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Research article

Endogenous purines as natural ligands of the A_{2B} adenosine receptor

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Abstract. Endogenous purines are essential regulators of various physiological functions, including immune response, inflammation, and neurotransmission. While adenosine has long been considered the primary ligand for adenosine receptors, recent evidence suggests that other purines may also interact with these receptors, particularly the A_{2B} adenosine receptor (A_{2B}AR). This study investigates the potential role of endogenous purines as natural ligands of A_{2B}AR using molecular docking. The results demonstrate a high binding affinity of purines for A_{2B}AR, suggesting their functional relevance in receptor-mediated signaling. Additionally, A_{2B}AR plays a crucial role in immune regulation by influencing T-cell differentiation and cytokine production. Modulating its activity through endogenous purines may have significant implications for inflammation-related diseases, including cancer and neurodegenerative disorders. The findings provide new insights into the purinergic control of the adenosinergic system and highlight the potential of targeting A2BAR in therapeutic strategies. However, further studies, including *in vitro* and *in vivo* experiments, are necessary to confirm the physiological relevance of these interactions. This research expands our understanding of purinergic signaling and opens new avenues for the development of pharmacological interventions aimed at modulating immune and inflammatory responses.

Keywords: A_{2B} adenosine receptor, purinergic signaling, immune modulation, inflammation and neurodegeneration, molecular docking analysis

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Introduction

Adenosine receptors (ARs) are G protein-coupled receptors that play crucial roles in various physiological processes, including inflammation, cardiovascular function, and neurotransmission [1, 2]. The four AR subtypes (A_1 , A_{2A} , A_{2B} , and A_3) have unique pharmacological profiles and tissue distributions, making them promising therapeutic targets for numerous diseases [2, 3]. ARs modulate neurotransmission in the central nervous system, interfering with dopaminergic, glutamatergic, and other neurotransmitter systems, which suggests potential applications in treating neuropsychiatric disorders [4]. Recent advancements in AR pharmacology have led to the development of new ligands and strategies for receptor activation, showing promise in treating conditions such as cancer, inflammatory diseases, and metabolic disorders [3]. However, the ubiquitous distribution of ARs presents challenges in achieving selective and site-specific modulation [1, 3]. Significantly, the A_{2B} adenosine receptor (A_{2B} AR) is a low-affinity receptor with wide distribution, making it a target of interest in various pathological conditions [5].

The A_{2B} AR has become a significant target in various pathological conditions, including inflammatory diseases, cardiovascular disorders, and metabolic dysfunctions [6,7]. A_{2B} AR activation plays a crucial role in alcoholic hepatitis by regulating cAMP levels and the NF- κ B pathway, potentially reducing inflammation and steatosis [8]. While A_{2B}AR antagonists have shown promise in treating airway inflammation, gastrointestinal disorders, and cancer, only a few have entered clinical trials [6]. Recent research has focused on developing allosteric modulators for A_{2B} AR, which offer advantages over orthosteric ligands by fine-tuning tissue responses to endogenous agonists [5]. These modulators may prove beneficial in managing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, protecting the heart from ischemic injury, and promoting bone formation [5]. Overall, A_{2B} AR-targeted therapies represent a promising avenue for treating various human diseases.

Interestingly, initially A_{2B} AR was considered less physiologically relevant due to its low affinity for adenosine, has gained attention for its upregulation during hypoxia and inflammation [9,10]. Studies using genetic and pharmacological approaches have demonstrated A_{2B} AR's tissue-protective role in various acute disease models [10, 11]. Additionally, the adenosine metabolite inosine has been identified as a functional agonist of the related A_{2A} receptor, exhibiting a unique signaling bias compared to adenosine [12]. This finding suggests that inosine may play a role in prolonging adenosine receptor activation in vivo, given its longer half-life. These advances provide new insights into purinergic signaling and potential other purines, such as inosine, guanosine, and their metabolites, which may contribute to A_{2B} AR modulation. These alternative ligands could influence receptor signaling, offering new insights into the physiological and pathological roles of the A_{2B} AR receptor.

An understanding of the interaction between endogenous purines and A_{2B} AR could provide valuable information for the development of pharmaceuticals. While synthetic compounds targeting A_{2B} AR have shown promise in preclinical and early clinical studies, the presence of natural ligands raises important questions about receptor selectivity, competitive binding, and functional outcomes [13-15]. Some endogenous purines have been suggested to exert

protective effects in ischemic injury, neuroinflammation, and metabolic regulation, indicating their potential as modulators of A_{2B}AR activity [16, 17].

This study investigates endogenous purines as natural ligands of A_{2B}AR and their influence on receptor signaling pathways using an AlphaFold-modeled receptor and molecular docking. This approach enables a detailed analysis of ligand-binding characteristics and their potential impact on receptor signaling mechanisms. A deeper understanding of these interactions may reveal new aspects of A_{2B}AR pharmacology and regulation and provide insights into the potential use of purines as biomarkers or therapeutic targets in diseases associated with A_{2B}AR dysfunction.

Materials and research methods

3D Model of the Adenosine Receptor

3D structures of the active and inactive conformations of the adenosine receptor type A_{2B} (A_{2B}AR) were obtained by the program AlphaFold2-MultiState AI (https://gpocrdb.org/structure/homology_models) [18,19].

Ligand Molecules

Based on structural similarities, it was hypothesized that all-natural purine nucleosides and purines could interact with the target proteins during the ligand library compilation for molecular docking [20]. Analysis of databases and literature led to the identification of two antagonists and one selective agonist that were used in this study.

Adenosine (C₁₀H₁₃N₅O₄) is a nucleoside composed of an adenine base linked to D-ribose, playing a key role in nucleic acid structure, energy metabolism, and cell signaling (PubChem CID: 60961) [21]. Inosine (C₁₀H₁₂N₄O₅) is structurally similar, participating in metabolic pathways and nitrogen compound exchange (PubChem CID: 135398641) [22]. Xanthosine (C₁₀H₁₂N₄O₆) serves as a metabolic intermediate (PubChem CID: 164959), while guanosine (C₁₀H₁₃N₅O₅) is crucial for genetic information transfer and cellular regulation (PubChem CID: 135398634) [23, 24].

Adenine (C₅H₅N₅) is a fundamental purine base in DNA, RNA, and ATP, essential for energy transfer (PubChem CID: 190) [25]. Hypoxanthine (C₅H₄N₄O) is an intermediate in purine metabolism (PubChem CID: 135398638), while xanthine (C₅H₄N₄O₂) is a precursor to biologically active compounds (PubChem CID: 1188) [26–29]. Guanine (C₅H₅N₅O) is a key nucleobase involved in genetic coding and cellular processes (PubChem CID: 135398635) [30].

Caffeine (C₈H₁₀N₄O₂) is a xanthine-derived alkaloid that acts as a non-selective A_{2B}AR antagonist, enhancing wakefulness and cognitive function (PubChem CID: 2519) [31–33]. MCP-NECA (C₂₁H₂₀N₈O₃) is a potent A_{2B}AR antagonist with potential applications in pain relief and neurodegenerative disease treatment (PubChem CID: 5310960) [34]. BAY 60-6583 (C₁₉H₁₇N₅O₂S) is a selective A_{2B}AR agonist with strong affinity, used to investigate A_{2B}-mediated pathways in inflammation, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer (PubChem CID: 135398635) [35]. These compounds provide valuable tools for exploring purinergic signaling and potential therapeutic applications.

Hardware and software

Molecular docking was carried out on a homemade computer, the system includes the motherboard ASRock Super Alloy B250 Pro4, video cards MSI NVIDIA GeForce GTX 1050 Ti 4Gb, Gigabyte NVIDIA GeForce GTX 1050 Ti 4Gb, processor Intel Pentium G4600, RAM Kingston Fury Beast KF432C16BBK2/16 16, permanent memory SSD Kingston SA400S37 480 Gb. To perform rigid molecular docking, we used the AutoDock Vina GPU program [36–38]. AutoDock is a program developed for molecular docking. It is mainly used for protein-ligand docking, including taking into account mobile protein residues. However, during the study, difficulties were identified in working on AutoDock Vina running on the CPU, and AutoDock Vina GPU, which runs on Linux, was adapted to work on Windows. The program itself was downloaded from open access on the GitHub website (<https://github.com/DeltaGroupNJUPT/Vina-GPU-2.0>).

Rigid Docking Using AutoDock

To perform molecular interaction, we used Rigid docking, which assumes the stability of the molecule and a specific binding site. The binding site was determined by the reference structure of the A_{2B}AR in AutoDock, and a Grid Box was also built on this basis with coordinates [39]. Also, a script with a configuration using the Grid Box coordinates was written to perform docking. The protein was also prepared in AutoDock, with the water removed from the structure, polar hydrogens added, and the charge calculated using Gasteiger [39,40]. The ligand molecule was also prepared in the same way after the structure was converted from SDF to PDB. Docking was performed with ligand and protein files in PBDQT format after preparation in AutoDock [36–38].

Visualization and Statistical Analysis

Molecular docking results were visualized and analyzed using PyMOL [41]. Structural alignments, ligand-receptor interactions, and binding poses were examined to identify key interactions contributing to ligand affinity. Statistical validation of docking results was performed by conducting docking simulations on five independent models of A_{2B}AR to ensure reproducibility [42]. Meaning energies and standard deviations were calculated to assess the stability of predicted binding interactions. This approach enabled a comprehensive comparison between rigid and flexible docking methods, providing a detailed understanding of ligand binding behavior in both active and inactive states of A_{2B}AR.

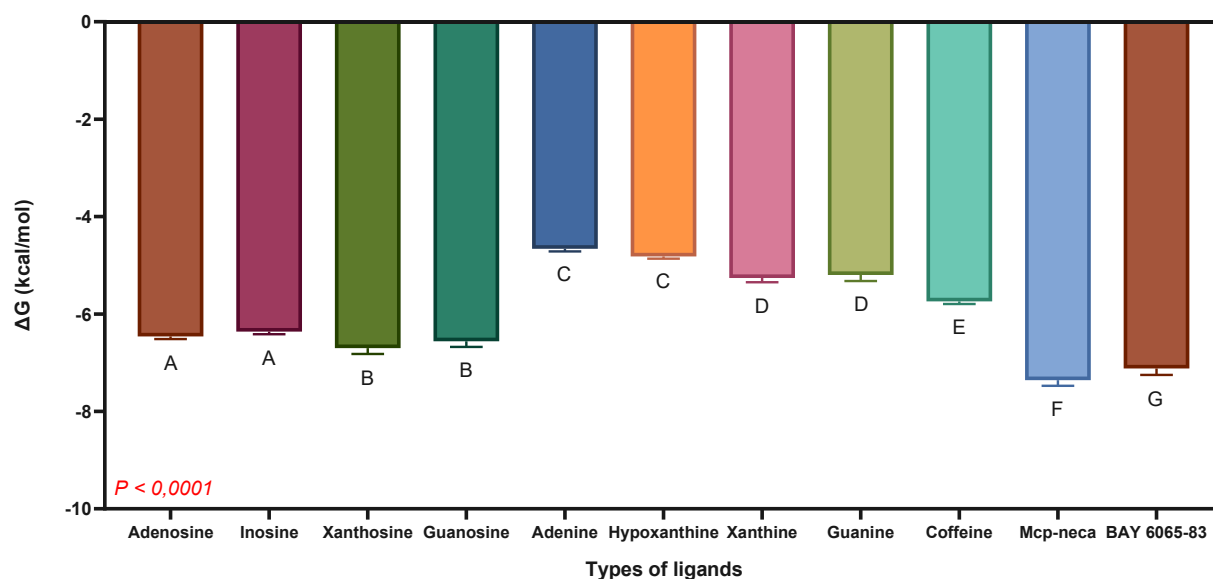
Results

In silico analysis of nucleotide binding to the inactive A_{2B}AR

In this study, molecular docking of 11 ligands with the inactive form of the A_{2B} adenosine receptor (A_{2B}AR) was performed to identify key interactions (Figure 1). The affinity of the compounds and their ability to bind to the receptor's active site were evaluated. The obtained data allowed for the determination of structural features influencing ligand interactions with A_{2B}AR. Statistical analysis was conducted using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a significance level of $P < 0.0001$, followed by Tukey's multiple comparisons test to assess differences between the ligands and the control group. The data confirms statistically significant differences in the affinity of the compounds studied for A_{2B}AR.

Adenosine was considered both a control and an experimental molecule, as its interaction with A_{2B}AR in the cryo-EM structure has already been described [21, 43]. Initially, an analysis

of adenosine binding revealed 16 possible binding variations, driven by different ligand conformations. The binding free energy (ΔG) analysis showed a minimum value of -5.8 kcal/mol and a maximum of -6.5 kcal/mol. The results indicate that adenosine binds to A_{2B}AR in its inactive state through interactions with residues ASN254, GLU174, PHE173, HIS280, and ALA82. ASN254 is localized in the $\alpha 6$ -helix, GLU174 and PHE173 in the $\alpha 5$ -helix, ALA82 in the $\alpha 3$ -helix, and HIS280 in the $\alpha 7$ -helix (Figure 2A). The mobility of these helices, as demonstrated by TM analysis, is necessary for conformational changes and the release of the Gs protein subunit [19].



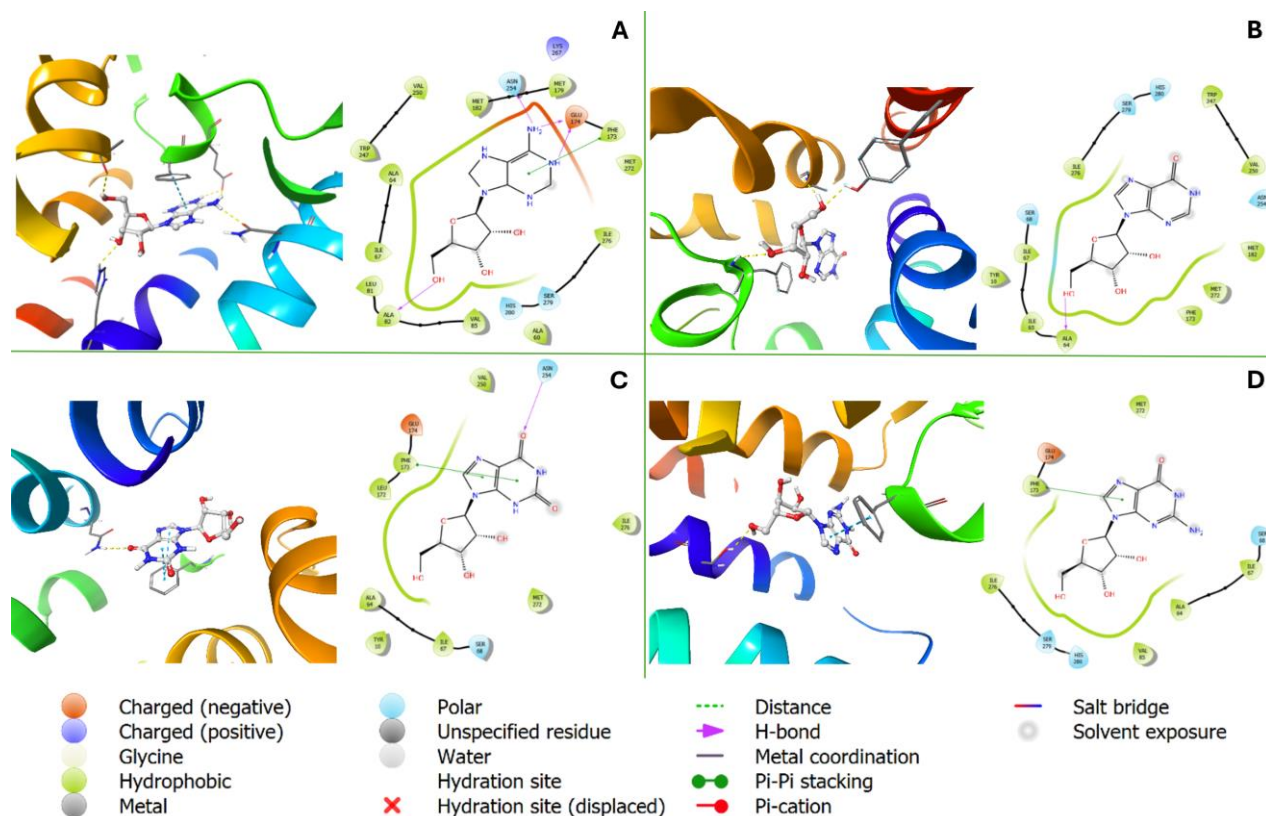
Note: Columns labeled with the same letters do not show statistically significant differences, whereas different letters indicate statistically significant differences.

Figure 1. Changes in ΔG upon ligand binding to the inactive A_{2B}AR

A hydrogen bond is formed between the amino group of adenosines at the 6-position of the purine ring and the carboxamide group of ASN254. The secondary amino group of adenosines at the 1-position of the purine ring may interact with the carboxyl group of GLU174. PHE173 participates in a π - π interaction between its benzene ring and the pyrimidine ring of the ligand. The hydroxyl group at the 5'-position of ribose forms a hydrogen bond with ALA82, while HIS280 interacts with the hydroxyl group of ribose at the 4'-position. These interactions have also been described in a study on the active structure of A_{2B}AR obtained by cryo-EM, further demonstrating that docking with AlphaFold-predicted structures is relevant for conducting molecular simulations [19,43].

Inosine was selected for docking due to its structural similarity to adenosine, with the only difference being the substitution of the amino group at the 6-position of the purine ring with an oxygen atom [22]. The maximum binding affinity of inosine ($\Delta G = -6.5$ kcal/mol) was found to be comparable to that of adenosine. However, unlike adenosine, inosine interacts with A_{2B}AR exclusively through its ribose moiety, without involving the purine ring. The primary

interactions occur with residues ALA64, PHE173, and TYR10, located in the α 2-, α 5-, and α 1-helices, respectively (Figure 2B). Inosine forms hydrogen bonds between the hydroxyl groups of its ribose moiety and the amide bond of the polypeptide chain at PHE173, as well as with the hydroxyl group of TYR10. These findings suggest a potential role for inosine as a physiological antagonist of A_{2B}AR.



Note: α 1 - red; α 2 - orange; α 3 - ochre-yellow; α 4 - lemon; α 5 - green; α 6 - turquoise; α 7 - blue.

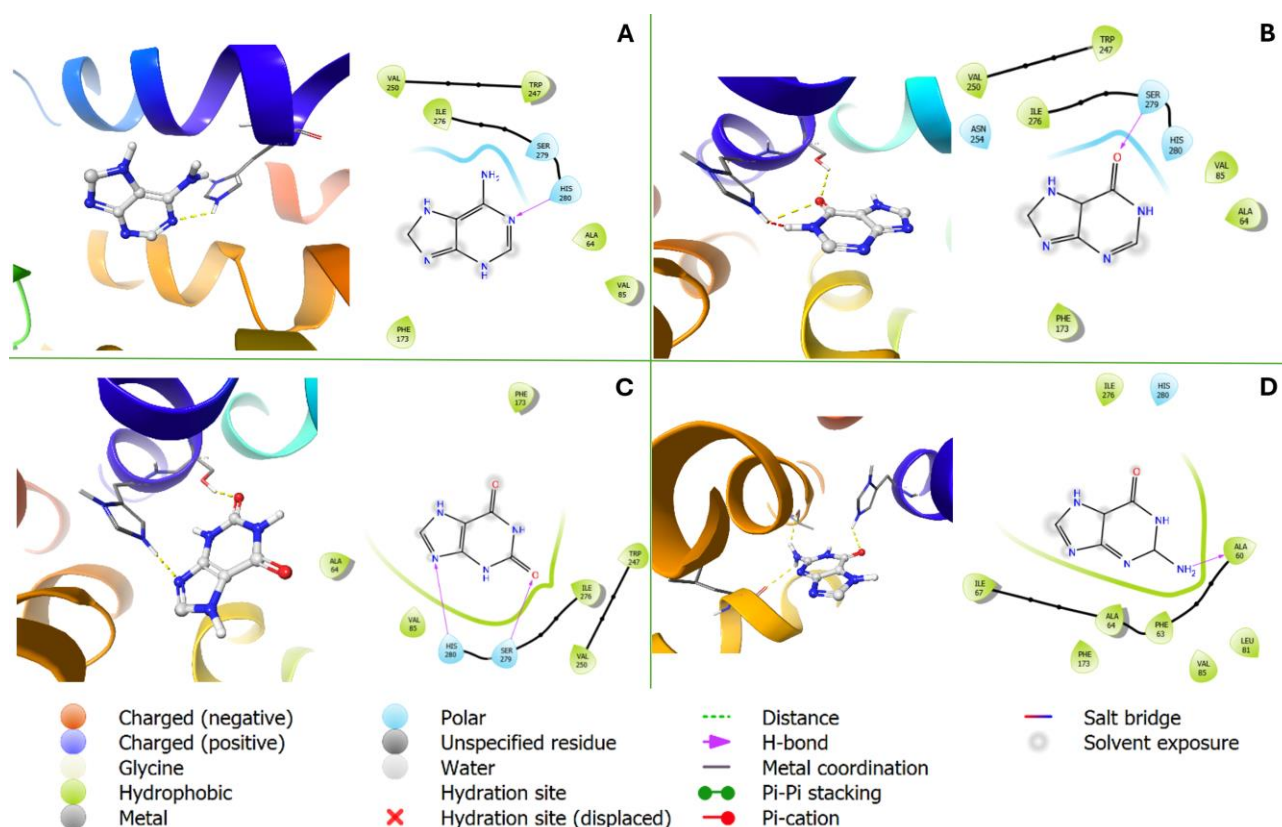
Figure 2. 3D and 2D visualization of molecular interactions between **(A)** Adenosine, **(B)** Inosine, **(C)** Xanthosine, and **(D)** Guanosine and the binding site of the inactive A_{2B}AR

Xanthosine, a less common purine nucleoside, was tested to assess its binding capacity to the inactive form of A_{2B}AR. Docking analysis revealed that xanthosine exhibits a higher binding affinity ($\Delta G = -6.9$ kcal/mol) compared to adenosine and inosine. The structural distinction of xanthosine lies in the presence of an additional oxygen atom at the 2-position of the purine ring, which may contribute to stronger receptor binding.

The most stable conformation of xanthosine interacts with PHE173 and ASN254, located in the α 5- and α 6-helices, respectively (Figure 2C). PHE173 forms a double π - π interaction with the purine ring of the ligand, whereas adenosine exhibited only a single interaction. ASN254 forms a hydrogen bond between its carboxamide amino group and the oxygen at the 6-position of the purine ring. The absence of interaction with GLU174 and the altered position of the secondary amino group may indicate a potential agonistic activity of xanthosine toward A_{2B}AR.

Guanosine, the fourth tested nucleoside, is structurally similar to inosine but differs by the presence of an amino group at the 2-position of the purine ring. Docking analysis revealed that guanosine exhibits a higher binding affinity ($\Delta G = -6.7$ kcal/mol) compared to adenosine. The primary interactions of guanosine with the receptor occur through residues PHE173 ($\alpha 5$ -helix) and SER279 ($\alpha 7$ -helix). PHE173 forms a π - π interaction with the benzene ring of the ligand, while SER279 participates in hydrogen bond formation with the hydroxyl group of the ribose at the 5'-position (Figure 2D). These findings suggest a potential role for guanosine as a physiological antagonist of A_{2B} AR.

Adenine is a derivative of adenosine lacking the ribose moiety. Molecular docking results indicated that its affinity for A_{2B} AR is lower than that of adenosine. The maximum and minimum binding free energies were $\Delta G = -4.7$ and $\Delta G = -4.3$ kcal/mol, respectively. Visualization of interactions demonstrated that adenine forms a single hydrogen bond between the tertiary amino group at the 1-position of the purine ring and the secondary amino group of HIS280 (Figure 3A). This amino acid is located on the $\alpha 7$ -helix, which could potentially influence the conformation of the $\alpha 8$ - and $\alpha 1$ -helices. However, the lack of additional interactions suggests that adenine does not exert a significant effect on A_{2B} AR as either an agonist or an antagonist.



Note: $\alpha 1$ - red; $\alpha 2$ - orange; $\alpha 3$ - ochre-yellow; $\alpha 4$ - lemon; $\alpha 5$ - green; $\alpha 6$ - turquoise; $\alpha 7$ - blue.

Figure 3. 3D and 2D visualization of molecular interactions between **(A)** Adenine; **(B)** Hypoxanthine; **(C)** Xanthine; and **(D)** Guanine and the binding site of the inactive A_{2B} AR

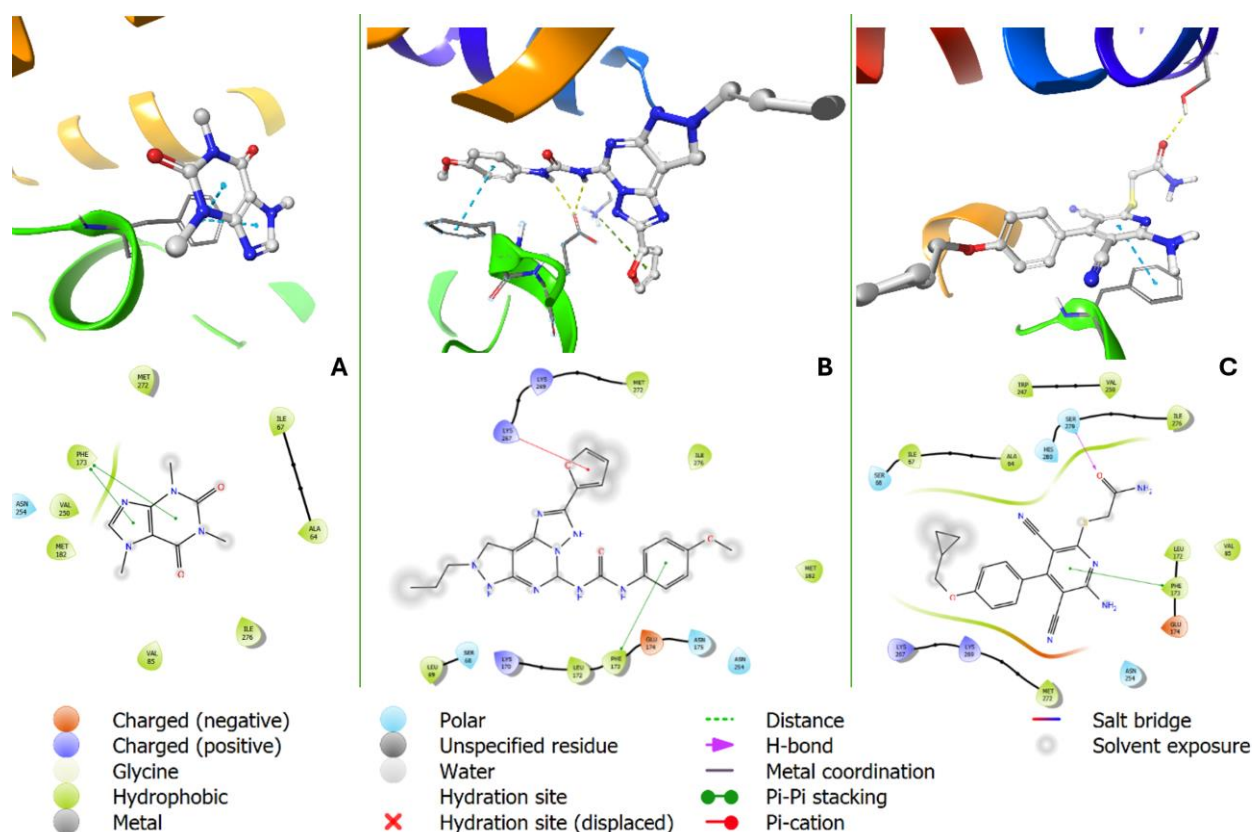
Hypoxanthine has been theoretically considered as a potential A_{2B}AR antagonist, providing the rationale for its molecular docking analysis [44]. However, literature data indicate low receptor affinity for alloxazine under physiological conditions in vitro and in vivo. The obtained results demonstrated that hypoxanthine exhibits a lower affinity for A_{2B}AR compared to adenosine, with the best binding free energy recorded at $\Delta G = -4.9$ kcal/mol. 2D and 3D visualizations revealed that the molecule forms two hydrogen bonds with the α 7-helix of the receptor via HIS280 and SER279 (Figure 3B). Hypoxanthine interacts with HIS280 through the secondary amino group at the 1-position of the purine ring, while SER279 forms a hydrogen bond with its carbonyl group at the 6-position. These interactions suggest that binding to the α 7-helix may influence the α 1-helix, altering the binding pocket and potentially inhibiting the receptor.

Xanthine, a derivative of hypoxanthine, has been considered a potential antagonist of adenosine receptors. However, existing data suggests its possible role as an A_{2B}AR agonist. The primary structural difference between xanthine and hypoxanthine lies in the presence of an additional oxygen atom at the 2-position of the purine ring. Docking results revealed that xanthine exhibits a higher affinity for the receptor compared to hypoxanthine, with the best binding free energy recorded at $\Delta G = -5.4$ kcal/mol. Visualization showed that xanthine forms similar interactions with HIS280 and SER279 but with additional functional contributions from the oxygen at the 2-position and the tertiary amino group at the 9-position (Figure 3C).

Guanine is the last of the naturally occurring purine bases circulating in the human body [30]. It differs from xanthine by the substitution of an oxygen atom at the 2-position of the purine ring with a primary amino group. Molecular docking revealed a similar binding free energy ($\Delta G = -5.4$ kcal/mol), indicating its high affinity for A_{2B}AR. Visualization demonstrated that guanine interacts with three amino acid residues located in different receptor domains: LEU81 (α 3-helix), ALA60 (α 2-helix), and HIS280 (α 7-helix). Hydrogen bonds are formed between LEU81 and the primary amino group at the 2-position of the purine ring, between ALA60 and the same group, as well as between HIS280 and the oxygen at the 6-position of the purine ring (Figure 3D). Potential conformational changes in these structural elements may lead to a reduction in the binding pocket size, making guanine a promising low-affinity antagonist of A_{2B}AR.

Caffeine is a well-known non-selective antagonist of adenosine receptors [31-33]. Numerous antagonists with specificity for different adenosine receptor subtypes have been synthesized based on their molecular structure. In this study, caffeine was used as a reference molecule to assess the inhibitory potential of the purine ring concerning the inactive form of the A_{2B}AR adenosine receptor.

Molecular docking analysis revealed two possible conformations of caffeine that could interact with A_{2B}AR in its inactive state (Figure 4A). Further molecular interaction analysis identified a key π - π interaction between caffeine and the PHE173 residue, which is known to play a significant role in receptor activation. Given the importance of this residue in receptor function, this interaction suggests that caffeine may act as a competitive inhibitor by interfering with ligand binding at the active site. These findings support the established role of caffeine as an effective modulator of adenosine receptor activity, further validating its function as a benchmark compound in receptor inhibition studies.



Note: $\alpha 1$ - red; $\alpha 2$ - orange; $\alpha 3$ - ochre-yellow; $\alpha 4$ - lemon; $\alpha 5$ - green; $\alpha 6$ - turquoise; $\alpha 7$ - blue.

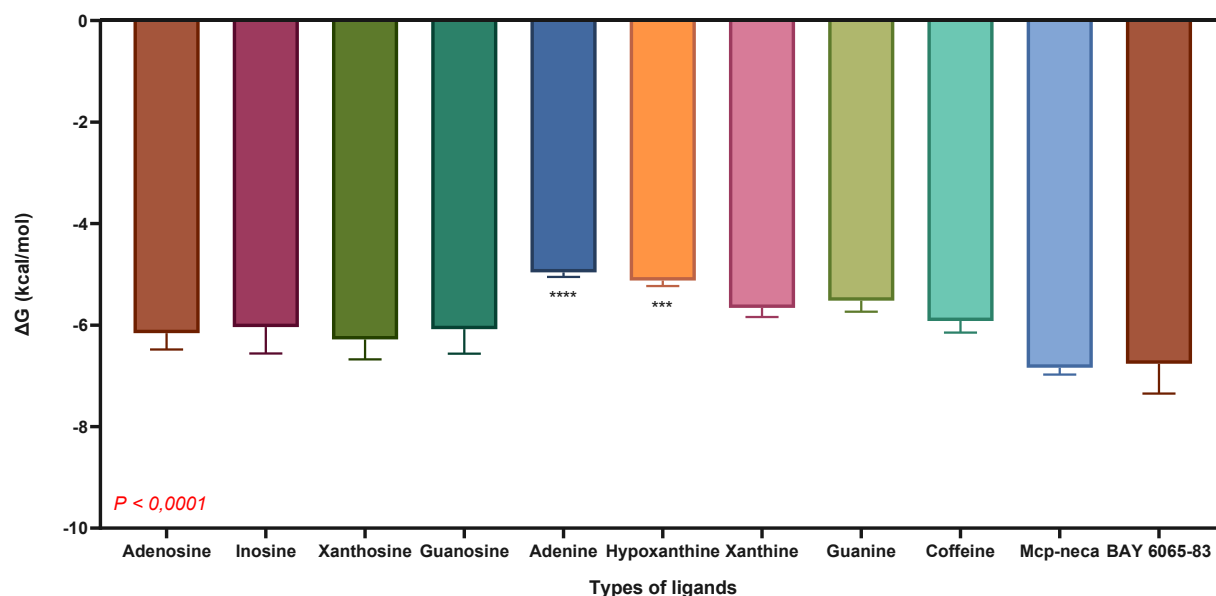
Figure 4. 3D and 2D visualization of molecular interactions of **(A)** Caffeine, **(B)** Mcp-neca, **(C)** BAY 6065–83 with the A_{2B} AR binding site

Mcp-neca, as previously described, is an antagonist of both A_{2B} and A_3 AR [34]. In this study, molecular docking of Mcp-neca was performed with both inactive and active forms of A_{2B} AR to elucidate its inhibition mechanisms. The results indicate a significantly higher affinity of Mcp-neca compared to adenosine ($\Delta G = -7.5$ kcal/mol, with a minimum value of $\Delta G = -6.8$ kcal/mol). Interaction visualization (Figure 4B) revealed that Mcp-neca interacts with at least three amino acid residues: PHE 173, GLU 174, and LYS 267. The PHE 173 residue, located in the $\alpha 5$ -helix, participates in a π - π interaction with the ligand's benzene ring, potentially stabilizing the complex. GLU 174 forms hydrogen bonds, which may restrict $\alpha 5$ -helix mobility and prevent G-protein activation. The most significant contribution to affinity is likely to come from the π -cation interaction between the positively charged LYS 267 and the ligand's aromatic system. Thus, Mcp-neca acts as a competitive antagonist by blocking the active site and preventing adenosine

The final tested ligand was BAY 6065–83, known as a selective A_{2B} AR agonist. Analysis of cryo-EM structures identified active conformations of the receptor interacting with BAY 6065–83. Molecular docking results showed that the ligand's highest affinity was $\Delta G = -7.3$ kcal/mol. Interaction visualization (Figure 4C) revealed two key interactions: a π - π interaction with PHE 173 ($\alpha 5$ -helix) and a hydrogen bond with SER 279 ($\alpha 7$ -helix). These interactions are characteristic of both adenosine receptor agonists and antagonists. Thus, BAY 6065–83 exhibits specific interactions with A_{2B} AR that may play a crucial role in its activation.

In silico analysis of nucleotide binding to the active A_{2B}AR

After molecular docking with the inactive form of the A_{2B}AR receptor, similar calculations were performed for its active form. The study covered 11 different ligands, including natural purines as well as selective and non-selective antagonists and agonists (Figure 5). The analysis identified potential agonists (xanthosine), antagonists (inosine, guanosine, guanine), and molecules with no significant effect (adenine). The roles of xanthine and hypoxanthine remain uncertain.

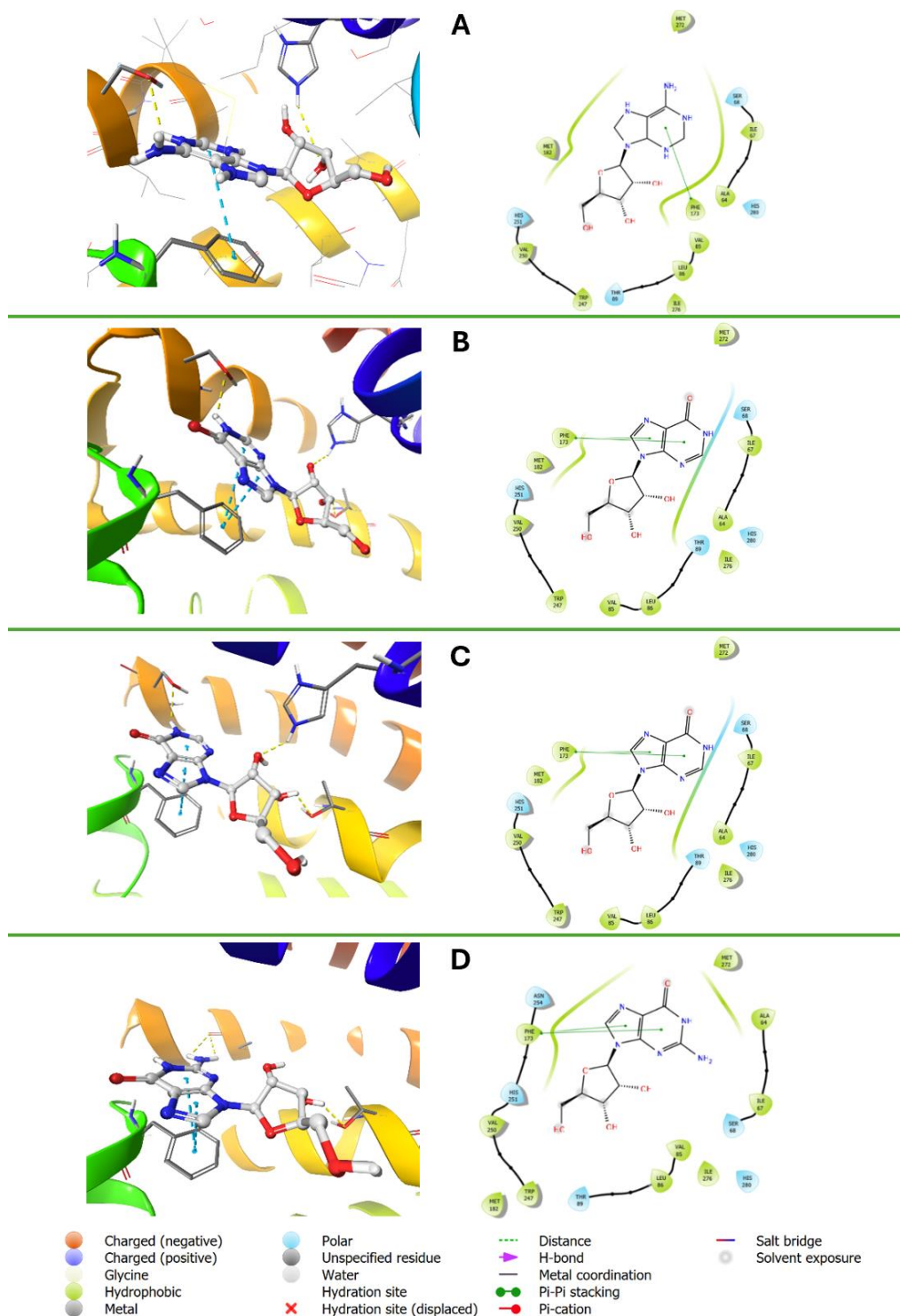


Note: Tukey's multiple comparison test was used to assess statistical significance relative to adenosine. Columns without labels are not significant, whereas asterisks indicate significance.

Figure 5. Change ΔG for ligand binding to the active A_{2B}AR

This section focuses on the analysis of natural nucleosides to confirm their functional role, as well as the selective antagonist MCP-NECA and the selective agonist BAY 6065–83. Affinity evaluation is based on binding free energy, analyzed only for the most stable complexes. Additionally, the interaction patterns of these ligands with key receptor residues were examined to provide further insights into their binding mechanisms.

The ΔG values for interactions between the active form of A_{2B}AR and adenosine, inosine, xanthosine, and guanosine did not show significant differences in affinity (Figure 5). Among them, adenosine exhibited the lowest affinity ($\Delta G = -6.6$ kcal/mol), while guanosine demonstrated the highest binding affinity ($\Delta G = -6.9$ kcal/mol). The presumed agonist xanthosine displayed an intermediate ΔG value of -6.8 kcal/mol. Molecular interaction analysis revealed that all potential agonists form a π - π interaction with the hydrophobic residue PHE 173 ($\alpha 5$ -helix). Adenosine, inosine, and xanthosine establish a hydrogen bond with HIS 280 ($\alpha 7$ -helix) via the ribose moiety. Additionally, inosine, xanthosine, and guanosine interact with THR 89 ($\alpha 2$ -helix), whereas guanosine, unlike the other molecules, forms a hydrogen bond with ALA 64 instead of SER 68 (Figure 6).



Note: $\alpha 1$ - red; $\alpha 2$ - orange; $\alpha 3$ - ochre-yellow; $\alpha 4$ - lemon; $\alpha 5$ - green; $\alpha 6$ - turquoise; $\alpha 7$ - blue.

Figure 6. 3D and 2D visualization of molecular interactions of **(A)** Adenosine, **(B)** Inosine, **(C)** Xanthosine, and **(D)** Guanosine with the binding site of the active $A_{2B}AR$

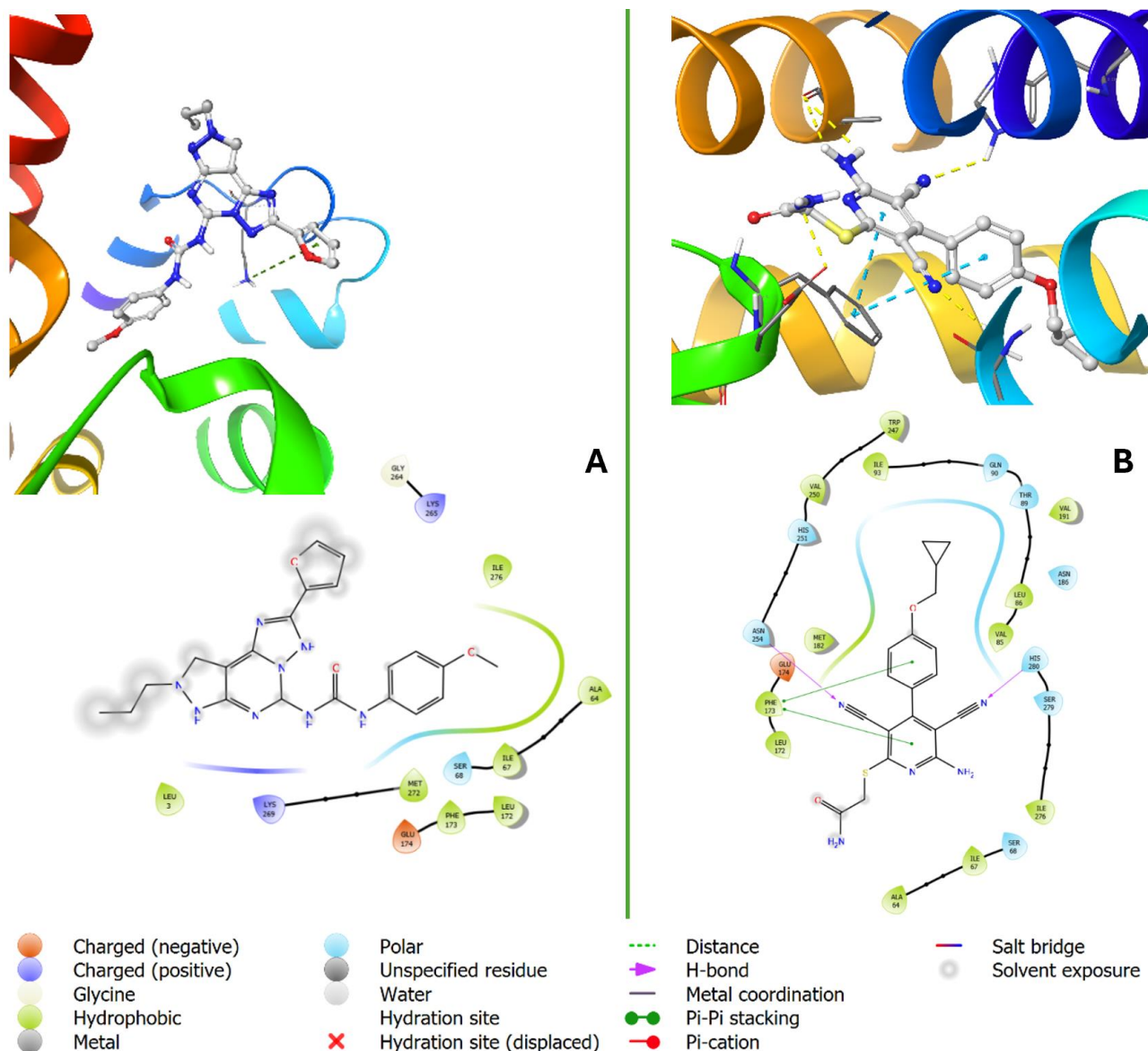
The data obtained suggest that xanthosine is likely to be an agonist of A_{2B}AR, as its interactions align with known parameters of agonistic activity. However, the influence of an additional hydrogen bond with THR 89 remains unclear and may merely enhance affinity without inducing conformational changes in the receptor. Inosine and guanosine also exhibit agonistic potential, but their interactions with key amino acids differ, which could indicate possible antagonistic activity of guanosine.

A literature review on the potential role of inosine in A_{2B}AR signaling revealed conflicting evidence. While several studies demonstrate that inosine interacts with A_{2A}AR adenosine receptors, these findings cannot be directly extrapolated to A_{2B}AR due to significant differences in their signaling mechanisms. A_{2A}AR primarily couples to Gs proteins, leading to increased intracellular cAMP levels, whereas A_{2B}AR can couple to both Gs and Gq proteins, resulting in more complex and context-dependent signaling pathways. Studies on A_{2A}AR typically employ adenosine concentrations of 30 nM and 100 nM, whereas research on A_{2B}AR indicates that this receptor has a relatively low affinity for its natural agonist, with a K_i value of 15,000 nM (equivalent to 15 μM) [12, 45, 46]. Interestingly, one study also utilized a significantly higher inosine concentration of 100 mM, which showed an increase in dynamic mass redistribution. However, this experiment was conducted on cells overexpressing A_{2A}AR, raising concerns about the validity of the observed effects [12]. Given the distinct functional roles and signaling pathways of A_{2A}AR and A_{2B}AR, it remains unclear whether inosine acts as an agonist, antagonist, or neutral ligand for A_{2B}AR. Direct functional assays are necessary to determine their precise activity.

These findings highlight the complexity of nucleoside-receptor interactions and suggest that further investigation is needed to determine the precise functional roles of inosine and guanosine in A_{2B}AR signaling. Future studies should aim to clarify whether their effects are context-dependent and whether variations in receptor expression levels influence their agonistic or antagonistic properties. It is important to note that in two separate experiments, the A_{2A} receptor antagonist [3H]ZM 241385 was used as a control agent to assess the binding of inosine to this receptor. However, this compound is also known to act as an A_{2B} antagonist, raising concerns regarding the validity of these findings. As a result, we cannot fully accept these data as definitive evidence [44]. Consequently, we propose the hypothesis that inosine may act as an A_{2B}AR antagonist, but further experimental validation is required.

In this study, the selective antagonist Mcp-neca and the selective agonist BAY 6065–83 were analyzed in complex with the active form of A_{2B}AR. The calculated binding free energy was ΔG = -7.4 kcal/mol for BAY 6065–83 and ΔG = -7.0 kcal/mol for Mcp-neca. Molecular docking results indicate that MCP-NECA loses a significant portion of its interactions in the active state of the receptor, although it retains π-π interactions with amino acid residues of the α7-helix.

In contrast, BAY 6065–83 exhibits interaction patterns similar to those of adenosine. Specifically, PHE 173 (α5-helix) forms a π-π interaction, while hydrogen bonds are established with HIS 280 (α7-helix), ALA 64 (α2-helix), GLU 174 (α5-helix), and ASN 254 (α5-helix). These findings suggest that BAY 6065–83 engages key structural elements involved in receptor activation, reinforcing its role as a potent A_{2B}AR agonist.



Note: $\alpha 1$ - red; $\alpha 2$ - orange; $\alpha 3$ - ochre-yellow; $\alpha 4$ - lemon; $\alpha 5$ - green; $\alpha 6$ - turquoise; $\alpha 7$ - blue.

Figure 7. 3D and 2D visualization of molecular interactions of **(A)** Mcp-neca, **(B)** BAY 6065-83 with the binding site of the active A_{2B} AR

Discussion

A_{2B} AR plays a crucial role in various physiological processes, including inflammation, immune modulation, and vascular regulation [6-13]. Previously, adenosine and its analogs were considered to be the primary ligands for this receptor. However, our findings indicate that

all endogenous purines may also interact with A_{2B}AR. In this study, we have demonstrated that endogenous purines exhibit a high affinity for A_{2B}AR, as confirmed by molecular docking analysis. These results expand the current understanding of the role of purines in the regulation of the adenosinergic system and may have significant physiological and pharmacological implications.

Studies have shown that A_{2B}AR is involved in the differentiation of CD4+ T cells into regulatory T cells (*Tregs*) [47]. The work of Hiroko Nakatsukasa *et al.* demonstrated that A_{2B}AR antagonists inhibit Foxp3 expression and IL-10 production without affecting CD4+ T cell activation. These findings highlight the pivotal role of A_{2B}AR in immune regulation. Regulatory T cells play a crucial role in maintaining peripheral immune tolerance and suppressing excessive immune responses. Notably, a reduction in *Treg* numbers has been associated with enhanced antitumor immunity [47,48]. Consequently, A_{2B}AR antagonists, by inhibiting *Treg* differentiation, may enhance the effectiveness of immune responses against tumor cells.

In the study by Matthias Seifert *et al.*, the influence of A_{2A} and A_{2B} adenosine receptors on murine CAR-T cells was investigated [49]. It was established that the non-specific adenosine receptor agonist NECA reduces the release of IFN- γ , IL-2, and TNF- α in a dose-dependent manner [49]. CAR-T cells predominantly express A_{2A} and A_{2B} AR; however, the potential expression of A₁ and A₃ AR cannot be ruled out. Given that the EC₅₀ values for NECA are 14 nM (A₁), 20 nM (A_{2A}), 2.4 μ M (A_{2B}), and 6.2 nM (A₃), it can be inferred that the observed reduction in cytokine secretion may also be influenced by the activation of A₁ and A₃ receptors, rather than being exclusively attributed to A_{2A} and A_{2B} [49,50].

Literature data confirm that the primary immunosuppressive effect of adenosine in CAR-T cells is mediated through the A_{2A} receptor [51]. Consequently, its activation suppresses the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines, which may be linked not only to the G α s protein but also to the involvement of G β / γ subunits. Experimental data indicate that at low concentrations of the A_{2A} antagonist AB928 (<10 nM, EC₅₀ = 2 nM), the secretion of pro-inflammatory cytokines is also reduced [52]. This suggests that A_{2B} signaling in CAR-T cells may activate the Gq pathway, promoting differentiation without directly affecting cytokine synthesis. In contrast, A_{2B} antagonists inhibit differentiation while having no significant impact on cytokine production.

Inflammation plays a crucial role in the development of neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Neuroinflammation, characterized by elevated levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines and activated microglia, contributes to disease progression [53]. Chronic microglial activation leads to increased production of inflammatory mediators, forming a vicious cycle of neuronal damage and further inflammation [54]. Protein aggregates, common in neurodegenerative diseases, can both induce and exacerbate neuroinflammation [53]. In Parkinson's disease, immune alterations in response to extracellular α -synuclein may modulate disease progression [55]. While it remains unclear whether neuroinflammation is a primary cause or secondary consequence of neurodegeneration, targeting inflammatory processes has emerged as a promising therapeutic strategy [53,54]. The activation of adenosine receptors, particularly A_{2B}, may influence neuroinflammatory processes by modulating immune cell activity in the central nervous system. Our findings suggest a potential role for endogenous purines in regulating inflammation through A_{2B} receptors, opening new avenues for exploring their involvement in the pathogenesis of neurodegenerative diseases.

Despite the significance of our results, this study has certain limitations. Our conclusions are currently based solely on molecular docking, which indicates potential interactions between endogenous purines and the A_{2B} adenosine receptor. However, additional biochemical studies, including experiments on cell lines and in vivo models, are necessary to confirm their physiological role.

If A_{2B} AR indeed influences T-cell differentiation, this could present new opportunities for immunotherapy. On one hand, activation of this receptor may promote the development of regulatory T cells (Treg), which are essential for controlling autoimmune diseases and inflammatory processes. On the other hand, the inhibition of A_{2B} AR could enhance anti-tumor immunity by suppressing Treg differentiation and increasing the activity of effector T cells. Future research should focus on elucidating the effects of endogenous purines on A_{2B} AR in the context of immune regulation, which could provide valuable insights into their potential therapeutic applications in cancer and inflammatory diseases.

Author Contributions

M.S. – conceptualization; **M.S.**– methodology; **M.S.**– investigation; **M.S.**– validation; **M.S.**– data curation; **M.S.** – visualization; **M.S.** – writing – original draft; **M.S.** and **E.Ch.** – writing – review & editing.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Compliance with ethical standards

This article does not contain a description of studies performed by the authors involving people or using animals as objects.

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Эндогендік пуриндер A_{2B} аденозин рецепторының табиғи лигандтары ретінде

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Аңдатпа. Эндогендік пуриндер әртүрлі физиологиялық функциялардың, соның ішінде иммундық жауаптың, қабынудың және нейротрансмиссияның маңызды реттеушілері болып табылады. Аденозин ұзақ уақыт бойы аденозиндік рецепторлар үшін негізгі лиганд болып саналғанымен, соңғы деректер басқа пуриндердің де осы рецепторлармен, атап айтқанда A_{2B} аденозиндік рецепторларымен ($A_{2B}AR$) әрекеттесе алатынын көрсетеді. Бұл зерттеу молекулалық докинг арқылы $A_{2B}AR$ табиғи лигандтары ретінде эндогендік пуриндердің әлеуетті рөлін зерттейді. Нәтижелер пуриндердің $A_{2B}AR$ -ға жоғары жақындығын көрсетеді, бұл олардың осы рецептор арқылы болатын сигнал беру жолдарындағы функционалдық маңыздылығын көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар, $A_{2B}AR$ Т жасушаларының дифференциациясына және цитокиндердің өндірісіне әсер ету арқылы иммундық реттеуде шешуші рөл атқарады. Оның белсенділігін эндогендік пуриндермен модуляциялау ісік және нейродегенеративті бұзылыстарды қоса, қабыну ауруларын емдеуге айтарлықтай әсер етуі мүмкін. Алынған деректер аденозинергиялық жүйенің пуринергиялық бақылауы туралы жаңа түсініктер береді және терапевтік мақсат ретінде $A_{2B}AR$ әлеуетін көрсетеді. Дегенмен, осы өзара әрекеттесулердің физиологиялық маңыздылығын түпкілікті растау үшін *in vitro* және *in vivo* эксперименттерін қоса, қосымша зерттеулер қажет. Бұл зерттеу пуринергиялық сигнализация туралы түсінігімізді кеңейтеді және иммундық және қабыну реакциясын модуляциялауға бағытталған фармакологиялық араласуды дамыту үшін жаңа жолдарды ашады.

Түйін сөздер: A_{2B} аденозин рецепторы, пуринергиялық сигнализация, иммундық модуляция, қабыну және нейродегенерация, молекулалық докинг талдауы

Эндогенные пурины как естественные лиганды A_{2B} рецептора аденозина

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Аннотация. Эндогенные пурины являются важными регуляторами различных физиологических функций, включая иммунный ответ, воспаление и нейротрансмиссию. Хотя аденозин долгое время считался основным лигандом аденозиновых рецепторов, последние данные свидетельствуют о том, что другие пурины также могут взаимодействовать с этими рецепторами, в частности, с A_{2B}-аденозиновым рецептором (A_{2B}AR). В данном исследовании изучается потенциальная роль эндогенных пуринов как природных лигандов A_{2B}AR с использованием молекулярного докинга. Результаты демонстрируют высокую аффинность пуринов к A_{2B}AR, что указывает на их функциональную значимость в сигнальных путях, опосредованных этим рецептором. Кроме того, A_{2B}AR играет ключевую роль в иммунной регуляции, влияя на дифференцировку Т-клеток и продукцию цитокинов. Модуляция его активности эндогенными пуринами может иметь значительное значение для лечения воспалительных заболеваний, включая рак и нейродегенеративные расстройства. Полученные данные дают новые представления о пуринергическом контроле аденозинергической системы и подчеркивают перспективность A_{2B}AR как терапевтической мишени. Однако для окончательного подтверждения физиологической значимости этих взаимодействий необходимы дополнительные исследования, включая эксперименты *in vitro* и *in vivo*. Это исследование расширяет понимание пуринергической сигнализации и открывает новые возможности для разработки фармакологических вмешательств, направленных на модуляцию иммунного и воспалительного ответа.

Ключевые слова: A_{2B} рецептор аденозина, пуринергическая сигнализация, иммунная модуляция, воспаление и нейродегенерация, молекулярный стыковочный анализ

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