



# Adsorption of 40 low molecular weight drugs on pristine and fluorinated C<sub>60</sub> fullerenes: *Ab initio*, statistical and neural networks analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Loading of 40 small drugs molecules with molecular weights in 47–210 g/mol range consisted of H, C, N, O, F, S elements on C<sub>60</sub>, C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>48</sub> fullerenes are studied with the density functional theory. Adsorption energies as well as deformation energies of fullerenes and drugs are calculated. The C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>2</sub> is recognized as the most active drugs adsorbent. Mean adsorption energies averaged over all considered drugs are 0.41, 0.59 and 0.54 eV with standard deviations of 0.10, 0.09 and 0.14 eV for C<sub>60</sub>, C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>48</sub> fullerenes, respectively. Mean energies of drug-induced deformations of C<sub>60</sub>, C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>48</sub> are 8.6, 12.0 and 16.6 meV, respectively. Multilinear regressions and neural networks were proposed for prediction of adsorption energies based on dipole moments and frontier molecular orbitals of the drugs. Achievable accuracy of such predictions is about 0.1 eV. Altretamine antibiotic is recognized as the notable drug possessing extremely high binding energies about 1 eV with fullerenes. Infrared spectral shifts due to its loading on fullerene carriers are calculated.

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## 1. Introduction

Carbon fullerene C<sub>60</sub> is regarded as a promise basis for drugs carrier systems. This fullerene is a stable bio comparable nanoparticle with well-defined structure and suitable diameter of about 0.7 nm. It is non-toxic and even has a positive effect on human health [1]. The presence of sp<sup>2</sup>-hybridized carbon atoms provides wide opportunities for functionalization and thus tuning the solubility of the fullerene. The stable skeleton is suitable for embedding of heteroatoms, which act as adsorption centers and provide reliable adhesion to small molecules. In recent years, researchers have examined the interaction of C<sub>60</sub> fullerene and its derivatives with dozens of drugs. *In vitro* experiments confirmed that some anticancer drugs loaded on C<sub>60</sub> are much more efficient compared to the same drugs disconnected from the fullerene [2]. Muz *et al.* concluded that BN-doped fullerene is a suitable carrier for favipiravir, a widely used anti-COVID medicament [3]. Esrafil and Khan

reported that alkali metals doped C<sub>60</sub> possesses moderate interaction with popular anticancer drug 5-fluorouracil, and assumed its appropriate releasing due to protonation inside the tumor [4]. Fouejio *et al.* found the pristine C<sub>60</sub> to be suitable for delivery of dihydroartemisinin and improving its suitability [5]. Parlak *et al.* proposed Si-doped C<sub>60</sub> for delivery of nornupiravir and for detecting this antivirus drug at water environment [6]. Wang *et al.* recognized Si, B and Al-doped C<sub>60</sub> as promising carriers for hydroxyurea delivery [7]. Neal *et al.* reported enhancing the polarity of C<sub>60</sub> due to loading of some anticancer antibiotics [8]. Nouraliei *et al.* considered C<sub>60</sub> as well as smaller C<sub>30</sub> and larger C<sub>90</sub> fullerenes as the carriers of phenelzine and ins derivatives [9]. Many other studies were dedicated to interaction of C<sub>60</sub> with different drugs, including 6-mercaptopurine [10], curcumin [11], endophytic fungus [12], fluoroquinolone antibiotic [13], oxadiazole [14] and amphetamine [15].

Fluorinated fullerenes are of particular interest for drug delivery applications. Attention to them is explained by the advantages of fluorine, which have recently been demonstrated by the example of fluorinated graphene. Involving of fluorine into delivery system

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provides its high near infrared absorbance and the possibility of effective photothermal therapy, as well as better drugs loading due to strong non-covalent interaction [16,17]. Ultra-small soluble flakes of fluorinated graphene demonstrates switchable fluorescence as well as controlled and pH-responsive drugs release [17]. Highly fluorinated graphene oxide prepared from ionic liquid exhibited very high curcumin-loading efficiency to deliver anticancer drugs [18]. Moreover, such carriers provide high magnetic resonance imaging contrast sufficient for the *in vivo* control of the delivery process [19]. Based on their experimental and theoretical studies, Gong *et al* noted “excellent photothermal performance in the near infrared region, a high drug loading capacity, pH-triggered drug release, low cytotoxicity and good combination therapy effects” of fluorinated graphene [20]. Additional advantage of drugs carriers based on fluorinated graphene is their experimentally demonstrated turn-off fluorescence properties [21,22]. In contrast to graphene flakes, fluorinated  $C_{60}$  fullerenes possess well-defined structure, uniform size [23] and better adsorption due to higher curvature [11,24]. In previous studies, fluorinated  $C_{60}$  were examined as the carriers of some anticancer [23] and anti-COVID drugs [25].

In all the mentioned studies, the authors considered a single or only a few practically interesting drugs loaded on fullerene, without extensive comparison with other drugs. In this article, we aimed to investigate systematically the interaction of fullerene with drugs. Therefore, we considered a set of 40 common low-molecular-weight drugs loaded on the pristine and fluorinated  $C_{60}$ s. Consideration of a large number of drugs provides some statistical conclusions and determination of the typical behavior of drugs on the fullerene surface.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Geometry optimizing of all drugs, fullerenes and their complexes was performed with GPU-accelerated TeraChem software [26] combined with efficient geomeTRIC optimizer [27]. The lowest energies adsorption positions were selected by the algorithm described in our previous work [23]. The values of  $E_b$ ,  $E_{def(full)}$  and  $E_{def(drug)}$  were calculated as it is described in the same Ref. [23]. The B3LYP/6-31G\*\* level of theory [28,29,30] was applied to both optimizing and infrared frequencies calculations. Since we considered only energy minima (not transition states), all frequencies are real. Corrections for basis set superposition errors and dispersion interactions [31] were included. Statistical and neural networks analysis was performed according with the protocol described in Ref. [32] using STATISTICA program package [33] Atomistic structures were visualized with the VESTA software [34].

The pristine  $C_{60}$  was considered along with two fluorinated derivatives,  $C_{60}F_2$  and  $C_{60}F_{48}$ , shown in Fig. 1. Fullerenes with exactly this amount of fluorine are the most stable and represent realistic models of low- and high-fluorinated cages (for a detailed discussion of their stability, see our previous study [23]). The most stable configuration of carbon skeleton with  $I_h$  symmetry was adopted. The lowest energy isomers were considered for fluorinated fullerenes  $C_{60}F_2$  and  $C_{60}F_{48}$  [23]. We investigated the non-covalent loading of drugs on these fullerenes. A set of 40 drugs with the lowest molecular weights was taken from the DrugBank database [35]. We limited ourselves to metal-free drugs molecules composed of common chemical elements C, H, N, O, S, F. Their names and formulas are listed in Table 1, whereas structures are shown in Supplementary materials Figure S1.

For each drug, we considered different loading positions and found the strongest adsorption energy with the density functional theory, as described in Ref. [23]. Interaction between fullerene and drug was quantitatively characterized by binding energy  $E_b$  and deformation energies of fullerene  $E_{def(full)}$  and drug  $E_{def(drug)}$ , respectively. We also calculated frontier molecular orbitals HOMO and LUMO and dipole moments  $D$  of pristine and loaded drugs. According to conceptual density functional theory, these values can define chemical activity of molecules and therefore influence on the interaction energies. Full set of calculated data for drugs loaded on  $C_{60}$ ,  $C_{60}F_2$  and  $C_{60}F_{48}$  fullerenes is presented in supplementary materials Tables S1, S2 and S3, respectively.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Effect of fluorination on interaction between $C_{60}$ and drugs

Table 2 shows the ranges of  $E_b$ ,  $E_{def(full)}$  and  $E_{def(drug)}$  values as well as arithmetic means and standard deviations of these energies. According to the data presented, low-fluorinated fullerene  $C_{60}F_2$  possesses the strongest interaction with drugs. Previously, similar behavior was reported for doxorubicin anticancer drug [23]. This can be explained by the fact that both the fluorinated and non-fluorinated parts of the fullerene surface are available for the drug. One can also see from Table 2, that fluorinated cages with movable C–F bonds provide more opportunities for fullerenes deformation. However, drugs are on average more deformed because of interaction, since they are less rigid.

### 3.2. Statistical correlations

Pair correlations coefficients for the values of the binding energy  $E_b$ , deformation energies  $E_{def(full)}$  and  $E_{def(drug)}$ , as well

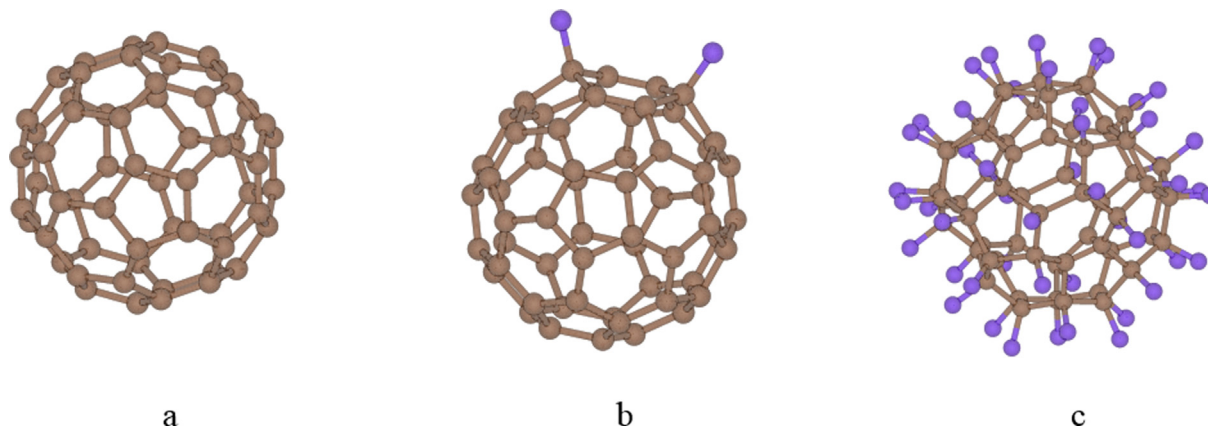


Fig. 1. Atomistic models of pristine  $C_{60}$  (a) and its  $C_{60}F_2$  (b) and  $C_{60}F_{48}$  (c) fluorinated derivatives. The brown and purple balls represent carbon and fluorine atoms, respectively. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

as frontier orbitals HOMO and LUMO and dipole moments  $D$  of the pristine and loaded on fullerenes drugs are presented in Table 3. According to Chaddock scale, the coefficients values higher than 0.5 indicate a significant correlation. One can see that the HOMO of pristine drug correlates positively with HOMO of  $C_{60}$  + drug complex. This indicates that the drug significantly contributes to HOMO of the complex. Note that the HOMOs of  $C_{60}$  and  $C_{60}F_2$  has a moderate values ( $-5.90$  and  $-5.94$  eV, respectively), which are close to typical HOMOs of the most drugs. The  $C_{60}F_{48}$  has a very deep lying HOMO ( $-9.70$  eV). Therefore, the HOMO of the “ $C_{60}F_{48}$  + drug” complexes are localized mostly on drugs and strongly correlate with the HOMOs of pristine drug. This fact is indicated by very high value of corresponding correlation coefficient (it equals to 0.972, see Table 3). In addition, dipole moments

of the complexes correlate with those of pristine drugs. This is because the  $C_{60}$  and  $C_{60}F_{48}$  have not their own dipole moments, and  $C_{60}F_2$  has moderate own moment (2.28 Debye).

It is a remarkable fact that  $E_b$  does not correlate with other considered values. As widely assumed, frontier orbitals and dipole moments of drugs defines their global reactivity. However, none of them possessed any statistical correlation with  $E_b$ . To further analyze relationship between  $E_b$  and other values, we derived a multiple linear regressions for  $E_b$  (see Table 4). We obtained multiple coefficient of determination  $R^2$  in 0.15–0.5 range, which indicates a low predictive power of these regressions. Maximal, minimal and mean absolute differences between actual and predicted values of  $E_b$  are collected in Table 4. They provides estimation of accuracy of the  $E_b$  prediction with multiple linear regressions.

Table 1

Names, chemical formulas and molecular weights of 40 considered drugs.

#	Name	Formula	Molecular weight, g/mol
1	Methoxyamine	CH <sub>5</sub> NO	47.057
2	Dacarbazine	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>10</sub> N <sub>6</sub> O	182.18
3	Amifampridine	C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>7</sub> N <sub>3</sub>	109.13
4	Altretamine	C <sub>9</sub> H <sub>18</sub> N <sub>6</sub>	210.28
5	Pimagedine	CH <sub>6</sub> N <sub>4</sub>	74.09
6	Cysteamine	C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>7</sub> NS	77.15
7	Sarcosine	C <sub>3</sub> H <sub>7</sub> NO <sub>2</sub>	89.09
8	Thiotepa	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>12</sub> N	189.22
9	Biguanide	C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>7</sub> N <sub>5</sub>	101.11
10	gamma-Aminobutyric acid (GABA)	C <sub>4</sub> H <sub>9</sub> NO <sub>2</sub>	103.12
11	Imexon	C <sub>4</sub> H <sub>5</sub> N <sub>3</sub> O	111.10
12	Histamine	C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>9</sub> N <sub>3</sub>	111.15
13	Creatinine	C <sub>4</sub> H <sub>7</sub> N <sub>3</sub> O	113.12
14	Thiosulfic acid	H <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> S <sub>2</sub>	114.15
15	Muscimol	C <sub>4</sub> H <sub>6</sub> N <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub>	114.10
16	Ethyl pyruvate	C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>9</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	116.11
17	2,4-thiazolidinedione	C <sub>3</sub> H <sub>3</sub> NO <sub>2</sub> S	117.13
18	Niacin	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>5</sub> NO <sub>2</sub>	123.11
19	Pyrazinamide	C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>5</sub> N <sub>3</sub> O	123.11
20	5-(Hydroxymethyl)-2-furaldehyde (HMF)	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>6</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	126.11
21	Flucytosine	C <sub>4</sub> H <sub>4</sub> FN <sub>3</sub> O	129.09
22	Agmatine	C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>14</sub> N <sub>4</sub>	130.19
23	Leucine	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>13</sub> NO <sub>2</sub>	131.17
24	Paraldehyde	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>12</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	132.16
25	5-amino-1,3,4-thiadiazole-2-thiol	C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>3</sub> N <sub>3</sub> S <sub>2</sub>	133.2
26	Timonacic	C <sub>4</sub> H <sub>7</sub> NO <sub>2</sub> S	133.17
27	Fluciclovine	C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>8</sub> FNO <sub>2</sub>	133.12
28	Tranylcypromine	C <sub>9</sub> H <sub>11</sub> N	133.19
29	Malic acid	C <sub>4</sub> H <sub>6</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	134.09
30	Amphetamine	C <sub>9</sub> H <sub>13</sub> N	135.21
31	Eniluracil	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> N <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub>	136.11
32	Bethistine	C <sub>8</sub> H <sub>12</sub> N <sub>2</sub>	136.19
33	Isoniazid	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>7</sub> N <sub>3</sub> O	137.14
34	Tramiprosate	C <sub>3</sub> H <sub>9</sub> NO <sub>3</sub> S	139.18
35	Dimiracetam	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>8</sub> N <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub>	140.14
36	Coenzyme M	C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>6</sub> O <sub>3</sub> S <sub>2</sub>	142.2
37	Piracetam	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>10</sub> N <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub>	142.16
38	4-isothioureidobutyronitrile	C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>9</sub> N <sub>3</sub> S	143.21
39	Valnoctamide	C <sub>8</sub> H <sub>17</sub> NO	143.23
40	Dimethyl fumarate	C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>8</sub> O <sub>4</sub>	144.12

Table 2

The minimum, maximum and mean values of adsorption energy  $E_b$  and deformation energies  $E_{def}(\text{full})$  and  $E_{def}(\text{drug})$  calculated for 40 drugs adsorbed on  $C_{60}$ ,  $C_{60}F_2$  and  $C_{60}F_{48}$  fullerenes. Standard deviations  $\sigma$  are also presented.

	$E_b$ , eV				$E_{def}(\text{full})$ , meV				$E_{def}(\text{drug})$ , meV			
	min	max	mean	$\sigma$	min	max	mean	$\sigma$	min	max	mean	$\sigma$
$C_{60}$	0.098	0.75	0.41	0.10	0.00	17.92	8.64	3.60	1.85	204.37	35.20	48.06
$C_{60}F_2$	0.28	0.98	0.59	0.14	2.25	33.83	12.03	6.50	4.17	343.15	57.90	67.24
$C_{60}F_{48}$	0.39	0.87	0.54	0.09	2.04	117.9	16.57	20.54	0.00	174.99	26.55	34.77

### 3.3. Predictions of $E_b$ with neural networks

Neural networks are suitable tools for recognizing of complex non-linear dependencies. It would be very attractive to predict binding energy between fullerenes and drug based on drug properties only, especially for extensive consideration of large sets of drugs. According to the conceptual density functional theory, the frontier orbitals and the dipole moment determine the chemical reactivity of the drug and therefore may hypothetically be relevant for its interaction with fullerene. Therefore, we constructed artificial neural networks to predict the  $E_b$  based on HOMO, LUMO and  $D$  of the loaded drug.

For each fullerene, 1000 networks were constructed and learnt. All networks had three input (for HOMO, LUMO and  $D$  of the drug) and single output (for  $E_b$ ) neurons, interacting via a single hidden layer. Other parameters were randomly distributed in the following ranges: number of neurons in hidden layer – 3 to 10; activation functions – identical, hyperbolic tangential, exponential, hyperbolic, logistic. For learning of networks, all data were randomly divided into three sets: training (70%), testing (15%) and validation (15%). Learning was carried out with the BFGS algorithm. Sum of squares (SOS) error function was applied. The parameters and productivities of the best networks are summarized in Table 5. This table shows mean absolute errors of  $E_b$  value lower than 0.1 eV, whereas maximal errors are substantially higher. Therefore, the presented networks provide only a quite rough estimation of  $E_b$  and have a limited applicability.

### 3.4. Exceptionally strong adsorption of altretamine drug on fullerenes

Among all considered molecules, we recognized altretamine, a drug used for ovarian cancer treatment. It possesses the highest  $E_b$  values for all considered fullerenes, which deviate from mean values by about  $3\sigma$ . According to Supplementary materials Table S5, this result is also confirmed by calculations with four different exchange–correlation functionals. The structure of altretamine is shown in Fig. 2(a), and its adsorption on fullerenes are shown in Fig. 2 (b–d).

**Table 3**

Pair correlations coefficients for the values of the binding energy  $E_b$ , deformation energies  $E_{def}(\text{full})$  and  $E_{def}(\text{drug})$ , as well as frontier orbitals HOMO and LUMO and dipole moments  $D$  of the pristine and loaded drugs. Correlation coefficients larger than 0.500 were marked in bold.

	$E_{def}(\text{full})$	$E_{def}(\text{drug})$	HOMO (drug)	HOMO (full + drug)	LUMO (drug)	LUMO (full + drug)	$D$ (drug)	$D$ (full + drug)	$E_b$
Pristine $C_{60}$									
$E_{def}(\text{full})$	1.000	-0.432	-0.133	-0.013	-0.006	0.154	-0.233	-0.294	-0.298
$E_{def}(\text{drug})$	-0.432	1.000	-0.112	-0.192	-0.150	-0.258	-0.132	0.319	0.340
HOMO (drug)	-0.133	-0.112	1.000	<b>0.753</b>	0.333	0.354	0.131	-0.001	0.350
HOMO (full + drug)	-0.013	-0.192	0.753	1.000	0.208	<b>0.708</b>	-0.023	-0.242	0.280
LUMO (drug)	-0.006	-0.150	0.333	0.208	1.000	0.132	-0.162	-0.080	-0.240
LUMO (full + drug)	0.154	-0.258	0.354	0.708	0.132	1.000	-0.103	-0.480	0.130
$D$ (drug)	-0.233	0.132	0.131	-0.023	-0.162	-0.103	1.000	<b>0.708</b>	0.110
$D$ (full + drug)	-0.294	0.319	-0.001	-0.242	-0.080	-0.480	0.780	1.000	0.110
$E_b$	-0.298	0.341	0.354	0.282	-0.243	0.139	0.118	0.118	1.000
$C_{60}F_{2}$									
$E_{def}(\text{full})$	1.000	0.179	-0.034	-0.111	-0.026	0.142	0.222	0.365	0.251
$E_{def}(\text{drug})$	0.179	1.000	-0.002	0.083	-0.130	0.003	0.232	0.207	-0.258
HOMO (drug)	-0.034	-0.002	1.000	<b>0.828</b>	0.333	0.104	0.131	0.080	0.289
HOMO (full + drug)	-0.111	0.083	0.828	1.000	0.199	0.210	0.055	0.020	0.272
LUMO (drug)	-0.026	-0.130	0.333	0.199	1.000	0.063	-0.162	-0.197	-0.135
LUMO (full + drug)	0.142	0.003	0.104	0.210	0.063	1.000	0.050	-0.069	0.078
$D$ (drug)	0.222	0.232	0.131	0.055	-0.162	0.050	1.000	<b>0.932</b>	0.154
$D$ (full + drug)	0.365	0.207	0.080	0.020	-0.197	-0.069	0.932	1.000	0.292
$E_b$	0.251	-0.258	0.289	0.272	-0.135	0.078	0.154	0.292	1.000
$C_{60}F_{48}$									
$E_{def}(\text{full})$	1.000	0.290	0.139	0.081	-0.245	0.500	0.246	0.261	0.187
$E_{def}(\text{drug})$	0.290	1.000	0.384	0.431	0.007	0.002	0.030	0.089	0.105
HOMO (drug)	0.139	0.384	1.000	<b>0.972</b>	0.333	-0.004	0.131	0.080	0.190
HOMO (full + drug)	0.081	0.431	0.972	1.000	0.326	-0.165	0.164	0.138	0.153
LUMO (drug)	-0.245	0.007	0.333	0.326	1.000	-0.046	-0.162	-0.197	-0.145
LUMO (full + drug)	0.500	0.002	-0.004	-0.165	-0.046	1.000	-0.130	-0.269	0.087
$D$ (drug)	0.246	0.030	0.131	0.164	-0.162	-0.130	1.000	<b>0.932</b>	-0.017
$D$ (full + drug)	0.261	0.089	0.080	0.138	-0.197	-0.269	0.932	1.000	0.036
$E_b$	0.187	0.105	0.190	0.153	-0.145	0.087	-0.017	0.036	1.000

**Table 4**

Multiple coefficients of determination  $R^2$  for multiple linear regressions of binding energies between fullerenes and drugs  $E_b$  as a function of eight other values listed in Table 3. Maximal, minimal and mean absolute differences (eV) between actual and predicted from regressions values of  $E_b$  are also presented.

	$R^2$	absolute deviations of $E_b$		
		min	max	mean
$C_{60}$	0.43	0.001	0.274	0.043
$C_{60}F_{2}$	0.46	0.001	0.329	0.078
$C_{60}F_{48}$	0.15	0.000	0.300	0.068

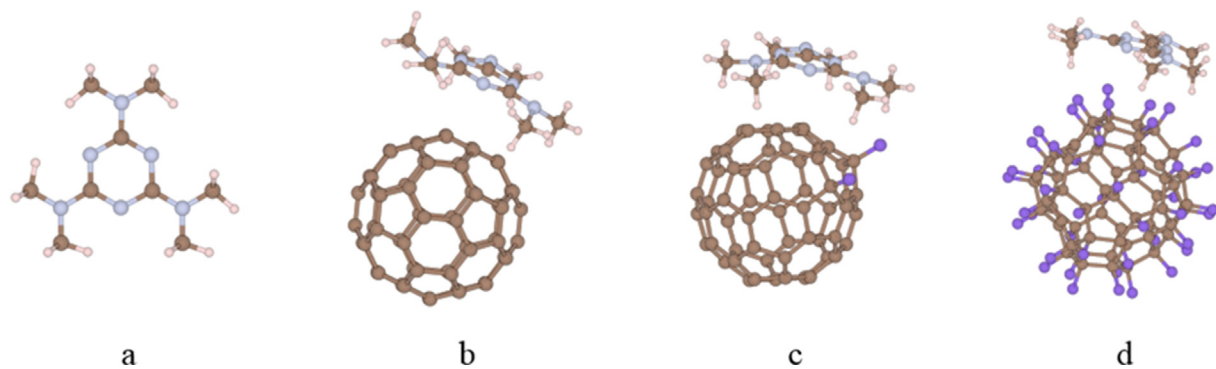
**Table 5**

Parameters of the best obtained neural networks for prediction of adsorption energy of drugs on pristine and fluorinated fullerenes based on drug HOMO, LUMO and dipole moment. Learning algorithms, activation functions of hidden and output neurons (logistic, exponential or hyperbolic) and absolute deviations of predicted  $E_b$  from its actual value (eV) are presented. Number of neurons in input, hidden and output layers and number of iterations of Broyden-Fletcher-Goldfarb-Shanno (BFGS) algorithm needed for convergence are indicated in second and third columns, respectively.

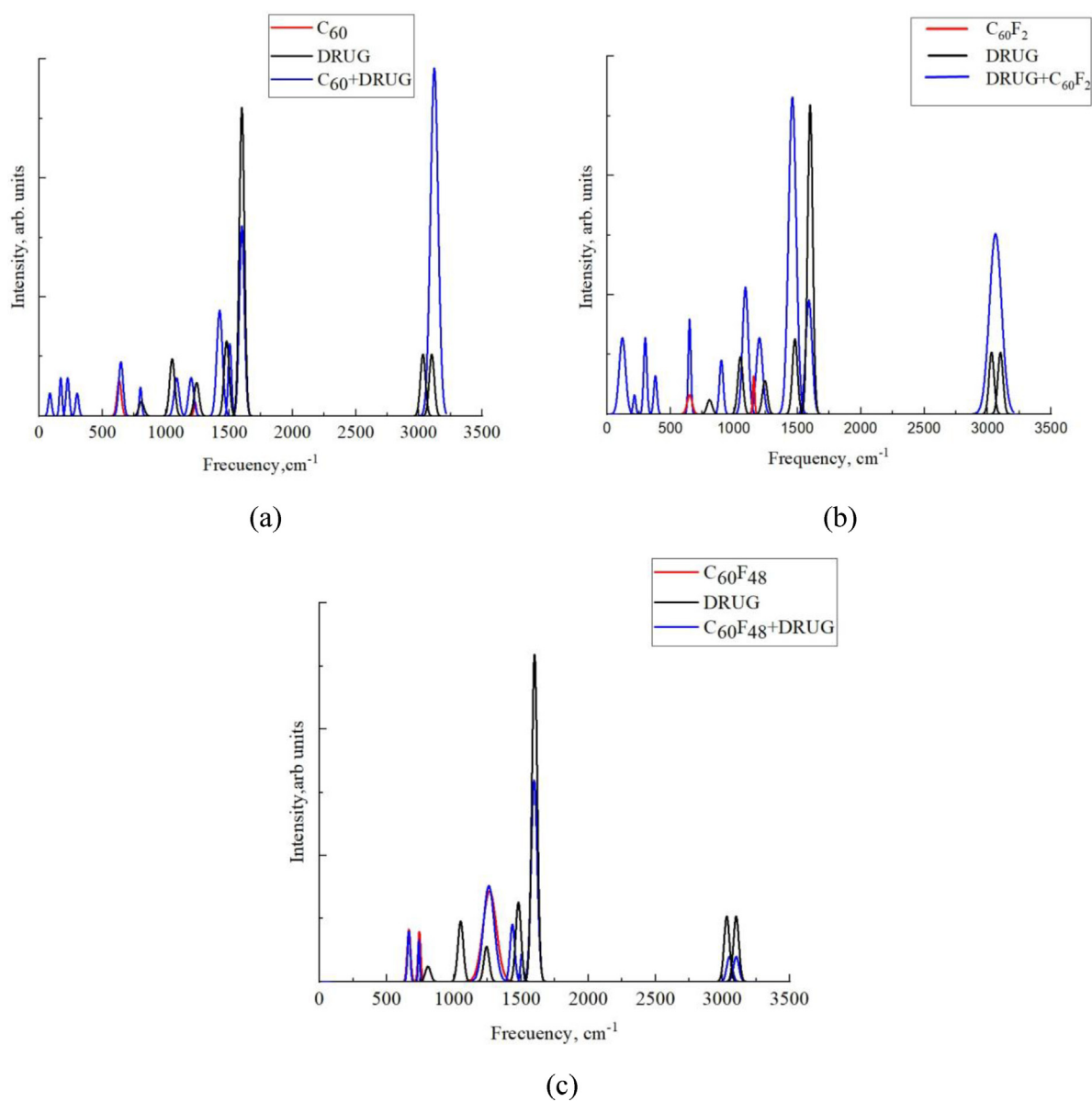
system	network name	learning algorithm	activation (hidden)	activation (output)	absolute deviations of $E_b$		
					min	max	mean
$C_{60}$	MLP-3-3-1	BFGS-43	LOGISTIC	EXP	0.000	0.143	0.043
$C_{60}F_{2}$	MLP-3-4-1	BFGS-32	HYPER	HYPER	0.001	0.227	0.089
$C_{60}F_{48}$	MLP-3-9-1	BFGS-1	EXP	EXP	0.000	0.323	0.068

The molecule has almost flat skeleton consisted of alternating C and N atoms, terminated by methyl groups. It is located parallel to fullerene surface, allowing interaction between fullerene rings and drug heterocycle. Curvature of pristine fullerene provides sufficient distance between fullerene and methyl groups, which do not prevent fullerene-drug interaction. Low fluorination of fullerene provides additional interaction of methyl groups with fluorine. High fluorinated fullerenes imply attraction of fluorine to nitrogen atoms. Previously, BN and AlN nanorings [36]

as well as cucurbit[n]uril [37] were considered for delivery of altretamine. However, interaction of this drug with fullerenes or other carbon-based carriers was not investigated so far. To facilitate the spectroscopic control of the loading process, we calculated infrared spectral shifts associated with the adsorption. The results are presented in Fig. 3. As one can see from Fig. 3, small red shifts near  $1450\text{ cm}^{-1}$  corresponding to methyl groups deformation vibrations can be selected as the suitable indicator of the drug loading.



**Fig. 2.** The structure of altretamine drug (a) and its adsorption on fullerenes  $C_{60}$  (b),  $C_{60}F_2$  (c) and  $C_{60}F_{48}$  (d). Fullerenes in Fig. 2b, 2c and 2d corresponds to fullerenes shown in Fig. 1a, 1b and 1c, respectively. The brown and purple balls represent carbon and fluorine atoms, respectively. Drug consist also nitrogen and hydrogen atoms, which are represented by blue and grey balls, respectively. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)



**Fig. 3.** Infrared active modes calculated for pristine and loaded on  $C_{60}$  (a),  $C_{60}F_2$  (b) and  $C_{60}F_{48}$  (c) altretamine drug. The calculated active frequencies are broadened by Gaussians with  $\sigma = 20 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ .



## 4. Conclusion

In summary, we provided a systematic study of the interaction between pristine and fluorinated fullerenes with a set of 40 low molecular weight drugs. We have established the range to which the binding energy between fullerene and drugs belongs, as well as the shift of the boundaries of this range due to fluorination. Mean adsorption energies of drugs on C<sub>60</sub>, C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>48</sub> are 0.41, 0.59 and 0.54 eV, respectively, whereas standard deviations  $\sigma$  are about 0.1 eV for all cases. The presented data can be used as a reference point for evaluating the reactivity and selectivity of pristine or fluorinated fullerenes toward any new molecule. The excess of the adsorption energy over the average value by  $2\sigma$  (0.2 eV) and  $3\sigma$  (0.3 eV) should be considered as an indicator of a strong and exceptionally strong drug-fullerene interactions, respectively. In particular, we observed exceptionally strong binding of fullerenes with the altretamine molecule containing a hexagonal (CN)<sub>3</sub> heterocycle ( $E_b = 0.75, 0.98$  and  $0.87$  eV for C<sub>60</sub>, C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>60</sub>F<sub>48</sub> fullerenes, respectively). One can also expect strong interaction between fullerenes and similar molecules with nitro-carbon skeletons, such as dactinomycin (anticancer drug) or enzalutamide (antineoplastic hormonal agent).

In addition, we evaluated the accuracy of the adsorption energies of drugs on fullerenes predicted based on statistical data and commonly used quantum chemical descriptors of reactivity. According to our calculations, an accurate prediction is impossible, and the typical absolute value of the error is about 0.1 eV. However, even such low accuracy can be useful for primary selection for the computational study of extensive sets of drugs. We believe that the presented results are useful for understanding the interaction of fluorinated fullerenes with drugs and for reasonable design of suitable drugs delivery systems.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Elizaveta B. Kalika:** Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Visualization. **Nikolay V. Bondarev:** Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Konstantin P. Katin:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Funding acquisition. **Alexey I. Kochaev:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Supervision. **Anastasiya A. Grekova:** Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation. **Savas Kaya:** Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation. **Yusupbek A. Bauetdinov:** Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation. **Mikhail M. Maslov:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Supervision.

## Data availability

Data are available as a [supplementary materials](#).

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.molliq.2023.121559>.

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