

Computational Docking of Pyocyanin for Antimicrobial Efficacy Against Bacterial and Fungal Pathogens

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Abstract: The present study investigates pyocyanin, a pigment produced by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, for its potential as an antimicrobial agent. Using in-silico techniques like Drug likeness, ADME analysis and molecular docking using Swiss ADME and Mcule 1-click docking platform respectively, interactions were explored with key proteins from *E. coli*, *S. aureus*, *P. aeruginosa*, and *C. albicans*. Our findings aim to establish pyocyanin as a promising lead for developing antibacterial and antifungal therapies. The findings highlighted the antimicrobial potential of pyocyanin and its prospects for diverse pharmaceutical applications, paving the way for further exploration in drug discovery and development.

Keywords: Pyocyanin, Molecular Docking, Drug Likeness, ADME, Pathogens

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Introduction:

Pseudomonas aeruginosa is a Gram-negative, motile, non-fermenting, aerobic rod bacterium belonging to the Pseudomonadaceae family [1]. This bacterium produces a variety of pigments as secondary metabolites, which, although not essential for its basic growth, are crucial for its pathogenicity and environmental interactions [2]. *P. aeruginosa* synthesizes at least six distinct pigments: fluorescein [3], pyoverdine [4], pyomelanin [5], aeruginosin A, aeruginosin B [6], and pyocyanin [7]. Pyocyanin, a chloroform-soluble and water-diffusible compound, is optimally produced at pH levels between 7.4 and 8.4, with production significantly decreasing below pH 6.0 or above pH 9.0 [8]. This pigment is distinguished by its vivid blue color, which exhibits pH-dependent spectral absorption properties [9,10]. Previous research has demonstrated pyocyanin's antimicrobial efficacy against *E. coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Candida albicans*, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* itself [11, 12]. To explore pyocyanin's potential as a therapeutic lead compound, comprehensive in-silico studies targeting various essential proteins of pathogenic organisms are warranted. Prior investigations have employed molecular docking to analyze pyocyanin's binding interactions with the AgrA protein of *S. aureus* and its inhibitory effects on the 5-lipoxygenase enzyme [13, 14]. In silico methods, encompassing molecular docking, virtual screening, and ADME/pharmacokinetic predictions, enable the examination of molecular interactions, prediction of binding affinities, and assessment of pharmacokinetic properties through computer simulations [15].

Molecular docking is a crucial technique that predicts the optimal orientation of a ligand when bound to a protein, thereby elucidating intermolecular complex structures. Essential tools for these studies include Zdock, FRED, Surflex, FLOG, EUDOC, LigandFit, DOCK, and Mcule 1-click docking [16,17]. These in-silico approaches facilitate the rapid and cost-effective exploration of drug-target interactions, guiding the design and optimization of therapeutic agents and accelerating the drug discovery process [18]. Pathogens such as *E. coli*, *S. aureus*, *C. albicans*, and *P. aeruginosa* are significant contributors to nosocomial infections [19]. Previous molecular docking studies have targeted proteins like β -ketoacyl-acyl carrier protein synthase I (FabB) and cell division protein FtsZ in *E. coli* for antibacterial agent development [20,21]. In *Staphylococcus aureus*, docking studies have focused on cell division protein FtsA and DNA ligase protein [22,23]. Proteins such as LasR and RhlR receptors in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* have been targeted to inhibit its quorum sensing mechanism [24]. In *Candida albicans*, the inhibition of targets including Cst20, Cek1, and Hst7 has been examined to develop antifungal therapeutics [25]. In-silico studies thus play a pivotal role in advancing pharmaceutical innovation and enhancing patient outcomes [18]. This study undertakes an in-silico exploration of pyocyanin's interactions with various proteins from bacterial and fungal pathogens, including *E. coli*, *S. aureus*, *P. aeruginosa*, and *C. albicans*, providing insights into its broad-spectrum activity. This investigation aims to establish pyocyanin as a potential lead compound for the development of antibacterial and antifungal therapeutics.

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Materials and Methods:

1. Drug likeness prediction:

The Swiss ADME explorer uses chemical structure and calculate on – the – fly

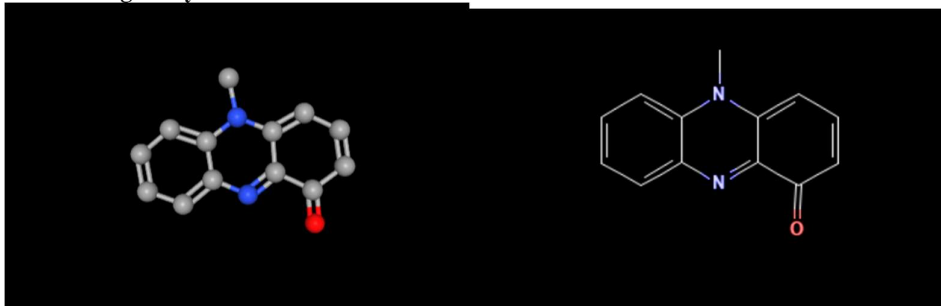
Fig. 2 D structure of Pyocyanin

structure of pyocyanin

various drug – relevant properties whenever a structure is valid. Prediction results are valued and colour coded. Properties analysed are TPSA, *c* log P calculation, log *S* calculation, molecular weight, fragment-based drug – likeness and drug score.

Fig. 3 D

3. Molecular Docking analysis:



To investigate the binding studies, the molecular docking of the ligand (pyocyanin) molecule with the different target proteins of pathogenic microorganisms was done by using 1- Click Docking Mcule software platform [26].

2. ADME analysis:

ADME properties of a compound deal with its absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion and toxicity through human body. ADME, which constitutes the pharmacokinetics profile of a drug molecule, is very essential in evaluating its pharmacodynamics activities. Nowadays a lot of online tools and offline software programs are available which helps us in the predicting the behaviour of the drug candidate. In this study, we have used the Swiss ADME prediction tool ([SwissADME](#)).

The rise of multidrug-resistant pathogens significantly compromises the effectiveness of antibacterial treatments. Consequently, the design and development of new drugs have become increasingly crucial. In this study, we employed computer-based analyses to discover novel drug compounds, presenting promising candidates for subsequent experimental validation.

Result and Discussion:

1.1 Drug likeness prediction
Table 1. A drug likeness result of pyocyanin

Lig and	Drug likeness					Bioavailabil ity score
	Lipinski	Ghose	Veber	Egan	Muegge	
pyocyanin	Yes;	violatio	Yes	Yes	Yes	0.55

According to Lipinski's rule, an active drug typically meets specific criteria: it has a molecular weight (MW) of 500 or less, a LogP value of 5 or lower, no more than 10 hydrogen bond acceptors, and no more than 5 hydrogen bond donors. Veber's rules suggest that an active drug should have a total of 12 or fewer hydrogen bonds, no more than 10 rotatable bonds, and a polar surface area (PSA) of less than or equal to 140, which often indicates oral bioavailability of 20% or more. Lastly, according to Ghose's rules, an active drug typically has a Log P value between -0.4 and 5.6, a molar refractivity (MR) between 40 and 150, a molecular weight (MW) between 160 and 480, a number of atoms between 20 and 70, and a polar surface area (PSA) of

less than 140 [27]. Based on the drug likeness analysis, the compound pyocyanin was found by the Lipinski's, Veber rule and Ghose's rule.

1.2 ADMET prediction

In present work predicted data of these compound were obtained by applying computer-based studies. The absorption, distribution, metabolism, elimination, and toxicity (ADMET) analysis have a big importance in drug discovery studies. In silico ADMET predictions have been designed to evaluate the pharmacokinetic and toxicity properties. In present work, human intestinal absorption, aqueous solubility levels, BBB penetration

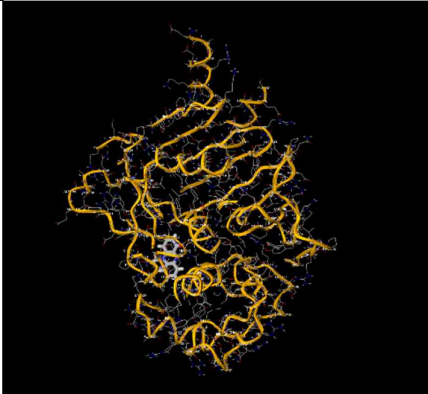
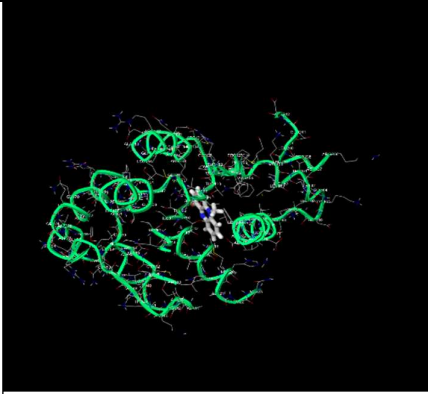
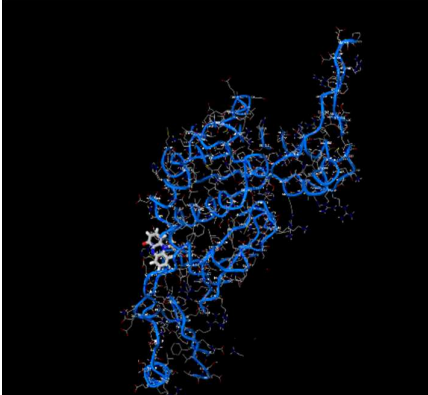
levels, CYP inhibition, hepatotoxicity, etc. of pyocyanin were determined. ADMET analysis shows that most of the compounds are predicted good human intestinal absorption, no toxicity, and water solubility.

1.3 Molecular Docking analysis

Till date, the in detail computational study of pigment pyocyanin has not been done yet. In present research

work computational analysis of pyocyanin compound against 4 common pathogens have been explored to check its potential efficacy to act as an active compound. Here, we aimed at the discovery of new potential drug compounds with computer-based analyses and presented an opportunity for further experimental analysis.

Table 2. Target organism: *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Total target: 57)

Target protein	PDB ID	Function of target protein	Binding Energy	Ligand-Target binding image
Beta-lactamase	2wzx	Beta-lactamase in <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> breaks down beta-lactam antibiotics, rendering them ineffective and contributing to antibiotic resistance [28].	-7.1 Kcal/mol	
Cell division protein ftsZ	1ofu	In <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> , the cell division protein FtsZ plays a fundamental role in bacterial cell division. FtsZ is a key component of the divisome, which is a multiprotein complex responsible for orchestrating cell division in bacteria [29].	-6.8 Kcal/mol	
DNA traslocase ftsK	2iuu	The DNA translocase FtsK plays a crucial role in chromosome segregation and cell division. FtsK is involved in ensuring the accurate and timely separation of replicated chromosomes during cell division [30].	-6.4 Kcal/mol	

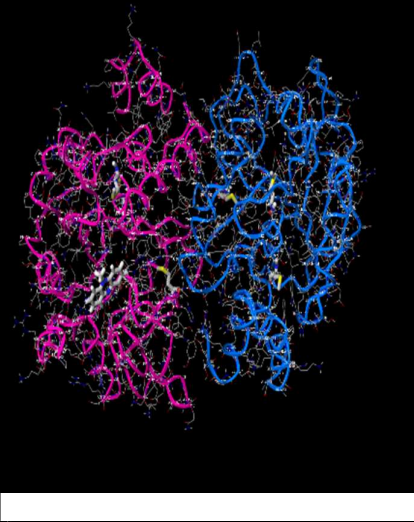

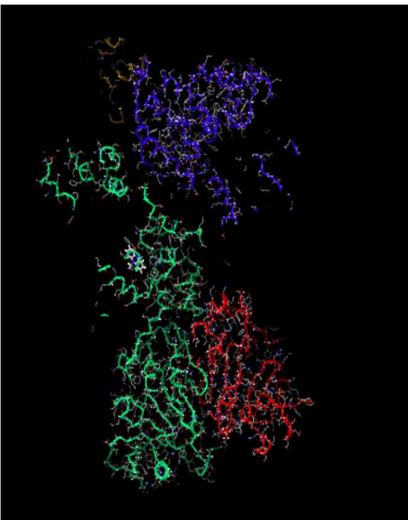
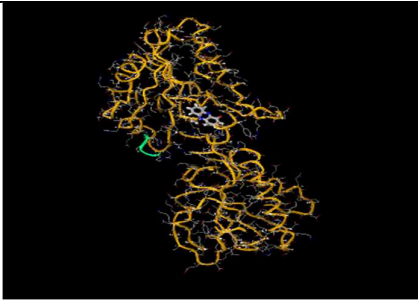
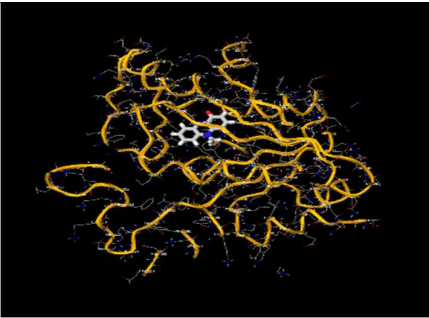
<p>Glucose-1-phosphate thymidyl transferase</p>	<p>1g23</p>	<p>It plays a critical role in the biosynthesis of the cell surface polysaccharide called alginate. Alginate is a key component of the extracellular matrix produced by <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>, particularly in mucoid strains associated with chronic infections, such as those found in cystic fibrosis patients [31].</p>	<p>-7.6 Kcal/mol</p>	
<p>Cyclic AMP receptor like protein</p>	<p>2oz6</p>	<p>CRP homologs in <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> typically function as transcriptional regulators by binding to specific DNA sequences called CRP binding sites or cAMP receptor protein binding sites. When bound to these sites, CRP homologs can either activate or repress the transcription of nearby genes, depending on the specific regulatory context and the presence of other factors [32].</p>	<p>-7.3 Kcal/mol</p>	

Table 3. Target organism: *Staphylococcus aureus* (Total target: 93)

Target protein	PDB ID	Function of target protein	Docking score	Ligand-Target binding image
pyruvate carboxylase	3ho8	The primary function of pyruvate carboxylase in <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> is to replenish the tricarboxylic acid (TCA) cycle with oxaloacetate. Oxaloacetate serves as a precursor for the synthesis of various biomolecules, including amino acids, nucleotides, and certain intermediates required for energy metabolism [33].	-6.3 Kcal/mol	
Cap 50	3ojl	Cap50 protein in <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> plays a critical role in capsular polysaccharide biosynthesis, which is essential for bacterial virulence and pathogenesis [34].	-6.6 Kcal/mol	
Tyrosyl-tRNA synthetase	1jik	TyrRS is essential for the accurate and efficient translation of mRNA into protein. Proper functioning of TyrRS is crucial for the synthesis of functional proteins necessary for bacterial growth, metabolism, and virulence [35].	-8.8 Kcal/mol	

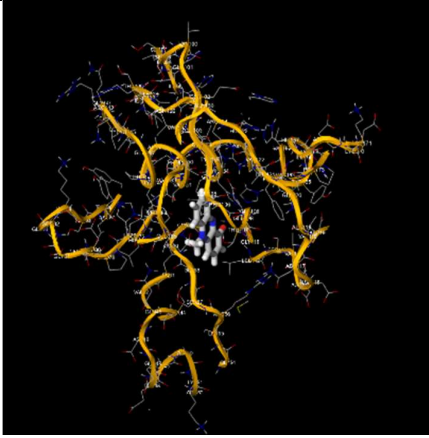
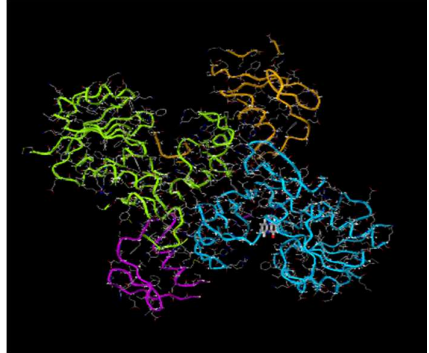
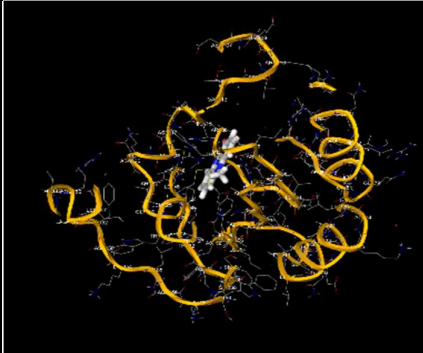
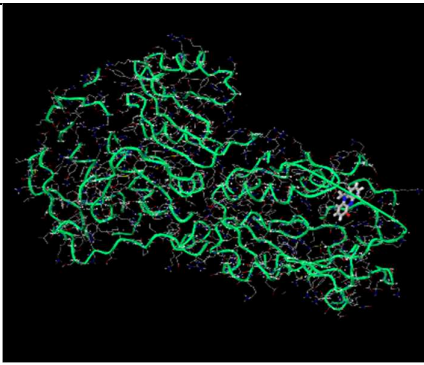
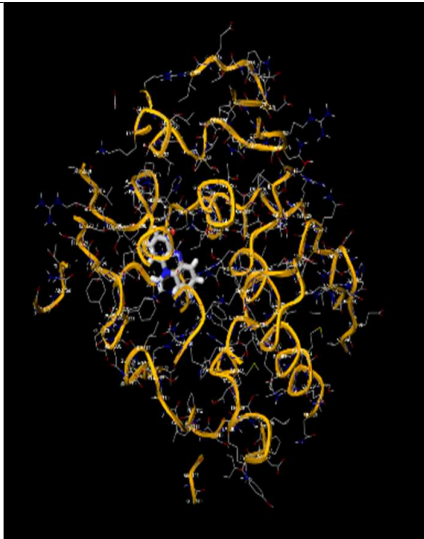

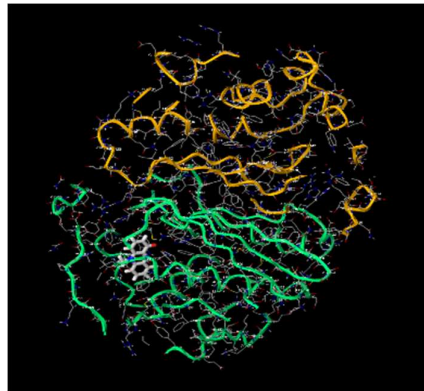
Peptide deformylase	1q1y	Peptide deformylase is essential for bacterial growth and viability, as it is involved in the processing of virtually all newly synthesized proteins. Therefore, peptide deformylase represents a potential target for the development of antibacterial agents aimed at disrupting protein synthesis and inhibiting bacterial growth [36].	-7.0 Kcal/mol	
Glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase-1	3k73	GAPDH1 is a crucial enzyme in <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> metabolism, playing a central role in glycolysis and contributing to the bacterium's ability to generate energy and sustain growth and survival in various environments [37].	-6.9 Kcal/mol	

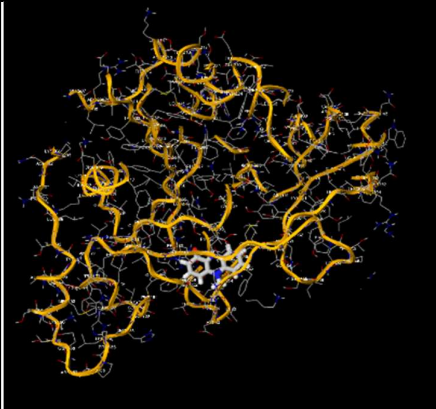

Table 4. Target organism: *Escherichia coli* (Total target: 659)

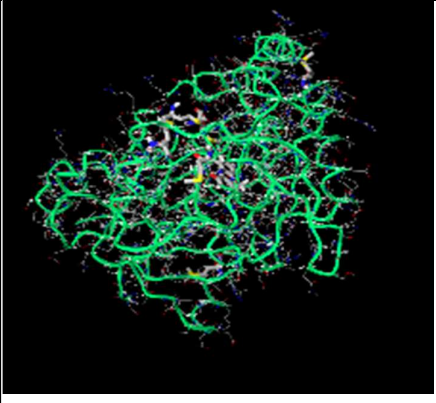
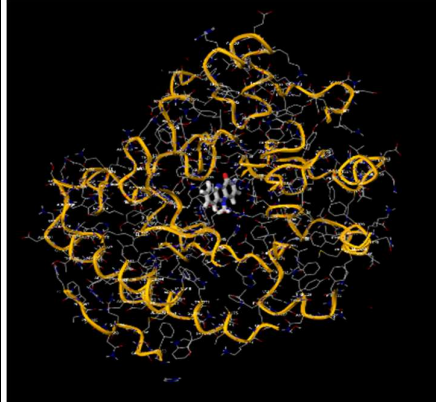
Target protein	PDB ID	Function of target protein	Docking score	Ligand-Target binding image
2-amino-4-hydroxy-6-hydroxyl methyl dehydropteridine pyrophosphate	3ipo	The function of HMDP in <i>E. coli</i> is to contribute to the synthesis of tetrahydrofolate (THF), which is essential for various metabolic processes, including DNA synthesis, amino acid metabolism, and purine and pyrimidine biosynthesis [38].	-7.3 Kcal/mol	

Chondroitin synthase	2z87	This is enzyme involved in the production of polysaccharides such as cellulose, colanic acid, and lipopolysaccharides (LPS). These polysaccharides have essential roles in the bacterial cell wall structure, biofilm formation, and interaction with the host organism or environment [39].	-7.5 Kcal/mol	
UDP-N-acetylglucosamine-1-carboxyvinyl transferase	1a69	It catalyzes the first step in the synthesis of peptidoglycan, which involves the transfer of a carboxyvinyl group from phosphoenolpyruvate (PEP) to UDP-N-acetylglucosamine (UDP-GlcNAc). This reaction results in the formation of UDP-N-acetylmuramic acid (UDP-MurNAc), a key precursor in peptidoglycan biosynthesis [40].	-7.7 Kcal/mol	
GTP cyclohydrolase 1	1a8r	GTP cyclohydrolase 1 plays a critical role in <i>E. coli</i> by initiating the pathway for the biosynthesis of BH4, which is essential for various metabolic processes and neurotransmitter synthesis [41].	-7.3 Kcal/mol	
Thymidylate synthase	2vfo	The function of thymidylate synthase in <i>E. coli</i> is to catalyze the conversion of deoxyuridine monophosphate (dUMP) to deoxythymidine monophosphate (dTMP) by transferring a methyl group from 5,10-methylenetetrahydrofolate (CH2-THF) to the uracil ring of dUMP. This methylation reaction is essential for DNA replication and repair because it generates the	-7.3 Kcal/mol	

		thymidine nucleotide required for DNA synthesis [42].		
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Table 5. Target organism: *Candida albicans* (Total target: 9)

Target protein	PDB ID	Function of target protein	Docking score	Ligand-Target binding image
Glycylpeptide N-tetradecanoyl transferase	1iyk	Glycylpeptide N-tetradecanoyltransferase in <i>Candida albicans</i> adds a myristoyl group to proteins, crucial for their function in signaling, membrane anchoring, and virulence [43].	-6.9 Kcal/mol	
Candidapepsin-2	1zap	Candidapepsin2 in <i>Candida albicans</i> is a protease enzyme that plays a key role in the virulence of the fungus. It is involved in the degradation of host proteins, facilitating tissue invasion and evasion of host immune responses. Additionally, candidapepsin2 contributes to nutrient acquisition and biofilm formation, essential for the pathogenicity of <i>Candida albicans</i> [44].	-7.0 Kcal/mol	

mRNA-capping enzyme subunit alpha	1p16	mRNA capping enzyme subunit alpha in <i>Candida albicans</i> adds 5' cap to mRNA, essential for stability and translation, ensuring accurate gene expression and adaptation [45].	-8.2 Kcal/mol	
Glucan 1,3-beta-glucosidase	2pb1	Glucan 1,3-beta-glucosidase in <i>Candida albicans</i> breaks down beta-glucans, aiding in cell wall remodeling and nutrient acquisition for fungal growth [46].	-7.8 Kcal/mol	

The essential nature of the targeted proteins across the 4 pathogens underscores their pivotal roles in pathogen growth and survival. Hence, the binding of pyocyanin to these proteins could disrupt their normal functioning, potentially impeding pathogen growth or inducing pathogen death. This observation highlights pyocyanin's promise as a candidate for inhibiting pathogenic organisms via targeted protein interactions, offering valuable insights into its therapeutic potential. Understanding the molecular mechanisms underlying pyocyanin's binding to these essential proteins not only enhances our knowledge of pathogen survival but also lays the groundwork for developing innovative strategies to combat infectious diseases. Targeting essential proteins in pathogens emerges as a promising avenue for discovering and designing effective antimicrobial agents.

In present molecular docking analysis, we observed that a negative docking score corresponds to a higher binding affinity between the ligand and the target molecule. This implies a stronger interaction between the two entities, suggesting a potentially more effective binding of the ligand to the target site. Moreover, our results underscore the importance of considering docking scores alongside other parameters such as binding energy and conformational stability to comprehensively evaluate the potential efficacy of ligand-target interactions. By integrating these factors, researchers can better assess the likelihood of successful binding and thus streamline the process of drug development and optimization.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, our in-silico investigation demonstrates the potential of pyocyanin as a versatile antimicrobial agent targeting essential proteins in *E. coli*, *S. aureus*, *P. aeruginosa*, and *C. albicans*. Through molecular docking and virtual screening, we have elucidated pyocyanin's binding interactions and predicted its pharmacokinetic properties, highlighting its broad-spectrum antimicrobial activity. These findings support the further development of pyocyanin as a promising lead compound for novel antibacterial and antifungal therapeutics, underscoring its significance in pharmaceutical innovation and potential impact on improving patient outcomes.

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