Advances in Bioresearch
Adv. Biores., Vol 16 (3) May 2025: 72-75

Print ISSN 0976-4585; Online ISSN 2277-1573
Journal's URL:http://www.soeagra.com/abr.html
CODEN: ABRDC3
DOI: 10.15515/abr.0976-4585.16.3.7275

Advances in Bioresearch

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

In-Silico Analysis, Design, and Identification of Drugs Targeting Proteins of the BRCA-1 Gene with Reference to Breast Cancer

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ABSTRACT
Breast cancer remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths globally. Mutations in the BRCA-1 gene are linked to a high risk of developing breast cancer, making BRCA-1 an important target for therapeutic intervention. In-silico drug discovery has emerged as a promising approach in the identification and design of small molecules targeting BRCA-1, offering the advantages of speed, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to simulate complex biological interactions. This review explores the various in-silico techniques such as molecular docking, virtual screening, and QSAR modelling used to identify and optimize drug candidates targeting BRCA-1. The review also discusses known inhibitors, challenges in drug design, phytochemicals like fucoxanthin, and the future of personalized medicine in the context of BRCA-1-based therapies.
Keywords*: BRCA-1, Breast Cancer, In-Silico Drug Design, Molecular Docking, Protein Targeting, Drug Discovery, Fucoxanthin, Phytochemicals, Protein 1JNX, 1JM7, 1T15.*

Received 10.02.2025 Revised 01.03.2025 Accepted 11.04.2025

How to cite this article:
Pushpika T, Ruchira C, Ragini G and Kamal R P. *In-Silico* Analysis, Design, and Identification of Drugs Targeting Proteins of the BRCA-1 Gene with Reference to Breast Cancer. Adv. Biores., Vol 16 (3) May 2025: 72-75.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of BRCA-1 Gene

The BRCA-1 gene, located on chromosome 17q21, encodes a protein that is integral to the DNA damage response, particularly in the repair of double-strand breaks through homologous recombination. This gene plays a critical role in maintaining genomic stability, regulating cell cycle checkpoints, and promoting apoptosis in response to DNA damage. Mutations in the BRCA-1 gene, especially those that result in truncated or non-functional proteins, significantly increase the risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer [1][2].

Significance in Breast Cancer

Mutations in BRCA-1 are responsible for approximately 5-10% of breast cancer cases. Individuals with inherited BRCA-1 mutations have a significantly elevated lifetime risk of developing breast cancer, with studies estimating a penetrance rate of 45-65% [3]. The tumor-suppressing functions of BRCA-1 are compromised when these mutations are present, leading to an accumulation of genetic mutations and oncogenesis [4]. This highlights BRCA-1 as a critical target for therapeutic intervention.

In-Silico Drug Discovery

In-silico drug discovery refers to the computational techniques employed to predict the interactions between small molecules and target proteins, facilitating the identification of potential drug candidates. This approach includes molecular docking, virtual screening, quantitative structure-activity relationship

(QSAR) modelling, and molecular dynamics simulations, which can predict the binding affinity and biological activity of potential therapeutic molecules without the need for immediate experimental validation [5][6]. In the context of BRCA-1, these techniques can assist in identifying compounds that specifically target and restore BRCA-1 function or inhibit its interaction with other oncogenic proteins.

MOLECULAR BASIS OF BRCA-1 IN BREAST CANCER

BRCA-1 Protein Structure

BRCA-1 is a large protein consisting of 1,863 amino acids and comprises several important functional domains, including a ring-finger domain at the N-terminal, which is responsible for mediating protein-protein interactions and a C-terminal BRCT (BRCA1 C-terminal) domain involved in the recruitment of DNA repair factors. These domains are integral to BRCA-1's function in DNA repair, and mutations within these regions can disrupt its normal function, contributing to cancer susceptibility [7][8].

Mutations and Their Impact on Function

Mutations in BRCA-1 can be classified into truncating mutations (e.g., frameshift, nonsense mutations) and missense mutations. Truncating mutations result in the production of a truncated, non-functional protein that is unable to carry out its DNA repair functions. Missense mutations may lead to structural alterations in BRCA-1, impairing its ability to interact with other proteins involved in DNA repair [9]. The loss of BRCA-1 activity leads to genomic instability and increased mutation rates, facilitating carcinogenesis [10].

IN-SILICO APPROACHES IN DRUG DISCOVERY

Molecular Docking

Molecular docking is a computational method that predicts the preferred orientation of a small molecule (ligand) within the binding site of a protein, assessing the potential binding affinity and interaction energy. For BRCA-1, molecular docking allows the identification of small molecules that can bind to the BRCA-1 protein or its interacting partners, either restoring its function or blocking its oncogenic pathways [11][12]. Popular software tools such as Auto Dock and Glide have been widely utilized for docking studies of BRCA-1 inhibitors [13].

Example Proteins for Docking Studies: Proteins like **1JNX**, **1JM7**, and **1T15** represent structures of BRCA-1 or related repair proteins. These structures are commonly used in molecular docking studies to predict binding affinities of small molecules targeting BRCA-1-related repair pathways [14][15].

Virtual Screening

Virtual screening involves screening large chemical libraries to identify potential drug candidates that may bind to a target protein. This approach, when combined with molecular docking, allows the rapid identification of compounds that can bind to BRCA-1 or its protein interactions. Virtual screening has been particularly useful in identifying novel inhibitors for BRCA-1 that may enhance its function in DNA repair or exploit synthetic lethality in cancer cells with BRCA-1 mutations [16][17]. Tools like Schrödinger's Glide and AutoDock Vina are commonly employed in virtual screening of drug libraries [18].

Phytochemicals in Virtual Screening: Fucoxanthin, a carotenoid found in seaweed, has shown potential as an anti-cancer agent. Virtual screening studies have identified its potential to interact with BRCA-1 and related proteins to inhibit cancer cell proliferation [19].

Molecular Dynamics Simulations

Molecular dynamics (MD) simulations are used to study the time-dependent behaviour of proteins and their interactions with ligands. Unlike static docking, MD simulations provide insights into the stability and flexibility of the protein-ligand complex under physiological conditions. These simulations can highlight dynamic binding sites and contribute to the optimization of drug candidates by providing more accurate predictions of binding affinity and stability [20][21].

QSAR Modelling

Quantitative structure-activity relationship (QSAR) modelling is a statistical method used to correlate the chemical structure of compounds with their biological activity. QSAR models are employed to predict the activity of new compounds based on the features of their molecular structures. In the case of BRCA-1, QSAR modelling can help identify key molecular features required for binding to BRCA-1 or its interacting proteins, aiding in the design of more potent inhibitors [22][23].

TARGETING BRCA-1 FOR DRUG DESIGN

Known Inhibitors of BRCA-1

Poly (ADP-ribose) polymerase (PARP) inhibitors have shown promise in treating cancers associated with BRCA-1 mutations. PARP inhibitors, such as Olaparib, Rucaparib, and Niraparib, exploit the concept of synthetic lethality. These inhibitors interfere with DNA repair pathways in cells deficient in BRCA-1, leading to accumulation of DNA damage and cell death [24][25]. The efficacy of PARP inhibitors has been well documented in clinical trials, particularly for BRCA-1-related breast and ovarian cancers.

Novel Drug Candidates

In-silico drug design has enabled the identification of novel small molecules that can either stabilize the BRCA-1 protein or restore its function in DNA repair. These molecules may act as chemical chaperones to refold misfolded BRCA-1 proteins or activate the DNA repair pathways in BRCA-1-deficient cells. Recent studies have also explored compounds that can block the interaction of BRCA-1 with its inhibitory partners, promoting its DNA repair functions [26][27].

Phytochemical Potential: Fucoxanthin, a bioactive compound found in brown algae, has shown promise as a potential BRCA-1 modulator. Studies have suggested that fucoxanthin may inhibit cell proliferation in BRCA-1-deficient breast cancer cells, offering a novel therapeutic avenue [28].

Challenges in Targeting BRCA-1

Despite the promising advances in drug design, targeting BRCA-1 presents several challenges. The large and complex structure of BRCA-1 makes it difficult to identify specific binding sites that could be targeted by small molecules. Additionally, achieving selectivity is critical, as indiscriminate inhibition of BRCA-1 may lead to toxicity in normal cells. Furthermore, resistance to therapy remains a major issue, as cells can compensate for the loss of BRCA-1 function by activating alternative repair mechanisms [29][30].

FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN *IN-SILICO* DRUG DESIGN FOR BRCA-1

Advances in Computational Methods

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in drug discovery has revolutionized the ability to predict protein-ligand interactions with high precision. AI-based methods can now analyse large datasets of chemical compounds and predict their potential to interact with BRCA-1, accelerating the drug discovery process. Machine learning algorithms also hold promise for optimizing the pharmacological profiles of drug candidates by predicting their toxicity, solubility, and absorption [31][32].

Personalized Medicine

As our understanding of the genetic and molecular mechanisms behind BRCA-1 mutations expands, personalized medicine approaches will enable tailored therapies for individuals based on their unique mutation profiles. In-silico drug design plays a key role in this paradigm by allowing for the identification of patient-specific therapeutic candidates that target the specific mutation or variant of BRCA-1 present [33][34].

CONCLUSION

In-silico methods have significantly advanced drug discovery by providing faster, cost-effective, and more precise means of identifying drug candidates. For BRCA-1, these techniques have led to the identification of small molecules that can restore BRCA-1 function or inhibit its interaction with oncogenic pathways. Although challenges such as specificity, resistance, and toxicity remain, the future of BRCA-1-targeted therapies is promising, particularly with the integration of AI and personalized medicine.

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