Conformational Space Profile Enhances Generic Molecular Representation Learning

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Abstract

The molecular representation model is a neural network that converts molecular representations (SMILES, Graph) into feature vectors, that carries the potential to be applied across a wide scope of drug discovery scenarios. However, current molecular representation models have been limited to 2D or static 3D structures, overlooking the dynamic nature of small molecules in solution and their ability to adopt flexible conformational changes crucial for drug-target interactions. To address this limitation, we propose a novel strategy that incorporates the conformational space profile into molecular representation learning. By capturing the intricate interplay between molecular structure and conformational space, our strategy enhances the representational capacity of our model named GeminiMol. Consequently, when pre-trained on a miniaturized molecular dataset, the GeminiMol model demonstrates a balanced and superior performance not only on traditional molecular property prediction tasks but also on zero-shot learning tasks, including virtual screening and target identification. By capturing the dynamic behavior of small molecules, our strategy paves the way for rapid exploration of chemical space, facilitating the transformation of drug design paradigms.

Main

If we say that representation learning is the "sensory receptor" of artificial intelligence (AI) for complex entities, as the modulator for transforming human-readable information such as text, images, and sound into digital representations that can be understood by intelligent agents, then molecular representation learning is the interpreter to interpret the human-readable molecular representations (SMILES and Graph) into feature vectors for AI models to learn to perform drug discovery tasks. Molecular representation learning enables us to train models to understand molecular representations through pre-training tasks, thereby enhancing their performance in various downstream tasks. This approach is also known as meta-learning. Over the past few years, the scientific community has devised three prominent training strategies for molecular representation learning, i.e., self-supervised learning, supervised learning, and composite strategies.

Self-supervised learning is a popular training strategy that trains models to understand different formats of molecular representations (SMILES, IUPAC, InChI, Graph, 3D structure, molecular

fingerprints, and even molecular image), such as SMILES-Bert[1], GraphMVP[2], KPGT[3], NYAN[4],
ImageMol[5], etc. By leveraging contrastive learning or self-generated on diverse molecular
representations, self-supervised pre-trained models can effectively extract features of molecular
structures without requiring molecular structure labels. However, due to the requirement of
learning a large number of unlabeled molecular structures during the pre-training stage, these
molecular structures are likely to appear in the test set of downstream tasks as well. Hence, it
becomes challenging to assess the generalization capabilities of self-supervised pre-training in the
chemical space that is far from the training data. In terms of performance on downstream tasks,
Sun et al. have pointed out that partial self-supervised pre-training strategies may not always
exhibit significant advantages over non-pretraining methods[6].

Supervised pre-training strategy is training with structure-properties projection or
structure-caption semantic matching to capture molecular organic or pharmacological profiles,
such as ChemBERTa[7], GEM[8], MolT5[9], CLOOME[10], etc. Supervised pre-training strategies require
different types of molecular attributes to form pre-training tasks, which can be certain
classification or regression tasks, as well as retrieval or generation tasks of molecular descriptors
or related biomedical data. The demand for labeled data leads to the major drawback of supervised
pre-training strategies, which heavily rely on high-quality data. Besides, introducing molecular
property information into the pre-training process raises concerns about the model's generalization
ability.

Considering the advantages and disadvantages of both self-supervised and supervised strategies,
several composite strategies have been proposed to further enhance molecular representation
learning, such as Uni-Mol[11], and HelixADMET[12]. These strategies employ segmented pre-training
stages, which involve additional supervised pre-training after self-supervised pretraining. At the
self-supervised stage, they included tasks such as self-generation, molecular fingerprints
generation, and 3D geometry prediction. At the supervised pre-training stage, they included tasks
such as molecular properties prediction. This composite strategy enables such models to achieve
better performance in most downstream tasks. However, the integration of self-supervised and
supervised pre-training also inherits their shortcomings, including chemical space bias in
self-supervised pre-training, and generalization concerns in supervised pre-training.

To address concerns regarding potential chemical space biases and generalization capabilities in
molecular representation learning, we propose a new hybrid contrastive learning framework. This
framework combines inter-molecular contrastive learning with molecular similarity projection
heads, enabling reliable molecular representation models to be trained on a miniaturized molecular
dataset without any experimental molecular properties. In this work, we trained a molecular
presentation model using this strategy, named GeminiMol. This model incorporated both
molecular geometric shape and pharmacophoric profiles of conformational space by learning the
Conformational Space Similarity (CSS) of drug molecules. Following this, we examined our
GeminiMol model's performance in four major drug discovery tasks, i.e., virtual screening, target
identification, Quantitative Structure-Activity Relationship (QSAR), and ADMET properties
prediction.

Descriptors of Conformational Space Similarity

The overall workflow of this study is illustrated in Extended Fig. 1. Firstly, we defined
descriptors for conformational space similarity and established a contrastive learning framework

based on molecular similarity. Subsequently, data collection was performed on a reduced set of
molecules, and a model called GeminiMol was trained. The performance of the GeminiMol model
was then evaluated on various molecular property prediction tasks, including independent datasets,
out-of-distribution datasets, zero-shot drug discovery tasks (including virtual screening and target
identification), real-world case studies, QSAR, and ADMET prediction, along with conducting
ablation experiments. This workflow allowed us to progressively build and extensively test the
GeminiMol model as a universal molecular representation model in various drug discovery
scenarios, thereby expanding and deepening the research paradigm in molecular representation
learning.

Fig. 1 | The definition of CSS descriptors of a pair of molecules. a, The different methods to
present the molecular similarity. In this work, 3D shape means the molecular shape with
pharmacophore features. **b,** The ratio between strain energy and the number of rotatable bonds
exhibits the most optimal distribution curve. This density plot obtained by standardizing the ratio
between strain energy and measurements of different molecular sizes, reveals the relationship
between molecular size factors and strain energy. RB, rotatable bonds, HA, heavy atoms. **c,**
Imatinib binds to four different targets with three different conformers. The energies in kcal/mol in
this figure represented strain energy. The PDB IDs corresponding to the ligand structures from top
to bottom are 3FW1, 3PYY, 4BKJ, and 6KTN. **d,** A schematic demonstrating the increasing
complexity of a molecule's conformational space with the number of rotatable bonds and the
estimated approach of CSS.

The similarity between molecular pairs provides the opportunity for contrastive learning,
however, previous studies employed molecular pairs that were generated by modifying the

molecular structure, such as MolCLR[13] and iMolCLR[14], rather than similarities between molecular

pairs with pharmacological or physical significance. As illustrated in Fig. 1a, the 3D shape is a

promising molecular similarity metrics that contains more pharmacological and physical

information than the 2D structure and fingerprint similarity, therefore, 3D shape and

pharmacological similarity is an optimal metric for contrastive learning. In GraphMVP[2] and

Uni-Mol[11], the authors primarily focused on 3D conformation generation as the pre-training task.

In contrast, MolCLaSS[15] incorporates static 3D shape similarity into the framework of contrastive

learning. Static 3D shapes are employed in these approaches to facilitate molecular representation

learning, however, the bioactive conformational space of drug molecules, plays an essential role in

the drug-target binding[16,17], the static minimal conformer used in previous works cannot represent

the bioactive conformational space corresponding to the drug-target binding. In this study, we

employ 3D shape similarity in the molecular conformation space as a metric for evaluating

intermolecular similarity.

Most small molecules contain multiple rotatable bonds, the rotations of which lead to

conformational and energetic changes in the small molecules, resulting in a conformational space

with several to hundreds of conformers. In particular, the small molecule is highly dynamic while

binding into protein pocket, e.g., the most prestigious targeted drug, imatinib, binds to four

different targets with three different conformers (as shown in Fig. 1b). Therefore, it is promising to

incorporate conformational space profile of molecules into molecular representation model.

As illustrated in Fig. 1c, the strain energy distribution of 6,670 bioactive conformers of 4518

molecules in the protein data bank (PDB) [18] suggests that the number of rotatable bonds is a

crucial factor in determining the molecular conformational space. With increasing numbers of

rotatable bonds, the conformational space of a small molecule will exhibit an increasingly

complicated distribution, containing more conformational clusters (as shown in Fig. 1d), which

brings the potential to drug molecules for binding to multiple different drug targets. Designing a

series of descriptors that can describe the CSS for contrastive learning is a reasonable strategy.

The key principle of the GeminiMol encoder is to extract the conformational space features

based on the 2D molecular structures. To accomplish this objective, we oversee the model's

acquisition of conformation space features by utilizing various CSS descriptors. Towards this end,

we devised a miniaturized molecular dataset (39,290 molecules) collected from six drug-like

molecule databases, searched the conformational space of these molecules using two strain energy

thresholds, and generated maximum and minimum similarities between pairs of molecules through

pharmacophore and geometric shape alignment (the details were described in the *method* section).

Additionally, we generated several CSS descriptors (as shown in Extended Fig. 2) by numerical

transformation to combine the similarity scores obtained under the two different thresholds.

Interpreting the contrastive learning framework of GeminiMol

In this study, we employed two different architectures to learn the CSS of molecular pairs,

Cross-Encoder and Binary-Encoder (as illustrated in Fig. 2a). Cross-Encoder allowed the

cross-attention weights between the reference molecule and the query molecule, this architecture

was implemented by AutoGluon[19] and ELECTRA[20] model with chemical tokenizer. In the

Binary-Encoder, the molecules are encoded independently using the same encoder (as illustrated

in Extended Fig. 3) that was implemented as Weisfeiler-Lehman Network (WLN)[21] and different

projection heads. It is important to note that, both the query molecule and the reference molecule,

as well as all similarity descriptors, share the same WLN network in the Binary-Encoder. The

details of the tokenizer and Graph-Featurizers were described in the *method* section.

Based on these encoders, different projection heads were used for CSS descriptors and MCS

similarities (as shown in Fig. 2b), the main purpose of these projection heads is to supervise the

encoders in learning an informative molecular representation (named GeminiMol encoding). To

evaluate the trained GeminiMol models, we applied the GeminiMol encodings to various

downstream benchmark tasks as shown in Fig. 2c. We have developed benchmark datasets and

corresponding baseline methods for various downstream tasks, including the DUD-E[22] and

LIT-PCBA[23] for virtual screening, Target Identification Benchmark Dataset (TIBD) for target

identification, target-based, cell-based, and ADMET-related compound properties data for QSAR

and ADMET. See the *method* section for details.

Fig. 2 | The training strategies of the molecular presentation models and their application

tasks. a, Cross-Encoder and Binary-Encoder. **b,** The pre-training and application framework of

GeminiMol. In the pre-training stage, both 2D and 3D molecular similarity were considered in our

model, the 3D similarity was evaluated by PhaseShape, and the 2D similarity was calculated by

the Maximum Common Substructure (MCS). **c**, our models were designed for four main drug

discovery tasks, including virtual screening, target identification, QSAR, and ADMET prediction.

The Cross-Encoder and GeminiMol (Binary-Encoder) were trained using a total of 8 million

molecular similarity descriptors from 37,336 molecules in the training set, and then evaluated on

both the cross and test sets. It is important to note that the cross set contains pairs of molecules

that contain one molecule from the training set, whereas the test set does not contain any

molecules from the training set. As shown in Fig. 3a, the comparison of the Spearman correlation

coefficients of the models on the test and cross sets showed a strong correlation, indicating their

robust generalization ability. To our knowledge, molecular pairs with significant differences in 2D

structures and high similarity in 3D structures are rare but high-quality out-of-distribution samples.

To investigate the impact of different components in the GeminiMol model on its learning ability,

we performed ablation experiments on out-of-distribution data in the test set. As illustrated in Fig.
3b, reducing the number of layers and the dimensionality of node features, as well as removing
rectifiers in the model, all have a detrimental effect on the model's performance. Similarly, the
same trend can be observed for CSS descriptors that undergo numerical transformations, as
depicted in Fig. 3c.

Fig. 3 | Learning the CSS descriptors and conformational space encoding using Cross-Encoder and Binary-Encoder. a, The correlation of performance between the cross and test sets reveals the high generalization capability of our models. **b,** Ablation results of raw CSS labels. **c,** Ablation results of transformed CSS descriptors. The GeminiMol model was subjected to four repeated training and testing experiments, while the other models underwent a minimum of two repeated experiments. The term DropLayerNumber refers to reducing the number of layers in the WLN network to 2. The term DropNodeFeatures indicates the reduction of node dimensionality in the WLN network to 1024. The term ΔReacifier denotes replacing the projection head to a simplification deep neural network. **d,** The performance comparison between Cross-Encoder with molecular fingerprints. The virtual screening performance is indicated by the BEDROC metric in the LIT-PCBA benchmark test, and the target identification performance is also BEDROC in the TIBD benchmark test. The choice of LIT-PCBA over DUD-E is primarily because the molecules in LIT-PCBA are derived from real high-throughput screening datasets. The model with the best balanced performance was pointed out with a red arrow. Molecular presentation methods and fingerprints were represented by various shapes, while similarity metric indices were depicted using different colors. **e,** The performance comparison of different molecular fingerprints, Cross-Encoder, and GeminiMol. **f,** Ablation results of GeminiMol models and CSS descriptors. The Pearson similarity metric was used in ablation experiments. The GeminiMol model was subjected to four repeated training and testing sessions, while the other

199    models underwent a minimum of two repeated experimental and testing sessions.

Towards Zero-Shot drug discovery using GeminiMol encoding

201  Zero-shot drug discovery, also known as virtual screening and target identification, involves
202 identifying compounds from a compound database that exhibit intended activity and target
203 specificity, relying solely on the structural features of one or a few molecules. This approach is
204 particularly relevant in drug discovery, where active compounds are often limited in availability,
205 necessitating the design of novel molecules with comparable activities using only a limited
206 number of reference compounds. The molecular similarity searching serves as the primary
207 methodology employed in zero-shot drug discovery.
208  In concept, molecules share similar conformational space also share similar biological activities,
209 allowing us to predict the similarity of biological activities between molecules by comparing the
210 similarity of GeminiMol encodings. Some projection heads used for training purposes can also be
211 applied to compare the conformational space similarity of compounds, such as MaxSim,
212 MaxOverlap, etc. Additionally, another approach is to directly compare the vector similarity
213 between GeminiMol encodings, such as cosine similarity, Pearson correlation coefficient,
214 Manhattan distance, and RMSE. It is worth noting that in this study, our miniaturized molecular
215 dataset (39,290 molecules) exhibits few overlap with DUD-E[22] (1,463,336) and LIT-PCBA[23]
216 (2,808,885). Therefore, the model has to learn the relationship between molecular 2D structures
217 and their CSS while demonstrating excellent generalization ability to achieve better performance
218 in downstream tasks.
219  We initially compared the performance of the Cross-Encoder and GeminiMol with PhaseShape
220 on the virtual screening to investigate whether the incorporation of conformational space profile
221 and contrastive learning improved the performance of PhaseShape, which was the shape
222 alignment method used in the CSS data collection. As shown in Extended Fig. 4, many of the
223 prediction heads, particularly the similarity between GeminiMol encodings, significantly
224 enhanced the performance of PhaseShape on the DUD-E and LIT-PCBA benchmark datasets.
225 Among the various encoding similarities, cosine similarity and Pearson correlation coefficient
226 achieved the best overall performance.
227  To assess the differences between our models and prominent baseline methods, we evaluated
228 the performance of 8 popular molecular fingerprints on the LIT-PCBA and the TIBD. We
229 compared these results with those of the Cross-Encoder (as shown in Fig. 3d) and GeminiMol (as
230 shown in Fig. 3e). The Cross-Encoder demonstrated comparable performance to molecular
231 fingerprints, mainly attributed to the MaxSim and CrossSim predictors. However, its performance
232 did not surpass that of molecular fingerprints. Surprisingly, the cosine similarity and Pearson
233 correlation of the GeminiMol encoding exhibited balanced and superior performance across
234 virtual screening and target identification compared to other methods. Further ablation
235 experiments (as shown in Fig. 3f) demonstrate that removing the rectifier in the projection head
236 leads to a significant detrimental impact on the model's performance and robustness. To extract
237 more information from the WLN network for molecular encoding, we have designed a variant of
238 GeminiMol called GeminiMol-MOD, which enhances molecular encoding by reading the
239 maximum and sum of each dimension of node features from the molecular graph.
240 GeminiMol-MOD exhibits superior performance compared to GeminiMol on the DUD-E dataset.
241 However, it shows some performance degradation in more realistic benchmark tests, such as

242 LIT-PCBA and TIBD, as depicted in Fig. 3f. This could be attributed to the increase in feature
243 dimensions, which leads to learning biases on molecular pairs with significant structural
244 differences. This agrees with the observation that the DUD-E benchmark dataset has greater
245 structural variations between positive and negative samples[24].

Applying GeminiMol encoding on scaffold hopping

To accurately represent the potential of molecules to exert their functions through similar targets
and mechanisms of action, the molecular presentation model should effectively capture the
underlying similarities between these molecules, even in cases where there are notable differences
in their 2D structures. This aspect holds immense significance in the realm of practical
applications, particularly in the pursuit of identifying novel active molecules with distinct
scaffolds. In comparison to baseline methods, GeminiMol has demonstrated exceptional
performance in zero-shot comparison of the molecular encoding, such as virtual screening and
target identification (as illustrated in Fig. 3e). To gain insights into the underlying factors
contributing to GeminiMol's superior performance, we investigated its sensitivity to structural
modifications and scaffold hopping of active compounds targeting three diverse targets.

Fig. 4 | Interpreting and evaluating the GeminiMol encoding. a, Changes in molecular

similarity induced by ring-closure. **b,** Intrinsic similarities of symmetric and non-symmetric HIV
protease inhibitors. The Pearson similarity metric was used. **c,** Molecules with significant
differences in their 2D structures can exhibit similar binding modes within protein pockets, while
GeminiMol encoding also demonstrates similarities. The Pearson similarity metric was used. **e, f,**
g, and **h** illustrate the comparison between GeminiMol and other baseline methods in four
different downstream molecular property modeling tasks. The dashed line indicates the
265   performance of the GeminiMol-MOD model.

We undertook a preliminary analysis to evaluate the impact of common ring-closure operations
on the refinement of lead compounds, employing GeminiMol encoding, ECFP4[25], and
TopologicalTorsion[25] fingerprints, as depicted in Fig. 4a. Our focus centered on two structurally
analogous non-steroidal estrogen receptor modulators, specifically lasofoxifene and afimoxifene.
Both compounds engage identically with the estrogen receptor, exhibiting comparable modes[26,27]
of binding (refer to Fig. 4a). Fingerprints suggest notable structural disparities, though such
alterations remain within the predictive capacity of human analysis. In contrast, GeminiMol,
acknowledging these compounds with nuanced structural changes as marked analogs, predicted a
MaxSim value of 0.942, coupled with an encoding similarity surpassing 0.7.

The HIV protease has been a significant target in drug development with a comprehensive
research history. Initially, research predominantly focused on pseudo-symmetric peptide inhibitors,
evolving to diverse chemical scaffolds, while structurally distinct from the original peptide
inhibitors, share a consistent mechanism of action. A comparative analysis was performed on the
structural variety within these inhibitors, from the classical pseudo-symmetric inhibitor A79285[28]
against four non-symmetric inhibitors[29–31]. The molecular fingerprints suggested the 2D structural
diversity of these molecules, however, it was observed that these molecules are in close proximity
within the encoded space of GeminiMol (as shown in Fig. 4b). This observation highlights
GeminiMol's effectiveness in detecting intrinsic similarities within the conformational space of
diverse molecules.

In a similar vein, we conducted a comparative analysis of the molecular structures of three
thrombin inhibitors and their respective interaction patterns with thrombin[32–34]. This investigation
reveals that despite substantial disparities in their 2D structures, the GeminiMol model is capable
of identifying underlying similarities among these molecules. Notably, we observed a correlation
between the activity of the inhibitors and their similarity to the most potent inhibitor, whereby
lower similarity corresponds to diminished activity (as shown in Fig. 4c).

Evaluating GeminiMol encoding on molecular property modeling

We compared the representation performance of GeminiMol and various molecular fingerprints
on two different QSAR tasks, classification and regression ADMET tasks (see Extended Fig. 5).
The results show that CombineFP (combined by ECFP4, FCFP6, AtomPairs, and
TopologicalTorsion) performs the best among all fingerprint methods. In particular, QSAR tasks
are divided into two categories: target-based and cell-based. The former is associated with specific
targets, while the latter may involve multiple unknown targets and cytotoxicity mechanisms. In
target-based QSAR tasks, GeminiMol-MOD, GeminiMol, and CombineFP demonstrate similar
performance, with GeminiMol-MOD showing a slight advantage (as shown in Fig. 4e). In
cell-based QSAR tasks, both GeminiMol models exhibit similar optimal performance,

significantly outperforming CombineFP and other baseline methods (as shown in Fig. 4f). In the
ADMET tasks, GeminiMol models perform comparably to CombineFP, achieving the best
performance in classification tasks (as shown in Fig. 4g) but slightly underperforming the
Uni-Mol model in regression tasks (as shown in Fig. 4g). Considering that Uni-Mol incorporates
data of molecular properties that partially overlaps with some tasks in our benchmark datasets, its
performance in ADMET tasks is reasonable.
Overall, the GeminiMol model surpasses not only traditional molecular fingerprints but also
FP-GNN[35], designed specifically for QSAR tasks, and Uni-Mol[11], which incorporates molecular
properties data during pre-training, in terms of molecular presentation capability. This indicates
that our proposed contrastive learning framework based on molecular conformational space
similarity descriptors is an efficient strategy for training molecular representation models.
Moreover, we investigated the performance of GeminiMol when solely utilizing the original
GeminiMol encoding as input features for downstream tasks, while keeping the encoder fixed.
Under this configuration of a fixed encoder, GeminiMol exhibits a slight decline in performance.
However, it still outperforms the majority of baseline models in QSAR tasks and surpasses
FP-GNN[35] and certain molecular fingerprints in ADMET tasks (as shown in Extended Fig. 6).
Remarkably, the fixed encoder was trained using only 37,336 molecular structures. This suggests
that our training strategy endows the GeminiMol encoder with robust generalization capabilities.
Additionally, incorporating a more diverse range of molecular structures in future research will
further bolster the performance of GeminiMol.

Related work

322 In recent years, somewhat inspiring works, such as Uni-Mol[11] and GraphMVP[2], have utilized
323 3D structural information in molecular representation models. Two similar conceptualized works,
324 MolCLaSS[15] and CLAPS[36], incorporated physically or pharmacologically relevant molecular
325 similarity labels in contrastive learning. To our knowledge, there is currently a lack of studies
326 incorporating conformational space profiles into molecular representation models.

Discussion

The data quantity and quality pose significant challenges in AI for science. This study
introduces an innovative approach to tackle this predicament, by harnessing highly precise
techniques from molecular simulation to yield training data of superior quality for AI. The primary
objective of this approach is to mitigate the scarcity of high-quality data in deep learning. By
doing so, it facilitates the independent training of molecular representation models, while also
deed as a supplementary data source for other strategies. Through our investigation, we have
unearthed that incorporating descriptors of conformational space similarity can enhance the
model's representative capacity and efficacy in drug discovery. In contrast to similar works, we
have taken great care in our framework design to avoid incorporating information that has already
been considered in other representation methods, such as molecular fingerprints. Instead, we aim
to explore novel means of representation, thereby paving the way for future model improvements.
Target-based drug design is the dominant paradigm in drug discovery in recent years. However,
recent studies have shown that phenotype-based strategies have led to the discovery of the
majority of drugs, and some target-based designed drugs also exert their effects through off-target

interactions[37]. This finding suggests that there is still significant room for application in existing
ligand-based drug design methods, including scaffold hopping and ligand similarity screening.
Our work has revealed potential for improvement in the current molecular representation models,
which inspires us to drive a paradigm shift in drug discovery. With the execution of initiatives
such as Target 2035[38], which focuses on the development of compound probes, similarity-based
target identification is gaining prominence. Alongside advancements in molecular presentation
techniques like GeminiMol, the bio-activities prediction and even the rational design of small
molecules with specific target selectivity based on similarity networks between small molecules
will become a new paradigm in future drug design. This study will also contribute to the fields of
drug-target interaction prediction and drug side effect prediction.

Note that, the conformational space profile is not a panacea for drug discovery. For a portion of
tasks, the 2D structure of a compound already contains sufficient information to establish
structure-activity relationships, rendering the introduction of the conformational space profile
inconsequential for these tasks. Additionally, the absorption, distribution, and metabolism of many
drugs are closely related to the involvement of other biomacromolecules. Therefore, relying solely
on information from small molecule conformational space is not an effective strategy for
addressing such problems. GeminiMol aims to improve existing small molecule representation
methods and provide a practical tool for other downstream tasks, such as protein-ligand affinity
prediction and conditional molecule generation.

Methods

Strain energy analysis for bioactive ligands in PDB

The 6672 conformers obtained from the literature[39] were first evaluated by energy calculations
of the prime module of Schrödinger2021-1, and discarded the 2 conformers that were structurally
implausible. Then, the strain energy analysis was performed by the strain energy rescoring
program of Schrödinger2021-1. The solvent model used in the strain energy calculation procedure
is the 4r distance-dependent dielectric (4RDDD) model and the global conformation searching
method used is MCMM/Low-Mode in the MacroModel module of Schrödinger2021-1. The
resulting strain energy values were divided by the number of rotatable bonds and the number of
heavy atoms of the molecule and normalized, respectively, then, plot the density map in Fig. 1c.
This was done to select an optimal factor to eliminate the effect of molecular size on the strain
energy threshold.

Schemes for CSS descriptors collection

In this study, a workflow was proposed to estimate the CSS descriptors for a pair of small
molecules. As the schematic shown in Extended Fig. 7a, the CSS descriptors was calculated by
three steps: 1) a pair of conformational ensembles were generated under the different strain energy
thresholds and RMSD cutoffs. 2) superimposing the conformational ensemble of the query to
reference molecule. 3) calculating their maximum and minimum molecular shape and
pharmacological similarity to represent the similarity of the conformational space for a pair of
small molecules. The strain energy thresholds for each molecule were determined by multiplying
the number of rotatable bonds and the three threshold factors shown in Fig. 2c.
All the compounds in our dataset were sequentially performed the process of de-redundancy,

ligand preparation, conformational searching and shape superimposition. The MarcoModel
module of Schrödinger2021-2 was employed to search potential conformers of our molecule
dataset. Both MCMM and Low-Mode/MCMM were used as search methods, and the RMSD used
for eliminating redundant conformers was set to 1 or 2 Å. For each molecule, the energy window
was multiplied by the product of strain energy factors and the number of rotatable bonds. The
strain energy factors were three quartiles of the strain energy distribution of bioactive ligands of
PDB (as shown in Fig. 2c), i.e. 0.5060, 1.4806, and 1.9978. The maximum number of steps was
set to 2,000, and 100 per rotatable bond. The pharmacophore mode (-pharm) of PhaseShape[40] was
used for superimposing and similarity scoring the conformers of query molecule to the conformers
of reference molecule. During the preliminary trials, we employed the CPU version of the
PhaseShape module of Schrödinger2021-2 to superpose the generated conformers. During the
training data collection phase, we used the GPU version of PhaseShape to speed up the
computation.

The construction of the miniaturized diversity molecular dataset

Considering the cost involved in sampling CSS descriptors as well as the diversity of the
compound library, we constructed a miniaturized but high-quality compound dataset. As
illustrated in Extended Fig. 7b, this dataset consists of six different subsets of compounds from the
PDB, GPCR Ligand Libraries (GLL, a diverse library of molecules targeting the most
predominant classes of drug targets), the active sets of Demanding Evaluation Kits for Objective
In silico Screening (DEKOIS2), Enamine diversity libraries, Glide decoy molecules library, and
the ChemBridge macrocyclic compounds library. The processed PDB ligands were downloaded
from the literature[39] (4461 unique ligands). The active ligands from the GPCR ligand library
(16513 unique ligands), DEKOIS2.0 (2997 unique ligands), and diversity ligands from Enamine
diversity collection DDS-10 (10214 unique ligands), Glide ligand decoys (1920 unique ligands),
and ChemBridge macrocyclic compounds library (3156 unique ligands) were download from
online databases. Then, we prepared them by the LigPrep module of Schrödinger2021-1.
Molecular SMILES were generated by Schrödinger2021-1.
We further analyzed the structural diversity distribution of these compounds by Self-Organizing
Map (SOM), as shown in Extended Fig. 8, which are fairly uniformly distributed in chemical
space. This map was created using 96 most informative bits of the pairwise fingerprint of
Schrödinger packages, the color gradient within cell population was set to 114 - 1,000, and the
max population set to1,673. We demonstrated the relationship between the molecular structure and
its SOM cell location in Extended Fig. 8 in a human-readable manner, where compounds between
neighboring cells have a similar structure. In the preparation of SOM, the molecular fingerprints
were computed by pairwise fingerprint and the 96 more informative bits were used for the
inference of SOM.

Collecting the CSS descriptors for training and evaluating GeminiMol models

Obviously, using CSS descriptors directly in virtual screening or target identification is an
expensive approach, so it is difficult to compute CSS descriptors on the benchmark dataset to
select the optimal strain energy threshold and RMSD cutoff for generating CSS descriptors.
Therefore, a proof-of-concept study was performed to figure out the optimal strain energy
threshold and RMSD cutoff for generating CSS descriptors. We randomly sampled 600,000

molecule pairs and calculated the shape similarity using the conformers sampled under the
different strain energy and RMSD thresholds as described before. As shown in Extended Fig. 7c,
the growth rate of the conformational space increases in a stepwise manner under different
conformational searching principles, of which MCMM1AM (searched using MCMM under 1 Å
and mean value of strain energy distribution) and LCMS2A1Q (searched using
Low-Mode/MCMM under 2 Å and quartile of strain energy distribution) are two representative
principles, and they belong to one of the two types of principles that produce the most and least
conformations, respectively.

In addition, we analyzed the correlation between MCS similarity and the MaxSim, resulting in a
vast majority of molecular pairs concentrated in an elliptical region as shown in Extended Fig. 9,
whereas the upper right corner representing the region of high 2D similarity and high 3D
similarity are apparent. We named these three areas as downtown, apparent and suburbia,
respectively. Considering this imbalance distribution, we enhanced the sampling from suburbia
area and reduce the sampling from downtown area in the subsequent data sampling.

We selected two different sampling principles (MCMM1A and LCMS2A) for CSS descriptors
collection, and we mapped the CSS descriptors into a matrix (as shown in Extended Fig. 7d). As
illustrated in Extended Fig. 7e, all the compound pairs were categorized according to two
dimensions: 1) training (37336), validation (598), testing (1356), and crossover, and 2) downtown,
suburbia, and apparent (as the ratio 0.30:0.65:0.05). The train, validation and test sets were
divided by the molecular skeleton. For each pair, the indexes of the two molecules were
exchanged to obtain the value of the symmetric position in the matrix, and abandoned this pair if
the symmetric position is null. For the model using SMILES as input, i.e. Cross-Encoder, each
SMILES in the dataset was randomized with a probability of 0.9 for data augmentation. We
performed 10,000 rounds of molecular sampling on the training set, with 3,000 iterations per
round, resulting in a dataset containing 183,391 positive samples with the MaxSim greater than
0.6. Considering the scarcity of samples with dissimilar 2D structures but similar 3D structures, as
shown in the Extended Fig. 9, we extracted all samples from the training set with the MaxSim
greater than 0.6 and not located in apparent regions, totaling 3,356,361 samples. The two sets of
positive samples were then merged, and subsequently, negative samples were randomly selected
from the sampled data with MaxSim less than or equal to 0.6 to complete the dataset, resulting in a
total of 8,000,000 samples. A total of 4501 samples were extracted from the training set, where the
MaxSim is greater than or equal to 0.75 and not located in apparent regions, to be used as an
additional validation set. The validation set was sampled for two rounds, the test set was sampled
for eight rounds, and the cross-validation set was sampled for twenty rounds. The molecule pairs
excluding any molecules present in the training set that had a MaxSim greater than 0.6 and were
not located in apparent regions were used as an additional independent test set.

Tokenizers of the Cross-Encoder

The tokenizer used in this work is a Byte-Pair Encoding (BPE) tokenizer[41], which vocabularies
were obtained by segmenting the SMILES of the compounds in our dataset, and the last is a list of
the common words that make up the SMILES, as determined by inspection by hand. These
tokenizers all include at least the basic elements that make up a pharmaceutical small molecule,
such as, C, N, O, S, P, c, n, o, s, F, Cl, Br, I, basic chemical bonds and isomer labels, such as, "=",
"@", "/", "\", and "#", as well as other special symbols, such as brackets and numbers.

The details of the Cross-Encoder

We employed the AutoGluon[19] framework to re-training the small version of the ELECTRA[20]

model (named SmELECTRA) using the hyperparameters as follow: learning rate is 0.001, weight

decay is 0.001, learning rate schedule is cosine decay with 0.9, and the first 0.2 epoch was set to

warmup steps. We confirmed ELECTRA's superior performance in chemical languages in a

previous study[42]. In these models, the CSS descriptor decoders are single linear layers. The

training process was performed for a maximum of 20 epochs, and validated every 0.1 epoch, and

up to three checkpoint models with the highest R^2 on the validation set were stored. Finally, the

top three models were fused by the greedy soup method and the final model was generated.

For CrossShape, we utilize the API provided by AutoGluon to extract conformational space

encoding features. In AutoGluon, text is embedded separately and then concatenated together

before being input into the model, allowing for cross-attention between texts. To prevent the

model from simply counting the same tokens in both texts to predict similarity, we apply

randomization to the input SMILES to enhance the data. This randomization is also used during

the feature extraction process. Specifically, for the molecule from which we want to extract

features, its canonical SMILES is placed in the position of the query molecule, while a

randomized SMILES is generated and placed in the position of the reference molecule.

Graph-Featurizers of the Binary-Encoder

We employed a specific graph featurization approach. The featurization process involves

capturing diverse aspects of atoms and bonds within the molecular structure, which is crucial for

accurately representing the chemical properties and interactions. For atom featurization, we

utilized a base atom featurizers that incorporates multiple atom descriptors. These descriptors

include atom type, atom hybridization, atom formal charge, atom chiral tag, whether the atom is in

a ring, and whether the atom is aromatic. Each descriptor provides valuable information about the

atom's characteristics and its role in the molecular system. To combine these descriptors, we

employed a concatenation featurizers, which concatenates the individual featurizers into a single

feature vector. On the other hand, for bond featurization, we employed the canonical bond

featurizers. This featurizers focuses on the bond type as the primary descriptor. The bond type

indicates the nature of the chemical bond between two connected atoms and plays a crucial role in

determining the molecular properties and interactions.

The architecture details and training regimens for GeminiMol

The overall architecture of GeminiMol is illustrated in Extended Fig. 3. In the Binary-Encoder

module, molecules are transformed into molecular graphs and subsequently encoded

independently. The encoded vectors are then extracted using a specified readout function. In this

study, we tested two main variations of the GeminiMol architecture, primarily differing in the way

the encoded vectors are read out from the molecular graph and the structure of the molecular

graph itself. For the GeminiMol model, the readout function is a multi-layer perceptron that takes

node features as input and computes their mean value. For the GeminiMol-MOD model, we

replaced the readout function with the weighted maximum and sum of node features. In the

GeminiMol model, the WLN graph consists of 4 layers, and the node dimensionality is set to 2048.

Due to CUDA memory limitations, in the GeminiMol-MOD model, we increased the number of

layers to 12 while reducing the node dimensionality to 1024, as a replacement for the

2048-dimensional nodes in GeminiMol. In the ablation experiments, dropping the layer number
means decreasing the WLN layers to 2, while dropping the node features means decreasing the
WLN node features to 1024 dimensions.

The projection head of the Binary-Encoder employed in our study is designed to transform the
learned GeminiMol encoding into meaningful output predictions. The network consists of a series
of fully connected layers with non-linear activation functions and additional normalization and
dropout layers to enhance its learning capabilities and prevent overfitting. The input to the CSS
similarity projection head is two encoding vectors from query and reference molecules. The
encoding vector first passes through a rectifier component, which expands the features to five
times the dimension of the original encoding vector, batch normalization, and then reduces it to
1024 dimensions. Subsequently, the features gradually pass through linear layers of different sizes,
reducing from 1024 dimensions to 128 dimensions and repeating this process three times. Finally,
it outputs a value that is reset to the range of 0-1 through a sigmoid neuron in the projection head.
The LeakyReLU activation function is added between all linear layers in the projection head. In
the ablation experiment, a subset of models had the rectifier removed. For this subset, the
encoding vector was directly reduced to 256 dimensions, and batch normalization was applied.
Subsequently, the output was further reduced to 1 dimension after passing through LeakyReLU.

For all GeminiMol models, we use the AdamW optimizer and a learning rate of 0.0001 for
Binary-Encoder training. The weighted MSELoss (Mean Squared Error Loss) function was used.
In each training epoch, the training data was randomly rearranged and sampled 512 pairs per batch.
We used two learning rate adjustment strategies during the training stage. First, the learning rate
was gradually increased at the beginning of training. Second, we use cosine learning rate
scheduling, which adjusts the learning rate according to the progress of the training steps to avoid
falling into local optimal solutions. The starting learning rate of warmup is set to 0.1 times the
original learning rate, which gradually increases to the original learning rate after 30,000 steps,
and the minimum learning rate in the cosine learning rate schedule is 0.5 times the original
learning rate, with a period of 10,000 steps. In addition, an early stopping strategy was used to
determine whether the model converges by monitoring the performance on the validation set per
500 steps and terminating the training prematurely if there is no performance improvement in 50
validations iterations.

The measurement of molecular similarity in this work

We introduce proprietary definitions of similarity when evaluating the similarity of three objects:
the 2D structures and the 3D conformational spaces between molecules, and the coding vectors of
the GeminiMol model, respectively. In this work, we denote the query molecule A and the
reference molecule B using A and B. We use N to denote the number of molecular bonds and the
size of the encoded vector. In the following Equation 1 for representing the similarity of maximal
common substructures (MCS), N_{bonds}^{MCS} represents the number of bonds in the MCS, and thus,
Similarity$_{MCS(A,B)}$ represents the proportion of the structure overlapping between the two
molecules to the structure of the smaller molecule. Matching of element types is not strictly
required when calculating the MCS.

$\text{Similarity}_{MCS(A,B)} = \dfrac{N_{bonds}^{MCS}}{\min\{N_{bonds}^{A}, N_{bonds}^{B}\}}$ Equation 1

Besides that, the conformational space similarity for molecular pairs is represented by four

metrics, which are represented based on the minimum and maximum similarity of the
conformational space under two different strain energy thresholds. Among them, MaxSim is the
maximum value of all similarities, MaxDistance is the minimum value of these similarities,
MaxOverlap is one-half of the sum of MaxSim and MaxDistance, and MaxAggregation is
one-half of the sum of the maximum similarities under both strain energy thresholds. In this paper,
replacing "Max" with "Cross" in the names of these similarities means half of the sum of the
similarities of molecules A to B and B to A. That is also referred to as the cross-similarity between
the two molecules, which corresponds to the previous biased similarity. For cross-similarities, the
similarity of A to B and B to A are identical, while for biased similarity, they are different. For
example, Tanimoto similarity is a cross-similarity, while Tversky is a biased similarity.

Building upon the obtained conformational space encoding, the calculation of similarity
between conformational space encodings using the vector similarity method described earlier can
better describe the distances between molecules in latent space. This can be applied to various
problems such as virtual screening, target identification, and scaffold hopping. For the encoding
vector A of the query molecule and the encoding vector B of the reference molecule, we compute
their RMSE similarity, cosine similarity, Pearson's correlation coefficient, Euclidean similarity,
Manhattan similarity, and Kullback-Leibler (KI) divergence similarity by using Equations 2-5
below.

$$\text{Similarity}_{RMSE(A,B)} = 1 - \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N_{encoding}}(A_i - B_i)^2}{N_{encoding}}} \quad \text{Equation 2}$$

$$\text{Similarity}_{Cosine(A,B)} = \frac{A \cdot B}{(|A| \times |B|)} \quad \text{Equation 3}$$

$$\text{Similarity}_{Pearson(A,B)} = \frac{cov(A,B)}{(stddev(A) \times stddev(B))} \quad \text{Equation 4}$$

$$\text{Similarity}_{Manhattan(A,B)} = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{N_{encoding}}|A - B| \quad \text{Equation 5}$$

The Binary-Encoder independently encodes each molecule, allowing for a reliable calculation
of the similarity between the encodings of two molecules, which in turn represents the similarity
between the molecules themselves. This approach ensures a convincing representation of
molecular conformational space encoding similarity.

Collecting benchmark datasets for drug discovery

In this work, we selected the DUD-E[22] and LIT-PCBA[23] as the benchmark datasets of zero-shot
virtual screening. Of these, DUD-E contained 102 targets and LIT-PCBA contained 15 targets.
The molecular fingerprints were used in the decoy's generation of DUD-E[22] to avoid the
production of "active" decoys, thus the superior performance of molecular fingerprints on DUD-E
is well deserved, similarly, it same goes for the molecular docking and ligand similarity-based
methods. In the LIT-PCBA[23], both the active and decoy molecules were obtained from
high-throughput screening, and the performance of all methods decreased substantially on this
benchmark. For each target, DUD-E provides a reference molecule and LIT-PCBA provides
several reference molecules. In the benchmark testing of LIT-PCBA, each target has multiple lead
compounds that can serve as reference molecules. We calculate the similarity of all reference
molecules to query molecules and select the highest similarity score as the final score for each

query molecule.

In the scenario of evaluating virtual screening capabilities, DUD-E is a much easier task
compared to LIT-PCBA, mainly due to the relatively fixed proportion of negative and positive
compounds in DUD-E and the greater structural variations. However, it is very rare to encounter
tasks as "standardized" as DUD-E in drug discovery, and it is common to encounter tasks as
challenging as LIT-PCBA, in particular, compound activity cliffs, complex mechanisms of action,
and large differences in the proportion of active compounds in different tasks. Therefore,
LIT-PCBA is considered the main virtual screening benchmark test set in our study.

We processed the data in BindingDB to produce the zero-shot target identification benchmark
dataset (as shown in Extended Fig. 10). In drug discovery, identifying the targets of active drugs is
a challenging task, and the ligand similarity-based methods are the dominant approach in this field.
However, the computational method is not necessary for molecules with apparently similar
chemical structures (as illustrated in Extended Fig. 10a). As shown in Extended Fig. 10b, our
benchmark dataset was produced by collecting decoy ligands with activity data entries over 300
and heavy atom numbers greater than or equal to 12 from BindingDB. For each ligand, we

removed targets with binding affinities greater than 10 μM and also removed all ligands with

MCS similarity greater than 0.5 to mimic real-world scenarios in which no similar structure
compounds could be found from the bioactive database. Subsequently, we further refined the
initial set of 176 decoy ligands by selecting only those ligands that targeted more than 70 receptors.
This refined subset, consisting of 54 decoy ligands, was designated as the refined TIBD. The
refined TIBD formulation comprises decoy molecules with diverse chemical structures, such as
macrocyclic compounds like Ruboxistaurin, as well as Chlorpromazine (FDA-approved drug)
with a single ring system, and natural product Quercetin. Using Dendritic molecular fingerprint
and Tanimoto similarity, the heatmaps display that there is low similarity among most molecules
in TIBD, indicating a high diversity of decoy molecules (as shown in Extended Fig. 10c). In our
experiments, we used the decoy ligand to compare with all bioactive ligands in the
decoy-specificity library and the targets extracted by matched ligands were used to analyze the
ROC or enrichment factors (as shown in Extended Fig. 10d), so the final performance shows the
performance of the different methods for discovering the targets but not bioactive ligands.

In addition, we have elaborated QSAR benchmark datasets corresponding to three different
downstream tasks, including 21 single-target datasets from PubChem BioAssays[43] database and
LIT-PCBA[23], 73 cell line datasets from the National Cancer Institute Developmental Therapeutics
Program (NCI/DTP)[44], and 34 classification and 12 regression datasets of the Adsorption,
Distribution, Metabolism, Excretion and Toxicity (ADMET) properties from Therapeutics Data
Commons (TDC)[45] and a drug addictive dataset from the literature[46]. As mentioned above,
datasets such as TDC[45] and LIT-PCBA[23] provide an avenue to evaluate molecular representation
models in real-world application scenarios. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these datasets
are predominantly influenced by target-based drug design approaches, resulting in a dearth of
comprehensive mechanism-based phenotypic drug activity data. Most of the available QSAR
datasets are derived from activity data specific to certain protein targets. Our benchmark datasets
incorporated a total of 73 cell line datasets from NCI/DTP to investigate the performance of
molecular representation models in multi-target QSAR tasks.

In this study, all training, validation, and test sets were divided using the molecular skeleton.

For all datasets from TDC, we used the default scaffold split method to split the dataset (20% of
data were held out for the test set). For other datasets from PubChem Bioassay, we used the
Murcko Scaffold extractor provided by RDKit to identify the skeletons, the training and test sets
were split according to the skeleton in a ratio of 7:3, where one-tenth of the data in the training set
was used as the validation set. For the asymmetric validation embedding (AVE) division provided
by LIT-PCBA, the training sets for per targets were also divided into training and validation using
the molecular skeleton in a ratio of 7:3.

In this study, a variety of statistical metrics were employed to evaluate the performance of
different methods. The area under the receiver operating characteristic curve (AUROC), the
Boltzmann-enhanced discrimination of receiver operating characteristic (BEDROC), and
enrichment factors with coefficients of 0.01%, 0.05%, 0.1%, 0.5%, and 1% were used to ranking
problem, the AUROC and the area under Precision-Recall curve (AUPRC) were used to binary
classification problem, the root-mean-square deviation (RMSE), the mean squared error (MSE),
the mean absolute error (MAE), the Pearson correlation coefficient, and the Spearman correlation
coefficient were employed to a regression problem. In most cases, BEDROC for ranking, AUROC
for classification, and Spearman correlation coefficient for regression were the preferred metrics.
Among them, BEDROC with α set to 160.9 was chosen, corresponding to $EF_{1\%}$ [47].

The zero-shot virtual screening and target identification were considered as ranking problem[47].
QSAR-based virtual screening tasks, i.e., seven QSAR datasets from LIT-PCBA, and the

high-throughput assays data of CRF-R2, CBFn-RUNX1, NF-κB, Peg3, ARNT-TAC3, A1

Apoptosis, uPA, Rango, Vif-APOBEC3G, RGS12, HSD17B4, and HADH2 from PubChem
BioAssays[43] database, NCI cell lines, drug addictive, and the classification tasks of ADMET were
considered as the classification problem. The regression tasks of ADMET were considered as the
regression problem.

Collecting competitive baseline methods on these benchmark datasets

Over the past twenty years, various molecular representation methods have been developed to
represent the features of pharmaceutical small molecules, including molecular fingerprints[48–50],
pharmacophores[51–53], and molecular shapes[54–57], which have continuously driven the technological
development and the paradigm revolution of drug discovery. The molecular fingerprint is the most
popular molecular representation method, which has been continuously updated since its proposal
in the last century and is still the most dominant method of molecular representation[58]. Besides,
the physics-based methods, including pharmacophores and molecular shape-based methods, such
as AutoPH4[59], ROCS[60], and PhaseShape[40], enable simultaneous presentation of both the geometric
shape and pharmacophoric features of molecules, allowing for numerical calculations to compare
the similarity between molecules. These similarity computation methods are highly interpretable,
can be applied to a wide range of chemical structure types, and have enabled practical applications
during the past twenty years. In this study, we introduce molecular fingerprints and PhaseShape as
baseline methods to evaluate the performance of GeminiMol on zero-shot tasks.

To evaluate the virtual screening and target identification performance of our models, we first
benchmarked the performance of 8 different molecular fingerprints (for all benchmark tasks) and 8
different similarity metrics (only for virtual screening and target identification) in RDKit[61] on the
benchmark datasets. This is done to preserve the bioactive conformers of the reference molecules.

For Tversky similarity, we tried setting α to 0.01, 0.50, and 0.99, respectively. The performance of
different combinations of molecular fingerprints and similarity metrics varies significantly across
different targets and tasks. As researchers in drug discovery, we often desire a method that exhibits
stable performance rather than having to speculate which similarity metric would work best for a
particular project before it begins. Therefore, in this study, we aim to test specific combinations of
individual molecular fingerprints and individual similarity evaluation methods, with the hope of
obtaining a method that demonstrates stable performance across various tasks and can make
accurate predictions. Besides, PhaseShape was also benchmarked on DUD-E[22] and LIT-PCBA[23],
for the reference molecule structures required by PhaseShape, we utilize the protein preparation
module in the Schrödinger software package for preprocessing.

The AutoGluon[62], an AutoML framework, was employed for QSAR and ADMET benchmarks
of different molecular representation approaches. We employ it for decoder network selection
without stacking, bagging, and hyperparameters trials, with the purpose of comparing the
performance of their optimal decoder to avoid the bias caused by the downstream decoder network.
Candidate models include CatBoost[63], LightGBM[41], and neural network with PyTorch backend.
The validation metric using AUROC for binary classification and RMSE for regression,
respectively. It is worth noting that in this study, we did not use the hyperparameter searching of
AutoGluon. Instead, we simply utilized AutoGluon to search for some commonly used model
architectures without conducting hyperparameter tuning. The motivation behind this approach was
to reduce the cost of benchmark testing while disregarding potential improvements from tricks.

In addition, we have incorporated a PropDecoder network act as decoder in QSAR and ADMET
benchmarks, which has a similar architecture to the projection head in the GeminiMol network.
The selection of validation metrics for PropDecoder depends on the type of dataset. For datasets
with a positive/negative sample ratio greater than 3 or less than one-third, the AUPRC is used.
Otherwise, the AUROC is employed. For regression tasks, the Spearman correlation coefficient is
utilized. In terms of loss functions, for all classification tasks, the loss is calculated by taking the
mean of BCELoss (Binary Cross-Entropy Loss) and MSELoss. Similar to the training process of
the GeminiMol network, the AdamW optimizer is utilized during the training of PropDecoder. To
adapt to varying dataset sizes, the complexity of the model, learning rate, and number of epochs
are dynamically adjusted. For larger datasets, a larger learning rate, more complex network
architecture, larger batch sizes, and fewer epochs are employed. Conversely, for smaller datasets, a
smaller learning rate, simpler network architecture, smaller batch sizes, and more epochs are
utilized.

Besides, FP-GNN[35] and Uni-Mol were also benchmarked on all of the QSAR and ADMET
tasks. For Uni-Mol, the data set splitting follows the same scheme as the molecular fingerprints
and our models, the validation metrics and all hyperparameters are left at their default settings. For
FP-GNN[35], the data set splitting, validation metrics, and all hyperparameters are left at their
default settings.

Data availability

All related data are freely available from public sources. The molecular database, training data,
and pre-trained models in this work were stored in Zenodo repository (10.5281/zenodo.10273480).
The BioAssay ID and descriptions of the dataset can be found in Extended Table 1, while the
statistical metrics for virtual screening and target identification benchmark tests are presented in

Extended Table 2. Additionally, the statistical metrics for QSAR and ADMET benchmark tests can

be found in Extended Table 3.

Code availability

721   Source code for the GeminiMol model, trained weights, training and inference script are

722   available under an open-source license at our GitHub repository

723   (https://github.com/Wang-Lin-boop/GeminiMol), Neural networks were developed with PyTorch

724   (pytorch.org), AutoGluon (auto.gluon.ai), and DGL-Life (lifesci.dgl.ai).

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Acknowledgments

We appreciate the technical support provided by the engineers of the high-performance computing cluster of ShanghaiTech University. Lin Wang also thanks Jianxin Duan, Gaokeng Xiao, Quanwei Yu, Zheyuan Shen, Shenghao Dong, Huiqiong Li, Zongquan Li, and Fenglei Li for providing technical support, inspiration and help for this work. We appreciate the developers of AutoGluon and Deep Graph Library (DGL). This work was supported by National Key R&D Program of China (Grant IDs: 2022YFC3400501 & 2022YFC3400500), Shanghai Science and Technology Development Funds (Grant IDs: 20QA1406400 and 22ZR1441400), Lingang Laboratory (Grant ID: LG202102-01–03), the National Natural Science Foundation of China (No 82003654), start-up package from ShanghaiTech University, and Shanghai Frontiers Science Center for Biomacromolecules and Precision Medicine at ShanghaiTech University.

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Contributions

L. W. and F. B. conceived the idea. L. W. designed the models, collected and tested all fingerprints, wrote the code, and performed the experiments. S. W. tested the baseline methods. S. W., H. Y., X. W., Y. Z., S. T., L. L., and S. L. contributed to data collection, case studies, and insightful discussion. All authors join in the preparation of the manuscript. The Large Language Models (GitHub Copilot, ChatGPT, and Claude) helped with a few touches to paper, and generated partial code.

Ethics declarations

Competing interests

The authors claim no competing interests.

Supplementary information

Supplementary Data

Extended Table 1. | General description of QSAR benchmark datasets used in this work.

Extended Table 2. | Statistical data of all molecular fingerprints, CrossEncoder and GeminiMol models in virtual screening and target identification benchmarks.

Extended Table 3. | Statistical data of all molecular fingerprints, CrossEncoder and GeminiMol models in QSAR and ADMET benchmark tasks.

Extended Data Figures

Extended Figure 1. | The overall workflow in this work. In this schematic diagram, the gray blocks represent physics-based data collection and proof-of-concept study, the blue blocks represent model training, and the green blocks represent benchmark testing on different downstream tasks.

Extended Figure 2. | The CSS descriptors. The degree of similarity between the most similar conformations of molecules is represented by MaxSim, while MaxDistance represents the similarity of the most dissimilar conformations between molecules. The mean value of MaxSim and MaxDistance, referred to as MaxOverlap, is used to estimate the distance from any conformation of the molecule to the most similar conformation. The mean value of maxiaum similarity under two strain energies is regarded as the proximity of the conformational spaces of

905   the two molecules.

Extended Figure 3. | The Binary-Encoder architectures of GeminiMol. Molecules are fed into
the network as graphs and encoded independently, where atoms are encoded as nodes and bonds
are encoded as edges. Straight Arrows show the information flow among the various network
components described in this paper. The highlighted 2D structures represent maximal topological
common substructures (ignoring elemental differences). The dimensions of the feature vectors
between the different network layers are labelled in parentheses.

**Extended Figure 4. | The virtual screening performance comparison of PhaseShape and our
models.** The portion highlighted in red dashed lines represents the similarity metrics of the GeminiMol
encoding.

Extended Figure 5. | The comparative performance of the GeminiMol model and molecular fingerprints was evaluated across four different downstream tasks. a, Target-based QSAR. The data for this task was sourced from the PubChem BioAssay database and LIT-PCBA. All activity data exhibits dose-response relationships and is associated with specific target proteins. **b,** ADMET classification task. **c,** Cell-based QSAR task. This task focuses on QSAR modeling using data from 73 cancer cell lines obtained from NCI/DTP. **d,** ADMET regression task.

Extended Figure 6. | The impact of freezing encoder on the performance of GeminiMol for QSAR and ADMET tasks. a, The QSAR performance comparsion of freezing GeminiMol encoder with other methods. **b,** The ADMET performance comparsion of freezing GeminiMol encoder with other methods.

Conformational Space Shape (CSS) Similarity data collection pipeline

Extended Figure 7. | The data collection workflow of CSS descriptors. **a,** The flowchart illustrates
the process of comparing the molecular CSS between two molecules. **b,** Source and size of molecular
databases in this study. **c,** As the number of molecules increases, the differences in the number of
molecular conformations under different sampling principles exhibit a stepwise growth pattern. The
molecular order on the X-axis is fixed. **d,** Heatmap analysis reveals the diversity of the molecular
dataset in this study. The two heatmaps on the left and right represent the MCS similarity and MaxSim
similarity, respectively, which represent the 2D structural similarity and 3D structural similarity. **e,**
Upon calculating the CSS, the obtained CSS descriptors under different conditions are then populated
into a single matrix. Subsequently, symmetrically extracted CSS descriptors from the matrix are
employed for the training, validation, and testing of the model.

Extended Figure 8. | The SOM for visualizing the distribution of molecular structures in the
compound dataset used in this work. The shown molecules were randomly selected from the cells.
The SOM was created by 96 most informative bits of the pairwise fingerprint, and color gradient within
cell population 114 - 1,000, the max population is 1,673.

Extended Figure 9. | Relationship between MaxSim and MCS similarity scores for the molecule
pairs in the preliminary experiment. The plot utilizes an ellipse to define a region with a high density
of molecule pairs, and a sector to define a region with high MCS similarity and MaxSim values. During
the training data sampling, different weights are assigned to these two regions, along with the
remaining regions, to achieve balanced data sampling.

Extended Figure 10. | Motivation, process, and testing methods for the preparation of benchmark target identification dataset. a, For target identifying, query molecules with 2D analogues are easier to study. Therefore, ensuring that the compound-target relationship database does not contain 2D analogues of query molecules can better reflect the real-world scenarios in target identification tasks. **b,** Process for preparing the benchmark testing dataset. **c,** The fingerprint similarity heatmap of decoys. **d,** Proposed evaluation scheme for target fishing methods in this study. d, the heatmap of fingerprint similarities for all TIBD decoys. The similarity metrics is Tanimoto.

a

2D MCS

Fingerprint

[0, 1]

3D Shape

b

Imatinib

K_D = 39 nM

3.545 kcal/mol

NMOR2

2.707 kcal/mol K_D = 137 nM

2.004 kcal/mol

K_D = 0.7 nM

ABL

DDR1

15.970 kcal/mol

K_D = 153 nM

PPARG

c

Strain_RB is $\frac{\Delta G_{\text{Strain}}}{N_{\text{RotatableBonds}}}$

1$^{\text{st}}$ Quartile = 0.5060 kcal/mol
Upper 95% CI of Mean = 1.4806 kcal/mol
3$^{\text{rd}}$ Quartile = 1.9978 kcal/mol

StrainRB
StrainHA
Strain

Density

Standardized Strain Energy

d

Rigid

Flexibility

High flexibility

Energy

Strain Energy
Threshold

Min Conf. Simi.

Max Conf. Simi.

Molecule A
Molecule B

Molecular Conformation Space

a

Cross Encoder

Molecule A | Molecule B
Cross-Encoder
Similarity Decoder

Binary Encoder

Molecule A → Encoder
Molecule B → Encoder
Similarity Decoder

b

Molecular Encoder

GeminiMol Encoding → Applications

Pre-training Task

Contrastive Learning

2D Similarity   3D Similarity

Common Sub-structure   Conformational Space

c

Reference Ligand → Compound Library → Lead Compound

Virtual Screening

Query Compound → Drug-Target Interaction Library → Targets with Hit Analogs

Target Identification

Compound Structure
Molecular Descriptor
Label → Model → Query Compound → Predicted Label

QSAR

DATASET
➢ **A**bsorption
➢ **D**istribution
➢ **M**etabolism
➢ **E**xcretion
➢ **T**oxicity
Modeling → Virtual manikin → Query Compound → Predicted Properties

ADMET