

评述与展望

Review and Progress

分子动力学模拟在核酸研究领域的应用

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摘要 由于受时间和空间分辨率的限制, 用于研究生物大分子的实验技术不能得到体系具体分子的运动性质。基于经典物理理论的分子动力学模拟, 采用全原子力场, 可以计算分子的运动轨迹, 进而对体系进行整体及细化分析。随着核酸、蛋白等分子力场的开发, 分子动力学模拟在核酸研究中的应用也越来越多。本综述列举了分子动力学模拟在核酸研究领域的成功应用, 指出目前该技术的局限性以及对其所做的改进, 并对分子动力学模拟在核酸领域的应用前景做了展望。

关键词 分子动力学模拟, 核酸, 应用

The Application of Molecular Dynamics Simulations in Nucleic Acids

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Abstract Due to the limitations of spatial and temporal resolutions, it was hard for experimental techniques to provide dynamical information of specific molecules. Through the molecular dynamics simulation based on classical physics, and with the help of all-atom force fields, molecular trajectories could be deduced and the integral and detailed analysis of the system could be carried out. With the development of the force fields, especially those related to nucleic acids and amino acids, there were the increasing applications of classical molecular dynamics (CMD) simulations in nucleic-acid related researches. In this review, we presented the successful applications of CMD simulations in nucleic-acid studies, its limitations and improvement. Finally, we made a clear prospect of CMD simulations in the field of nucleic-acid related research.

Keywords Molecular dynamics simulations, Nucleic acids, Application

作为生命体重要的生物大分子之一, 核酸承载着生命体的遗传物质, 参与生物体内代谢过程, 是所有已知生物体的基本组成成分。核酸是一种具有序列特异性的生物分子, 这种特异性导致了其结构的灵活性以及功能的多样性, 这就增加了研究核酸结构并阐明其功能的难度。虽然有各种各样的实验技术被用于核酸生物大分子的研究, 但是均受到空间

和时间分辨率的限制, 只能针对整体给出平均性质, 不能给出具体单个分子的运动性质。

分子模拟方法的出现为生物大分子的研究提供了新的技术指导, 目前模拟这种分子运动的标准方法是分子动力学模拟技术。分子动力学模拟通过全原子力场来计算作用于每个原子上的力, 并运用经典物理学理论确定每一个原子随时间变化的位置和

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速度,进而得出其运动轨迹。力场是基于经典物理或拟合量子力学参数以及实验数据的理论模型。虽然分子动力学模拟不能直接表达内在的真实物理模型,但是能对研究的生物化学过程提供一个十分接近的近似。因此这一技术可以用于核酸的研究,对反应中核酸的结构变化及运动性质进行描述,为实验提供解释甚至指导。在过去的几年中我们见证了分子动力学模拟在核酸领域的巨大发展。

本研究主要列举了近些年分子动力学模拟在核酸研究中的成功应用,以及该技术的局限性及发展,并对分子动力学模拟在核酸领域的应用前景做一个展望。

1 分子动力学模拟在核酸研究中的应用

近些年,分子动力学模拟在核酸研究领域得到了很大发展与进步,这主要得益于用快速高效的方法处理长程静电相互作用,计算机的并行计算以及力场的不断改进。

据现有研究报道,应用分子动力学模拟研究的核酸范围十分广泛,从常规的双螺旋结构(Lavery et al., 2010)、寡核苷酸(Krepl et al., 2012; Henriksen et al., 2013; Bergonzo et al., 2014)、发夹结构(Banáš et al., 2010; Chen and García, 2013)到中等体系的核酸序列(核酶,核糖开关,rRNA片段等)(Rhodes et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2008; Villa et al., 2009; Jung and Schlick, 2014),再到核小体(Roccatano et al., 2007; Portella et al., 2013)与核糖体(Sanbonmatsu et al., 2005; Trabuco et al., 2010)均有报道,而且对核酸的研究越来越趋向于复杂体系。同时,对核酸结构特性和功能的研究也在进行,例如核酸结构的环境依赖性(Rhodes et al., 2006)、核酸与离子的相互作用等(Lee et al., 2008)。

2 局限性及发展

对于分子动力学模拟最大的优势在于,随着反应时间的推移,可以对体系所有分子的三维结构和运动性质进行十分细化的描述,甚至包括所有水分子和离子的运动位置变化。这使得人们可以更直观透彻的了解反应的进行,这一点是现在的实验技术所无法达到的。然而,分子动力学模拟也面临着两大主要限制。第一,现有应用于生物分子的力场包括很多近似项。这种近似性使得模拟结果会随着模拟时间的延长而与预期发生偏离。第二,与生物体内的动态反应相比,所能模拟的时间十分短暂,限制了分子动力学模拟的适应范围。例如,生物体内碱基对的打开过程或者DNA

呼吸需要微秒到毫秒的时间级别(Guéron et al., 1987; Dornberger et al., 1999; Wärmländer et al., 2002);再如生物分子的折叠所需时间从毫秒到天不等(Lane et al., 2008)。

在过去的几年里人们在核酸力场的方面做了很多改进与发展。在之前,只有小分子的力场参数来源于量子力学计算以及实验数据。现在,越来越多的量子力学计算结果和实验数据被应用于核酸分子的动力学模拟,这既增加了模拟的速度,也增加了准确性。虽然力场函数的基本形式未改变,但是对它们的参数做了大量的修改。例如,对于最早应用于核酸的AMBER力场,在核酸分子的一些二面角扭曲、骨架扭曲方面做了大量的调整(Wang et al., 2000; Perez et al., 2007; Banáš et al., 2010; Zgarbova et al., 2011)。RNA的CHARMM力场在2'-OH处对二面角参数也进行了大量的修改,来抑制RNA模拟时的不稳定性(Denning et al., 2011)。另外,最近有报道在B-DNA模拟中,DNA分子结构中的 ϵ/ζ 2个二面角参数被调整以保证B/B₂亚态的动态平衡(Hart et al., 2012)。

除了力场的改进外,对软硬件的改良也延长了分子动力学模拟时间。例如,硬件方面GPU的使用,NAMD、GROMACS和AMBER等软件大大提高了其计算上的并行能力,以及对系统采用粗粒化模型等都加快了模拟速度。

3 前景展望

分子动力学模拟在研究体系的特定问题(如研究反应运动性)时,比实验容易得多。同时,实验也在模拟方法中扮演着重要的角色,实验不仅可以用来对模拟的正确性进行验证,而且还可以为模拟方法的改进提供依据。随着实验数据和量子力学计算结果的不引入,会发展出更精确的、适应于各种体系的力场函数。并且随着计算机技术的发展,模拟时间尺度会不断延长,采样数目不断增多。在研究内容上,据上面介绍,分子动力学模拟已用于核糖体核小体等复杂体系的研究,另外,对核酸-蛋白质复合物的模拟研究也已成为热点(Mackerell and Nilsson, 2008; Sponer et al., 2014),并取得了很好的成果,未来对这种复合体的研究还会不断深入。综合该技术的优良特点,未来对核酸的分子动力学模拟研究会不断拓展到相关的各个交叉领域,研究内容也会越来越多,越来越广。

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