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QSAR Study of Series of HEPT (1-[(2-hydroxyethoxy) methyl]-6-(phenylthio)thyio)thymine) Derivatives Using Genetic Function Approximation as Anti-HIV-1 Agents

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Authors EIE and SEA designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, wrote the first draft of the manuscript and managed literature searches. Authors EIE, AU and SEA managed the analyses of the study and literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Short Research Article

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ABSTRACT

Aims/Objectives: Studies were performed to correlate the biological activity of the HEPT (1-[(2 hydroxyethoxy) methyl]-6-(phenylthio)thyio)thymine) 107 sets of compound with the independent descriptor to know the structural requirement of the drug receptor binding interaction.

Methodology: Genetic function approximation algorithm (GFA) approach has been applied to linearly correlate dependent biological activities and independent descriptors. Genetic function approximation algorithm (GFA) has been widely used when the number of samples surpass the amount of descriptors.

Results: The result obtained from the regression analysis is good and statistical values of multiple correlation coefficient R^2 = 0.9118 and standard error of estimation (Se) = 0.4449, Fisher ratio (F) = 65.1139, Q_{LOO}^2 = 0.8830 and Q_{LOO}^2 = 0.8816 proves that the obtained mathematical model from the 107 sets of HEPT derivatives is the best.

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Conclusion: The role of RotBtFrac, VPC-5, SP-4 and SHaaCH is important to reduce the required concentration of the drug and so as LogP and Weta2.volume also play vital role in this concern.

Keywords: Anti HIV; biological activity; drug design; NNRTIs; QSAR; regression analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), initiated by infection from the human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1), remains a severe international health problem. Even if there is no definite cure for HIV infection, a number of drugs slow or halt disease progression [1]. After years of hard work, a number of inhibitors of reverse transcriptase (RT), integrase (IN) and protease (PR) are discovered and introduced in clinical practice [2,3]. Unluckily, all the mono therapies using either RT, IN or PR inhibitors have failed owing to the rapid emergence of HIV-resistant strains, and the longterm goal of eradicating the virus from infected cells is still unattained [4]. However, the use of both RT, IN and PR inhibitors have resulted in significant increases in disease-free survival [1,5]. This numerous outbreak is more effective, blocking two different steps of the virus replication cycle and causing a delay in the emergence of resistant strains [6,7,8]. Therefore, it is evident that the development of new inhibitors targeted toward other viral proteins is of paramount importance [9].

Two main categories of HIV RT inhibitors have been discovered to date. The first category of inhibitors is nucleoside analogues and the second category of inhibitors is non-nucleoside analogues [10]. Nucleoside analogues cause chain termination when they are incorporated within newly synthesized DNA. Non-nucleoside inhibitors block RT binding to a pocket adjacent to the catalytic site of the enzyme and thereby interrupt the conformation of several amino acids essential for proper RT function [11]. Reverse transcriptase (RT) plays a central role in the replication of HIV because of its specificity and its low cytotoxicity [12]. A number of RT-inhibitors active against both HIV-1 and HIV-2 RT or only against HIV-1 RT have been discussed in the literature [13,14,15]. Structure-Activity Relationships (SARs) and Quantitative Structure Activity Relationships (QSARs), jointly referred to as (Q)SARs, are theoretical models that relate the structure of chemicals to their biological activities. (Q)SARs are used to predict the physicochemical, biological and fate properties of molecules from knowledge of chemical structure

[16]. In a QSAR study, generally, the quality of a model is expressed by its fitting ability and prediction ability, and of these the prediction ability is the most important. The QSAR studies enable the scientists to establish reliable quantitative relationship to derive the QSAR model and predict the activity of potent, novel and non-toxic molecules prior to their synthesis. These studies reduce the trial and error element in the design of compounds by establishing mathematical relationships between biological activities of interest and measurable or computable parameters such as physicochemical, electronic, topological, or thermodynamic. The main success of the QSAR method is the possibility to estimate the characteristics of new chemical compounds without the need to synthesize and test them. This analysis represents an attempt to relate structural descriptors of compounds with their physicochemical properties and biological activities. This is widely used for the prediction of physicochemical properties in the chemical, pharmaceutical, and environmental spheres. This method included data collection, molecular descriptor selection, correlation model development, and finally mode evaluation. QSAR are certainly a major factor in contemporary drug design. Therefore, it is quite clear why a large number of users of QSAR are located in industrial research units [10].

There is a series of statistical model studies that are used to develop a QSAR model, which include multiple linear regression (MLR), principle component analysis (PCA), partial least square (PLS), genetic function algorithm (GFA).

A QSAR is a quantitative relationship between a biological activity and one or more molecular descriptors that are used to predict the activity [17]. A molecular descriptor is a structural or physicochemical property of a molecule, or part of a molecule, which specifies a particular characteristic of the molecule and is used as an independent variable in a QSAR [18].

QSAR analyses of HIV-1 reverse transcriptase inhibitors [10], HIV-1 protease inhibitors [19], HIV- 1 integrase inhibitors [16, 20] and gp 120

envelope glycoprotein [21] were reported. The present group of authors has developed a few quantitative structure-activity relationship models to predict anti-HIV activity of different group of compounds [22,23,24]. Although several QSAR studies on HIV reverse transcriptase, protease and integrase inhibitors have been reported [4,19,25-32] using MLR, PLS, PCA, GFA and ANN, the QSAR study on HIV-1 reverse transcriptase using the GFA method has been lacking in literature. Such a kind about the GFA method might provide a new starting point for the design of novel inhibitors against HIV-1. The main purpose of this work is to find out how accurate the QSAR analysis predicted the activities of compounds that were already synthesized in comparison to their experimental biological activities.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Data Set

The HEPT derivatives selected with their activities [33] are listed in Table 1 and the parent structure of the HEPT derivatives is given in the Fig. 1. The molecular structures of the compounds in the selected series were sketched using ChemBioDraw ultra 12.0 module of CambridgeSoft 2010 molecular modeling software. The sketched structures were then transferred to Spartan'14 version 1.1.2 for complete geometry optimization with the semiempirical Parameterized Model 3 (PM3) method was performed. The geometries of generated structures were pre-optimized using MM2 force field as implemented in the PaDEL-Descriptor version 2.18 software.

Fig. 1. Structure of training and test set

A QSAR model was therefore, used to analyze some potential (1-[(2-hydroxyethoxy) methyl]-6- (phenylthio)thyio)thymine) Derivatives HIV-1 reverse transcriptase inhibitors. The list of the structures of 107 inhibitors employed in this study and their experimental inhibitory concentration (EC $_{50}$) effective against HIV-1 RT enzyme was taken from literature [33] (Table 1). It was observed that in each case 500 crossovers and smoothing factor $d = 0.5$ resulted in optimum internal and external predictivity (Table 2).

Table 1. The HEPT derivatives selected with their activities

^aTraining set; ^bTest set

2.2 Calculation of the Parameters

2.3 The GFA Approach

All the physicochemical properties viz. S (Entropy), PSA (Polar Surface Area), E(aq) (Aqueous Energy), Acc. Area (Accessible Area), LogP (Partition Coefficient), HBD count (Hydrogen Bond Donar) etc. were calculated by
Spartan'14 version 1.1.2 software $Spartan'14$ version $1.1.2$ (Wavefunction/spartan14v1.1.2). All other descriptors were calculated by PaDEL-Descriptor version 2.18. A total of 238 descriptors were calculated using the fore mentioned molecular modeling package. A list of the descriptors used are summarized in Table 5.

In this study, we define the application of QSAR models based on GFA approach. GFA is an experimental search method used for finding optimal solutions to a problem where the possible solution space is too large to be systematically computed. The GFA approach has a number of significant benefits, which comprise: ability to build multiple models rather than a single model, as do most other statistical methods, it produces a population of models (e.g., 100). The range of variation this population gives added information on the quality of fit and importance of descriptors (Table 7). For example, the frequency of use of a particular descriptor in the population of equations (Table 8) may indicate how relevant the descriptor is to the prediction of activity [34]; automatic selection of features to be used in its basic functions and to determine the suitable number of basic functions to be used by testing full-size models rather than incrementally building them; reliable discovery of combinations of basic functions that take advantage of correlations between features; ability to include the lack of fit (LOF) error measure developed by Friedman [35] that resists over fitting and allows user control over the smoothness of fit (in this case, 0.5); use of larger variety of basic functions in building of its models, preferred model length and useful partitions of the data set, automatic removal of outliers and finally, provision of additional information not existing from other statistical standard regression analysis. The GFA has been applied to three published data sets to demonstrate it is an effective tool for doing both QSAR and QSPR [36-40].

Table 2. Summary of GFA analysis

Analysis type	Genetic function				
	approximation				
Response column	ID: pC50				
Number of rows in	74				
model					
Population	5000				
Maximum generations	500				
Initial terms per equation	10				
Maximum equation	10				
length					
Constant equation	Yes				
length					
Number of top models	5				
returned					
Scoring function	Friedman LOF				
Scaled LOF smoothness	0.50000000				
parameter					
Mutation probability	0.10000000				
Linear splines	N٥				
Quadratic splines	No				
Random number seed	9999				
Minimum prediction	1.000000e-004				
fraction for term					
inclusion					
Number of variables	5				
requested for plot					

3. MODEL VALIDATION

The final model was systematically validated using a set of measures suggested in the literature [17,41-43]. The statistical parameters listed in (Tables 3, 5 and 9) were used to evaluate the quality of the model. For the internal quality, the recommended limits are R^2 > 0.6 and $Q_{LOO}^2 > 0.5$ [17,44]. The SEE, RMSECV and SDEP should be lower as possible. The F-value and the Q value [45,46] should be higher.

The robustness of the optimized model was examined by leave-N-out cross-validation procedure. The average value of each Q_{LNO}^2 (leave-many-out cross-validation) is expected to be close to Q_{LOO}^2 (leave-one-out cross-validation) with standard deviation close to zero.

The parameter R^2 _{pred} was used as a measure of the predictive power of the QSAR model. For this work, it was used the recommended limited of R^2_{pred} > 0.6 [17]. However, this is not a sufficient condition to guarantee that the model is really predictive. It is also recommended to check:

- 1) The slopes K or K' of the linear regression lines between the observed activity and the predicted activity in the external validation, where the slopes should be $0.85 \leq K \leq$ 1.15 or $0.85 \leq K' \leq 1.15$;
- 2) The absolute value of the difference between the coefficients of multiple determination, R_0^2 and R_0^2 smaller than 0.3 [41];
- 3) $r²_{\text{m}}$ (overall) and $R²_{\text{p}}$ are ≥ 0.5 (or at least near 0.5) [42].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dissimilar QSAR equations were produced using the GFA algorithm in Material Studio V7.0 for a series HEPT (1-[(2-hydroxyethoxy) methyl]-6- (phenylthio)thyio)thymine) anti-HIV derivatives. A total of 107 compounds (Table 1) were used for QSAR model generation. It is essential to assess the predictive power of models by using a test set of compounds. This was achieved by setting aside 33 compounds as a test set such that it represented the various functional groups included in the training set and had a regularly distributed biological data. The mean of the biological activity of the training and test set was 5.4715 and 6.3964, respectively.

The selection of the best model was based on the value of correlation coefficient (R) , the squared correlation coefficient (R^2) , the F -test (Fischer's value) for statistical significance F, the standard error of estimation (Se), lack of fit (LOF) and the quality of fit (Q). The squared correlation

coefficient (or coefficient of multiple determination) R^2 is a relative measure of fit by the regression equation. Correspondingly, it represents the part of the variation in the observed data that is explained by the regression. The correlation coefficient values closer to 1.0 represent the better fit of the regression. The F -test reflects the ratio of the variance explained by the model and the variance due to the error in the regression. High values of the F–test indicate that the model is statistically significant. Standard deviation is measured by the error mean square, which expresses the variation of the residuals or the variation about the regression line. Thus, standard deviation is an absolute measure of quality of fit and should have a low value for the regression to be significant. The positive value of quality factor (Q) for this QSAR model suggest its high predictive power and lack of over fitting.

Model 2, 3, 4 and 5 showed lower Q^2 cvand high R_{pred}^2 values than Model 1 which means that cross validated Q^2 ability of Model 1 was much better. The quality factor (Q) was performed to access the robustness and statistical confidence. Higher value of R^2 , RMSEP, Q and F and lower value of Se, and RMSECV of Model 1 in comparison to Model 2, 3, 4 and 5 revealed that Model 1 was robust and promising. In the developed Model the value of coefficient of correlation was significantly high supporting reliability and goodness. Based on the above results Model 1 was considered as the best validation model for 107 inhibition activity. The accuracy of the Model 1 was ascertained by correlation coefficient $(R = 0.9549)$, statistical significance more than 99% (against tabulated value F= 65.1139) and low standard error of estimate (0.4449).

The model shows that parameter LogP, VPC-5, SP-4, SHaaCH, RotBtFrac and Weta2.volume showed positive contribution. The regression model has small residuals that can be seen in (Table 3). LOO cross-validation analysis revealed that $R^2 - Q_{LOO}^2 < 0.3$ (0.9118-0.8890 = 0.0288). The robustness of the model was justified According to Golbraikh and Tropsha [44], the proposed QSAR model is predictive as it satisfies this conditions like $R^2_{pred} > 0.5$, $R^2 > 0.6$, $r^2 - r^2$ _o $r^2 < 0.1$, $r^2 - r^2$ o/ $r^2 < 0.1$ and $0.85 \le k \le 1.15$ or $0.85 \le k' \le 1.15$, but this model satisfy the following criteria R^2_{pred} =0.8526 > 0.5, and R^2 =0.9118 > 0.6 (Tables 3 and 5). So this QSAR model is predictive as it's satisfy this conditions reported by Golbraikh and Tropsha, [44]. The internal validation parameter of the model (Q_{cv}^2 = 0.8830) was also good.

4.1 Y-Randomization Tests

The Y-randomization test is useful to verify the possibility that the explained and predicted variances by the obtained model may suffer from chance correlation [41]. The statistical significance of the relationship between the anti-HIV activity and chemical structure descriptors which was confirmed by randomization procedure. The test was done by:

- (1) Frequently permuting (100 trail) the activity values of the data set,
- (2) Using the permuted values to generate QSAR models and
- (3) Relating the resulting scores with the score of the original QSAR model generated from non-randomized activity values.

If the original QSAR model is statistically significant, its score should be significantly better than those from permuted data. The R , R^2 and $Q²$ value of the original model was much higher than any of the trials using permuted data. It can be observed in Table 9 that the results obtained for all randomized models are of bad quality when compared to the real model. Hereafter, model 1 is statistically significant and robust.

Table 4. Observed pIC50 and GFA predicted pIC50 for training set

7.99 7.94 0.05 7.96 0.03 7.84 0.15 7.79 0.2 7.9 0.09

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8.51	8.08	0.43	8.03	0.48	7.76	0.75	8.15	0.36	7.93	0.58	
8.55	8.31	0.24	9	-0.4	8.41	0.14	8.75	-0.2	8.47	0.08	
8.24	8.39	-0.1	8.19	0.05	8.58	-0.3	8.48	-0.2	8.67	-0.4	
5.06	5.62	-0.6	5.58	-0.5	5.72	-0.7	5.61	-0.5	5.67	-0.6	
5.96	5.92	0.04	6.13	-0.2	5.91	0.05	5.92	0.04	5.92	0.04	
7.06	6.06		5.87	1.19	5.81	1.25	6.16	0.9	6.06		
7.58	7.55	0.03	6.95	0.63	7.74	-0.2	7.27	0.31	7.65	-0.1	
7.89	8.44	-0.6	8.55	-0.7	8.3	-0.4	8.37	-0.5	8.4	-0.5	
6.66	7.91	-1.2	7.49	-0.8	8.01	-1.4	7.62	-1	8.15	-1.5	
6.66	6.14	0.52	6.5	0.16	6.48	0.18	6.28	0.38	6.25	0.41	
5	6.65	-1.6	6.26	-1.3	6.4	-1.4	6.36	-1.4	6.4	-1.4	
8.3	8.72	-0.4	8.5	-0.2	9.05	-0.7	8.8	-0.5	9.01	-0.7	
8.11	7.45	0.66	7.88	0.23	7.98	0.13	7.95	0.16	7.82	0.29	
7.37	7.74	-0.4	7.34	0.03	7.74	-0.4	7.55	-0.2	7.67	-0.3	
6.01	5.3	0.71	4.95	1.06	5.22	0.79	5.11	0.9	5.21	0.8	

Predicted1: Predicted value for equation 1, Residual1: Residual value for equation 1
Predicted2: Predicted value for equation 2, Residual2: Residual value for equation 2

Predicted3: Predicted value for equation 3, Residual3: Residual value for equation 3
Predicted4: Predicted value for equation 4, Residual4: Residual value for equation 4
Predicted5: Predicted value for equation 5, Residual

4.2 Euclidean Based Applicability Domain (AD)

Applicability domain (AD) is the physicochemical, structural or biological space, knowledge or information on which the training set of the model has been developed. The resulting model can be reliably applicable for only those compounds which are inside this domain. Euclidean based application domain helps to ensure that the compounds of the test set are representative of the training set compounds used in model development. It is based on distance scores calculated by the Euclidean distance norms. At first, normalized mean distance score for training set compounds are calculated and these values ranges from 0 to $1(0)$ = least diverse, 1 = most diverse training set compound). Then normalized mean distance score for test set are calculated, and those test compounds with score outside 0 to 1 range are said to be outside the applicability domain (Table 10). If the test set compounds are inside the domain/area covered by training set

compounds that means these compounds are inside the applicability domain otherwise not [41,47,48].

Table 6. Summary of input data for genetic function approximation

Table 8. Table of all descriptors used in this study

Table 9. The average R, R²and Q² LOO values after several Y-Randomization

Table 10. Euclidean based application domain for Model 1 and 2

5. CONCLUSION

In the present investigation, a QSAR model for a set of HEPT derivatives that have the capability of inhibiting in vitro strain of HIV. The leave-oneout (LOO) and leave-many-out (LNO) crossvalidation methods, the Y-randomization technique, and the external validation indicated that the model is significant, robust and has good internal and external predictability. The inhibitory activity of the investigated compounds was described based in descriptors: LogP, HBD count, SPC-6, VPC-5 SP-4, VP-3, ECCEN, SHaaCH, RotBTFrac and Weta2.volume. Thermodynamic, ChiPath, ChiCluster, ChiPathCluster, EccentricConnectivityIndex, ElectroTopological State atom type, Rotatable bonds count, Structural and WHIM descriptors play a significant role in explaining the activity of the data set. The results indicated that the activity against strain of HIV is favoured by higher partition coefficient, valence path cluster, order5, simple path, order 4, sum of atom-type H

E-state: CH:, directional WHIM, weighted by van der waals volumes, smaller number of hydrogen bond donors, simple path cluster, order 6, valence path, order 3, decreased topological descriptor combining distance and adjacent information. The mechanism of action is related with structural and thermodynamic aspects of the compounds, which can explained by the descriptors that were selected in the QSAR model proposed. The study indicates that the increase of LogP, VPC-5, SP-4, SHaaCH, RotBtFrac and Weta2.volume would be contributing for biological activity. It's important the synthesis of 1-[(2-hydroxyethoxy) methyl]-6- (phenylthio)thyio)thymine) with these descriptors for verify the authenticity of the facts. The proposed model may provide a better understanding of the ant-HIV activity of 1-[(2-hydroxyethoxy) methyl]-6- (phenylthio)thyio)thymine) and can be used as guidance for proposition of new chemopreventive agents.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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