

Combined Deep Learning and Molecular Docking Simulations Approach Identifies Potentially Effective FDA Approved Drugs for Repurposing against SARS-CoV-2

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Conflict of Interest:

All authors declare no competing interest.

Abstract: (Word Count 280)

The ongoing pandemic of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), has posed a serious threat to global public health. Currently no approved drug or vaccine exists against SARS-CoV-2. Drug repurposing, represented as an effective drug discovery strategy from existing drugs, is a time efficient approach to find effective drugs against SARS-CoV-2 in this emergency situation. Both experimental and computational approaches are being employed in drug repurposing with computational approaches becoming increasingly popular and efficient. In this study, we present a robust experimental design combining deep learning with molecular docking experiments to identify most promising candidates from the list of FDA approved drugs that can be repurposed to treat COVID-19. We have employed a deep learning based Drug Target Interaction (DTI) model, called DeepDTA, with few improvements to predict drug-protein binding affinities, represented as KIBA scores, for 2,440 FDA approved and 8,168 investigational drugs against 24 SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins. FDA approved drugs with the highest KIBA scores were selected for molecular docking simulations. We ran docking simulations for 168 selected drugs against 285 total predicted and/or experimentally proven active sites of all 24 SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins. We used a recently published open source AutoDock based high throughput screening platform virtualflow to reduce the time required to run around 50,000 docking simulations. A list of 49 most promising FDA approved drugs with best consensus KIBA scores and AutoDock vina binding affinity values against selected SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins is generated. Most importantly, anidulafungin, velpatasvir, glecaprevir, rifabutin, procaine penicillin G, tadalafil, riboflavin 5'-monophosphate, flavin adenine dinucleotide, terlipressin, desmopressin, elbasvir, oxatomide, enasidenib, edoxaban

and selinexor demonstrate highest predicted inhibitory potential against key SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins.

Key Words:

SARS-CoV-2, COVID 19, Deep Learning, DeepDTA, Docking, FDA approved Drugs, Drug Repurposing

List of Abbreviations:

SARS-CoV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
COVID19	Novel 2019 Coronavirus Disease
SARS-CoV	Sever acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus
MERS-CoV	Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
PDB	The Protein Data Bank
DAVIS	Densely Annotated Video Segmentation
CNN	Convolutional neural network
DeepDTA	Deep Drug-Target Binding Affinity Prediction
CPU	Central Processing Unit
K _i	Inhibitory constant
K _d	Dissociation constant
IC ₅₀	Half maximal inhibitory concentration
Bi-LSTM	Bi-directional long short term memory
BPE	Byte pair encoding
ReLU	Rectified Linear Unit
MSE	Mean Squared Error
CI	Concordance index
C-I-TASSER	Contact-guided Iterative Threading ASSEmbly Refinement
S	Spike
E	Envelope
M	Membrane
N	Nucleocapsid
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
Nsp1	Non-structural protein 1
Nsp7	Non-structural protein 7
Nsp8	Non-structural protein 8
Nsp12	Non-structural protein 12
HCV	Hepatitis C virus
HBV	Hepatitis B virus
FAD	Flavin Adenine Dinucleotide
DPP-4	Dipeptidyl peptidase 4
ACE	Angiotensin converting enzyme
HMG-CoA	β -Hydroxy β -methylglutaryl-CoA
RMSD	Root-mean-square deviation
PLpro	Papain-like protease
RdRp	RNA-directed RNA polymerase
Hel	Helicase
CPK	Corey-Pauling-Koltun
RCSB	Research Collaboratory for Structural Bioinformatics
XPO1	Exportin-1
FMN	Flavin mononucleotide

Introduction

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV), Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) are three highly pathogenic human coronaviruses (CoVs) that can cause severe disease in humans¹. SARS-CoV resulted in an outbreak in 2003 while MERS-CoV was reported in Saudi Arabia in June 2012. SARS-CoV-2 was first reported in the city of Wuhan in central China and the disease caused by this virus has been termed as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 has now become a global pandemic with severe effects on global public health. As of 28th April, 2020, approximately 3 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported with an estimated 211,147 deaths globally³. Currently no approved drug or vaccine is available for COVID-19. Therefore, there is a pressing urgency to make an expedited discovery of effective therapeutics for COVID-19.

De-novo drug development is a time consuming, complex, and expensive process that typically costs 2.8 billion dollars⁴. How to decrease the costs and speed up new drug discovery has become a challenging and urgent question in the industry. Drug repurposing, a process of investigating approved or investigational drugs for new therapeutic purposes, offers a cost and time effective alternative⁵. Drug repurposing is based on a paradigm shift in our understanding that many effective drugs act via modulation of multiple proteins rather than single targets⁶ ⁷. Both experimental and computational approaches are being employed in drug repurposing with computational approaches becoming increasingly popular, robust and efficient⁵.

Recent advancements in the field of deep learning have significantly improved the computational approaches for drug repurposing. Conventional machine learning methods are limited by the lack of ability to process the data in the raw form and hence depend on feature

engineering⁸ for machine learning and pattern recognition⁹. Deep learning, a novel machine learning approach utilizing deep neural networks, based techniques overcome the issue of manual feature engineering and processes the crude multi-dimensional data (images, text sequences etc) in their layers for algorithm training¹⁰. The architecture of deep learning model is a multi-layer cascade of several modules, mapping a nonlinear relationship between input and output employing a back propagation method to fine-tune the corresponding weights¹¹. Deep learning is also being used to study Drug-Target interaction¹².

The approach of supervised deep learning can be used to predict drug-target binding affinities. In this stratagem, a deep learning model is trained on the experimentally available binding affinities of several protein-ligand complexes. Several available benchmark protein-ligand complex datasets, providing the experimental binding affinities, are PDB¹³, DAVIS¹⁴ and KIBA^{15 16} datasets. These have been used in several studies to predict the binding affinities of the complexes. The training of the deep learning model is realized using physical or structural features of protein ligand complexes on the training dataset. A properly trained model can be employed to predict the binding affinities of unseen protein ligand complexes. A binary prediction classifier has already been proposed^{17 18} which takes into account the several input representations of the protein-ligand complex. In several other deep learning network studies, a protein-ligand interaction scoring has been predicted, training the convolutional neural network (CNN) using the three dimensional structure of the associated complexes^{19 20}. The main source of these complexes is PDB¹³ ; however small number of interactions is a limitation as only 25000 protein-ligand complexes have been documented. DeepDTA²¹ is another novel approach which uses SMILES and FASTA sequences of ligands and proteins, respectively. In the DeepDTA approach, two separate CNN blocks have

been employed to train the protein and ligand sequences and eventually combined in a fully connected layer called DeepDTA. In this study, we have employed DeepDTA with few improvements.

Another computational approach that is employed to study drug target interaction is virtual screening. Virtual screening can be performed by using *molecular docking* - a technique that samples the ensemble of binding modes to predict preferred pose(s) in which the ligand can bind with the receptor at a certain location, known as active / binding site, in order to form a stable complex^{22 23}. A binding mode refers to a unique conformation along with orientation and translation of the ligand. Ranking of the preferred binding modes / poses is carried out by evaluating a mathematical function, known as scoring function, that quantifies the stability of the complex formed by a particular pose of ligand with the receptor^{24 25}. In our work, docking was performed using actual simulation as it is more realistic compared to its alternatives^{25 26}. We have used the results of docking simulations to get docking scores of potential candidate drugs with COVID19 viral proteins. In order to reduce the time required for around 50,000 docking simulations, we made use of a recently published open source high throughput screening platform virtualflow²⁷ to parallelize the docking scenarios across multiple machines and CPU cores.

In this study we have employed a multidisciplinary, multimodal approach combining deep machine learning and large scale molecular docking experiments in a sequential manner to identify FDA approved drugs that can be used as effective treatment against SARS-CoV-2.

Methods:

Deep Learning Model Overview

In our work, we have employed a deep learning based DTI-model, called DeepDTA²⁰, with few improvements. Our deep learning model automatically incorporates useful and required features

from raw ligands and proteins into the model to predict the drug and protein interactions. We have utilized 1-D sequences of ligands (SMILES)²⁸ and proteins (FASTA)²⁹ to train our model. SMILES (Simplified Molecular Input Line Entry System) representation of molecules have been exploited rather than physical and chemical properties associated with the ligands. We have employed the Bi-LSTM³⁰ blocks of neural networks instead of CNN used by DeepDTA²⁰ to learn the SMILE representation of molecules whereas fully connected CNN have been engaged to learn the FASTA representation of proteins.

Dataset

We have used a benchmark KIBA dataset for training our model and prediction evaluation of binding affinities, which has been tapped previously in a handful of studies. The KIBA dataset comprises selectivity assays of the kinase proteins family and the associated inhibitors¹⁵. It predominantly embodies the corresponding KIBA scores. The KIBA values have been contrived by combining K_i , K_d and IC_{50} values obtained from several sources. This Dataset has been created from original 52,498 drugs¹⁴, which has been filtered to 2111 unique drugs. The pool of all shortlisted drugs has at least 10 measured interactions, yielding a total of 229 proteins out of all 467 targets and a total of 118,254 interactions²⁰. In our preliminary work we have employed the same KIBA dataset used by DeepDTA²⁰.

Input Representation

In our approach, we have employed byte pair encoding³⁰ to represent the SMILES of ligands and FASTA sequences of the proteins. SMILES have a varied length based upon the number of atoms and type of bonds in the drug. Since we used Bi-LSTM³¹ to learn the representation of drugs, we used an end token to indicate the end of the SMILES. We utilized CNN for learning protein

representation, so we set the maximum length of the FASTA sequence to 1000 characters. We truncated larger sequences and padded zeros to smaller sequences.

Proposed Model

Our prediction model is based upon two sub-models. One part takes SMILES as input and the second part takes FAST as input. SMILES are encoded via byte pair encoding (BPE) and then passed to a novel Bi-LSTM³¹ learning approach for sequence analysis. It has been successfully used in the recent studies for text sequence analysis. This part yields an effective representation of drugs. FASTA sequences of proteins are also encoded with BPE and then trained with Convolutional neural networks (CNN). This part learns the representation of the proteins. These separate representations are then concatenated and then passed through three fully connected layers. Our CNN model greatly relies on the number and size of filters to define dependencies of the sequences and we have chosen appropriate values fit to the scenario. As the size of filters and the number of filters are varied, performance of CNN also varies with it. All layers of networks are shown in the block diagram ([Figure 1](#)).

The interaction pairs of the KIBA dataset have been split into training and testing datasets. As an activation function, we used Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU)³² mathematically represented as $g(z) = \max\{0, z\}$, which has been widely used in deep learning studies⁸. A learning model is trained to minimize the difference between the expected and actual value. We have formulated it as a regression task, mean squared error (MSE) has been chosen as an appropriate loss function. The learning has been accomplished with the 100 epochs and mini-batch size of 512 is chosen to update the weights and hyperparameters of our networks. The chosen optimization algorithm to train the networks is ADAM³³ which had the default learning rate of 0.001.

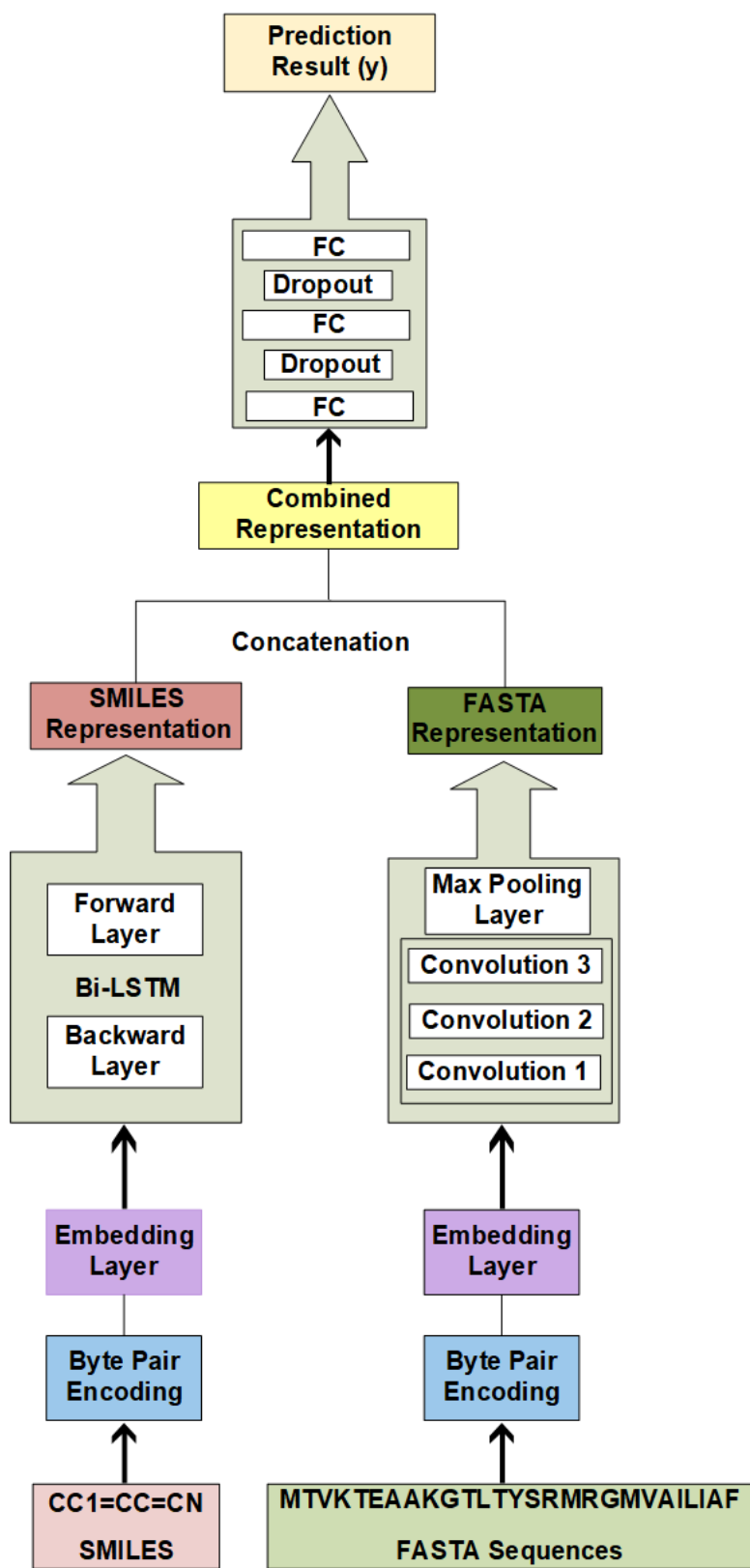


Figure 1: Block Diagram of Modified DeepDTA model with Bi-LSTM and CNN blocks to learn from sequences - The proposed Bi-LSTM and CNN methodology is represented. It consists of two separate BI-LSTM and CNN blocks, for training the representations of ligands and proteins respectively. The output representations from both blocks have been concatenated and fed to the fully connected layers, which eventually predict the drug.-protein binding affinities at their output.

Prediction of KIBA Scores for FDA approved and investigational drugs

After training of the model, we have predicted the KIBA scores of FDA approved and investigational drugs. The FDA approved and investigational drugs have been retrieved from Canadian DrugBank³⁴. The DrugBank database is a handy pool of drugs which includes detailed drug information and their corresponding interactions. The DrugBank is composed of approved 3,546 drugs, including 2,630 small molecule drugs and 1,372 approved biologics (proteins, peptides, vaccines, and allergenics) and over 9,000 drugs which are either under investigation or experimentation³⁴. From DrugBank, we have retrieved SMILE sequences for both FDA approved and investigational drugs. The SMILE sequences of various drugs were not available on the DrugBank and ultimately based upon available SMILE sequences we have incorporated 2,440 FDA approved drugs whereas 8,168 investigational drugs have been analyzed. The FASTA sequences of 24 viral proteins have been acquired from the published genome of SARS-CoV-2 available at C-I-TASSER²⁸. Both of them, in combination, have been supplied to the trained deep learning model, which predicted all corresponding KIBA scores.

Selection of FDA approved drugs for Virtual Screening

FDA approved drugs were ranked according to their KIBA scores for each viral protein. Two mutually non-exclusive subsets of drugs were prepared. Subset A comprised of drugs making it to top 50 drugs with highest KIBA score for any of 24 viral proteins. Subset B comprised of drugs

with KIBA scores of greater than or equal to 11.5 for all 24 viral proteins. Two subsets were then combined, duplicates were removed and drugs with significant interaction with less than 3 viral proteins were removed. Resulting set of FDA approved drugs were then subjected to Virtual Screening.

Molecular Docking Simulations

We made use of recently published structures of 24 viral proteins for COVID19²⁸ and the three dimensional structures of these proteins were retrieved. We performed extensive literature search for the availability of binding site data for these viral proteins. If the structures are available and their binding site data is elucidated, it is made use in this research work. In the other case, the predicted binding sites for all the proteins are provided as determined by several binding site prediction algorithms e.g. COACH, S-Site, FINDSITE, ConCavity etc²⁹. In our simulations for the sake of uniformity, we made use of the predicted binding sites given by C-I-TASSER²⁸ from which we have obtained our protein structures. For every site, we computed the search box mean by averaging the coordinates of residues forming the site. The size of the search box was set to be the difference of maximum and minimum along all three dimensions. Afterwards we discarded the search boxes that were contained in other search boxes. This resulted in 284 potential sites to be tested in total. In case of published active site data, we relied on that data completely. Autodock tool was used to preprocess docking files for Autodock Vina docking algorithm³⁰. The structure files for ligands were obtained from PubChem³¹ and converted to pdbqt. Various tools like Chimera³² and ChemOffice³³ were used for the refinement and proper energy minimization of the structures of ligands. The refined and best stereochemical quality structures having suitable number of minimization steps, were then docked into the active site of the target proteins using AutoDock and AutoDock Vina. The simulations were executed in parallel on eight compute nodes

with eight CPU cores each. To parallelize the whole procedure, we made use of virtualflow²⁷, an open source platform that automates docking simulations across multiple machines in a scalable manner. Every docking scenario was run once on one CPU core with exhaustiveness value fixed to 8 for all scenarios. VMD³⁴ (Visual Molecular Dynamics) and Chimera were used for the analysis of best docked conformations and interaction of drugs with active residues.

Results and Discussion

Modified DeepDTA identified key FDA approved drugs targeting SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins. Using the DeepDTA based model, we predicted drug-protein binding affinities, represented as KIBA scores, for 2,440 FDA approved and 8,168 investigational drugs against 24 SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins, yielding KIBA scores for a total of 254,592 interactions (Supplementary [Figure 1](#) and [Supplementary Table 1](#)). These proteins include four structural proteins; spike (S), envelope (E), membrane (M), and nucleocapsid (N)². N protein forms the capsid that protects the viral RNA while E, M and S proteins make the outer coat of the virus that surrounds the capsid^{2 28}. Spike protein projects from the surface of the virus and plays a crucial role in viral attachment, entry and fusion into the target host cell³⁵⁻³⁷. Two essential proteins constituting the viral replication-transcription complex are helicase and non-structural protein 12 (nsp12)^{38 39}. Nsp12 is an RNA-dependent RNA polymerase³⁹ that binds with nsp7 and nsp8 to make a multi-subunit complex essential for viral replication⁴⁰. Helicase (nsp13) assists in viral replication by unwinding the duplex viral RNA. Main protease (M^{pro}, also called 3CL^{pro})^{41 42} is another essential protein that works in conjunction with papain-like protease(s) to process the huge polyproteins encoded by the SARS-CoV-2 genome. These proteins are key targets for an effective antiviral therapy^{38 39 41-44}. Predicted KIBA scores for all these interactions are provided in the supplementary table S1.

By applying our predefined filtering strategy (See Section 2.6 of Methods for details), 184 out of 2,440 FDA approved drugs (top 7.5%) with high predicted binding affinity scores were identified. Sixteen drugs with either severe toxicity or topical use only (eyes and skin) were excluded. Remaining 168 drugs included 48 antimicrobial, 18 antineoplastic, 22 central nervous system acting, 35 hormonal, 9 vitamin derivatives and 36 other agents from miscellaneous classes of drugs. (Supplementary table S2). Antimicrobial agents included antibiotics, antiviral, antifungal and antimycobacterial drugs. Two most frequently observed classes of antibiotics were beta lactam agents (including penicillin derivatives and cephalosporins) and quinolones. Antiviral drugs included 3 anti-retroviral drugs (didanosine, nelfinavir and cobicistat), 5 anti-HCV drugs (sofosbuvir, elbasvir, pibrentasvir, glecaprevir and velpatasvir), 2 neuraminidase inhibitor (peramivir, oseltamivir) and 1 anti-HBV drug (adefovir dipivoxil). Three highest predicted KIBA score antifungal agents included anidulafungin, isavuconazonium and natamycin. Antineoplastic drugs included tyrosine and BRAF kinase inhibitors, anthracyclins and growth factor inhibitors amongst others. Vitamin derivatives included vitamin D derivatives and analogues, flavin derivatives (Riboflavin monophosphate and FAD) and biotin. Hormonal drugs included glucocorticoids, androgen antagonists and analogues of estrogen, progesterone, oxytocin, vasopressin and somatostatin. Drugs acting on central nervous system included dopamine agonists, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors and antipsychotic agents. Miscellaneous group of drugs included dipeptidyl peptidase 4 (DPP-4) inhibitors (alogliptin and linagliptin), anticoagulants (edoxaban, ticagrelor and dabigatran etexilate), calcium channel blockers (manidipine and diltiazem), angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors (cilazapril, perindopril, trandolapril, enalaprilat and reserpine), angiotensin II receptor blocker (eprosartan) and HMG-CoA reductase

inhibitors (rosuvastatin and cerivastatin). (For a complete list of drugs with the predicted KIBA scores against each selected SARS-CoV-2 protein see supplementary table 2)

Molecular docking simulations identified most promising inhibitors of selected SARS-CoV-2 proteins

We obtained the protein structures for docking from Zhang lab server (<https://zhanglab.ccmb.med.umich.edu/COVID-19/>). In order to verify the accuracy of these structures, we performed a comparison with available crystal structures. We found that the root-mean-square deviation (RMSD) of backbone atomic positions was in the range of 0.5 to 1.9 Å, establishing the reliability of the Zhang lab structures. It is worth mentioning that these structures were determined experimentally^{35-37 39 41} and being published when the manuscript was in the process of compilation.

This server has reported 24 proteins or peptides encompassing the complete genome of SARS-CoV-2. Our aim is to disrupt the pathways where these proteins are involved in order to inhibit normal functioning and replication cycle of the virus. We ran docking simulations for 168 selected drugs with high predicted KIBA scores against 285 total predicted and/or experimentally proven active sites of all 24 SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins^{28 36 37 39 41}. This yielded binding affinity values (kcal/mol) for 47,880 docking simulations (For details of all docking sites and docking energies, see supplementary table S3). AutoDock vina binding affinity values were plotted against KIBA scores of these drugs and drugs with best *consensus* KIBA scores and binding affinity values were selected. (For visualization of KIBA scores and docking binding affinity values of shortlisted drugs, see our interactive plot in Supplementary Figure S2 available online). This provided a list of top 49 FDA approved drugs that are predicted to effectively inhibit selected SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins through 134 key drug-protein interactions with high degree of confidence. These include

antimicrobials (n=12), hormonal agents (n=14), anti-neoplastic drugs (n=11), vitamin derivatives (n=3) and miscellaneous drugs (n=9) (Table 1). Details of these drugs with the predicted KIBA scores and docking affinity values are provided in table 1.

We have shortlisted eighteen docked complexes after extensive analysis and interaction mapping based on their significance in the viral pathways. Complete results for docking energies and active site details are provided in Supplementary Table S3. The shortlisted complexes include proteins host translation inhibitor (NSP1), papain-like protease (PLpro), proteinase 3CL-pro, RNA-directed RNA polymerase (RdRp), helicase (Hel), surface glycoprotein (S) and nucleocapsid phosphoprotein (N) with key drugs anidulafungin, velpatasvir, glecaprevir, rifabutin, procaine penicillin G, tadalafil, riboflavin 5'-monophosphate, flavin adenine dinucleotide, terlipressin, desmopressin, elbasvir, oxatomide, enasidenib, edoxaban and selinexor. The energy values and other information for the selected complexes are provided in the Table 1.

In a broader context, PLpro, 3CL-pro, RdRp and Hel are involved in virus RNA synthesis and replication. Henceforth, more research is being carried out on these targets due to their biological significance. Their structures are mostly available and well elucidated. The fifth protein, NSP1, is the virulence factor that is related to assisting the virus in gene expression and interfering host immune response. The remaining two proteins, that is, S and N are the structural proteins of the virus assisting it in attachment and binding to the host. Results of molecular docking and screening experiments clearly showed that certain drugs have higher affinities for a particular protein target. Here we briefly discuss the results of docking experiments for these drug-protein complexes.

Active site of PLpro is deduced through superimposition with a crystal structure having PDB code 6W9C.A. The RMSD value for backbone atoms came out to be 0.76 Å. There are 4 domains in the monomer of PLpro enzyme, i) an extended ubiquitin-like domain, ii) thumb domain, ii) palm

domain and iv) fingers domain. The binding site for inhibitors is present in between the thumb and palm domains. Three key drugs namely riboflavin 5'-monophosphate, oxatomide and selinexor have shown better binding affinity values than others. Active pocket of the enzyme majorly consists of hydrophilic residues as Tyr857, Asp909, Arg911, Glu912, Tyr1009, Asn1012, Tyr1013, Gln1014, Cys1015, His1017 and Tyr1018. Other residues present on the interface of thumb and palm domains are: Leu907, Gly908, Val910, Thr913, Met953, Pro992, Pro993, Gly1016, and Thr1046. It is noted that riboflavin 5'-monophosphate binds to more hydrophilic residues as compared to other two drugs. However, the best binding affinity is shown by oxatomide having both hydrophilic and hydrophobic interactions in a better fit (Figure 2).

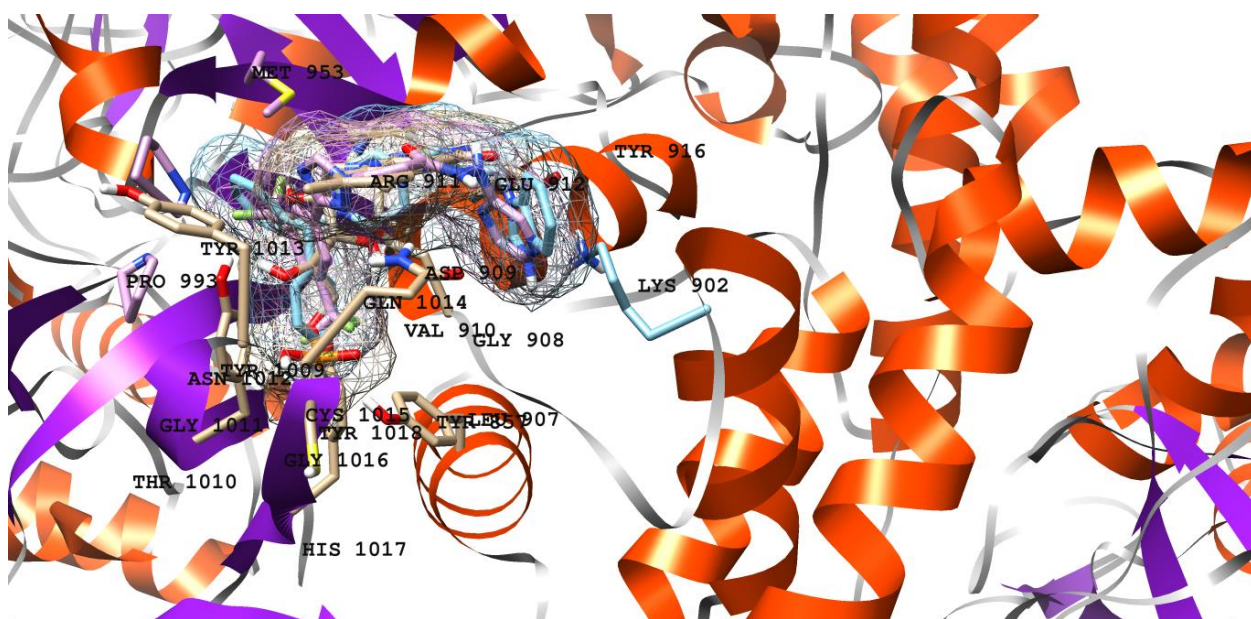


Figure 2. 3D representation of PLpro active residues and three selected drugs riboflavin 5'-monophosphate, oxatomide and selinexor in active pocket

3CL-pro contains two chymotrypsin like β -domains and an α -helical domain⁴¹. Domains I and II have the substrate-binding domain in between them and it is represented in figure (Figure 3a). Residues spanning the active site around the drugs procaine penicillin G, enasidenib and edoxaban

are Thr24, Thr25, Thr26, Leu27, His41, Cys44, Thr45, Ser46, Glu47, Met49, Leu50, Phe140, Leu141, Asn142, Gly143, Ser144, Cys145, His163, Met165, Glu166, Leu167, Pro168 and Gln189 (Figure 3b).

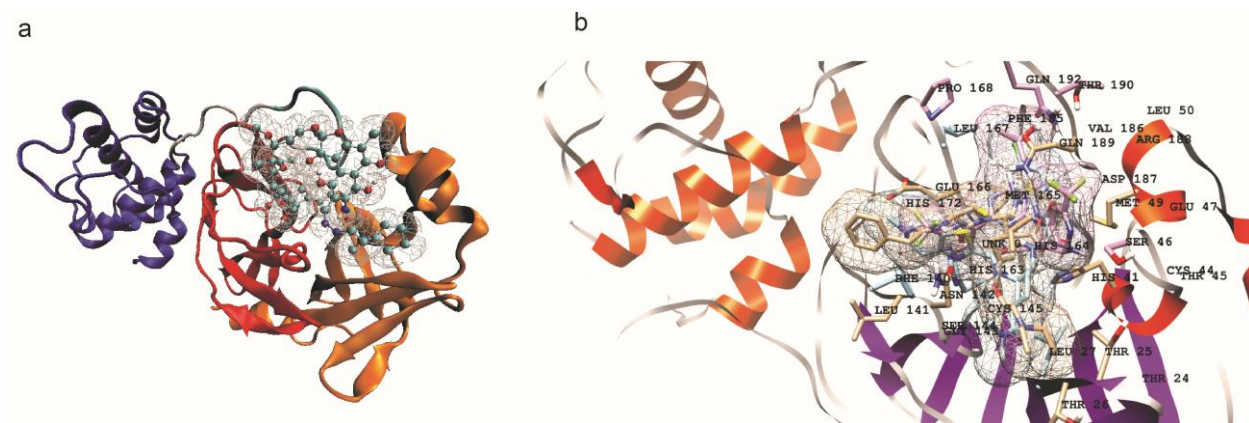


Figure 3. a) 3D structure of 3CLpro highlighting three domains, the two β -domains are shown in orange and red colors respectively, blue shows α -helical domain and drug is shown with CPK representation b) 3D representation of active site residues of 3CLpro surrounding the active drugs

Residues His41, Ser46, Met49, leu141, Asn142, Glu166, Pro168 and Gln189 are involved in hydrogen bonding with the inhibitors while Asn142 in all three drugs is forming a salt-bridge interaction as well.

RdRp contains a RdRp domain, a nidovirus N-terminal extension domain, both connected by an interface domain³⁹ (Fig. 4a). The inhibitor binding site is present on the RdRp domain for RdRp inhibition.

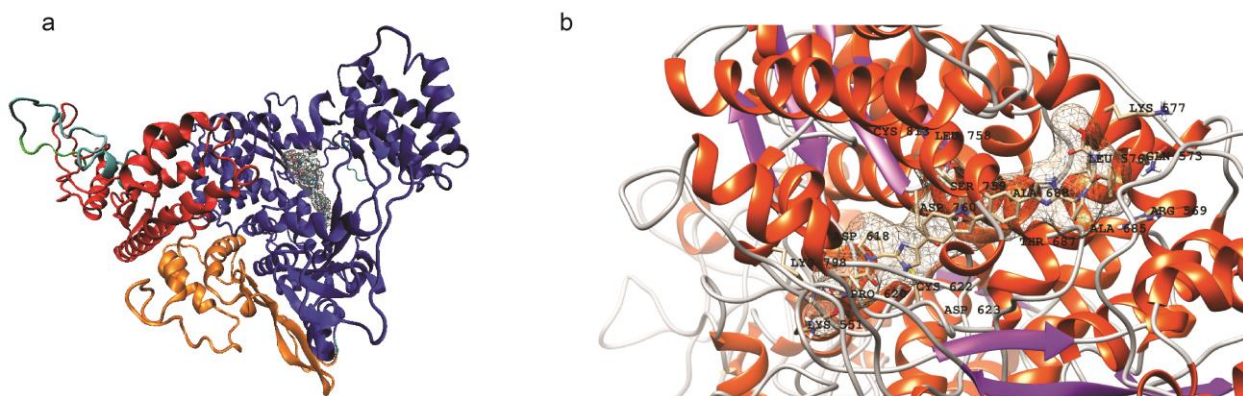


Figure 4: a) Structure of RdRp enzyme highlighting different domains: N-terminal domain (red), RdRp domain (blue), interface domain (orange) and an additional β -hairpin (green). b) 3D representation of active site residues surrounding the drug elbasvir.

Elbasvir, that is a direct antiviral medication, shows good binding with RdRp (Figure 4b). A number of hydrophobic residues are involved in binding of elbasvir and anidulafungin into the binding site of RdRp. Major contributing residues in drug binding are: Ile548, Ser549, Arg569, Ile589, Ala685, Ser759, Leu758, Ala688, Gln573, Leu576, Asp760, Asp761 and Cys622. Hydrogen bonding interactions are formed by Ile548, Ser549, Ser759, Cys622, Asp760, Ala550, Lys551, Tyr689, Lys798, Lys577, Cys813 and Ser814.

Helicase contains five domains namely N-terminal zinc-binding domain, stalk domain, 1A, 2A and 1B with inhibitor binding site between domain 1A and 1B (Figure 5a). The drugs flavin adenine dinucleotide, desmopressin, glecaprevir and rifabutin inhibit viral helicase protein with lowest binding affinities. These drugs mainly form hydrogen bonding and electrostatic interactions due to the presence of majority hydrophilic amino acid residues such as: Asp260, Glu261, Asn265, His290, Glu319, Lys320, Arg442, Arg443, His464, Lys465, Ser539, Glu540, Asp542, Arg567 and Lys569. Both Arg442 and Arg443 form salt-bridge interactions with the drugs contributing to tight binding. Figure 5b shows a snapshot of all the residues involved in binding

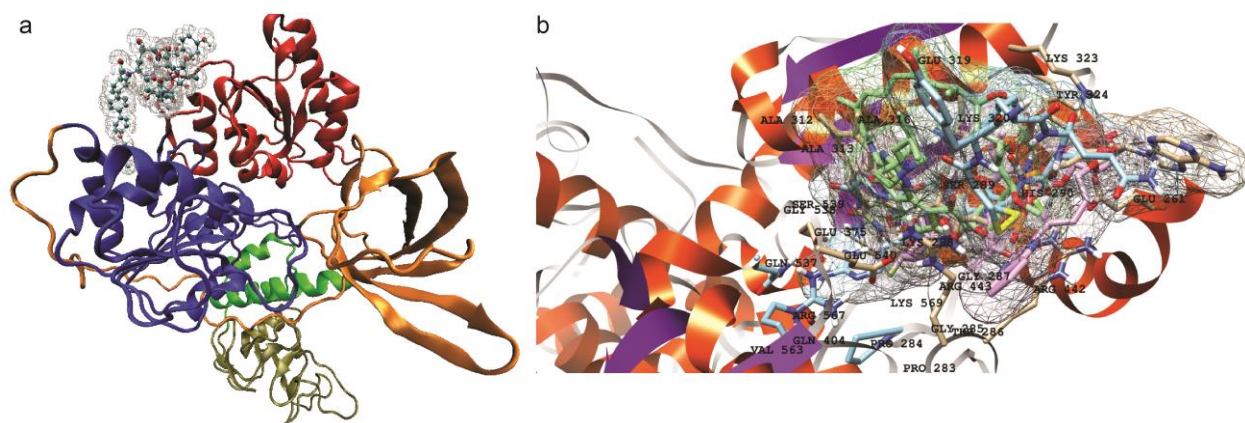


Figure 5: a) 3D representation of helicase structure highlighting N-terminal zinc-binding domain (tan), stalk domain (green), 1A (blue), 2A (red) and 1B (orange) with inhibitor binding site between domain 1A and 1B b) 3D representation of active site residues surrounding the drugs

In a second category of targets, Host translation inhibitor or NSP1 is selected for detailed analysis. Tadalafil is a drug that improves exercise capacity by relaxing muscles of the blood vessels and increase of blood flow. Tadalafil and enasidenib show promising results and best energy values in our docking experiments with NSP1. The binding site contains hydrophobic residues such as Leu39, Leu88, Val89, Leu123, Phe143 and Pro153. Several hydrogen bonds are formed by amino acids: Arg43, Lys72, Glu87, Lys125, Asp144, Tyr145 and Asp144.

Our third category of targets include S and N proteins. S protein consists of two functional subunits (S1 and S2) (Fig 6a). it is reported that S protein binds to human ACE2 to enter the cell correlating with its speedy dissemination³⁶. A structure for spike protein is reported³⁵ and deposited in RCSB protein databank (PDB) having PDB ID 6VXX. It was matched with the structure from Zhang lab server and RMSD value for backbone atoms came out to be 1.88 Å. We have observed three different drugs to show strong potency for S protein target: anidulafungin, velpatasvir and terlipressin. The key residues that are present in the active binding pocket include:

Ser45, Ser46, Leu48, Glu281, Leu303, Ser305, Phe306, Thr307, Glu309, Lys310, Arg815, Phe823, Asn824, Thr827, Leu828, Ala829, Ala831, Ala846, Arg847, Leu849, Lys854, Leu945, Gly946, Leu1203, Lys1205, Tyr1209, Ile1210, Pro1213, Ile1216, and Trp1217. Terlipressin is a large compound covering a wide area over the protein surface. It is involved in majority hydrogen bonds and electrostatic interactions.

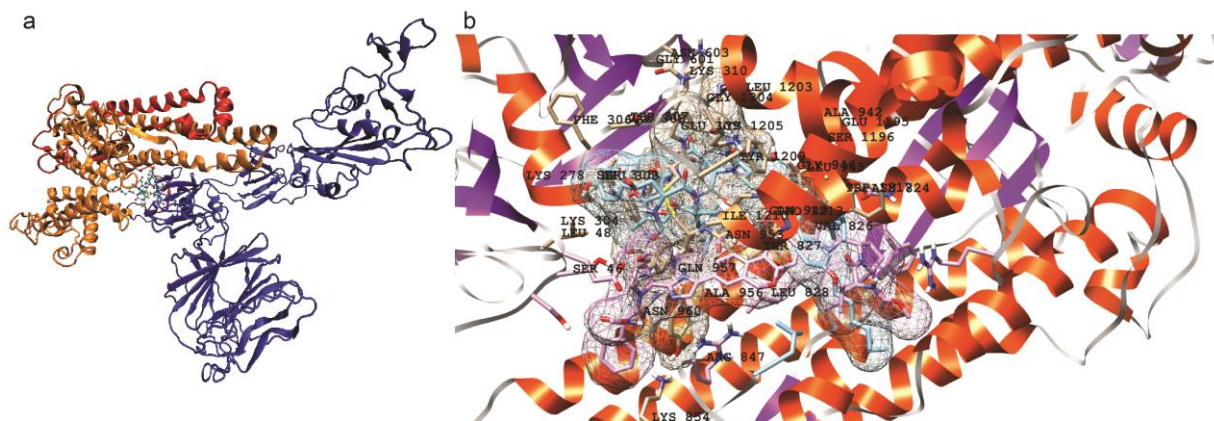


Figure 6: a) 3D representation of S protein structure highlighting S1 (blue), S2 (red) and S2' (orange) with inhibitor binding site b) 3D representation of active site residues surrounding the three selected drugs for S protein anidulafungin, velpatasvir and terlipressin

The model of the SARS-CoV-2 nucleocapsid phosphoprotein was superimposed with the NMR structure of RNA-binding domain of this protein⁴⁵ (PDB ID 6YI3) and RMSD value was 1.14 Å. It is observed that the drug anidulafungin binds at the interface of the protein and interacts with many polar residues naming a few: Arg92, Tyr109, Asn150, Arg259, Gln272, Gln283 and Asp399.

Anidulafugin, a member of the echinocandin class of antifungals, appears to be a promising candidate against SARS-CoV-2 and has high predicted KIBA scores and low docking energies against key viral proteins including RdRp, helicase, exonuclease, S and N. Anidulafungin is used for the treatment of mucosal and invasive fungal infections⁴⁶. Isavuconazonium, another triazole antifungal approved for the treatment of invasive aspergillosis and invasive mucormycosis,

showed high binding affinities for nsp2 and N proteins (Table 1). Interestingly, Anidulafungin was shown in a recent study to exhibit strong in-vitro antiviral activity against SARS-CoV-2 virus with an IC₅₀ value of 4.64 μ mol⁴⁷. Although rare, cases of invasive fungal infections have been reported in literature in association with severe influenza⁴⁸ and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus infection⁴⁹. Whether COVID-19 patients are also at increased risk of invasive fungal infections is yet to be investigated. Anidulafungin with its potential antiviral activity against SARS-CoV2 and proven antifungal activity against invasive fungal infections appears to be a promising candidate.

Our study highlights the potential of HCV protease inhibitors (elbasvir, velpatasvir, glecaprevir and pibrentasvir) in inhibiting SARS-CoV-2 proteins. Elbasvir, an HCV NS5A inhibitor, demonstrated best docking energies with RdRp, a key viral enzyme and an important therapeutic target for COVID-19. In other studies, elbasvir⁵⁰ and velpatasvir⁵¹ have been reported to dock well with 3CLpro. Glecaprevir, an HCV NS3/4A protease inhibitor, is often given in combination with pibrentasvir, an NS5A inhibitor, for treatment experienced cases of HCV infection. While safety profile of this combination has been well-established, the potential of this combination in treating COVID-19 has not been examined so far. Rifabutin and rifapentine belong to the rifamycin group of antibiotics. Both rifabutin and rifapentin inhibits mycobacterial DNA-dependent RNA polymerase, thereby suppressing the initiation of RNA formation and are used in combination with other drugs for the treatment of tuberculosis. With the potential of inhibiting RdRp and helicase amongst other SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins, rifabutin can be a promising therapeutic option that needs further investigation.

Selinexor, an FDA approved drug for the treatment of relapsed or refractory multiple myeloma, is predicted to inhibit SARS-CoV-2 PLpro in our study. Selinexor is an inhibitor of Exportin-1

(XPO1) which is an important protein involved in the transport of multiple proteins across nuclear envelope. In addition to its role in cancer, XPO1 also plays an important role in facilitating transport of viral proteins across the host cell nuclear envelope⁵². Studies have shown that XPO1 plays a critical role in SARS-CoV viral replication by controlling the export of certain SARS-CoV proteins out of the nucleus⁵³. We hypothesize that selinexor has both direct antiviral activity through inhibiting PLpro as well as indirect activity through modulation of host target proteins. A multinational clinical trial has recently been launched to study the efficacy of selinexor in patients with severe COVID-19 disease. Enasidenib, another anti—neoplastic drug, inhibits mutant forms of *isocitrate dehydrogenase 2* (IDH2) and is approved for the treatment of refractory form of acute myeloid leukemia (AML). Here, we have shown that enasidenib demonstrates high binding affinity with two key SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins: 3CLpro and nsp1.

Edoxaban is a rapidly acting selective factor Xa inhibitor and belongs to Novel Oral Anti-Coagulant (NOACs) class of drugs. In our study, edoxaban has demonstrated best binding affinity with 3CLpro that is a key enzyme involved in SARS-CoV-2 viral replication and an emerging drug target. Recently, a wealth of clinical data has suggested that COVID-19 is a hypercoagulable state associated with increased incidence of thrombosis in critically ill patients. Therefore, anticoagulation is being recommended for prophylactic and therapeutic⁵⁴. Given the potential to inhibit 3CLpro, ease of oral administration and anticoagulant activity, edoxaban appears to be a promising candidate drug for treating COVID-19. Further in vitro and clinical studies are warranted.

Flavin mononucleotide (FMN; also known as riboflavin-5'-phosphate) and flavin adenine dinucleotide (FAD) are two coenzymes produced from riboflavin (vitamin B2) and function as prosthetic group of various oxidoreductases. FMN is predicted to have high binding affinity with

PLpro while FAD has high predicted affinities for RdRp, helicase, S and N amongst other SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins. FAD is a redox-active cofactor that is essential for the functioning of flavoenzymes that play critical role in many biochemical processes such as oxidative metabolism of macromolecules and electron transport chain⁵⁵. Studies have shown that the intracellular redox state may play an important role in inhibiting viral replication⁵⁶. In one study FAD was shown to enhance the antiviral activity of interferons against herpes virus-1 and influenza virus type A⁵⁶. FAD can also increase intracellular activity of glutathione and nitric oxide synthase, both of which may play important roles in inhibiting viral replication. FAD has shown binding affinity with spike protein of SARS-CoV-2 in another docking based study (vina score -7.3)⁵⁷. In another study using molecular docking, riboflavin was found to interact with Papain-like proteinase (PLpro) and flavin mononucleotide (FMN) interacted with 3C-like main protease (3CLpro) of SARS- CoV-2 virus⁴³. Other studies have shown that FAD can decrease lung injury in influenza A H5N1 infected mice by altering the levels of immune response related genes⁵⁸. In conclusion, the results of our study coupled with evidence from literature dictate that FAD may play an important role against SARS-CoV-2 virus by directly targeting the virus as well as host response to the viral replication. However, further evidence from in-vitro and in-vivo studies is required.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have combined deep learning and molecular docking simulations to identify most promising candidates from the list of FDA approved drugs that can be repurposed to treat COVID-19. These drugs include anidulafungin, velpatasvir, glecaprevir, rifabutin, procaine penicillin G, tadalafil, riboflavin 5'-monophosphate, flavin adenine dinucleotide, terlipressin, desmopressin, elbasvir, oxatomide, enasidenib, edoxaban and selinexor amongst others. Further *in vitro* studies are indicated to investigate antiviral potential of some of

these drugs. For drugs with proven *in vitro* antiviral activity against SARS-CoV-2, clinical trials are warranted.

Description of Supplemental Data

Supplemental data include 2 figures and 3 tables.

Declaration of interest

All authors declare no competing interest.

Acknowledgements

We are very thankful to Riazuddin S for his guidance and review of the manuscript.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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Muhammad Umer Anwar: Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Resources Farjad Adnan: Methodology, Software, Resources, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft Asma Abro: Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Writing - Original Draft Rayyan Ahmad Khan: Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Resources Asad ur Rehman: Formal analysis, Resources, Data Curation Muhammad Osama: Formal analysis, Data Curation Saad Javed: Formal

analysis, Data Curation Ahmadullah Baig: Data Curation, Visualizations Muhammad Raffey
Shabbir: Formal analysis, Data Curation Muhammad Zaman Assir: Conceptualization,
Methodology, Validation, Writing - Original Draft, Supervision

Online Resources:

C-I-TASSER: <https://zhanglab.ccmb.med.umich.edu/COVID-19/>

PubChem: <https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

DrugBank: <https://www.drugbank.ca/>

RCSB PDB: <https://www.rcsb.org/>

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Table 1: FDA approved drugs with best predicted KIBA and AutoDock vina binding affinity values against selected SARS-CoV-2 Viral Proteins

Sr #	Drug Name	PubChem Drug ID	Drug Action	Protein Name		KIBA Score	Docking Binding Affinity Values (kcal/mol)
A. Antimicrobials							
1	Anidulafungin	166548	Antifungal	RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.7602	-13.4
				Helicase (Hel)		11.7768	-9.0
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.7008	-13.2
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease		11.7605	-12.3
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.7623	-15.3
				N		11.6237	-14.3
2	Isavuconazonium	6918606	Antifungal	Non-structural protein (nsp2)	2	11.5459	-11.1
				N		11.6357	-10.9
3	Procaine Penicillin G	5903	Antibiotic	Proteinase 3CL-PRO		11.2148	-9.3
4	Quinupristin	5388937	Antibiotic	RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.7965	-12.2
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.5520	-12.1
				N		11.6461	-11.8
5	Rifapentine	135659016	Antibiotic	Non-structural protein (nsp9)	9	11.6792	-8.6
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.6241	-11.4
				N		11.7584	-11.6
6	Rifabutin	135415564	Antibiotic	Non-structural protein (nsp2)	2	11.8004	-11
				RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.8209	-11.5

7	Polymyxin B	49800004	Antibiotic	Helicase (Hel)		11.8829	-10.5
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.7498	-12.7
				N		11.8253	-11.7
				RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.8949	-14.2
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.8941	-12.6
8	Cobicistat	25151504	Antiviral	N		11.7840	-12.7
				Non-structural protein 2 (nsp2)		11.8630	-10.7
				RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.9491	-11.4
9	Elbasvir	71661251	Antiviral	Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.8669	-14.1
				RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.9396	-13.6
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.8797	-13.5
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease		11.9112	-11.7
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.8991	-13.7
10	Velpatasvir	67683363	Antiviral	N		11.8131	-13.8
				Non-structural protein 2 (nsp2)		11.4887	-10.8
				RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.5925	-11.9
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.3040	-13.5
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease		11.5538	-11.2
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.7373	-14.5
				N		11.5965	-11.7

11	Pibrentasvir	58031952	Antiviral	RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.8812	-12.7
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.7442	-12.3
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease		11.8894	-11.4
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.8692	-13.1
				N		11.7755	-12.9
12	Glecaprevir	66828839	Antiviral	Non-structural protein (nsp2)	2	11.8902	-11.3
				Helicase (Hel)		11.9120	-10.5
				RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.9551	-11.7
				2'-O-methyltransferase (2'-O-MT)		11.8422	-11.8
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.7496	-11.8
				N		12.0036	-11.9
B. Hormonal							
13	Abiraterone	132971	Antiandro gen	M		11.5199	-7.7
14	Amcinonide	443958	Corticoster oid	Helicase (Hel)		11.8256	-9.1
				M		11.6823	-7.5
15	Atosiban	5311010	Tocolytic	RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.8447	-12.5
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.9298	-11.7
16	Carbetocin	16681432	Uterotonic	Helicase (Hel)		11.6491	-9.8
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.6623	-13.8
				N		11.5698	-12.3

17	Cortisone	5745	Corticosteroid	M		11.6792	-7.3
18	Danazol	28417	Androgen	M		11.8513	-7.2
19	Deoxycorticosterone	5952	Corticosteroid	M		11.6867	-7.6
20	Desmopressin	5311065	ADH Analog	RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.9439	-13.6
				Helicase (Hel)		11.9303	-10.6
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.9756	-12.3
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease		11.9761	-11
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		12.0064	-13.1
				N		11.8459	-12.4
21	Ethinodiol diacetate	9270	Progesterone Receptor Agonist	M		11.7367	-7.5
22	Pentetreotide	72128	Octreotide Analog	RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	12.0372	-11.9
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.9211	-12.9
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease		12.0956	-12.7
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.8687	-14.5
				N		11.8935	-12.4
23	Somatostatin	16129706	Octreotide Analog	RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.8702	-15.3
				Helicase (Hel)		11.9113	-9.7
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.7610	-12
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease		11.8051	-12

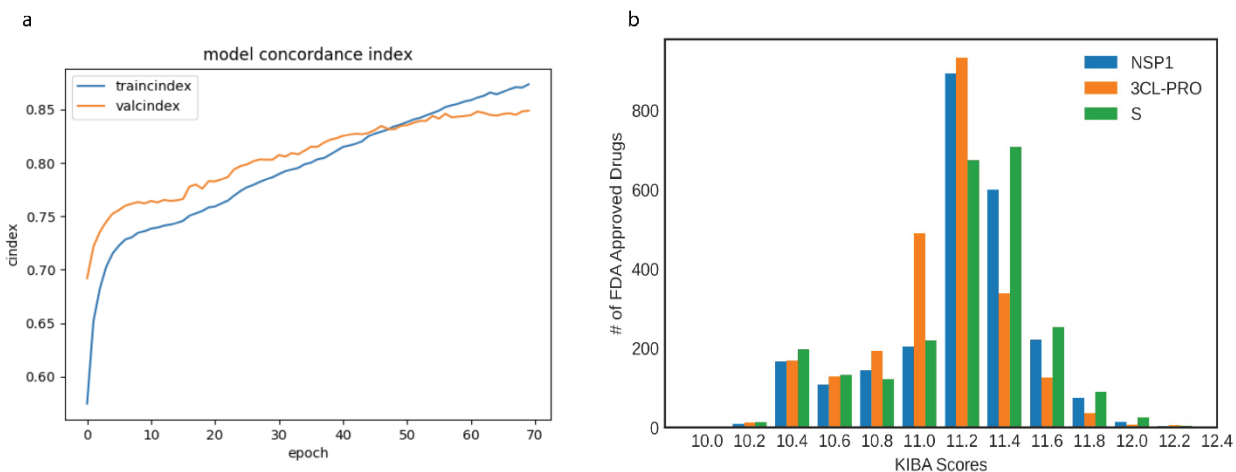
				Surface glycoprotein (S)	11.8407	-14.4
				N	11.7700	-12.5
24	Progesterone	5994	Sex Steroid	M	11.6636	-7.3
25	Prednisone	5865	Corticosteroid	M	11.7184	-7.3
26	Terlipressin	72081	Vasopressin Analog	RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA 11.5954	-13.8
				Helicase (Hel)	11.6692	-9.8
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease	11.7842	-11.9
				Surface glycoprotein (S)	11.5950	-14.5
				N	11.5939	-12.4
C. Anti-neoplastic						
27	Vindesine	11643449		Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)	11.4910	-12.8
				Surface glycoprotein (S)	11.7376	-11.6
				N	11.7234	-10.9
28	Nilotinib	644241	Tyrosine-Kinase Inhibitor	Host translation inhibitor nsp1	11.7249	-8
				Non-structural protein 2 (nsp2)	11.7242	-12.2
				Papain-like proteinase	11.7398	-6.7
				Proteinase 3CL-PRO	11.4559	-8.5
				E	11.4128	-7.5
29	Exemestane	60198	Aromatase Inhibitor	M	11.7052	-7.5
30	Etoposide	36462	Topoisomerase Inhibitor	Proteinase 3CL-PRO	11.7101	-8.6
31	Epirubicin	41867	Anthracycline	Proteinase 3CL-PRO	11.5659	-8.5

			antineoplastic antibiotic					
32	Enasidenib	89683805	Isocitrate Dehydrogenase Inhibitor	Host translation inhibitor nsp1			11.9167	-8.5
				Non-structural protein (nsp2)	2		11.9669	-10.7
				Proteinase 3CL-PRO			11.8091	-8.7
				Papain-like proteinase			11.8572	-6.9
33	Daunorubicin	30323	Anthracycline antineoplastic antibiotic	Proteinase 3CL-PRO			11.5225	-8.5
34	Cabazitaxel	9854073	Microtubule Inhibitors	RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)		RNA	11.9236	-12.3
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease			12.0602	-11.7
				N			11.9556	-11.3
35	Docetaxel	148124	Microtubule Inhibitors	Non-structural protein (nsp10)	10		11.7887	-10.1
				RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)		RNA	11.8086	-11.8
				N			11.7737	-11.4
36	Brigatinib	68165256	Tyrosine Kinase Inhibitor	Non-structural protein (nsp2)	2		11.7242	-10.7
37	Selinexor	71481097	Antineoplastic	Papain-like proteinase			11.5764	-7.1
D. Vitamins								
38	Cholecalciferol	5280795	Vitamin D- Steroid	M			11.7619	-7.2

39	Flavin adenine dinucleotide	643975	Coenzyme	Non-structural protein 2	(nsp2)	11.7630	-11.8
				RNA-directed polymerase (RdRp)	RNA	11.6978	-12.8
				Helicase (Hel)		11.8304	-11.2
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.3726	-13.6
				Uridylate-specific endoribonuclease		11.8032	-12.3
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		12.2218	-12.9
				N		11.6575	-13.3
40	Riboflavin monophosphate	5'- 643976	Vitamin B2 derivative	Papain-like proteinase		11.8168	-7
E. Miscellaneous							
41	Dabigatran etexilate	135565674	Anticoagulant	Helicase (Hel)		11.8329	-9.7
				Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.7765	-12.5
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.6961	-12.7
				N		11.7036	-11.2
42	Dihydroergotamine	10531	Ergot Derivative	Host translation inhibitor nsp1		11.9048	-8.2
				Helicase (Hel)		11.9629	-9.2
43	Edoxaban	10280735	Anticoagulant	Proteinase 3CL-PRO		11.5352	-8.7
44	Elexacaftor	134587348	Corrector of the CFTR protein	Non-structural protein 2	(nsp2)	11.8181	-11.1
45	Ergotamine	8223	Ergot alkaloid with vasoconstr	Host translation inhibitor nsp1		11.9048	-8
				Proteinase 3CL-PRO		11.3610	-8.4

			ictor and analgesic property.	Helicase (Hel)		11.9629	-9.3
46	Manidipine	4008	Calcium Channel Blocker	Non-structural protein (nsp2)	2	12.0029	-11.1
47	Mivacurium	5281042	Neuromuscular Blocker	Guanine-N7 methyltransferase (ExoN)		11.7171	-12.1
				Surface glycoprotein (S)		11.5691	-13.2
48	Tadalafil	110635	PDE-5 Inhibitor	Host translation inhibitor nsp1		11.7874	-8.5
				Non-structural protein (nsp2)	2	11.6870	-11.2
49	Oxatomide	4615	First-generation H1-antihistamine	Papain-like proteinase		12.1627	-7.3

Supplementary Figures:



Supplementary Figure 1: Prediction of KIBA scores using modified DeepDTA

Performance of modified DeepDTA model demonstrating a high concordance index of 0.899.

b) Frequency distribution of DeepDTA for FDA approved drugs against three selected SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins nsp1, 3CLpro and S. Drugs with the highest KIBA scores were shortlisted for docking simulations.

Supplementary Figure 2: Interactive plot of selected FDA approved drugs with KIBA scores and docking binding affinity values against key SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins

Supplementary Table 1: Predicted KIBA scores of all FDA approved and experimental drugs in DrugBank against all 24 SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins

Supplementary Table 2: KIBA scores of selected 168 FDA approved drugs against SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins

Supplementary Table 3: Docking binding affinity values for 168 drugs against all predicted and/or experimentally proven active sites of SARS-CoV-2 proteins

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Funding Sources

Any funds used to support the research of the manuscript should be placed here (per journal style).

Notes

Any additional relevant notes should be placed here.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCR2, CC chemokine receptor 2; CCL2, CC chemokine ligand 2; CCR5, CC chemokine receptor 5; TLC, thin layer chromatography.

REFERENCES

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