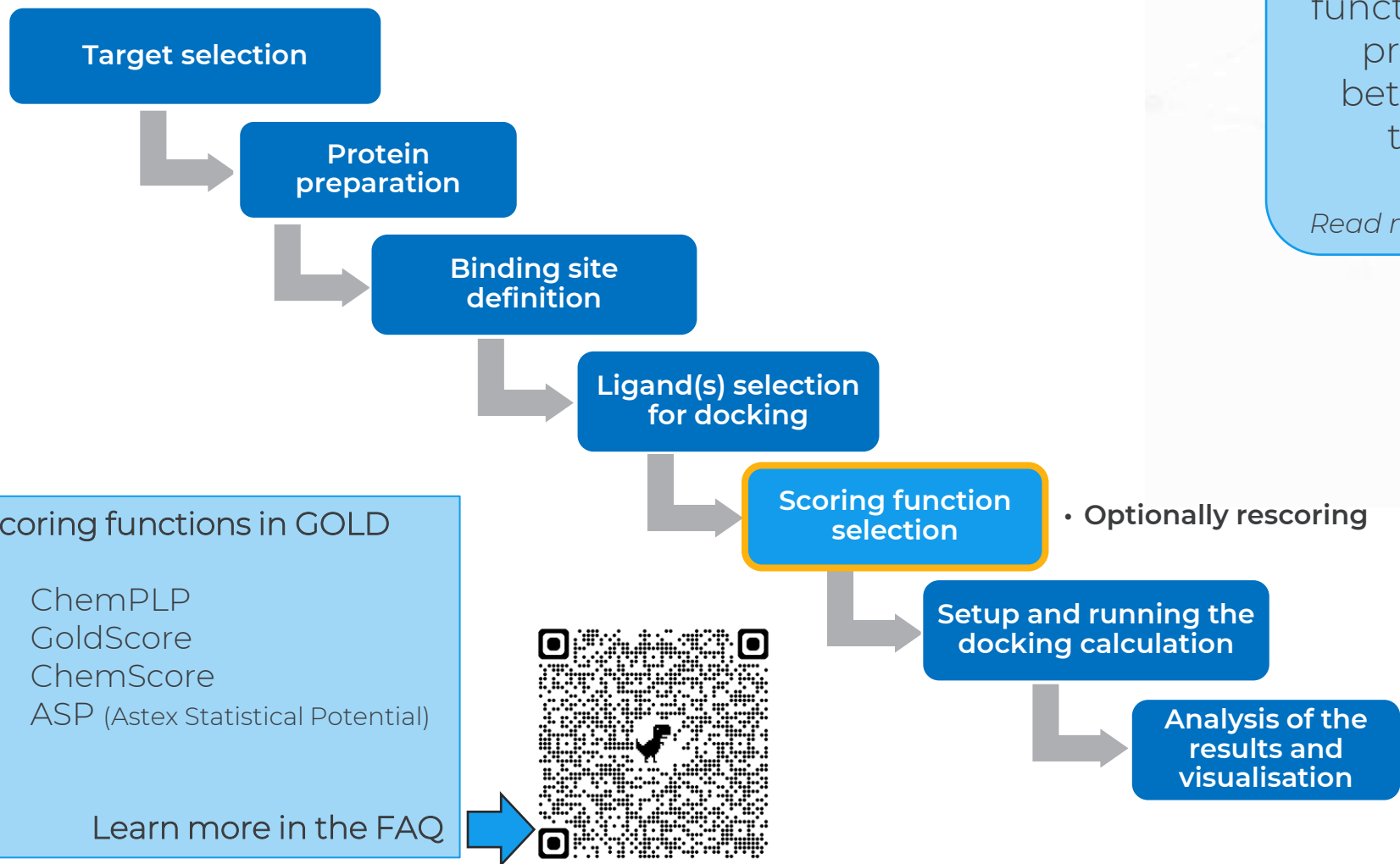
Binding site: a region on a macromolecule such as a protein that binds to another molecule with specificity

Read more in the Glossary in the handout.

Steps in GOLD docking



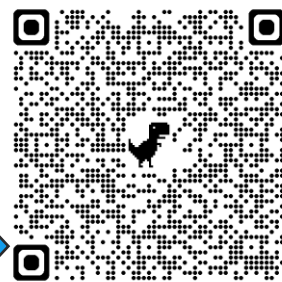
Steps in GOLD docking



Scoring functions in GOLD

- ChemPLP
- GoldScore
- ChemScore
- ASP (Astex Statistical Potential)

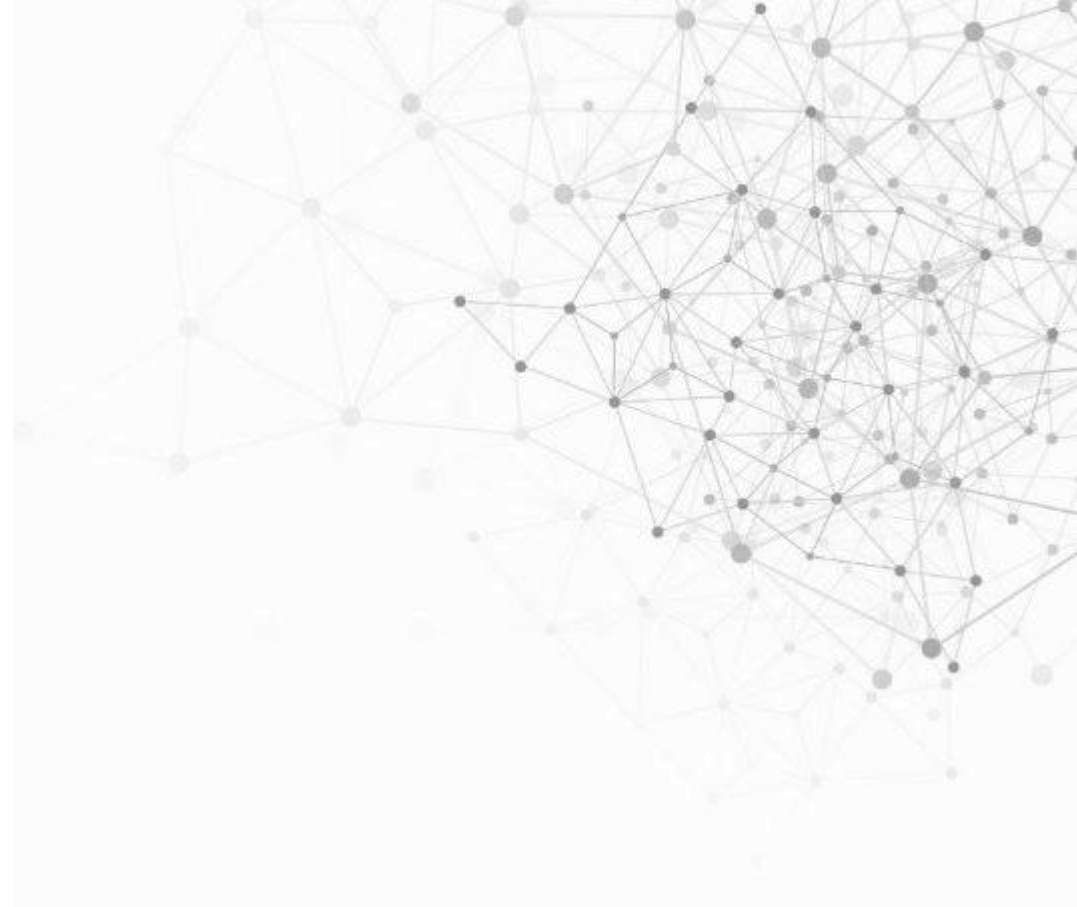
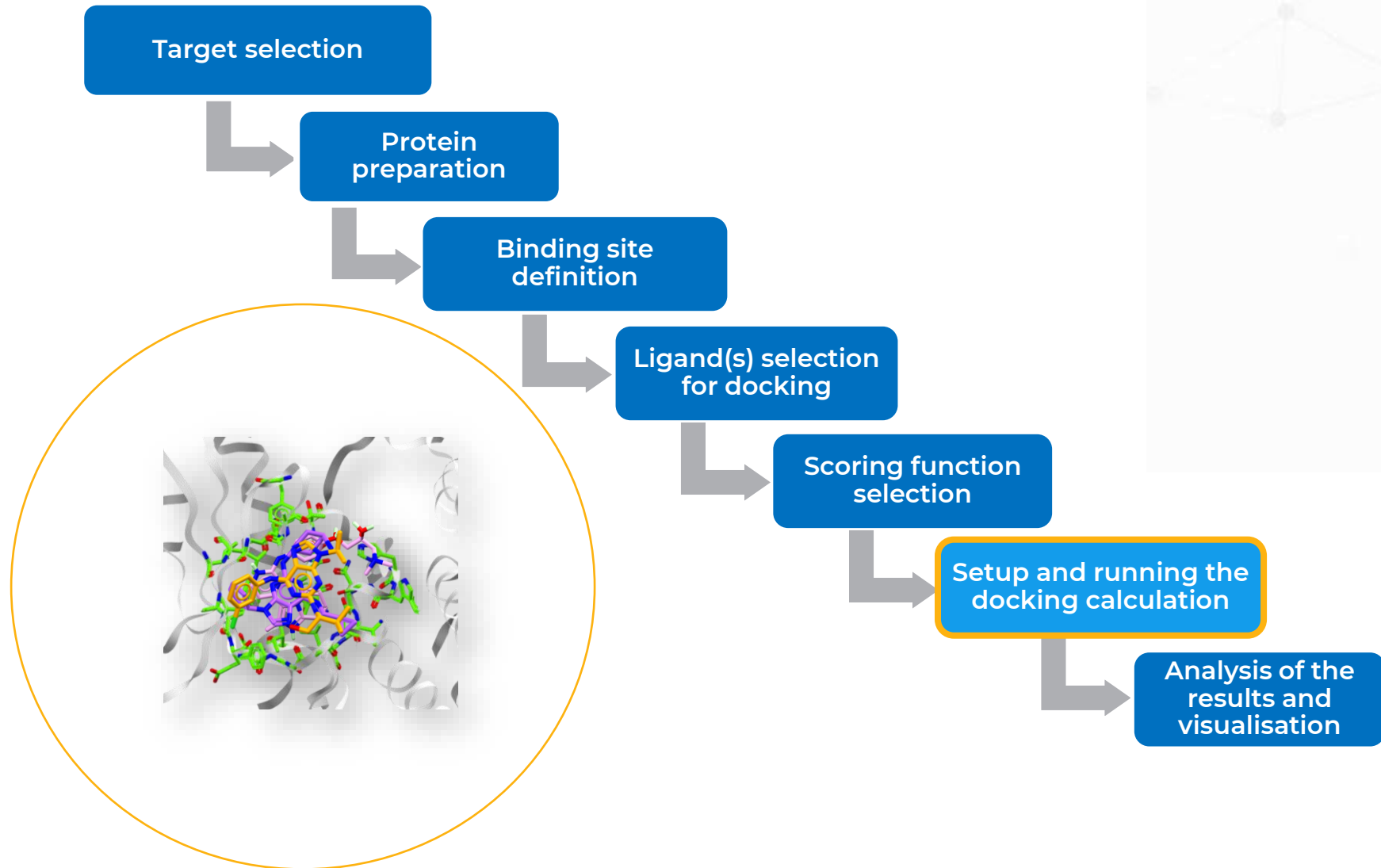
Learn more in the FAQ



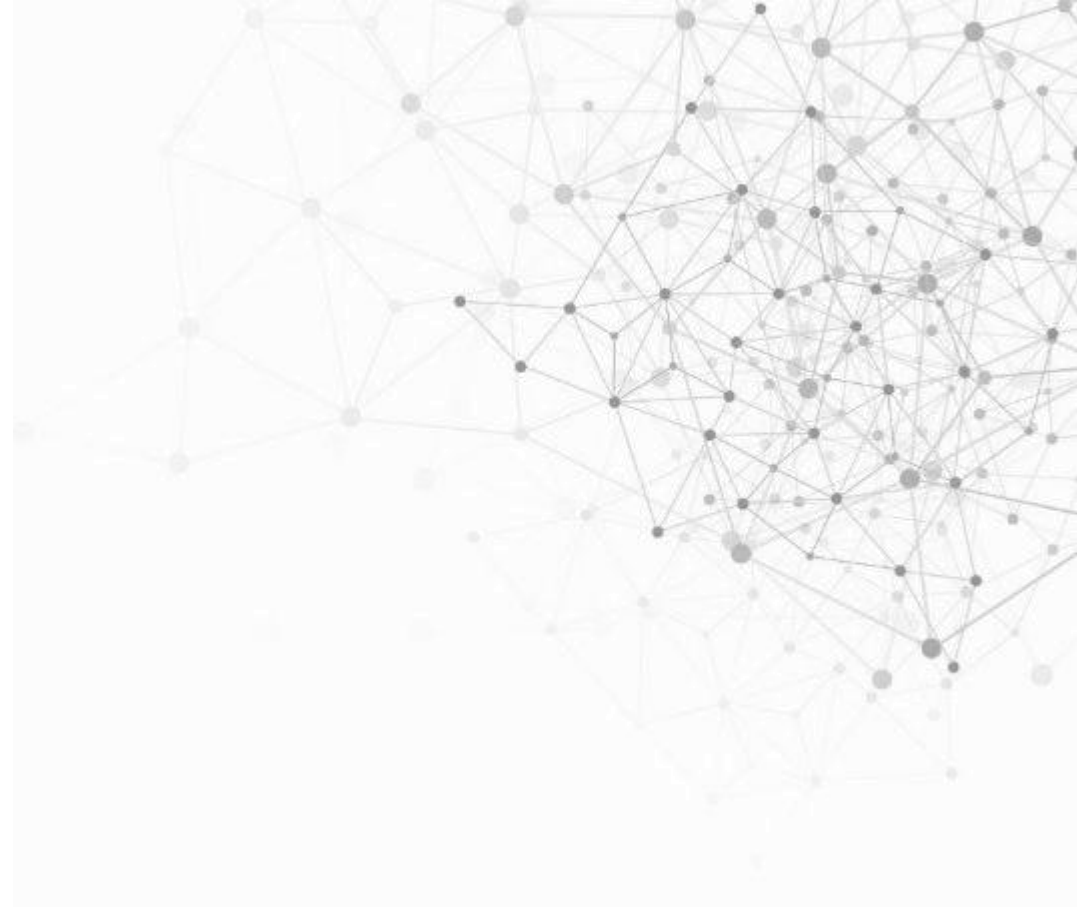
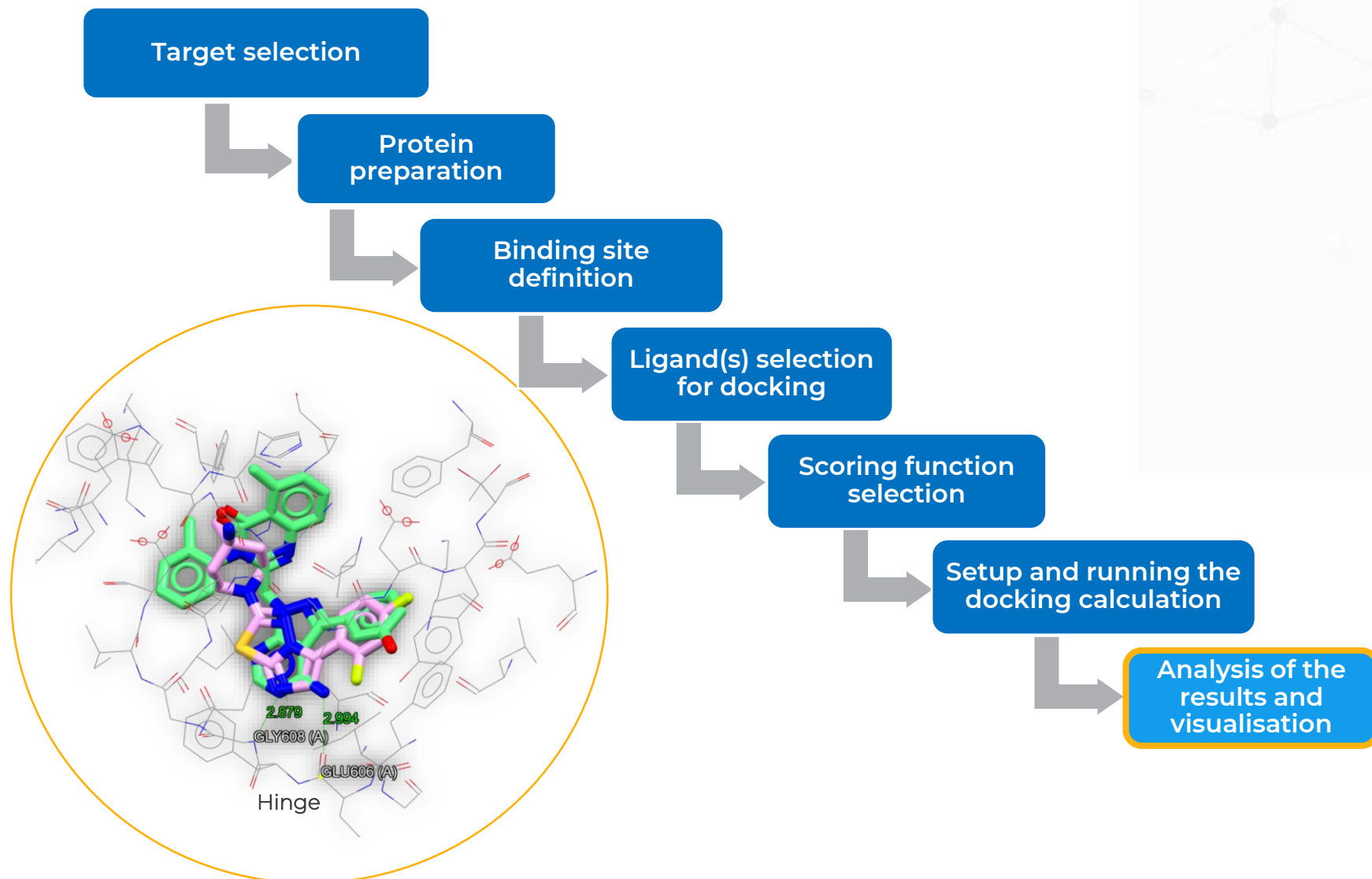
Scoring functions: mathematical functions used to approximately predict the binding affinity between two molecules after they have been docked.

Read more in the Glossary in the handout.

Steps in GOLD docking



Steps in GOLD docking











Before docking: Hermes Interface

File menus and tool bars

The screenshot displays the Hermes software interface. At the top is a menu bar with options: File, Edit, Selection, Display, Calculate, Descriptors, GOLD, Databases, CSD Python API, CSD-CrossMiner, and Help. Below the menu bar is a toolbar with various icons for file operations and display settings. A blue callout box labeled "File menus and tool bars" points to this area. The main interface is divided into several panels. On the left, the "Molecule Explorer" panel is highlighted with a yellow background and labeled "Molecule Explorer". It contains a tree view under "Atom selections:" with "All Entries" and "2WSY" checked. Below this are checkboxes for "Chains", "NucleicAcids", "Ligands", "Cofactors", "Waters", "Metals", and "Packing". At the bottom left, the "Contact Management" panel is highlighted with a teal background and labeled "Contact Management". It has buttons for "Define H-Bonds ..." and "Define Short Contacts ...", and a "Ligand Sphere" checkbox. The main central area is a "3D visualiser" showing a complex 3D molecular structure with atoms represented by spheres and bonds by sticks. A grey callout box labeled "3D visualiser" points to this area. A blue arrow on the left points from a circular icon containing three blue nodes connected by lines towards the Molecule Explorer panel.

Navigation basics

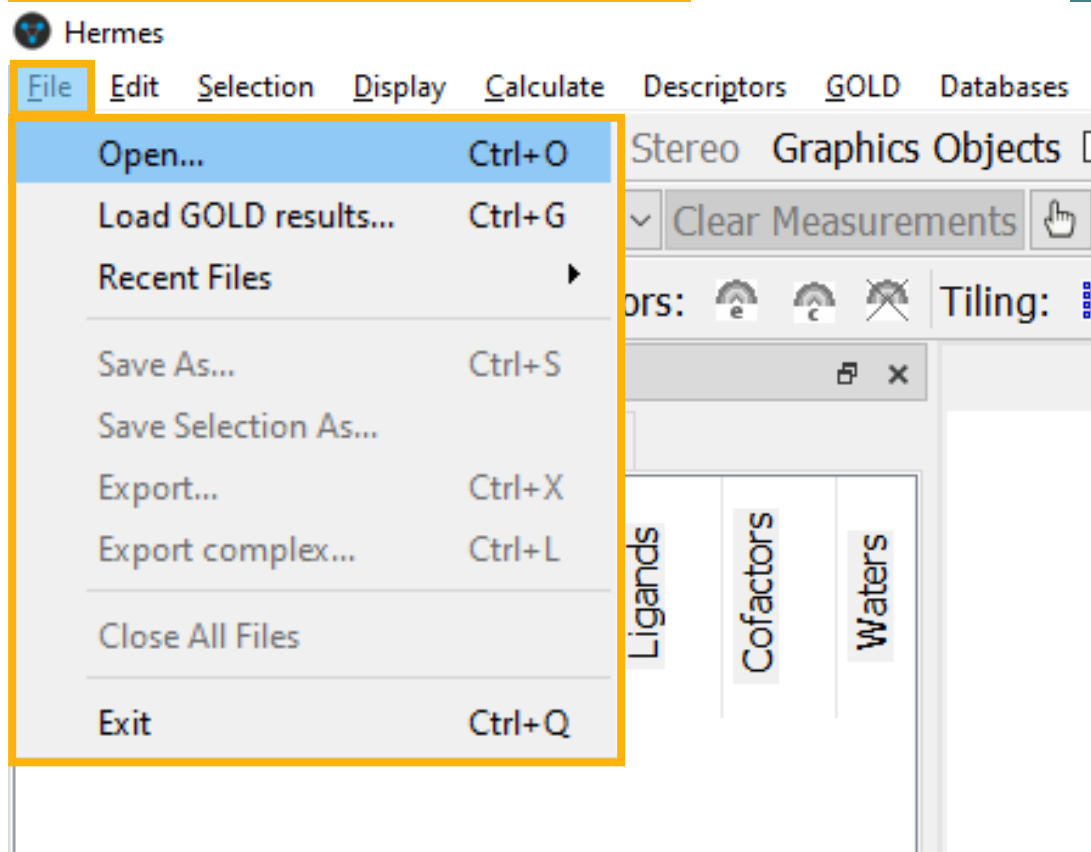
-  • **Left mouse** button and move – rotate molecules
-  • **Middle Mouse** wheel – move molecules up and down
-   • **Right mouse** button and move up and down – zoom in and out of molecules
-  +  • **Shift + Left mouse** button and move – rotate in the plane molecules
-  +  • **Ctrl + Left mouse** button and move – translate molecules

Did you know?

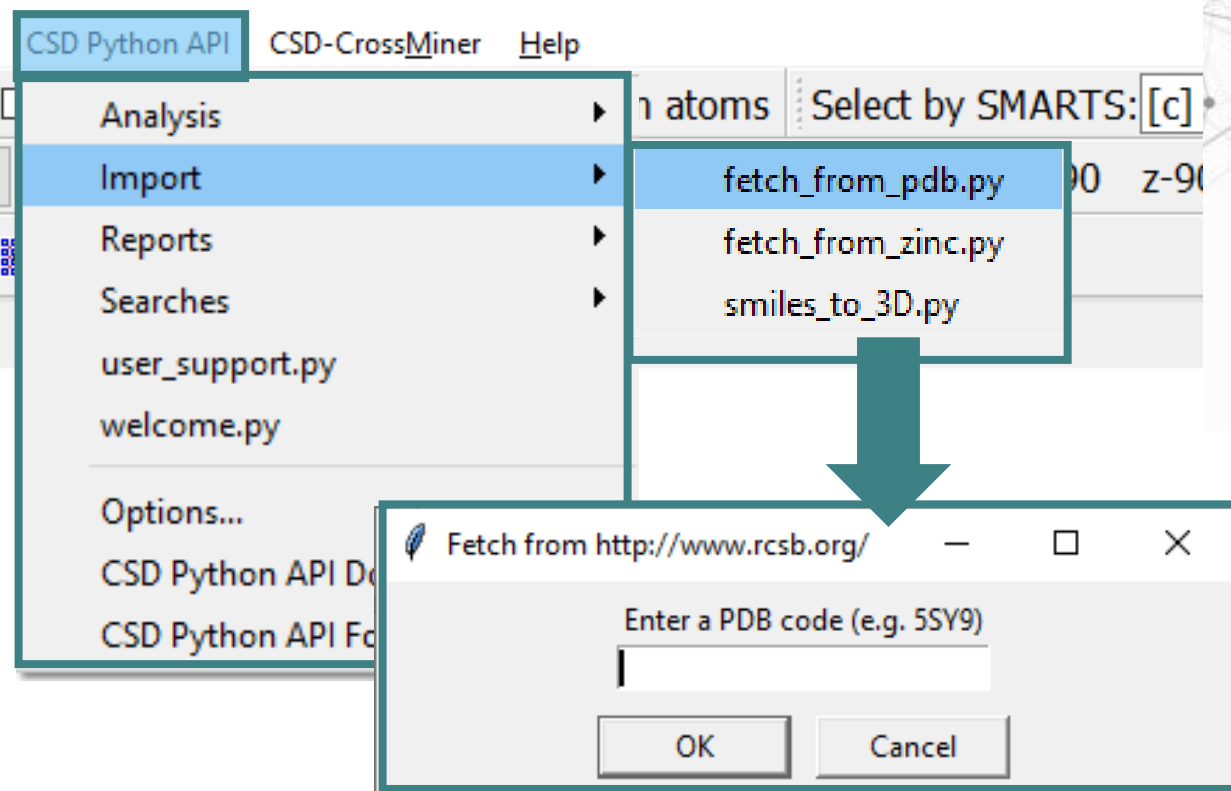
The basic navigation features in **Hermes** are the same in **Mercury** - our small molecule visualisation software. So... if you are an expert in one you are an expert in both!

Loading structures into Hermes

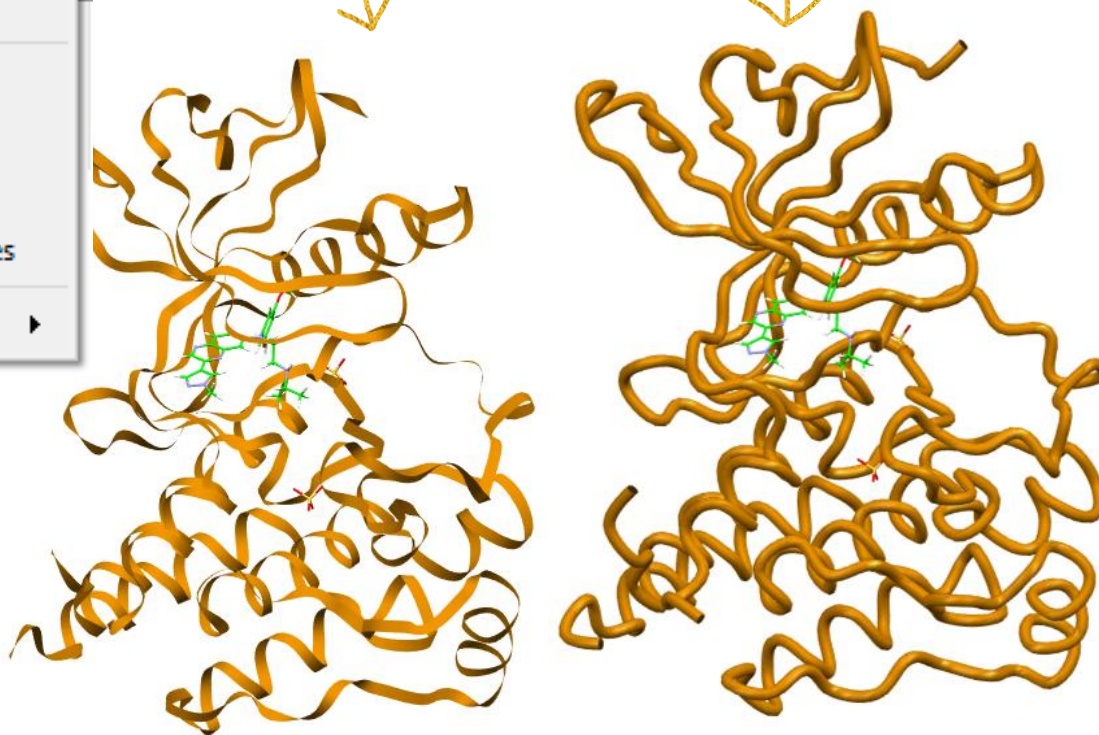
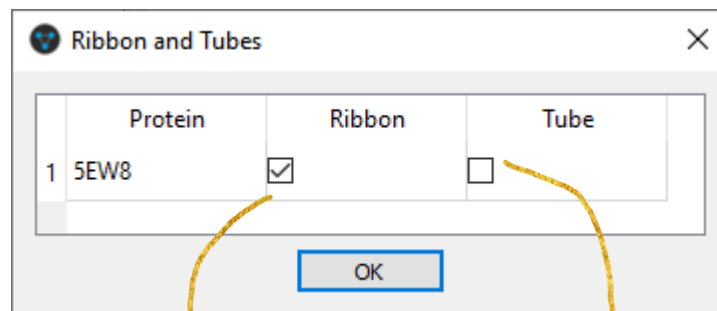
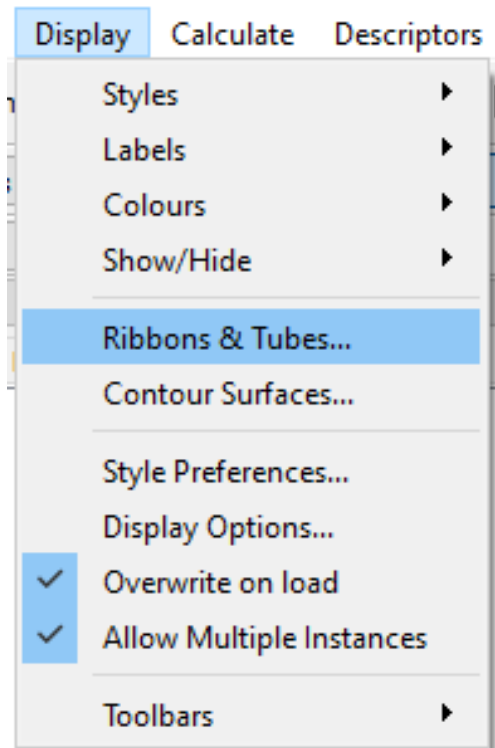
From a file: File > Open



From a DB or SMILES: CSD Python API > Import



Ribbon & Tubes options



Colours and transparency

A protein ribbon model is shown with a color and transparency menu open. The menu includes options for deleting objects, clearing all objects, and selecting colors and transparency. A star icon is visible in the top right corner of the menu.

- Delete Object
- Clear All Objects
- Colours**
- Labels
- Show/Hide

- White
- Light Grey
- Grey
- Dark Grey
- Black
- Pink
- Red
- Orange
- Yellow
- Light Green
- Green
- Light Blue
- Blue
- Purple
- Violet
- Magenta
- Colour...
- Opaque
- Transparent

Creating high-resolution images

The screenshot displays the Hermes software interface with the following components:

- Main Window:** Shows a protein structure in wireframe mode. The menu bar includes File, Edit, Selection, Display, Calculate, Descriptors, GOLD, Databases, CSD Python API, CSD-CrossMiner, and Help. The toolbar contains various navigation and display controls.
- File Menu:** Opened, showing options: Open... (Ctrl+O), Load GOLD results... (Ctrl+G), Recent Files, Save As... (Ctrl+S), Save Selection As..., Export... (Ctrl+X), Export complex... (Ctrl+L), Close All Files, and Exit (Ctrl+Q).
- Save File As Dialog:** Shows a file explorer with a folder named 'image-1' containing a file named 'image-1'. The 'Save as type' dropdown is open, listing file formats: Portable Network Graphics File (*.png), PDB File (*.pdb *.ent), Mol2 File (*.mol2), Binary Archive (*.reliarch), Bitmap File (*.bmp), JPEG File (*.jpg *.jpeg), Portable Network Graphics File (*.png), and POV-Ray File (*.pov). The 'Portable Network Graphics File (*.png)' option is selected.
- Save Image Dialog:** Shows the 'Image size' settings. The 'Current window size: 1033 x 768 pixels' option is selected. A multiplier of 2.00 is entered. Other options include 640 x 480 pixels, 800 x 600 pixels, and 1024 x 768 pixels. The 'Size' section has Width: 1500 and Height: 1500. The 'Transparent background' checkbox is checked. OK and Cancel buttons are at the bottom.
- Contact Management Panel:** Located at the bottom left, it includes buttons for 'Define H-Bonds ...' and 'Define Short Contacts ...', and a 'Ligand Sphere' checkbox. A table below shows contact information for protein 2WSY.

Protein	H-Bonds	Short Contacts
1 2WSY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

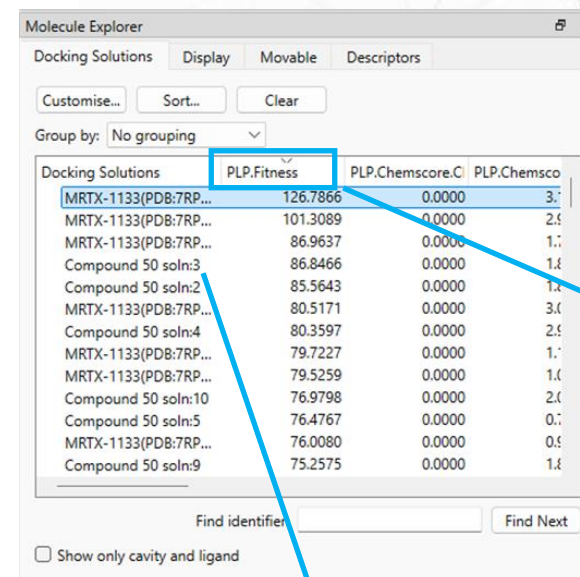
We are recording today's session and will make the recording available to you in the next few days

Demonstration

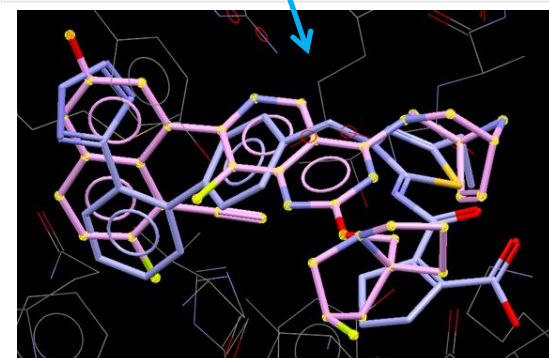
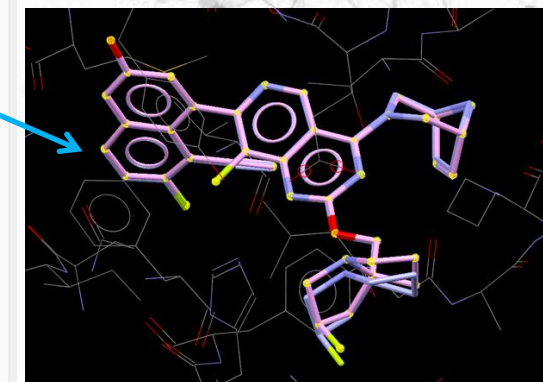
Approaches to virtual screening using target-focused libraries

In this demonstration we will:

- Navigate the interface.
- Import a protein-ligand complex from the PDB.
- Set up GOLD virtual screening.
- Run GOLD.
- Visualise and inspect the docking solutions.



Docking Solutions	PLP.Fitness	PLP.Chemscore.C	PLP.Chemscore.S
MRTX-1133(PDB:7RP...	126.7866	0.0000	3.1
MRTX-1133(PDB:7RP...	101.3089	0.0000	2.5
MRTX-1133(PDB:7RP...	86.9637	0.0000	1.7
Compound 50 soln:3	86.8466	0.0000	1.8
Compound 50 soln:2	85.5643	0.0000	1.4
MRTX-1133(PDB:7RP...	80.5171	0.0000	3.0
Compound 50 soln:4	80.3597	0.0000	2.5
MRTX-1133(PDB:7RP...	79.7227	0.0000	1.7
MRTX-1133(PDB:7RP...	79.5259	0.0000	1.0
Compound 50 soln:10	76.9798	0.0000	2.0
Compound 50 soln:5	76.4767	0.0000	0.7
MRTX-1133(PDB:7RP...	76.0080	0.0000	0.5
Compound 50 soln:9	75.2575	0.0000	1.8



Agenda

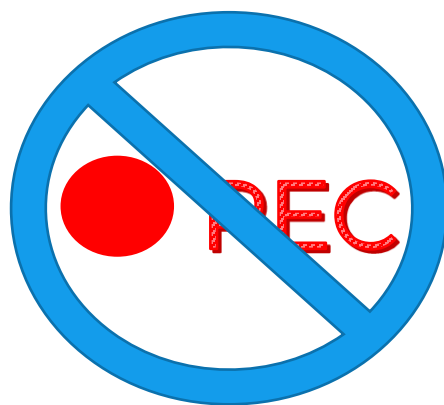
- *Show One*: Introduction to the CSD
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- *Show One*: Case studies from Prof. Armando Albert
- *Show One*: GOLD overview and demonstration of Virtual Screening using GOLD
- *Try One*: Hands-on exercise
- *Explore More*: Advanced functionality and use cases
- *Explore More*: Quiz and summary
- *Extra time*: More time for hands-on and Q&A

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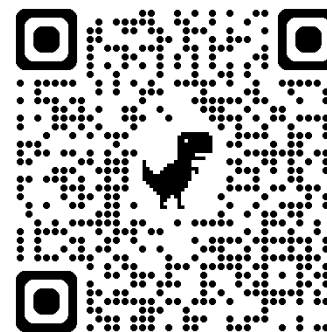
Try One



It's your turn!

- Try the [Case Study](#) from the handout.
- Your tutors are here to help you!
- To ask questions during this time [type a message in the chat box](#).

[link to webpage](#)



How to Use the Docking Software GOLD to Perform Virtual Screening Simulations



Virtual Screening of a Library of KRAS Inhibitors using GOLD

Developed using
2025.1 CSD Release

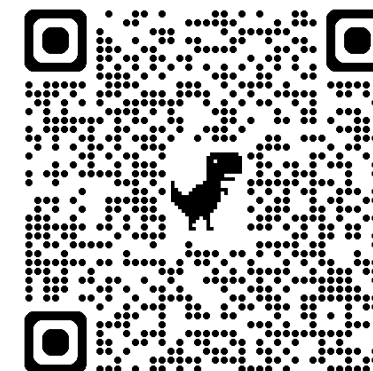


CCDC
advancing structural science

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[link to handout](#)



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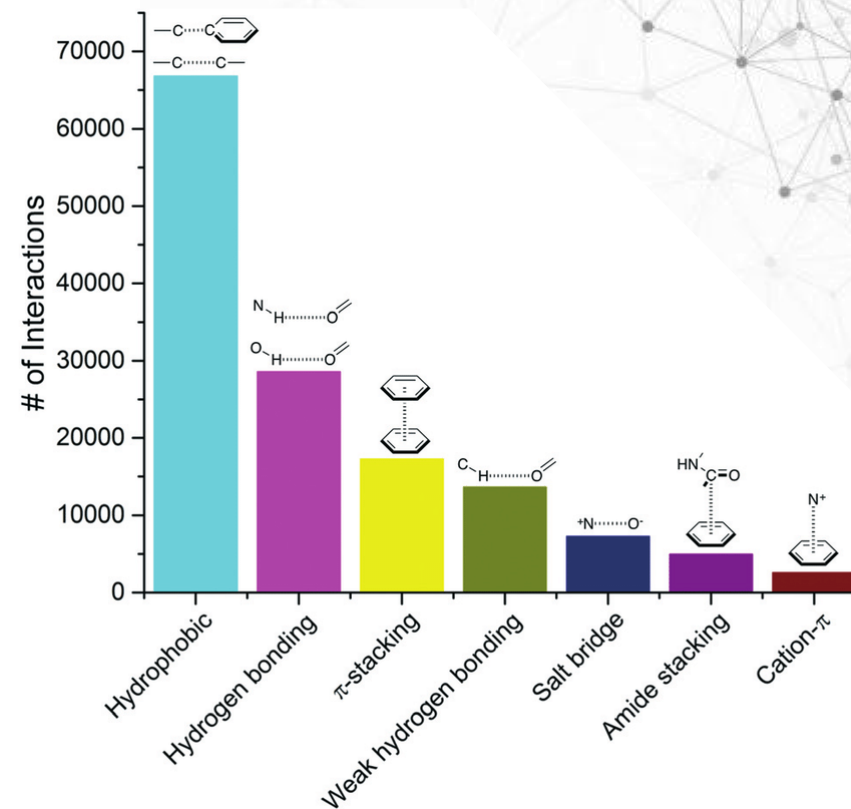
After the session you can earn a completion certificate for today by taking our test.

Explore More: More advanced uses

- Not enough time to explore everything you can do within a virtual-screening process
- But here are a selection of more advanced tips and tricks on using data driven approaches as well as some additional case studies

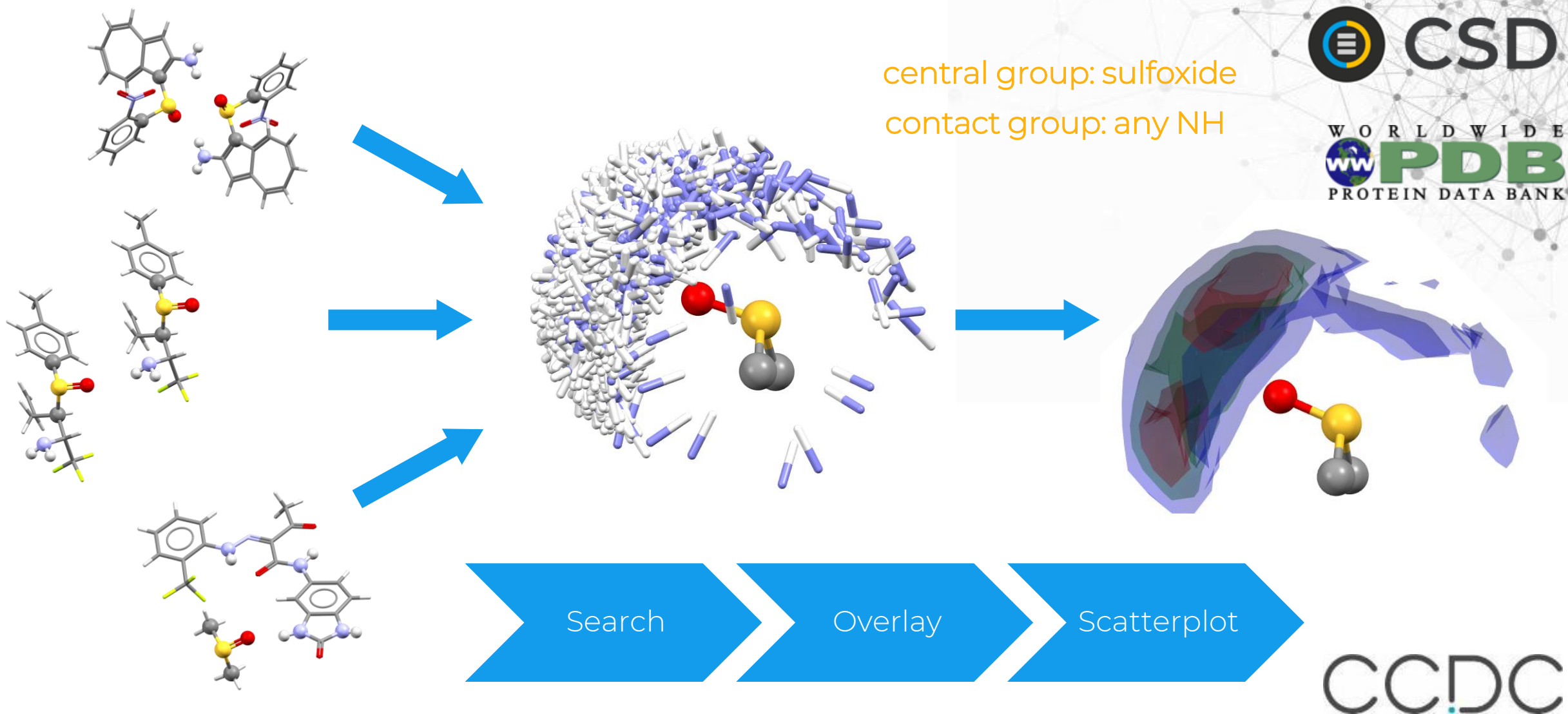
Data driven approaches: non-covalent interactions

- Critical driving force for the structure, stability, and function of proteins.
- Important for drug discovery as their interplay is responsible for binding affinity within proteins and ligands.



Most common non-covalent interactions observed in protein–ligands extracted from the PDB

IsoStar: An interactions knowledge base

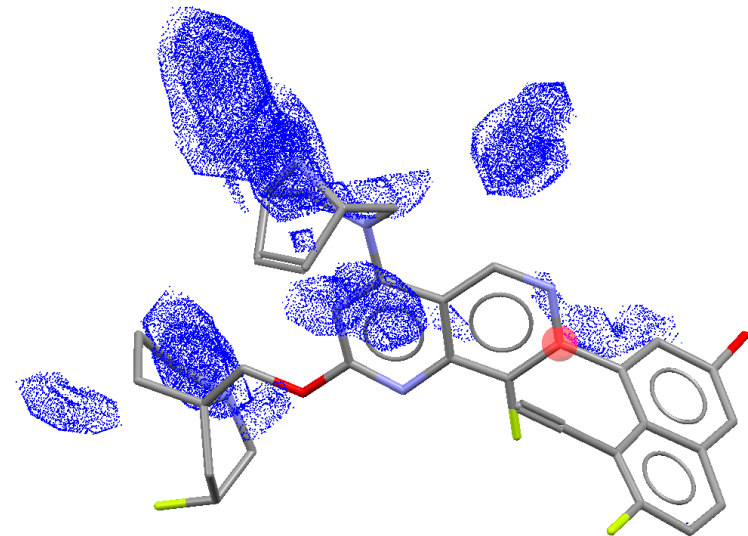


SuperStar

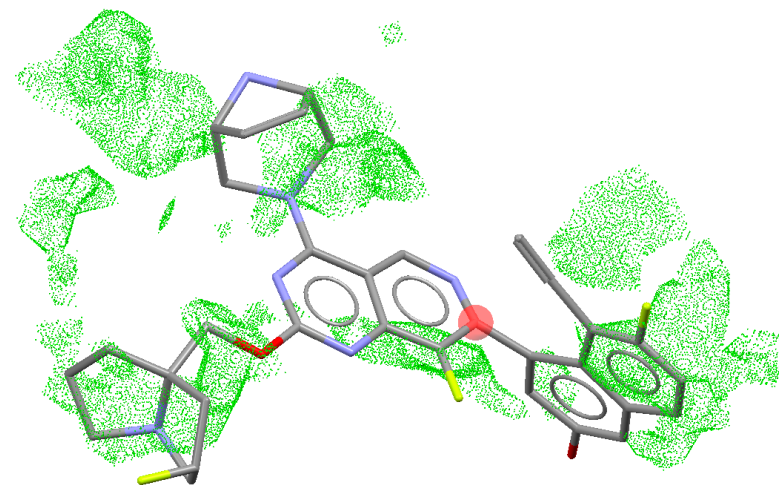


- Provides the **interaction preferences** for all or selected cavities in protein.
- Interaction preferences **visualised** simply in 3D based on validated experimental structural knowledge (i.e. **CSD** or **PDB** data from IsoStar).
- Contour plots using probes, hotspots as peaks in contours.
- Accessed through Hermes (protein visualiser).

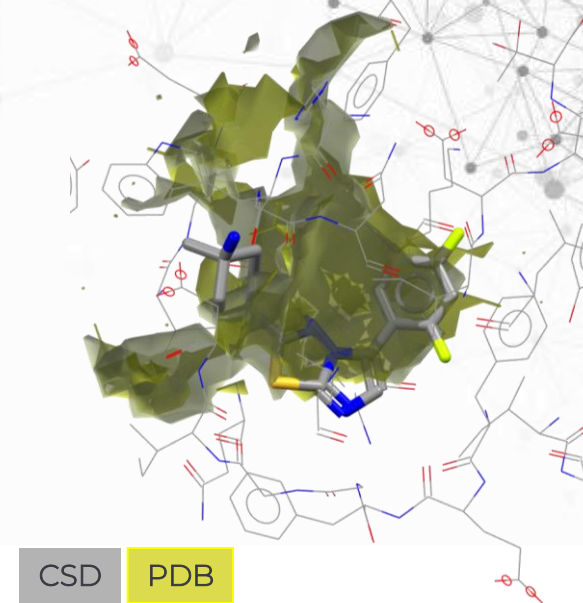
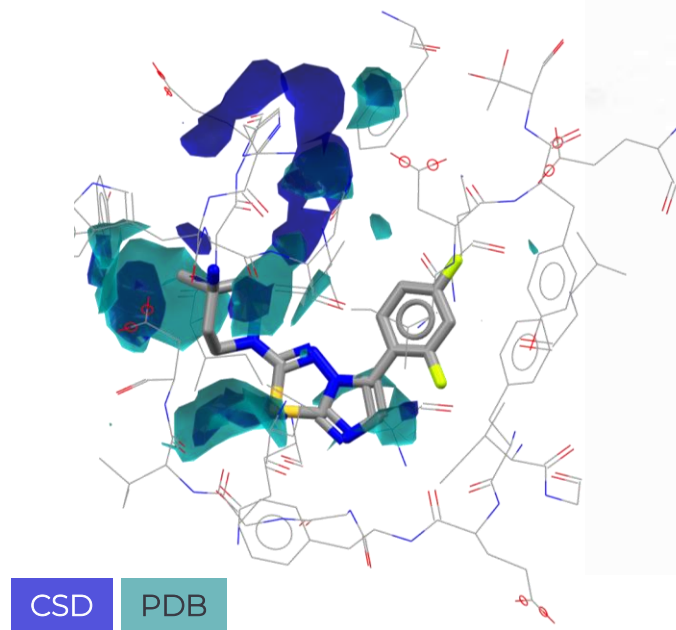
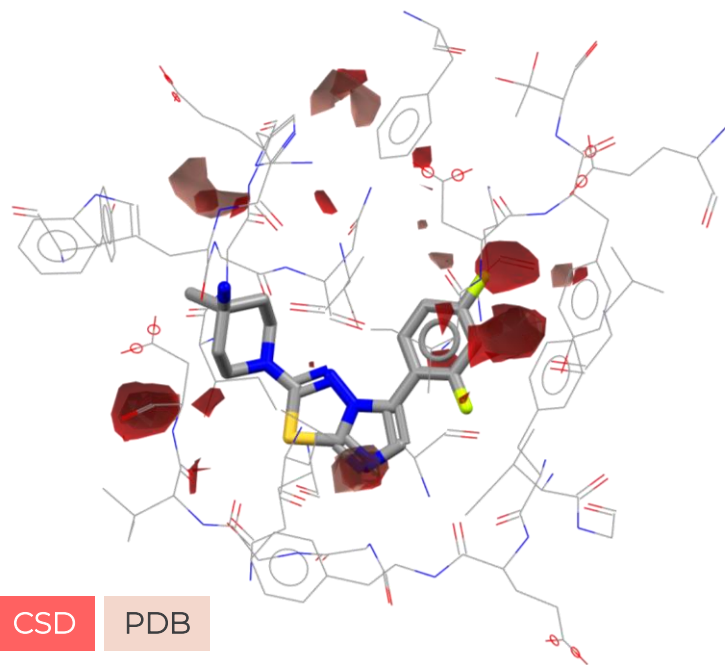
H-bond donor propensity map (NH-probe)



Hydrophobic propensity map (CH-aliphatic probe)



Superstar: a Knowledge-based method

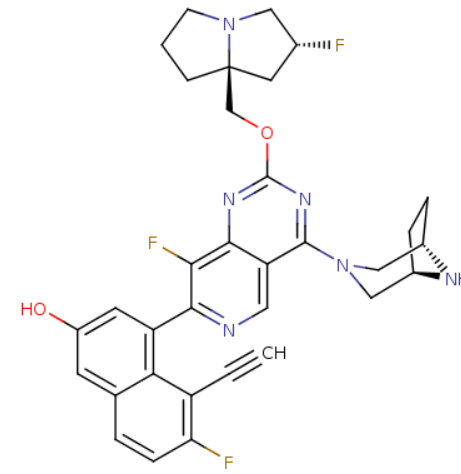


- Estimates the probability of an interaction:
 - Between a protein and a small functional group (probe).
 - Based on how often the interaction has been observed in the [knowledge-based library of intermolecular interactions](#).
- Druggable target

Applications:

- Identify potential [binding hot-spots](#) in proteins and ligands.
- Validation of [docking poses](#).
- Identify structural [waters](#).

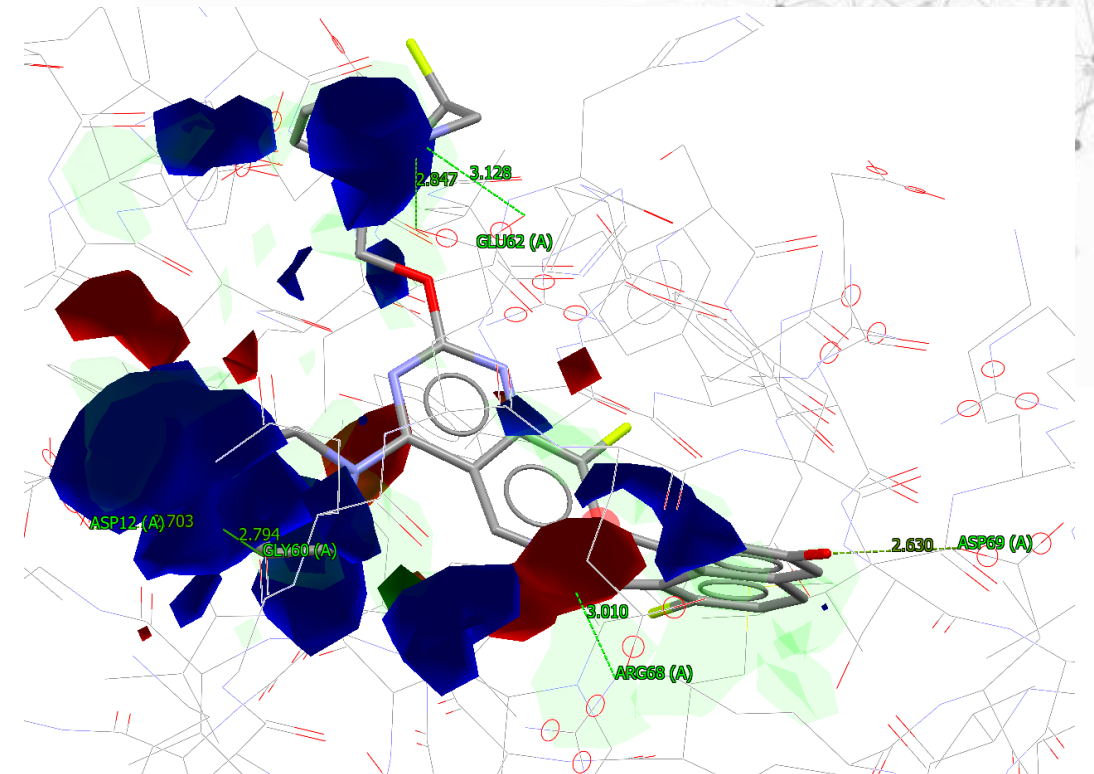
SuperStar application



Validation of docking poses

Binding mode of MRTX-1133 validated by showing good match of:

- H-bond donor interactions between amino groups in MRTX-1133 and residues ASP12, GLY60, and GLU62.
- H-bond acceptor interactions between N with ARG68 and Hydroxyl group with ASP69



A background network diagram consisting of numerous grey nodes connected by thin grey lines, forming a complex web-like structure. The nodes are of varying sizes and are distributed across the entire slide area.

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What we have learnt

- ✓ Brief overview of [structure-based virtual screening](#).
- ✓ Basics of the [Hermes](#) interface, the CCDC's 3D visualizer for proteins.
- ✓ [Cavity detection and extraction](#) in Hermes.
- ✓ Step-by-step set-up of a [virtual screening simulation in GOLD](#).
- ✓ [Analysis](#) of virtual screening results.
- ✓ Protein-ligand interactions insights using hotspots via [Superstar](#).

We will make the recording available to you in the next few days.

Want to explore more?

On-demand training resources

Solutions

Community

Discover

Consultancy

Access/Deposit Structures

CCDC for the Community

Education and Outreach

Events

Free Products

Training and Learning

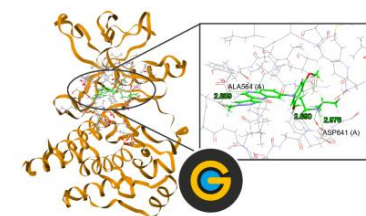
Free Online Courses

Self-Guided Workshops

Training and Support Videos



Protein-ligand docking 101 - Running a simulation in GOLD

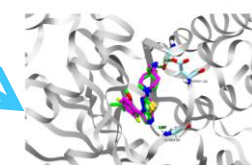


Start the CSDU module!

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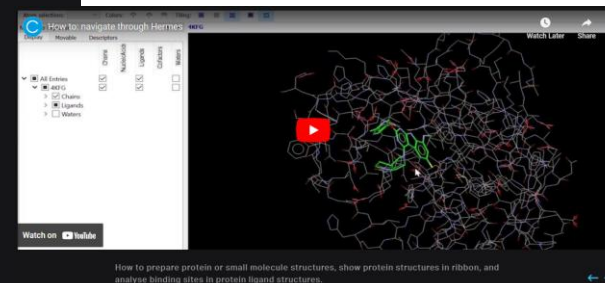
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CSD-Discovery



For pharmaceutical and agrochemical researchers, tools for discovering new molecules and performing protein docking studies, featuring GOLD, CrossMiner and SuperStar

CSD-Discovery Workshops

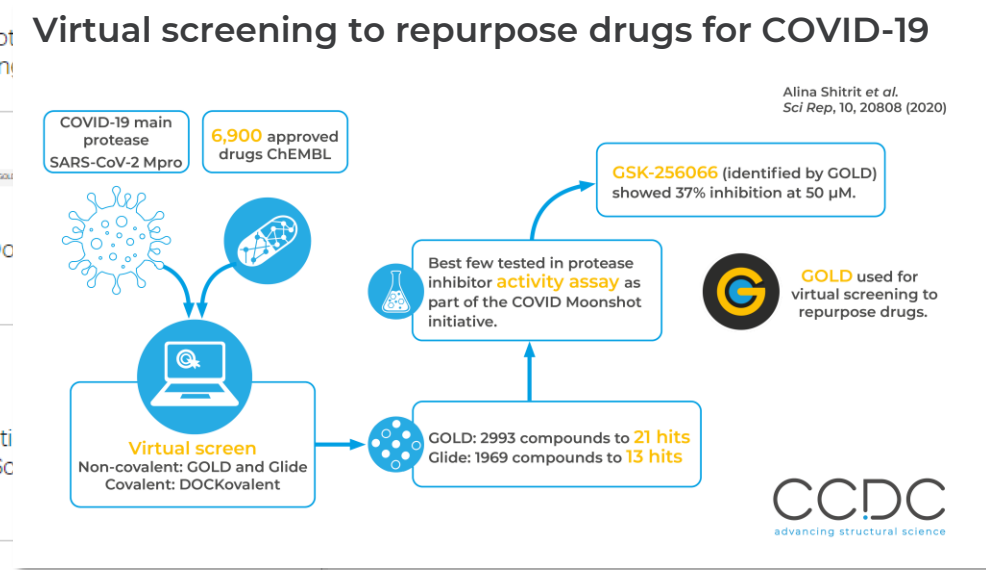
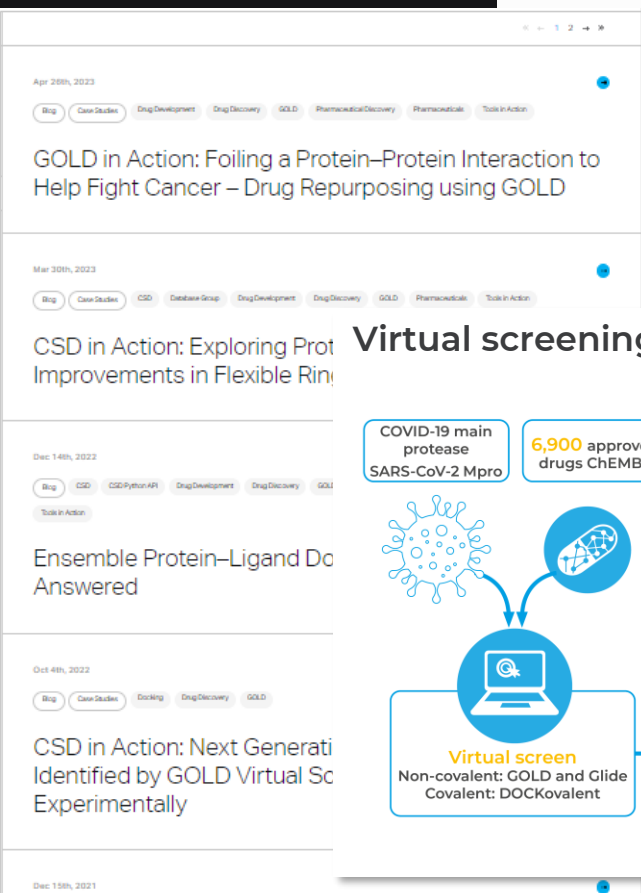
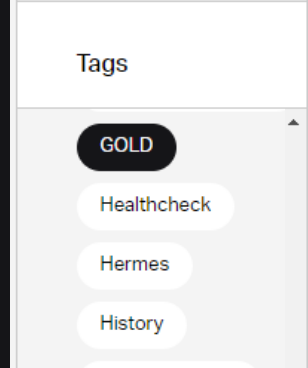
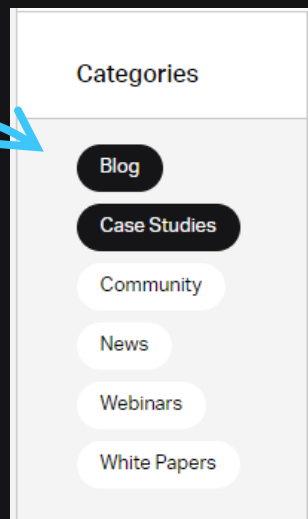
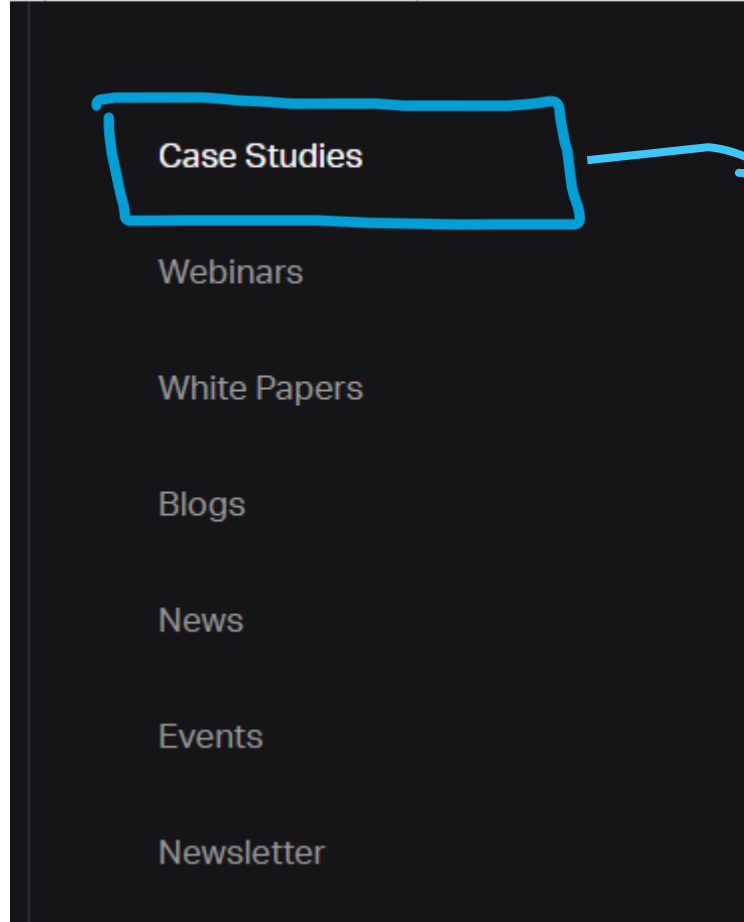


How to prepare protein or small molecule structures, show protein structures in ribbon, and analyse binding sites in protein-ligand structures.

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Want to explore more?

Case Studies



How to cite the tools seen today

- **GOLD**

Development and Validation of a Genetic Algorithm for Flexible Docking

G. Jones, P. Willett, R. C. Glen, A. R. Leach and R. Taylor, *J. Mol. Biol.*, 267, 727-748, 1997

[DOI: 10.1006/jmbi.1996.0897](https://doi.org/10.1006/jmbi.1996.0897)

- **SuperStar**

Combined use of physiochemical data and small-molecule crystallographic contact propensities to predict interactions in protein binding sites

J. W. M. Nissink, R. Taylor, *Org. Biomol. Chem.*, 2, 3238-3249, 2004

[DOI: 10.1039/B405205F](https://doi.org/10.1039/B405205F)

- **CSD**

The Cambridge Structural Database

C. R. Groom, I. J. Bruno, M. P. Lightfoot and S. C. Ward, *Acta Cryst.* (2016). B72, 171-179

[DOI: 10.1107/S2052520616003954](https://doi.org/10.1107/S2052520616003954)



More reference
papers for
GOLD



More reference
papers for
CSD Software

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Want to explore more?

CCDC Webinars

- **13th November** - Using general purpose **force fields** in solid form studies
- **20th November, Panel** – **Frontiers in MOFs:** Creating Real-World Solutions with MOFs

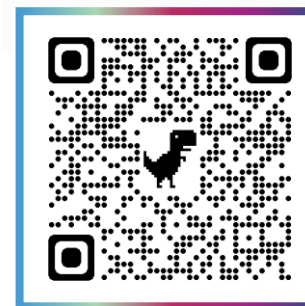
Check our Events online for more virtual and in person events.



Using General Purpose Force Fields in Solid Form Studies

Lily Hunnisett
Computational Solid-State Scientist, CCDC

Thursday, 13th November
15:00 (GMT)/ 10:00 (EST)



Frontiers in
MOFs

CCDC **60**
advancing structural science YEARS

WEBINAR

Creating Real-World Solutions with MOFs

Panel discussion with experts from academia and industry.

20th November, 3pm GMT

REGISTER