Editor

Defang Ouyang

Exploring
Computational
Pharmaceutics Al and Modeling
in Pharma 4.0



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Exploring Computational Pharmaceutics – AI and Modeling in Pharma 4.0

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Exploring Computational Pharmaceutics – AI and Modeling in Pharma 4.0

Edited by

DEFANG OUYANG

University of Macau Taipa, Macao



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ouyang, Defang, editor.

Title: Exploring computational pharmaceutics: AI and modeling in Pharma

4.0 / edited by Defang Ouyang

Other titles: Advances in pharmaceutical technology.

Description: Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2024. | Series: Advances in

pharmaceutical technology | Includes index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024008997 (print) | LCCN 2024008998 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119987130 (hardback) | ISBN 9781119987246 (adobe pdf) | ISBN

9781119987253 (epub)

Subjects: MESH: Drug Design-methods | Artificial Intelligence | Computer

Simulation | Computational Biology-methods

Classification: LCC RM301.25 (print) | LCC RM301.25 (ebook) | NLM QV 745

DDC 615.1/9-dc23/eng/20240313

LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024008997

LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024008998

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Image: © everything possible/Shutterstock

Set in 10/12pt TimesLTStd by Straive, Chennai, India

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List of Contributors

Johan Bøtker Department of Pharmacy, University of Copenhagen, København, Denmark

Alex Bunker Drug Research Program, Division of Pharmaceutical Biosciences, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Hong Cai State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences, University of Macau, Macau, China

Zeying Cao Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Center for Pharmaceutical Research, Shanghai, China

Xizhong Chen Department of Chemical Engineering, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China

Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

Senping Cheng Triastek, Inc., Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

and

Jie Dong Xiangya School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Central South University, Changsha, Hunan, P. R. China

Ruihu Du Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacometrics Office, Drug Clinical Trial Center, Peking University Third Hospital, Beijing, China

Ruofei Du Innovation Research Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Shanghai, China

and

Engineering Research Center of Modern Preparation Technology of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Ministry of Education, Shanghai, China

Kai Ge Jiangsu Province Hi-Tech Key Laboratory for Biomedical Research, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Southeast University, Nanjing, China

Jiawei Hu School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK

Yuanjia Hu State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences, University of Macau, Macau, China

Chenxi Huang Lingang Laboratory, Shanghai, China

Yuanhui Ji Jiangsu Province Hi-Tech Key Laboratory for Biomedical Research, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Southeast University, Nanjing, China

Josef Kehrein Drug Research Program, Division of Pharmaceutical Biosciences, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

and

Soft Matter Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Liang Li Department of Chemical Engineering, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China

Renjie Li Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering, Monash University, Clayton, Australia

and

Monash Suzhou Research Institute, Suzhou, China

Youyong Li Macao Institute of Materials Science and Engineering, Macau University of Science and Technology, Taipa 999078, Macau SAR, China

and

Institute of Functional Nano & Soft Materials (FUNSOM), Soochow University, 199 Ren'ai Road, Suzhou, 215123, Jiangsu, China

Xiaoling Li Triastek, Inc., Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

and

Department of Pharmaceutics and Medicinal Chemistry, Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy, University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA, USA

Xue Li Yinghan Pharmaceutical Technology (Shanghai) Co. Ltd., Shanghai, China

Bo Liu Department of Pharmaceutical Engineering, School of Chemical Engineering and Pharmacy, Wuhan Institute of Technology, Wuhan, China

Dongyang Liu Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacometrics Office, Drug Clinical Trial Center, Peking University Third Hospital, Beijing, China

Kai Liu Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

Rink-Jan Lohman School of Pharmacy, The University of Queensland, Woolloongabba, Australia

Zheng-Hong Luo Department of Chemical Engineering, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China

Anders Ø. Madsen Department of Pharmacy, University of Copenhagen, København, Denmark

Hao Miao Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering, Monash University, Clayton, Australia

and

Monash Suzhou Research Institute, Suzhou, China

Defang Ouyang State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences (ICMS), University of Macau, Macau, China and

Department of Public Health and Medicinal Administration, Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), University of Macau, Macau, China

Preeti Pandey School of Pharmacy, The University of Queensland, Woolloongabba, Australia

Haredra Parekh School of Pharmacy, The University of Queensland, Woolloongabba, Australia

Raphael Paus Department of Biochemical and Chemical Engineering, Laboratory of Thermodynamics, TU Dortmund, Dortmund, Germany

Jukka Rantanen Department of Pharmacy, University of Copenhagen, København, Denmark

Gabriele Sadowski Department of Biochemical and Chemical Engineering, Laboratory of Thermodynamics, TU Dortmund, Dortmund, Germany

Prasenjit Seal Aerosol Physics Laboratory, Physics Unit, Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

Sean Smith National Computational Infrastructure, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

Zhenbo Tong School of Energy and Environment, Southeast University, Nanjing, China and

Southeast University-Monash University Joint Research Institute, Suzhou, China

Timothy Tracy Triastek, Inc., Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

and

Tracy Consultants, LLC, Huntsville, AL, USA

Karnaker Reddy Tupally School of Pharmacy, The University of Queensland, Woolloongabba, Australia

Jiawen Wang Macao Institute of Materials Science and Engineering, Macau University of Science and Technology, Taipa 999078, Macau SAR, China

and

Institute of Functional Nano & Soft Materials (FUNSOM), Soochow University, 199 Ren'ai Road, Suzhou, 215123, Jiangsu, China

LiGe Wang Department of Smart Manufacturing and Engineering Software, Shandong University, Jinan, China

Nannan Wang State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences (ICMS), University of Macau, Macau, China

Wei Wang State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences (ICMS), University of Macau, Macau, China

Yuzhu Wang Office of Biostatistics and Clinical Pharmacology, Center for Drug Evaluation, National Medical Products Administration, Beijing, China

Chuan-Yu Wu School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK

Lei Wu Triastek, Inc., Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

Li Wu Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Center for Pharmaceutical Research, Shanghai, China

Tiqiao Xiao Shanghai Synchrotron Radiation Facility, Shanghai Institute of Applied Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shanghai, China

Jiaqi Xu State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences, University of Macau, Macau, China

Zhuyifan Ye State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences (ICMS), University of Macau, Macau, China

and

Faculty of Applied Sciences, Macao Polytechnic University, Macao, China

Xianzhen Yin Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Center for Pharmaceutical Research, Shanghai, China

and

Lingang Laboratory, Shanghai, China

Peter York Institute of Pharmaceutical Innovation, University of Bradford, Bradford, UK

Yi Yu Institute of Functional Nano & Soft Materials (FUNSOM), Soochow University, 199 Ren'ai Road, Suzhou, 215123, Jiangsu, China

Jialu Yuan State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences, University of Macau, Macau, China

Jiwen Zhang Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Center for Pharmaceutical Research, Shanghai, China

Ling Zhang School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK

Yu Zhang Innovation Research Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Shanghai, China

and

Engineering Research Center of Modern Preparation Technology of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Ministry of Education, Shanghai, China

Zheng Zhang Jiangsu Province Hi-Tech Key Laboratory for Biomedical Research, School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Southeast University, Nanjing, China

Hao Zhong State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences (ICMS), University of Macau, Macau, China

Xudong Zhou Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering, Monash University, Clayton, Australia

and

Monash Suzhou Research Institute, Suzhou, China

Ruiping Zou Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering, Monash University, Clayton, Australia

and

ARC Hub for Computational Particle Technology, Monash University, Clayton, Australia

Preface

It is with great pleasure that we present the second edition of our book, *Exploring Computational Pharmaceutics – AI and Modeling in Pharma 4.0*. This book builds upon the foundation laid by our previous work, *Computational Pharmaceutics: Application of Molecular Modeling in Drug Delivery*, published by the Wiley Press in 2015.

The pharmaceutical industry is in a constant state of evolution, presenting new daily challenges and opportunities. With the advent of Pharma 4.0 and the increasing importance of artificial intelligence and modeling in drug discovery and development, we felt it was necessary to update our previous work to reflect these changes.

In this book, we explore the latest advancements in computational pharmaceutics, including the use of AI and machine learning in drug formulation, the application of multi-scale modeling in drug delivery, and the integration of these technologies into the drug development process. We hope that this book will serve as a valuable resource for scientists, students, and professionals in the field of pharmaceutics.

We would like to express our gratitude to our collaborators who have contributed to this book, as well as to the Wiley Press for their continued support. We hope that this book will inspire further research and innovation in the field of computational pharmaceutics, and we look forward to seeing the impact that these technologies will have on the future of drug discovery and development.

29 March 2024

Defang Ouyang University of Macau, Macau, China

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Introduction to Computational Pharmaceutics

Nannan Wang¹, Wei Wang¹, Hao Zhong¹, and Defang Ouyang^{1,2}

¹State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine, Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences (ICMS), University of Macau, Macau, China

²Department of Public Health and Medicinal Administration, Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), University of Macau, Macau, China

Acronyms

3D three-dimensional

ADME absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion

AI artificial intelligence

ANDA abbreviated new drug application CFD computational fluid dynamics

DDS drug delivery systems
DEM discrete element method
FDA food and drug administration

ISPE the international society for pharmaceutical engineering

MD molecular dynamics

NDA new drug application NME new molecular entity

PBPK physiologically based pharmacokinetic PK/PD pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamic

QM quantum mechanics R&D research and development

1.1 Current Pharmaceutical Research

Modern pharmaceutics, closely related to novel dosage forms and drug delivery systems (DDSs), has experienced a dramatic transformation over the past 70 years. In 1952, the development of the first 12-hour drug release formulation with Spansule® technology by Smith Kline & French initiated the history of modern pharmaceutics [1]. The progress of modern pharmaceutics made during the past 70 years could be divided into two generations [2, 3]. During the first generation (1950s–1980s), physical pharmacy, developed by combining the basic principles of physical chemistry with pharmacy, mainly focused on building the controlled-release preparations. During this period, drug delivery technologies were developed rapidly and achieved great success in clinical application, including oral sustained-release preparations, transdermal patch (Scop®) [4], and pressurized metered dose inhaler (MDI) [5]. The attention of the second generation (1980s-2010s) was dedicated to the development of advanced drug delivery systems. In the second generation of drug delivery technologies, several advanced approaches were widely investigated, including nanotechnology-based drug delivery systems, self-regulated drug delivery systems, and long-term depot formulations. However, due to biological barriers of the human body, the introduction of clinical formulations was significantly hindered and success rates were limited [6].

Nowadays, there is an obvious gap between the input of research and development (R&D) and the output of new molecular entities (NMEs). The costs of NMEs are growing significantly at an average rate of 13.4% per year [7]. However, the success rate of NMEs in clinical trials is merely about 10%. Research in 2007 involving 68 approved drugs reveals that it takes 15 years [8] and up to 2558 million dollars on average to bring a single NME to market [9]. As shown in Figure 1.1, only 37 NMEs were approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2022 and the annual approval number remains at 20–50 compounds a year during the past 30 years despite the exponentially increasing resources invested, a phenomenon known as "Eroom's law" [10]. Moreover, the current pharmaceutical products exhibit a far from optimal performance in clinical practice due to their low solubility, poor stability, and poor targeting effect. Theoretically, developing a novel formulation only costs a tiny fraction of the billions spent on each NME, and it only takes 3–4 years overall, which pushed many pharmaceutical companies to advanced drug delivery systems.

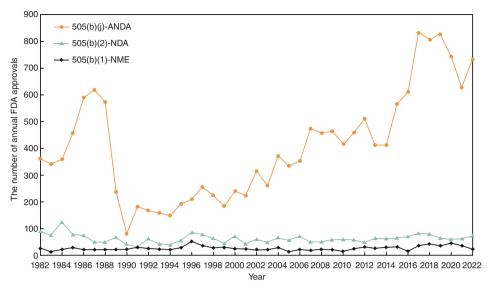


Figure 1.1 The number of annual FDA approvals: (1) 505(b)(1)-NME: the approval of new molecular entities under section 505(b)(1); (2) 505(b)(2)-NDA: the approval of modified new drugs under section 505(b)(2), including new active ingredient, new dosage form, new combination, new formulation, or new indication; (3) 505(b)(j)-ANDA: the approval of abbreviated new drug applications under section 505(b)(j).

Academic research in pharmaceutics has achieved remarkable progress in the past 40 years. As shown in Figure 1.2a, a total of 141,523 papers were published in pharmaceutical SCI journals with an impact factor above 1 between 1980 and 2022, showing a stable increase trend. The publication number in 2022 has reached up to 8420, almost 5.5 times higher than that in 1980 (1523). However, the clinical success rate (the ratio of marketed drug products to clinical trials) of advanced drug delivery systems was even lower than that of NMEs (10%) [11]. The main reason is that traditional R&D of pharmaceutical formulations still relies on the inefficient trial-and-error pattern, which lacks the focus and understanding of the multiscale interactions between the drug delivery system and the biological system.

The challenges of the high cost, long period, and low success rate bring about a question, that is, how to improve the efficiency of R&D of drug products. The current low efficiency of drug formulation development should be attributed to the conflict between the pharmaceutics principles and the traditional drug formulation development paradigm. Pharmaceutical research is essentially a multi-objective optimization task in the high-dimensional space consisting of material properties and process parameters. It has been estimated that the dimensionality of the space for formulation development can be as high as 10^{25} – 10^{30} [12]. It is highly inefficient to perform trial-and-error tests in such a high-dimensional space. A straightforward idea is that knowing the basic principles in drug formulations in advance of production and testing should be cheaper than the endless trial-and-error tests relying on the favor of Lady Luck. Integrating the understanding of both products and processes into the design of drugs to improve their qualities is also encouraged in the philosophy of Quality by Design promoted by the US Food and Drug Administration.

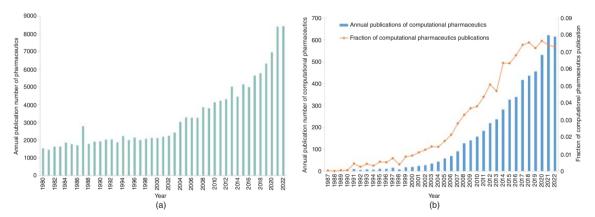


Figure 1.2 (a) The annual publication number of pharmaceutics from 1980 to 2022. (b) The annual publication number of computational pharmaceutics and the fraction it represents out of all pharmaceutics publications. The number of publications of computational pharmaceutics in the year from 1987 to 1990 are 1, 0, 1, and 1, respectively.

1.2 What is Computational Pharmaceutics?

Over the past decade, leaps in computing power are powering digital transformation in all sectors, and the pharmaceutical industry is no exception. The incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) and multiscale modeling in drug formulation development has led to the emergence of a novel field known as "Computational Pharmaceutics" [12]. As shown in Figure 1.3, distinguished from conventional "screen-verify-re-screen" formulation development procedures, computational pharmaceutics emphasizes the computer-driven "understand-design-verify-optimize" formulation design paradigm [13]. By leveraging modeling and simulation tools to comprehensively comprehend the mechanisms of drug delivery, coupled with the potent design and optimization algorithms of AI, the concept of Quality by Design is being well implemented in computational pharmaceutics. This approach is expected to not only enhance the effectiveness of drug formulation development but also facilitate the objective-oriented and personalized drug development.

The commonly used tools in computational pharmaceutics include machine learning or AI, quantum mechanics (QM), molecular dynamics (MD) simulation, mathematical modeling, process simulation, and physiologically based pharmacokinetic (PBPK) modeling. By training models on existing data, machine learning or AI algorithms can uncover the underlying relationships and make predictions for new scenarios. QM uses the spatial electron density of molecules and functions of quantum chemistry to precisely calculate molecular properties and changes in chemical reactions. MD simulation is based on the potential energy within and between molecules and Newton's laws of motion to simulate and analyze the dynamic change in structures of the molecules and the constituted system. Mathematical modeling uses mathematical equations to describe macroscopic processes. Mathematical equations are the base of many types of simulations; however, the term "mathematical modeling" is usually accompanied by simulations of dissolution

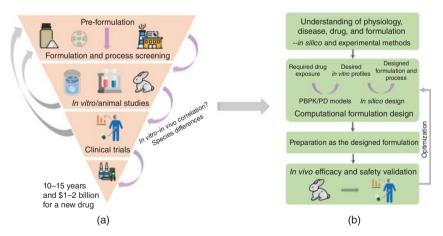


Figure 1.3 Pharmaceutical formulation development paradigm shift prompted by computational pharmaceutics. (a) Conventional drug formulation development procedures: "screen-verify-re-screen" and (b) computer-driven drug formulation design framework: "understand-design-verify-optimize."

and precipitation. Process simulation is to simulate the change in materials during the drug process in the manufacturing pipelines, and the involved techniques include computational fluid dynamics (CFD), discrete element method (DEM), and automatic monitoring systems trained from data with statistical algorithms. PBPK is a method of using a set of differential equations involving pharmaceutical and physiological parameters to simulate the pharmacokinetics of drug administration. Besides, if the pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamic (PK/PD) relationship is known, PBPK/PD modeling is also possible.

Nowadays, research about computational pharmaceutics is increasingly getting popular. Using the same strategy as in the article [12] and searching the publications in the Web of Sciences up to the year 2022, 5547 papers were found. Among these publications, 85.2% (4724) of them are research articles, while review papers occupy 10.1% (590) and other types take around 5%. The number of publications per year is shown in Figure 1.2b. In the past decades, both the annual publication number for the field of computational pharmaceutics and its fraction in all pharmaceutics publications present rapid increases, especially from the year 2000. The number of publications in 2022 has exceeded 600.

These investigations present a landscape of the applications with computational pharmaceutics, as shown in Figure 1.4. The picture is that all stages of drug development can involve modeling technologies. AI or machine learning delves into the relationship underlying the data; thus, it can be used in nearly all situations only if the data is properly collected. QM and MD simulations are microscopic investigation techniques used to study the mechanisms of biomolecules, drug molecules, excipients, and their interactions. When faced with problems on a larger scale, QM and MD are not applicable because their calculation precision is too high, and the computation power of current machines does not support the simulation of too large systems. In such cases, methods based on mathematical modeling have to be used. The available mathematical equations cover processes like solid dissolution, molecule diffusion, flow of fluid or powder, particle collision, and ADME (absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion) of drugs. These equations correspond to special problems in the stages of formulation development, product process, and clinics.

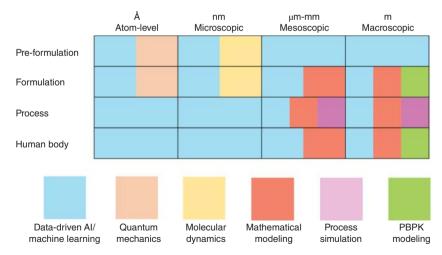


Figure 1.4 Multi-level modeling techniques in computational pharmaceutics.