

Highly accurate protein structure prediction with AlphaFold

Tim Green

Learning to Discover, Paris

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DeepMind

Introduction

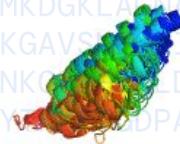


DeepMind and protein folding

A central part of DeepMind's mission is to solve fundamental scientific problems with AI

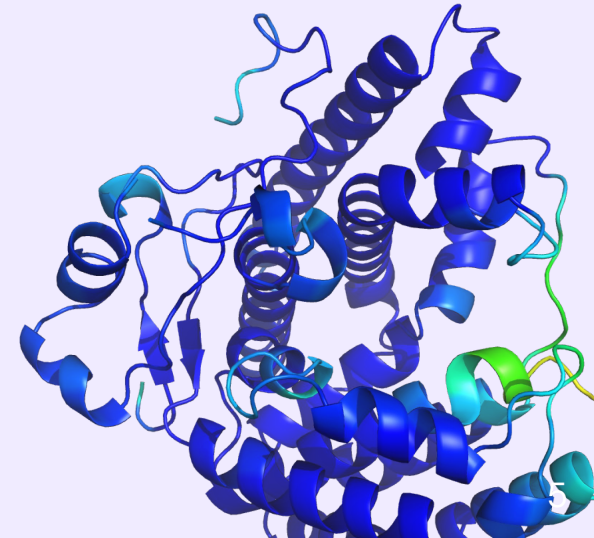
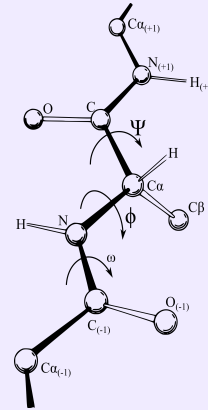
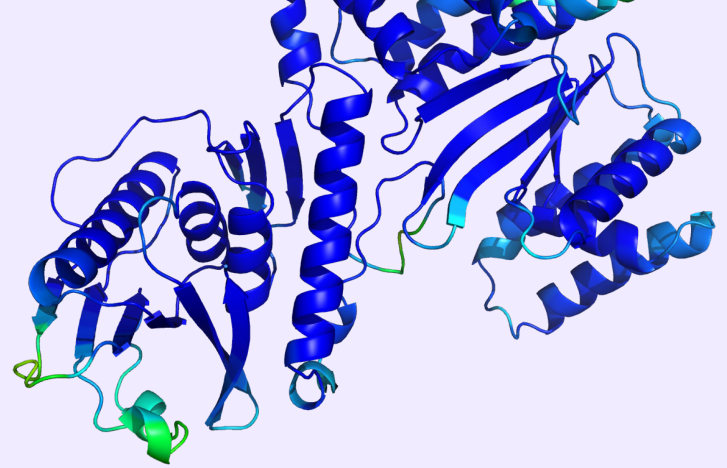
Predicting the 3D structure of a protein from its amino acid sequence is one such challenge

AlphaFold is our model that aims to solve this problem



What are proteins?

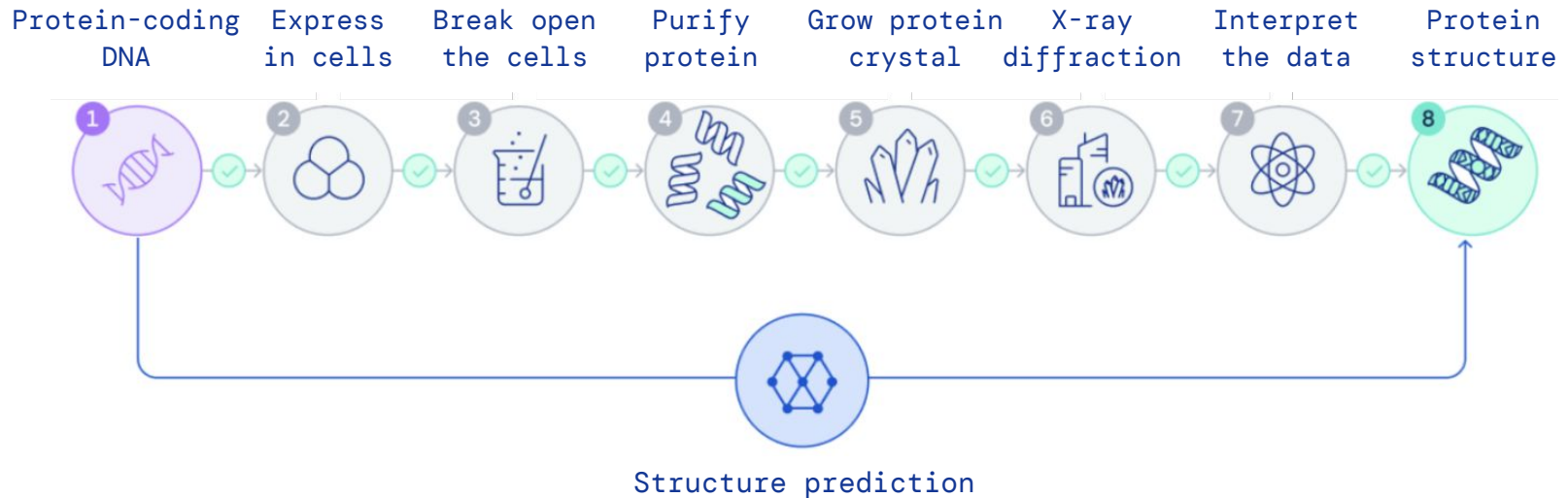
- Proteins are molecular machines that are **essential to life**
- They have **many functions**: from our hair to our immune system
- Consist of **chains of amino acids** that fold into a 3D structure
- The exact **3D shape** is important for a protein's function
- Understanding protein structures is a **fundamental problem in biology**



Why predict protein structures?

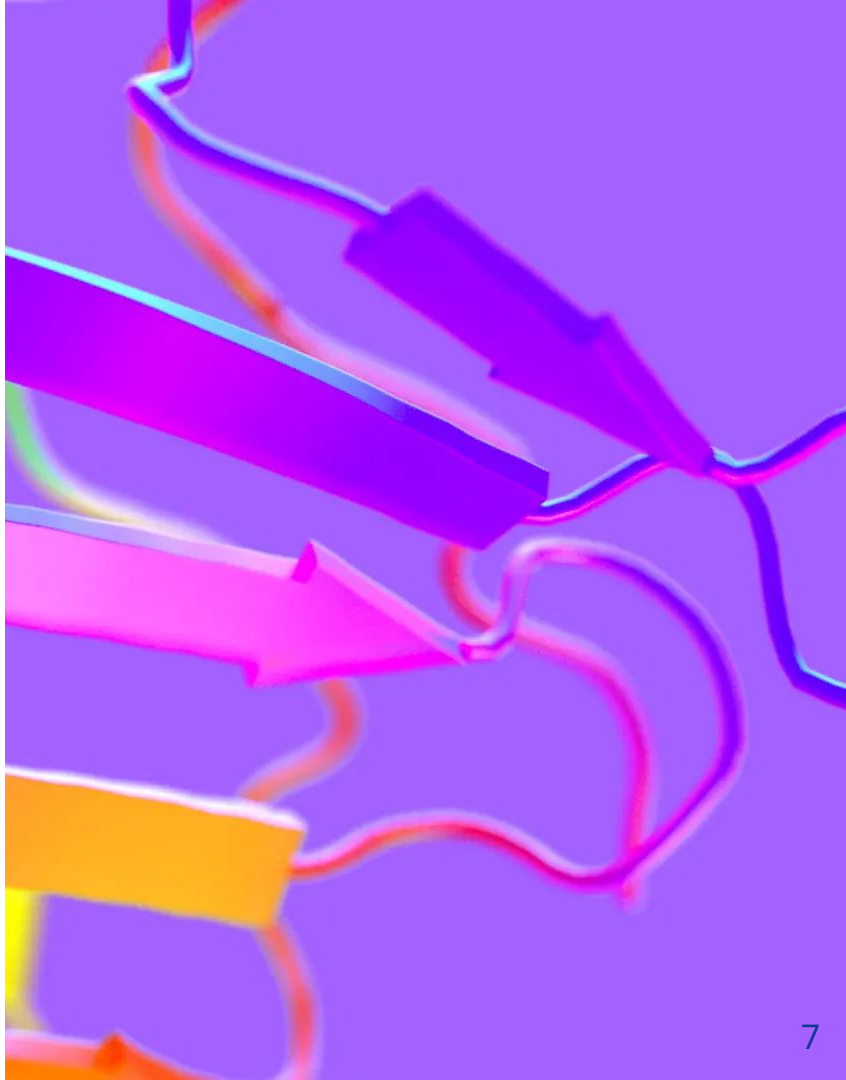
Experimental structure determination takes months to years.

Structure prediction can provide actionable information faster.



Agenda

- Introduction
- AlphaFold and CASP
- How AlphaFold works
- How AlphaFold builds protein structures
- AlphaFold impact
- AlphaFold-Multimer



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AlphaFold and CASP



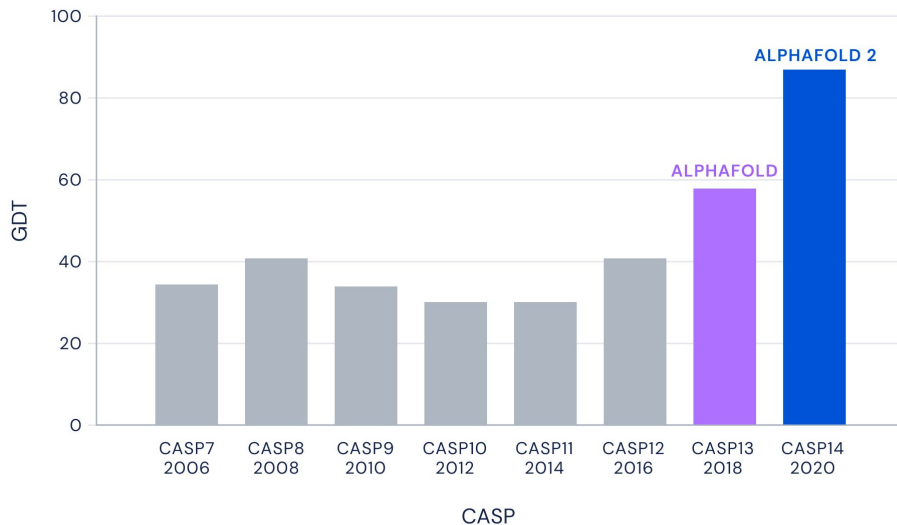
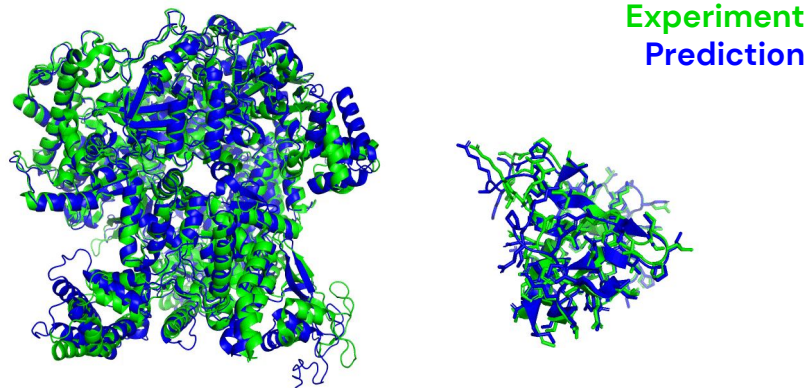
AlphaFold at CASP

When working on these problems, a clear success metric is crucial

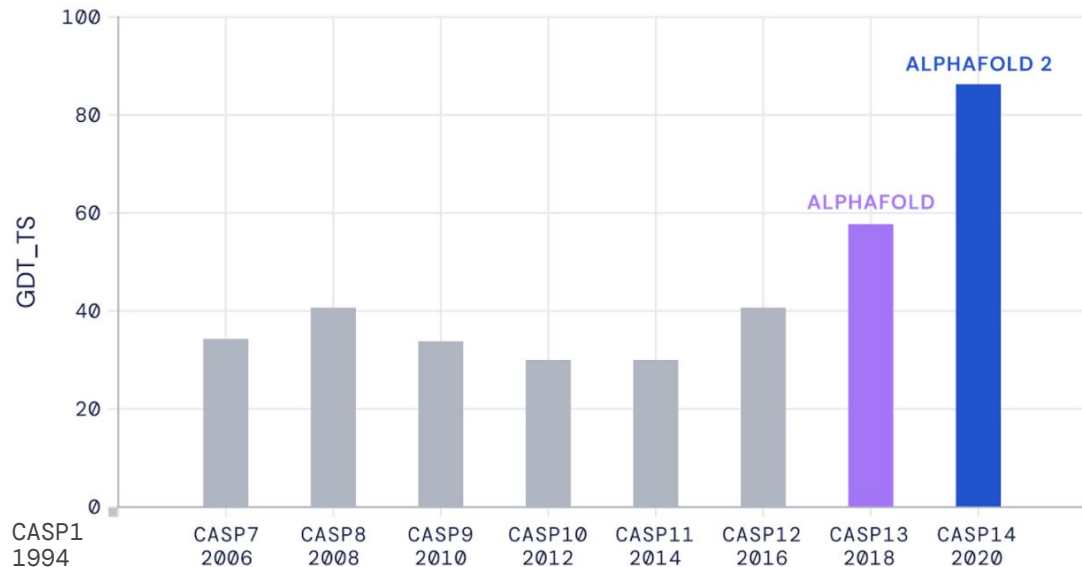
Fortunately, the protein structure prediction community had established CASP

The CASP assessment involves predicting recently solved structures that aren't yet public

At CASP14, AlphaFold was the top ranked method achieving consistently high accuracy



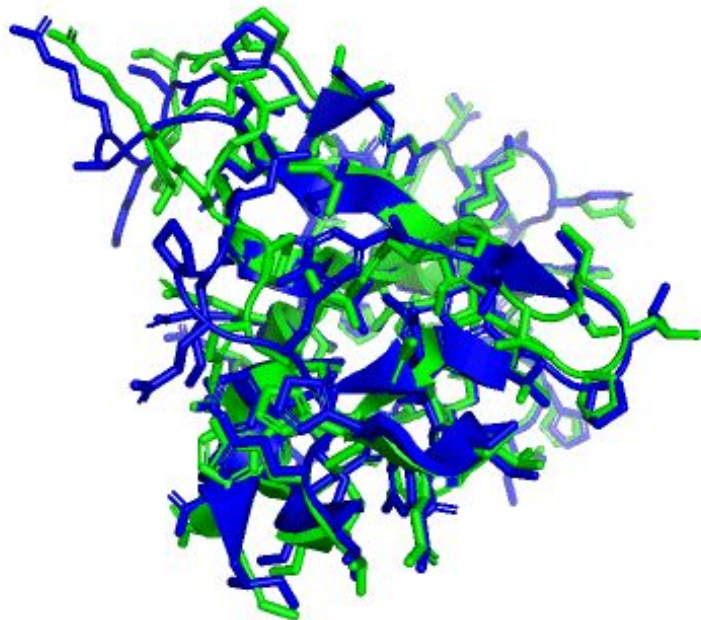
CASP: historical perspective



- CASP has provided a biennial blind assessment of structure prediction methods over the last 25 years
- AlphaFold 2 achieved a **median accuracy of 92.4 GDT** over all targets in CASP14
- In response, **AlphaFold was recognised as a solution to the structure prediction problem** by the CASP organizers



Protein example: T1064 (ORF8)



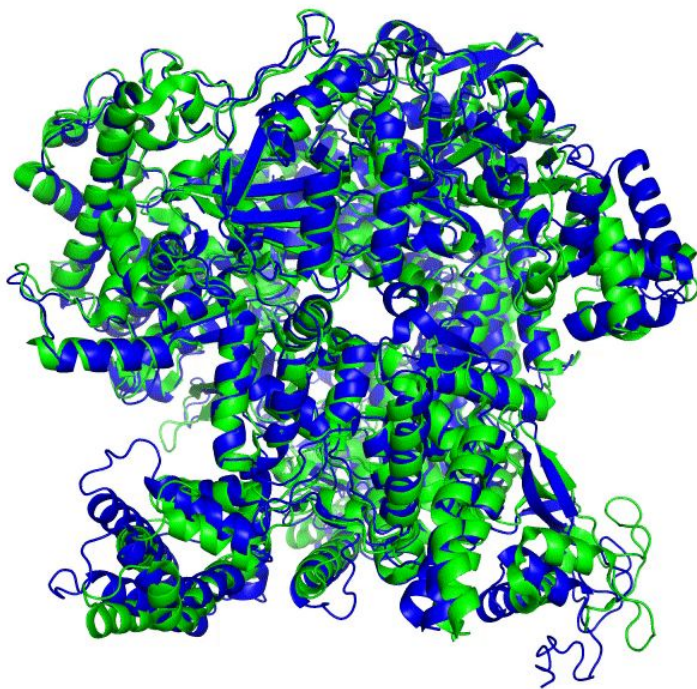
T1064 / 7jtl
87.0 GDT
(ORF8, SARS-CoV-2)

Ground truth
Prediction

7JTL: Flower, T.G., et al. (2020) Structure of SARS-CoV-2 ORF8, a rapidly evolving coronavirus protein implicated in immune evasion. Biorxiv.

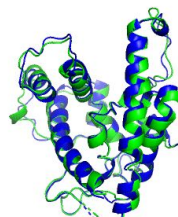


Protein example: T1044 (RNA Polymerase)

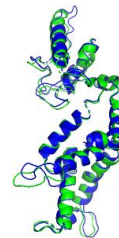


→ Folding as a single long chain

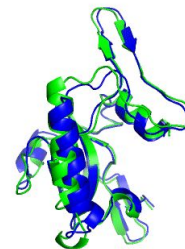
Individual domains



T1041



T1042



T1043

6VR4: Drobysheva, A.V., et al. Structure and function of virion RNA polymerase of a crAss-like phage. *Nature* (2020). (CASP14 target T1044)

Ground truth
Prediction

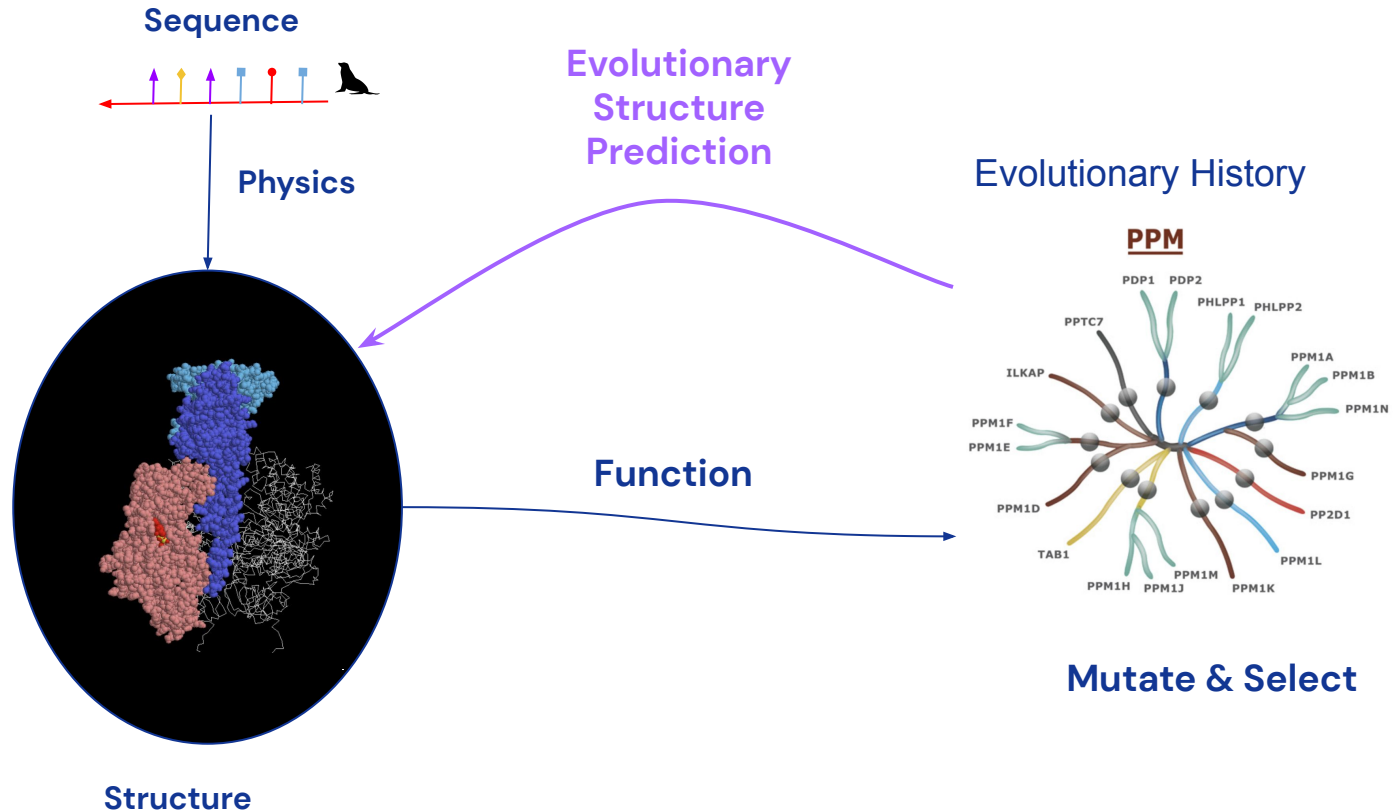


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How AlphaFold works



Determining Structure from Evolution - Intuition



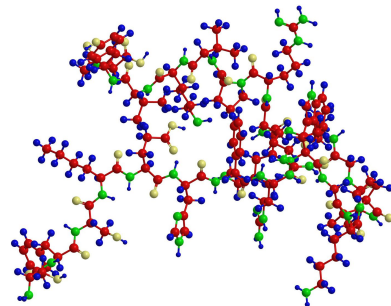
- ◆ Amino acid sequence (residues) for the protein
- ◆ Evolutionary-related sequences (sequences that fold to the same structure, but whose amino acid sequence has diverged due to mutations)

SQETRKKCTEMKKKFKNCEVRCDESNHCVEVRCSDTKYTLG

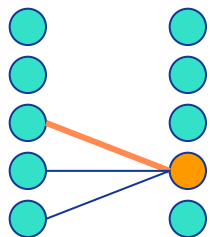
- ◆ **Labelled Data** – 170k structures, 40k after deduplicating
- ◆ **Unlabelled Data** – 350k deduplicated sequences

- ◆ 3D position of every atom in the protein (300 - 50,000 atoms)

Multiple Sequence Alignment (MSA)

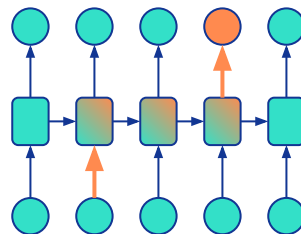
[illegible]

Inductive Bias for Deep Learning Models



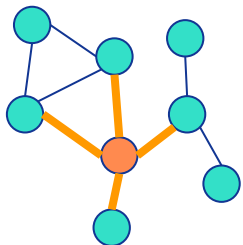
Convolutional Networks
(e.g. computer vision)

- data in regular grid
- information flow to local neighbours
- AlphaFold 1



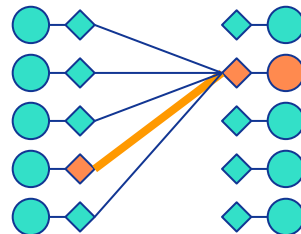
Recurrent Networks
(e.g. language)

- data in ordered sequence
- information flow sequentially



Graph Networks (e.g. recommender systems or molecules)

- data in fixed graph structure
- information flow along fixed edges

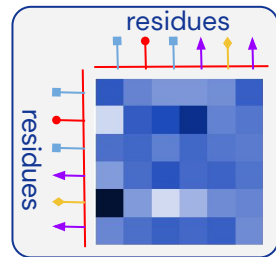
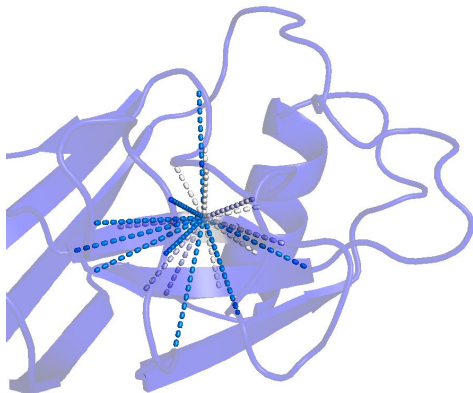


Attention Module (e.g. language)

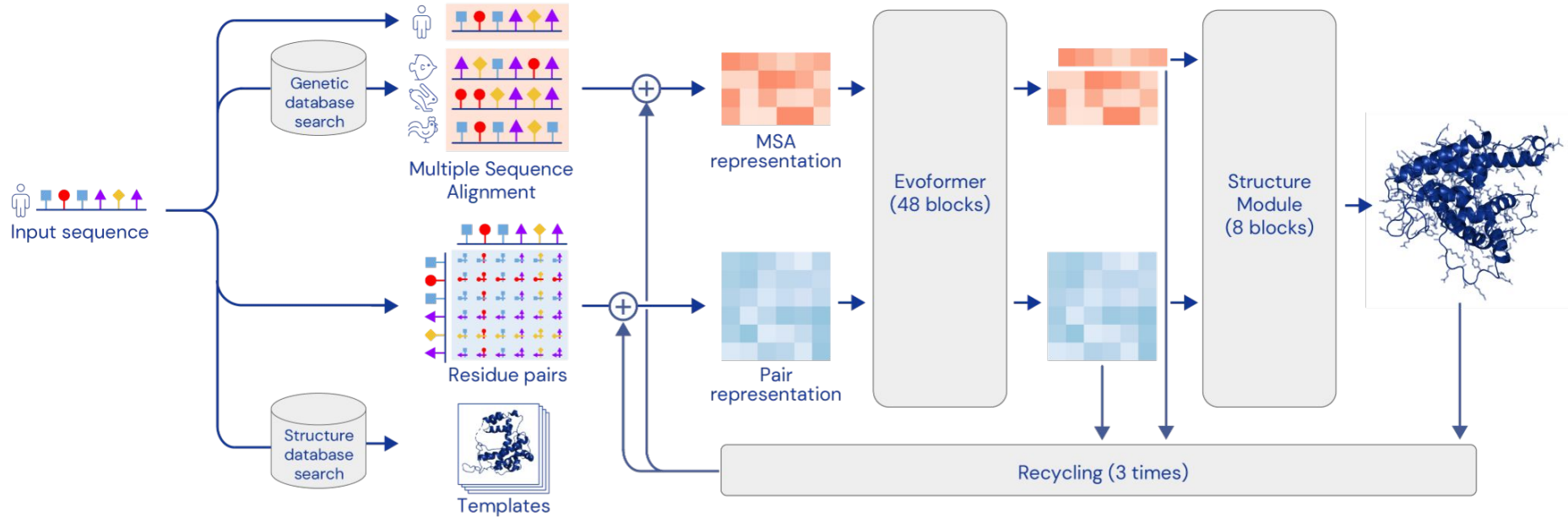
- data in unordered set
- information flow dynamically controlled by the network (via keys and queries)

Putting our protein knowledge into the model

- Physical and geometric insights are built into the network structure, not just a process around it
- End-to-end system directly producing a structure instead of inter-residue distances
- Inductive biases reflect our knowledge of protein physics and geometry
 - The positions of residues in the sequence are de-emphasized
 - Instead residues that are close in the folded protein need to communicate
 - The network iteratively learns a graph of which residues are close, while reasoning over this implicit graph as it is being built



Network

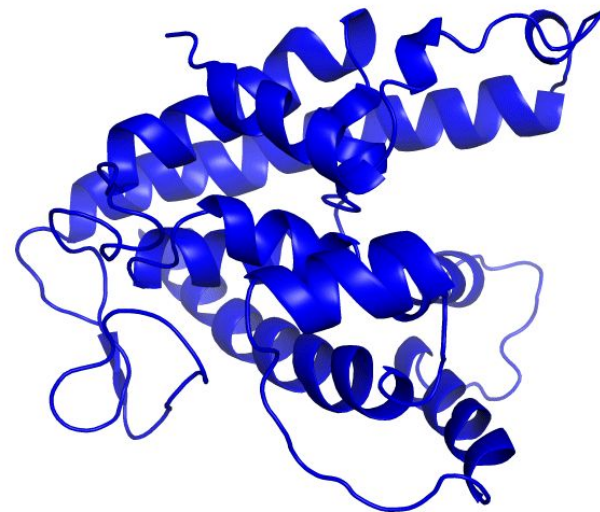
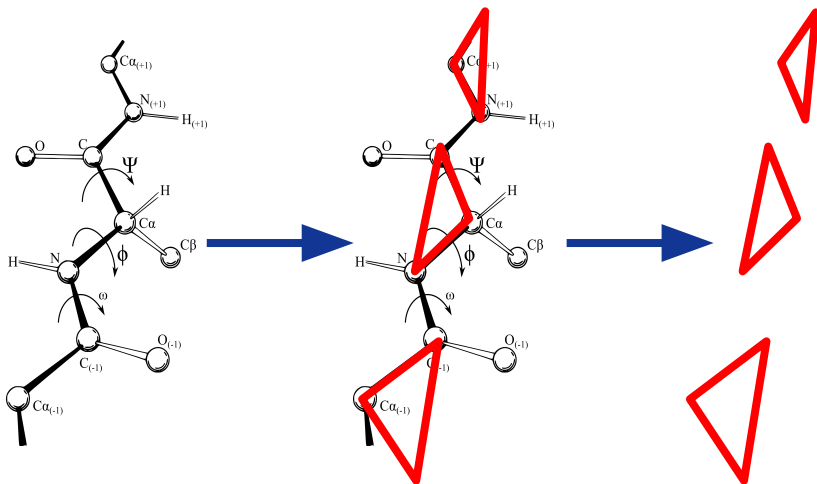


Feeding certain outputs back through the network again improves performance



Structure module

- **End-to-end folding** instead of gradient descent
- Protein backbone = gas of 3-D rigid bodies (chain is learned!)
- **3-D equivariant transformer architecture** updates the rigid bodies / backbone
 - Also builds the side chains from torsion angles



Iteration 1

Target: T1041

Using unlabelled sequences in training

We know ~200k protein structures (Protein Data Bank) but several billion protein sequences.

We use these data in two ways.

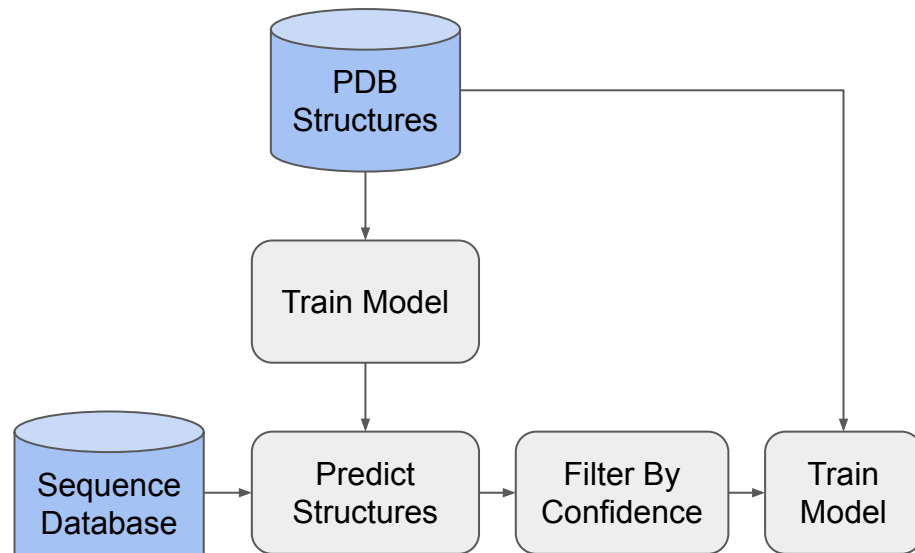
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Q5E940 BOVIN -----MPREDRATWKSNYFLKIIQLDDDPKCFIVGADNVGKKMQQIRMSLRGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
RLA0 HUMAN -----MPREDRATWKSNYFLKIIQLDDDPKCFIVGADNVGKKMQQIRMSLRGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
RLA0 MOUSE -----MPREDRATWKSNYFLKIIQLDDDPKCFIVGADNVGKKMQQIRMSLRGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
RLA0 RAT -----MPREDRATWKSNYFLKIIQLDDDPKCFIVGADNVGKKMQQIRMSLRGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
RLA0 CHICK -----MPREDRATWKSNYFLKIIQLDDDPKCFIVGADNVGKKMQQIRMSLRGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
RLA0 RANSY -----MPREDRATWKSNYFLKIIQLDDDPKCFIVGADNVGKKMQQIRMSLRGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
Q7ZUG3 BRARE -----MPREDRATWKSNYFLKIIQLDDDPKCFIVGADNVGKKMQQIRMSLRGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
RLA0 ICTPU -----MPREDRATWKSNYFLKIIQLDDDPKCFIVGADNVGKKMQQIRMSLRGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
RLA0 DROME -----MYRENKAAWAGQYFKIKVYELFDEFPKCFIVGADNVGKKMQQIRMSLRGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
RLA0 DICDI -----MSGAG-SKRKKLFTEKATKLTITTDKMIVAEADVGRSOLAKIRKISIRGI-GAVLGGKKTMIRKIVIRDLADSK--PELD 75
Q54LP0 DICDI -----MSGAG-SKRKNVFTEKATKLTITTDKMIVAEADVGRSOLAKIRKISIRGI-GAVLGGKKTMIRKIVIRDLADSK--PELD 75
RLA0 PLAF8 -----MAKLSQOQKQNYTEKLSLSIQQSKLIVHIVNVGMMASVRSRSGK-AVVLGKNTMMRKAIRGHLENN--PALE 76
RLA0 SULAC -----HLEAVTAKKAWYDVAALIKLITKTILIANIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 79
RLA0 SULTO -----MRIMAVITQERRAKKRIEWEKLEKLEKEHTITIANIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 80
RLA0 SULSO -----MKRIALALQKRWASWKEEWEKLEKLEKNSNTILIGNIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 80
RLA0 AERP8 MSVVSIVGQMYKREKPIDEWKTLMIRELEELFSKRHVFLADTCTGDFVYVVRKRLKWK--PMVAKKRILIRAMKAGLE----LDDN 86
RLA0 PYRAE MMLATGKRRYVRTQYPAKVKIVSEATELLOKQYVFLFDLHGLSRILHEKRYRLRRY-GVTKIKPLFKIAFTKVYGG--IPAE 85
RLA0 METAC -----MAEERHHTIEHPQWKEDEFEWEKLEKLEKNSNTILIGNIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 78
RLA0 METHA -----MAEERHHTIEHPQWKEDEFEWEKLEKLEKNSNTILIGNIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 78
RLA0 ARCFU -----MAAVRGS-----DEKRYVRAVEELKRNISKPPVAIVSRNVPAGDMKIRREFGK-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 80
RLA0 METKA MAVKAKGPPSCGYEKPVAEWRREVEKLEKLEKLEKNSNTILIGNIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 75
RLA0 METHH -----MAHVAEWKKKEVEELAKIKSPVVALVDVSSMPAYPLSQMRRLIRENGGLLVSRKLTLELAIKKAAKLEKPELE 77
RLA0 METTL -----NITASESEHKAPKRIEWEKLEKLEKNSNTILIGNIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 82
RLA0 METVA -----MIDAKSEHKAPKRIEWEKLEKLEKNSNTILIGNIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 82
RLA0 METJA -----MEKVKYKADWPKRIEWEKLEKLEKNSNTILIGNIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 81
RLA0 PYRAB -----MAHVAEWKKKEVEELAKIKSPVVALVDVSSMPAYPLSQMRRLIRENGGLLVSRKLTLELAIKKAAKLEKPELE 77
RLA0 PYRHO -----MAHVAEWKKKEVEELAKIKSPVVALVDVSSMPAYPLSQMRRLIRENGGLLVSRKLTLELAIKKAAKLEKPELE 77
RLA0 PYRFU -----MAHVAEWKKKEVEELAKIKSPVVALVDVSSMPAYPLSQMRRLIRENGGLLVSRKLTLELAIKKAAKLEKPELE 77
RLA0 PYRKO -----MAHVAEWKKKEVEELAKIKSPVVALVDVSSMPAYPLSQMRRLIRENGGLLVSRKLTLELAIKKAAKLEKPELE 76
RLA0 HALMA -----MSSESRKTTEVTPQWKEQDAVYELIESSESGVGVNAGTPEELDMRDLHET-AEIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 79
RLA0 HALVO -----MSSESRKTTEVTPQWKEQDAVYELIESSESGVGVNAGTPEELDMRDLHET-AEIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 79
RLA0 HALSA -----MSSESRKTTEVTPQWKEQDAVYELIESSESGVGVNAGTPEELDMRDLHET-AEIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 79
RLA0 THEAC -----MKEYSQOKKELVNEITRLKASRSVAIVDLAGIRIRIOLDIRKKMRGK-INLKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 72
RLA0 THEVO -----MKKINPKKELVSELAIDITKSKAVAIVDIKVYRIRIMIDIAKNRDK-VKIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 72
RLA0 PICTO -----MTESPKKIDTFKWEKLEKLEKNSNTILIGNIEGFPADKLHDKMKRGM-AIKVYKNTLFIKIAKNAG----IDTS 72
ruler 1.....10.....20.....30.....40.....50.....60.....70.....80.....90

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MSA BERT

(train model to predict masked locations in MSA)



Noisy student self-distillation

(train from predictions of same architecture)

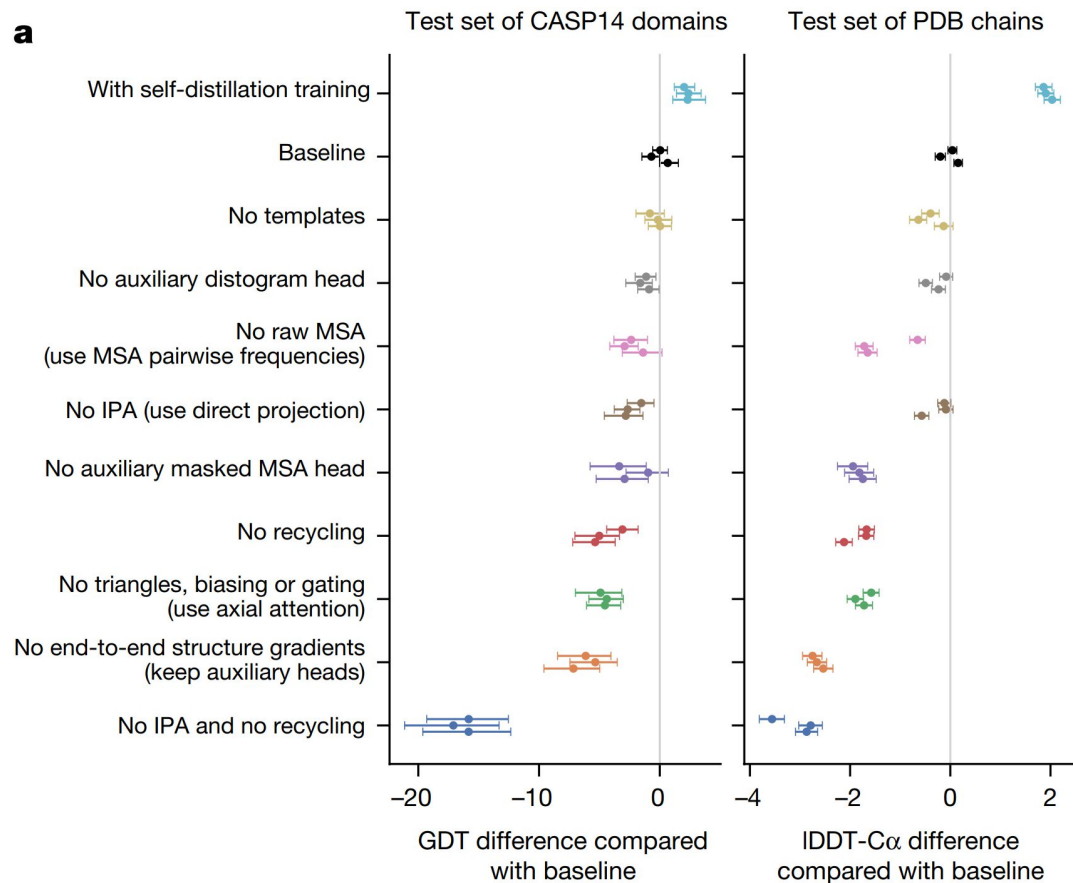


Which parts mattered? All of it

No single improvement is dominant

More important was the methodology of building the protein intuition into the model

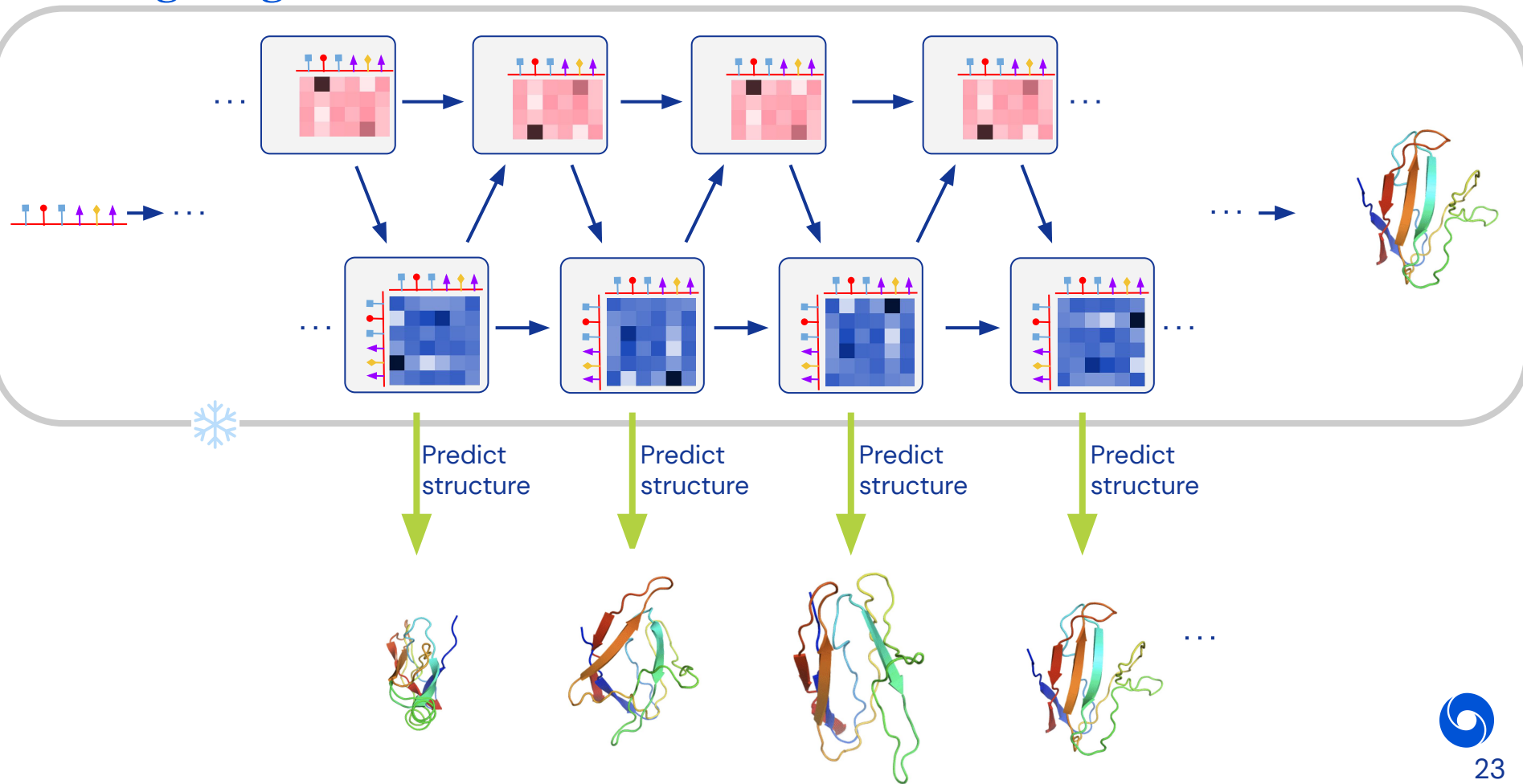
Multiple ablations suggest strong interactions between many of the components



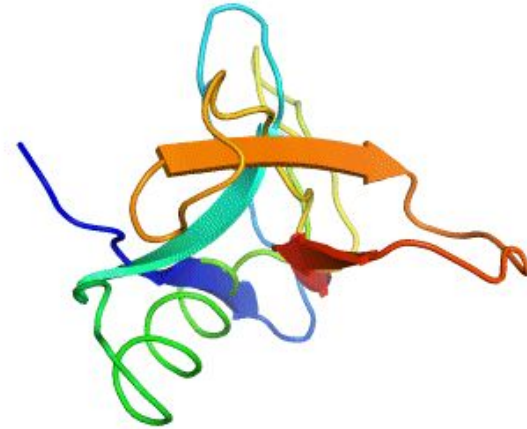
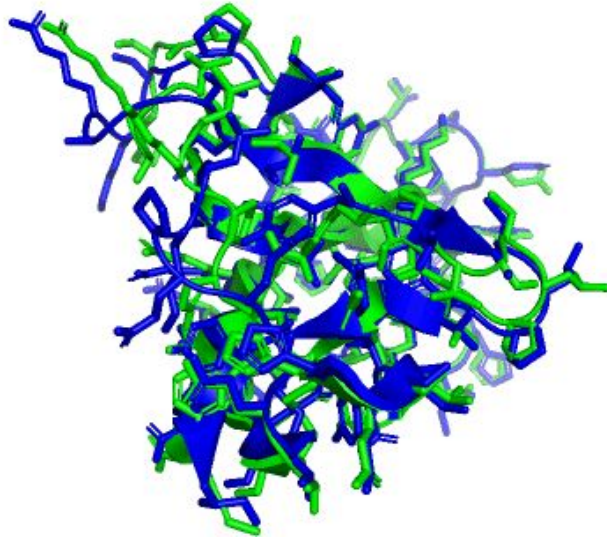
How AlphaFold builds protein structures



Interrogating the Network



Model interpretability - ORF8 - Sars-Cov2

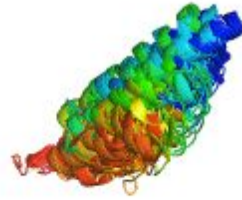


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7JTL: Flower, T.G., et al. (2020) Structure of SARS-CoV-2 ORF8, a rapidly evolving coronavirus protein implicated in immune evasion. Biorxiv.



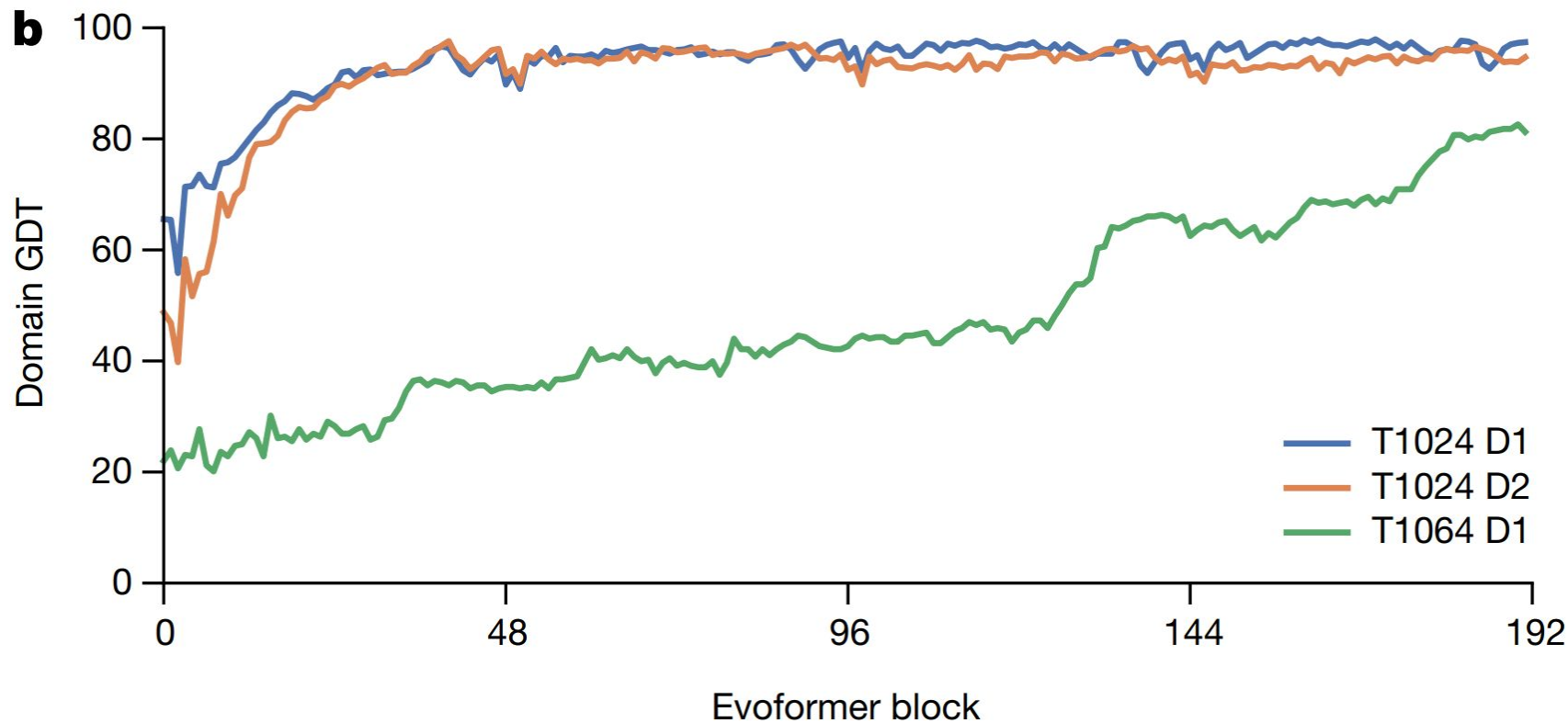
Model interpretability - T1044



1



Model interpretability - Role of depth



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AlphaFold Impact

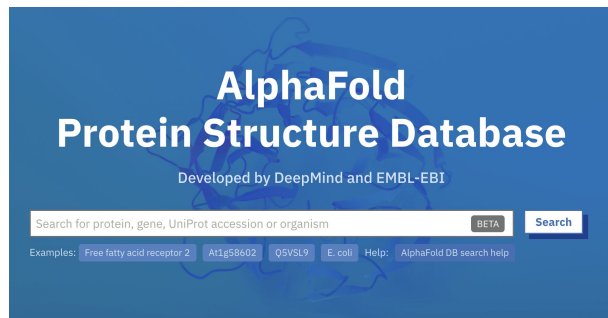


Open Source & AlphaFold Protein Structure Database

We open sourced the code and model weights to run AlphaFold – github.com/deepmind/alphafold (8.3k ★)

Also created AlphaFold Protein Structure Database

- Website developed and hosted by EMBL-EBI
- Contains pre-run predictions for **21 model organisms + SwissProt** (>800k structures)
- Plans to expand to **Uniref90** (~135M structures)

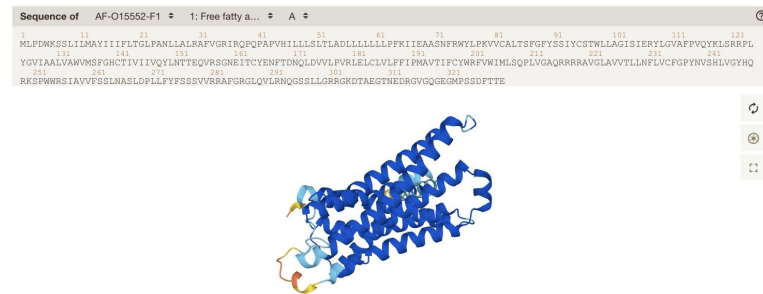


3D viewer

Model Confidence:

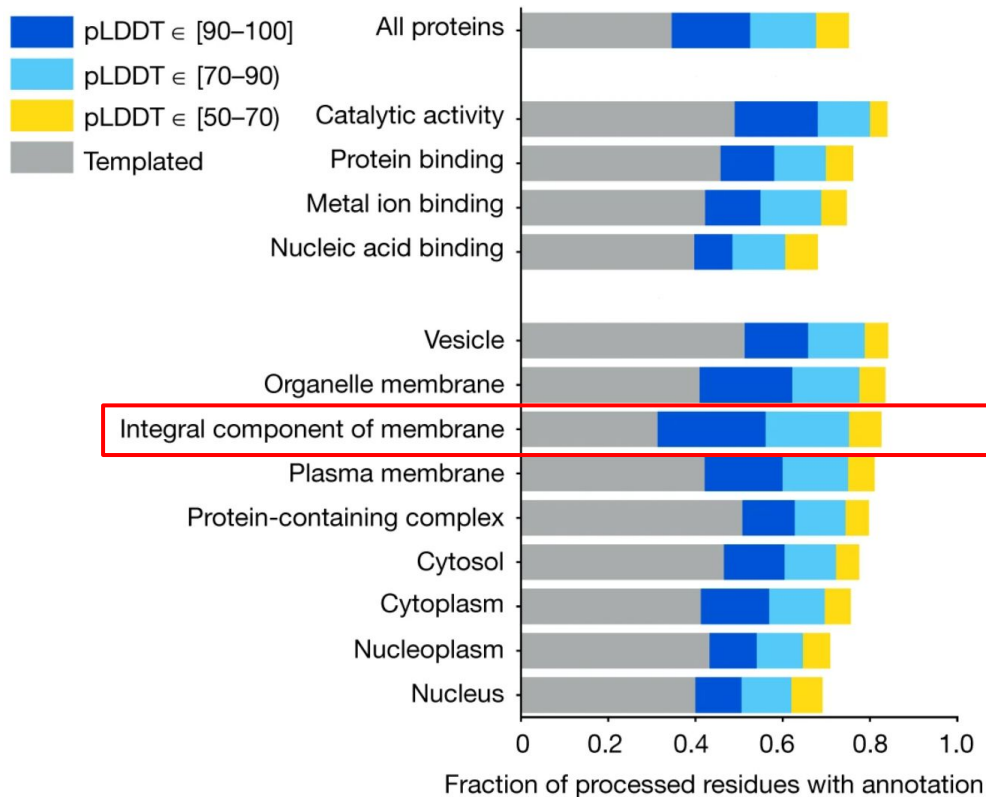
- Very high (pLDDT > 90)
- Confident (90 > pLDDT > 70)
- Low (70 > pLDDT > 50)
- Very low (pLDDT < 50)

AlphaFold produces a per-residue confidence score (pLDDT) between 0 and 100. Some regions below 50 pLDDT may be unstructured in isolation.

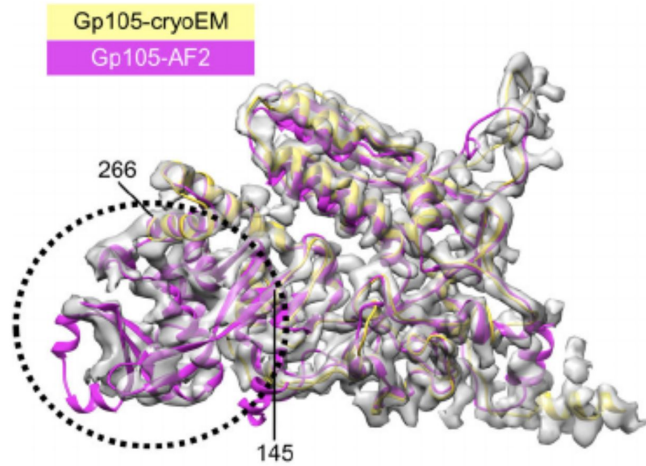


Increase in coverage of the human proteome

Even when accounting for template-modelling, AlphaFold greatly expands the high-accuracy structural coverage of the human proteome

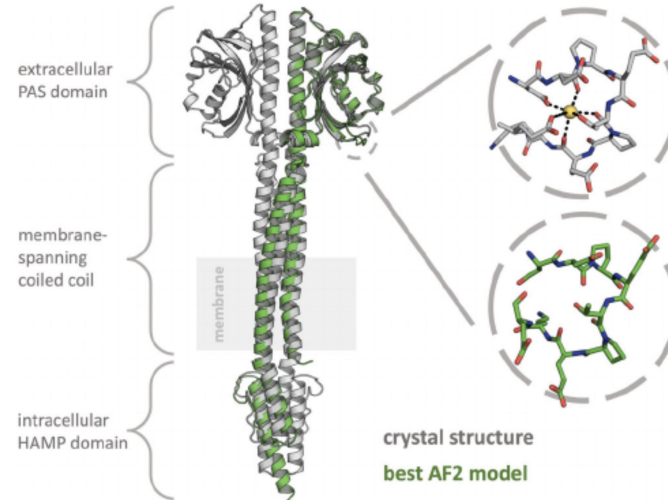


AlphaFold as an aid to experimental structure determination



AlphaFold models of AR9 nvRNAP proteins fit the cryo-EM density nearly perfectly

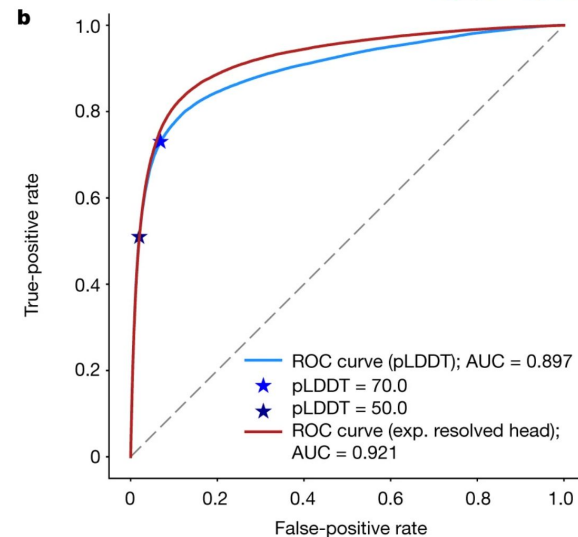
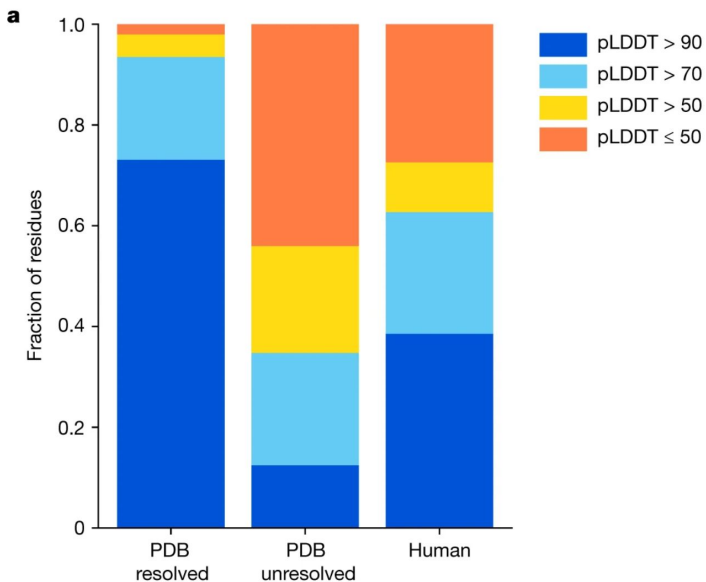
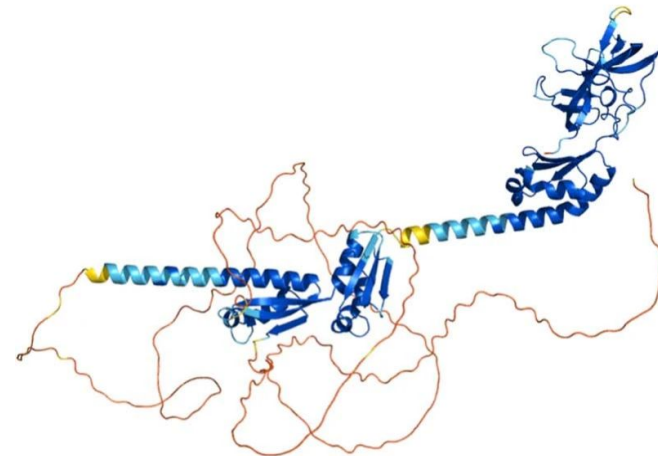
Figures taken from: Kryshafovych, Andriy, et al. *Computational models in the service of X-ray and cryo-EM structure determination. Proteins: Structure, Function, and Bioinformatics* (2021).



Crystal structure of dimeric Af1503

AlphaFold confidence and disorder

- In IDRs, there is no fixed structure for AlphaFold to identify
- So AlphaFold produces a boring ribbon *and* reports very low confidence (pLDDT)
- This make very low confidence a strong signal of disorder or chains that are unstructured in isolation





Kamil Górecki
@kamil_gorecki85

You really appreciate AlphaFold when you run it on a protein that for a year refused to get expressed and purified...

10:33 pm · 20 Jul 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



SmithLabUMBC
@SmithLabUMBC

Aaaaaaaand using an AlphaFold model we just phased some very important X-ray data that we previously couldn't phase using other MR approaches and even SAD methods!!!!

3:46 PM · Jul 23, 2021 · Twitter Web App



Tristan Croll @CrollTristan · Jul 23

Upshot: while AlphaFold clearly isn't a "replacement" for experimental structures by any stretch, it's already very clear that it's going to make the task of "building" experimental structures both much easier and much less error prone. Welcome to the future! (fin)

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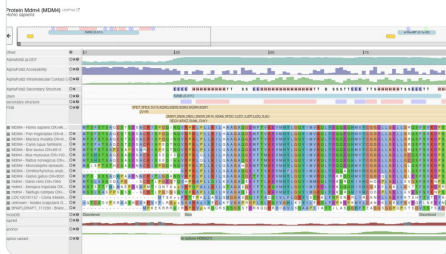
Bálint Mészáros
@BalintMeszaros

ProViz by @DaveyLab now has various AlphaFold-based disordered predictions and secondary structures

Short Linear Motif team @DaveyLab · Aug 3

@BalintMeszaros and I have been staring at the @DeepMind @emblem structure database non-stop. To see them in context we've updated ProViz to visualise AlphaFold2 data mapped to multiple sequence alignments and data from @uniprot @rcsbPDB @PfamDB tinyurl.com/ProVizAF.

[Show this thread](#)



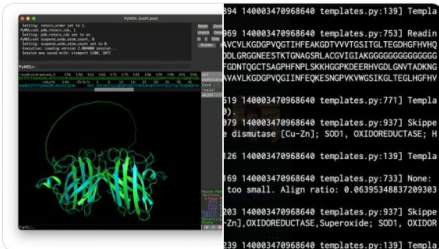
12:49 PM · Aug 3, 2021 · Twitter Web App



Yoshitaka Moriaki
@Ag_smith

Prediction from AlphaFold2, SOD1 (Superoxide dismutase), max_template_date=1979-07-19 (No template).

Nevertheless AF2 could successfully predict the homodimer form if we input two SOD1 sequences with a polyQ linker.



11:39 pm · 19 Jul 2021 · Twitter Web App



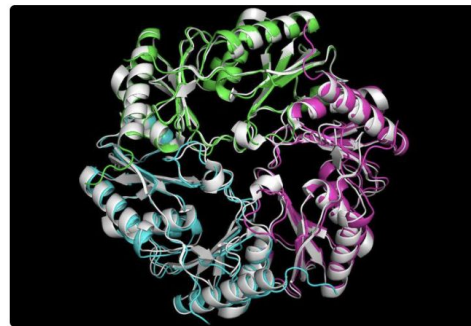
Sergey Ovchinnikov @sokrypton

Homooligomeric prediction in #alphafold works a little too good. So far worked on nearly every case we (me & @minkbaek) tried. Going beyond dimers! Seems @DeepMind accidentally "solved" the homooligomeric prediction problem (w/ MSA input) 🤪 Give it a try:

<https://colab.research.google.com/github/sokrypton/ColabFold/blob/main/AlphaFold2.ipynb>

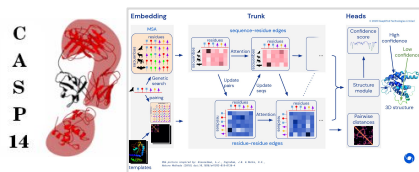
<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/E62EYFSXEAllvCa.jpg>

Twitter | Jul 21st (159 kB)



AlphaFold timeline

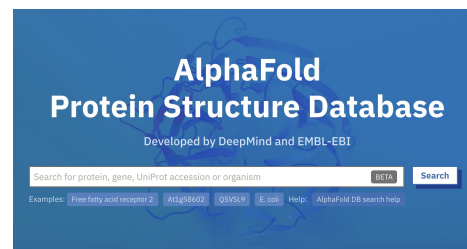
CASP14
conference



AlphaFold paper
& code release



AlphaFold DB &
Proteome paper



November 2020

July 2021



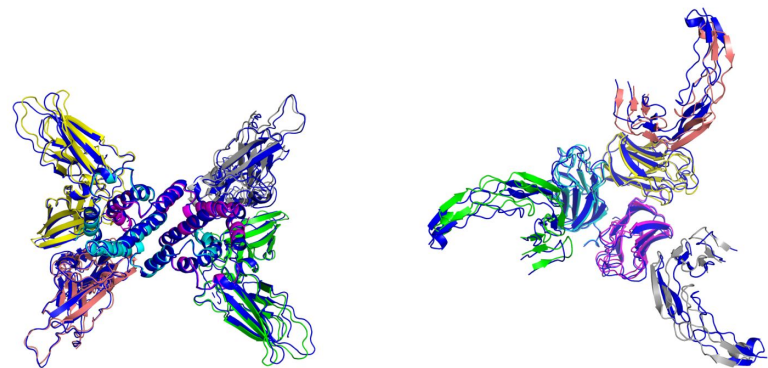
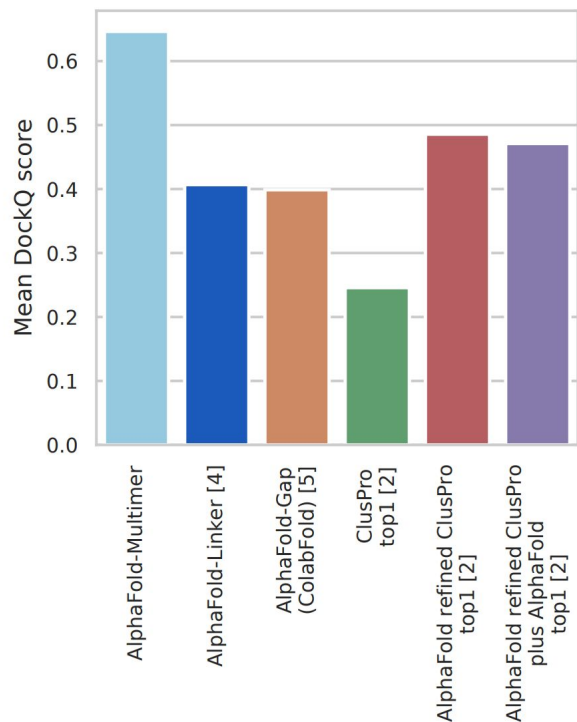
DeepMind

AlphaFold-Multimer

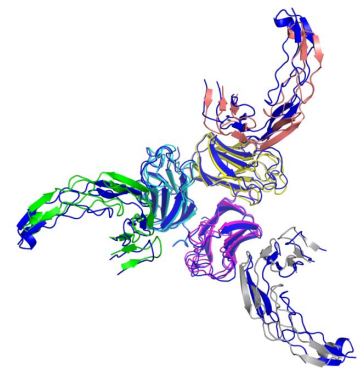


Training AlphaFold to predict protein complexes (AlphaFold-Multimer)

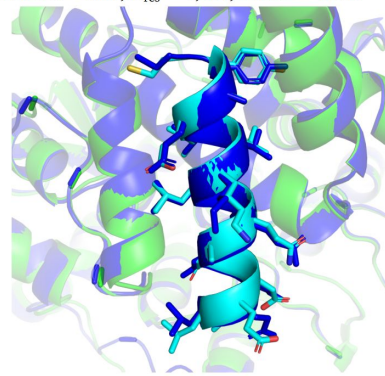
Adapting the inputs, loss function, and training of AlphaFold to handle multimers and then training the model from scratch



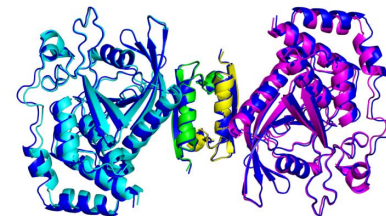
(a) A2B2C2 heteromer
TM-score = 98.0, $N_{\text{res}} = 1,246$, PDB ID = 6E3K



(b) A3B3 heteromer
TM-score = 89.3, $N_{\text{res}} = 795$, PDB ID = 7KHD



(c) Protein-peptide complex
TM-score = 96.0, DockQ = 0.948,
 $N_{\text{res}} = 385$, PDB ID = 6JMT



(d) A2B2 heteromer
TM-score = 98.3, $N_{\text{res}} = 716$, PDB ID = 6IWD

Organizing



- Make it easy to measure your performance – one metric, one leaderboard
- Incrementally improve this metric
 - +0.5% per week adds up – enough quantitative change adds up to qualitative change!
- How to create research velocity:
 - Enable fast iteration – the more ideas you can test, the faster you progress
 - Allow people to build on each other's work – you should always be improving SOTA
 - Test your code – avoid errors that damage progress



DeepMind work in science

- Protein structure prediction (AlphaFold)
- Quantum chemistry (QMC, DFT)
- Genomics
- Weather prediction
- Fusion reactor control
- Lattice QCD
- Glassy dynamics
- Mathematical discovery



Acknowledgements



Thank you to everyone who made AlphaFold possible!

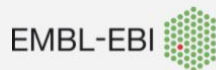
Agata Laydon
Alex Bateman
Alex Bridgland
Alexander Pritzel
Andrew Cowie
Andrew J. Ballard
Andrew W. Senior
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Augustin Žrdek
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The wider team at DeepMind and EMBL-EBI



The CASP community

The experimental biology community



DeepMind

Q&A