# **nature** portfolio

# Peer Review File

# A Molecular Video-derived Foundation Model for Scientific Drug Discovery



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# **REVIEWER COMMENTS**

#### **Reviewer #2 (Remarks to the Author):**

#### Summary:

The authors propose a molecular video-based foundation model, VideoMol, targeted at representation learning for 3D conformers downstream tasks. To learn useful representations of conformers, VideoMol is trained with three self-supervised learning strategies: Direction-Aware Pretraining Video-Aware Pretraining and Chemical-Aware pretraining, Then subsequently fine-tuned on different prediction tasks. An advantage the proposed method over similar deep learning approaches, is the provided interpretability through denoting key chemical substructures related to 3D conformational changes that according to the manuscript overlap with previous domain knowledge. The experiments show promising results of VideoMol in diverse drug discovery datasets for predicting molecular targets and properties.

The manuscript is well written and self contained. The authors made the effort to include diverse set of baselines including foundation models learnt on sequence, structure and image which gives a nice comparison across the current landscape of available methods. All experiments and results are described in detail and highlight multiple advantages of video-based features compared to current SOTA. It is encouraging that the inhibitors suggested by VideoMol overlap, to some extent, to results from other published domain studies.

#### Questions:

1. As the authors mentioned themselves, using videos increases complexity of conformer prediction models, which is an already challenging setup because of the 3D structure learning. Are the 60 frames the minimal or optimal number of frames to be used? Has this been explored?

2. Could the authors elaborate on how helpful will the features learned by VideoMol without fine tuning for a new dataset? Would it be beneficial for practiioners to use VideoMol as pretrained models to extract features and then use those for downstream tasks (without fine tuning)?

3. Why is there no standard error/deviation for any of the results? Have the experiments been repeated multiple times? Having some indication about the uncertainty intervals around the results would be appreciated.

4. It will help if the authors include some intuition on why videos make more sense and contribute to learning better features. It is not so easy to understands for readers that are less experienced with conformers. Some running/motivating example could help the presentation.

5. How sensitive is the framework to the source for video generation, in this case RDKit. I assume it is quite dependent on this platform, and thus, VideoMol probably does not allow for mixing videos from different sources. Does this pose any kind of limitation in real-world applications?

#### **Reviewer #2 (Remarks on code availability):**

The provided code is clean and well organised. The authors also included a docker image for setting up the environment. The code for training the model as well as reproducing the results is included. I believe only the code for VideoMol is provided, and not for the baseline methods. Not necessary, but if it is easy to include the related methods, the community might appreciate a full testbed.

#### **Reviewer #3 (Remarks to the Author):**

#### Noteworthy results:

The manuscript presents a video-based pretrained model that can be used to make downstream task predictions across multiple tasks with finetuning. The results are an improvement upon authors' previous work, ImageMol. The improvement is tied to use of video, which can be considered as an augmentation to static images, as well as the use of more comprehensive fingerprints that provide chemical, pharmacological and physicochemistry information. The authors show, through extensive testing, that the new model outperforms the previous and is at least as good or as better as some SOTA models for different tasks.

#### Impact to field:

The work is valuable to the field in multiple areas: it is a demonstration of technology transfer from video representation learning. It shows new self supervision tasks that are meaningful for molecule structure videos. It identifies a large set of benchmark cases. However I see major drawbacks or open questions that would limit its use beyond limited academic interest:

- Unlike stated, the model does not capture a dynamic conformation of the molecule. The videos are not generated to represent any physical dynamics, or conformer change, or changes to torsion angles etc. They are movies with standardized rotations around given axis. As such, they are only augmentations to enrich the model input about the 3d structure of the molecule. Authors should consider another wording than dynamics to prevent misleading the reader.

- if the manuscript's main aim was to inject more information about the 3d nature of the molecules, they could have considered an equivariant graph neural network or transformer. An equivariant neural network would remove the need to perform augmentation for different rotations.

- This is where it gets interesting: if the success of the model was truly due to better representation of 3d structure, we would expect the model to be sensitive to different conformers, especially on tasks that provide a binding affinity proxy. While, in multiple places in the manuscript the opposite is claimed, that model is robust to molecule conformer choice. Perhaps authors can devise an experiment to understand why video information does not lead to sensitivity to conformer.

-Which makes me think the success of the model is not due to better 3d representation but one of the several other changes: 1-working with video frames and the new self-supervision tasks have

expanded the effective size of the data and complexity the network processes each molecule (perhaps this is why the number of frames seem to change the prediction accuracy) 2-the large number of domain information that is crafted into the fingerprint may be impactful in several tasks in this work. Further understanding from where exactly the accuracy improvement comes from, can be considered for future work. In the teamtime, the claims of impact of 3D could be dialed down.

-Feedback to the methodology: the splits used in this work would not stop data leaking from train to validation sets and scaffold balancing might not be enough. Indeed we see a hint of the issue in the COX examples where training data from ChEMBL in 8:1:1 split gave high ROC-AU >0.9, but when the model was tested against MedChemExpress data, only less than 40% of inhibitors are successfully identified. This difference may be due to data leak in the high ROC-AUC train-test data, inflating the apparent generalizability. In general if authors would like to claim generalizabilty, more attention to the split stragety, overlap between data points is needed according to certain similarity metric will be needed.

-Some of the tasks in the work are for high-throughout applications (e.g. virtual screening). In such cases the trade-off between accuracy and compute becomes important. The proposed method should clearly state the compute needs for pretraining and various downstream tasks. Because it works with video, compared to much smaller atomic position files, memory needs should be highlighted too.

-minor typos in text, highlighting one that is on figure in case it escapes proofreading: angel -> angle Fig 1b

#### **Reviewer #3 (Remarks on code availability):**

Lightly reviewed code. Checked the pretraining tools and the base encoder model definition. Looks rather standard, didnt see any weird libraries or so. Didn't run but I didnt see a reason why it wouldnt. Also there are links to pretraining data and to pretrained model to reproduce inference results in the paper.

# **Point-by-Point Response Letter**

# **Manuscript #: NCOMMS-23-62188**

We are grateful to the reviewers for their insightful and constructive feedback on our manuscript. In response to the feedback, we provide the detailed responses to address each reviewer's concerns point by point as follows.

# **Responses to the Reviewer #1**

**Overall Summary – "**The authors made the effort to include diverse set of baselines, a **nice comparison** across the current landscape of available methods. All experiments and results are described in detail and highlight **multiple advantages** of video-based features**.** The manuscript is **well written" –**



# **Ref 1.1 – "Are the 60 frames the minimal or optimal number of frames to be used? Has this been explored?" –**



## **Ref 1.2 – "Effectiveness of features learned by VideoMol without fine-tuning on new datasets" –**



## **Ref 1.3 – "Standard error/deviation of experimental results repeated multiple times" –**







bias and skewness of the bootstrap parameter estimates by incorporating a bias-correction factor and an acceleration factor. The results of the uncertainty interval are reported in the Extended Table 1 (the Revised Supplemental Table 8) and Extended Table 2 (the Revised Supplemental Table 9) below, which shows the effectiveness of VideoMol with an average improvement ranging from 5.44% to 10.07%.

In summary, these new experiments highlight the robustness of our VideoMol models. We have added these new experiments and more detailed explanations in the revised manuscript.

**Extended Table 1** (the Revised Supplemental Table 8). The uncertainty intervals with 95% confidence intervals of ImageMol and VideoMol on 10 compound-kinase interaction datasets. UI(·) represents the uncertainty intervals and "Improvement" represents the relative performance improvement of VideoMol compared to ImageMol.



**Extended Table 2** (the Revised Supplemental Table 9). The uncertainty intervals with 95% confidence intervals of ImageMol and VideoMol on 11 SARS-CoV-2 viral activity prediction datasets. UI(·) represents the uncertainty intervals and "Improvement" represents the relative performance improvement of VideoMol compared to ImageMol.





![](_page_11_Picture_231.jpeg)

# **Ref 1.4 – "Intuition on why videos make more sense and contribute to learning better features" –**

![](_page_11_Picture_232.jpeg)

![](_page_12_Picture_221.jpeg)

![](_page_12_Picture_222.jpeg)

![](_page_12_Picture_223.jpeg)

democratizes the use of deep-learning in drug discovery, materials science, quantum chemistry, and biology. It uses three steps to generate molecular conformer: (1) Generate a pool of conformers using UFF force field; (2) Minimize conformers; (3) Prune conformers using an RMSD threshold.

 As shown in the revised **Extended Table 1** (the Revised Supplemental Table 27), we found that the video generation source has no significant impact on VideoMol with an average performance of 0.755±0.068 (Openbabel), 0.755±0.072 (DeepChem), 0.742±0.064 (RDKit) in RMSE metric and 0.581±0.057 (Openbabel), 0.576±0.060 (DeepChem), 0.565±0.053 (RDKit) performance in MAE metric. Therefore, VideoMol has low sensitivity to video generation sources.

**Extended Table 1** (the Revised Supplemental Table 27). The performance of different video generation source on 10 kinases datasets with balanced scaffold split.

![](_page_13_Picture_360.jpeg)

[2] Altae-Tran H, Ramsundar B, Pappu A S, et al. Low data drug discovery

![](_page_14_Picture_145.jpeg)

# **Comments on** code availability **– "**The provided code is **clean and well organized" –**

![](_page_14_Picture_146.jpeg)

# **Responses to the Reviewer #3**

![](_page_15_Picture_181.jpeg)

## **Overall Summary – "**The work is **valuable** to the field in multiple areas**" –**

# **Ref 2.1 – "More explanations about dynamics" –**

![](_page_15_Picture_182.jpeg)

making video the most direct representation method. The molecular 3D information can be directly observed from the video without the help of manual feature extraction, such as the distance between pairs of atoms and the angle formed between multiple atoms and so on. In addition, we evaluated the advantages of different representations in feature extraction capabilities and found that our proposed video representation has obvious advantages over existing representations with a 66% improvement rate on 8 basic attributes (Supplementary Section C.2 and Supplementary Table 1). Therefore, these significant differences motivate us to develop VideoMol for accurately predicting the targets and properties of molecules in the form of videos derived from molecules.

#### **C.2 Results of different representations on 8 basic attributes**

To fairly compare the effects of different representations, we evaluated the representation without using any self-supervised tasks. It is well known that the development of drug discovery depends on accurately capturing chemical and biological representations of molecules. Here, we used several commonly used representative methods (such as GCN, GIN, EGNN, and the representation used by ImageMol) to inspect the model's ability to understand the 8 basic attributes of molecules, including molecular weight, MolLogP, MolMR, BalabanJ, NumHAcceptors, NumHDonors, NumValenceElectrons and TPSA.

We randomly collected 10,000 molecules from the pre-training dataset and used exactly the same experimental setup for fair comparison. In detail, we split the training set, validation set, and test set using a ratio of 8:1:1 and reported the results on the test set based on the best validation set score. As shown in Supplementary Table 1, we found that VideoMol using only one frame outperformed that of the 2D graph-based methods, the 3D-based graph method and the 2D image-based method, revealing the advantage of 3D representation. Specifically, compared with the second-place ImageMol without pre-training, the performance of video-1frame improved by 11%. When we utilized all video frames (video-60frame), the performance is further significantly improved from 12.47 to 7.55 with a 66% improvement rate.

In summary, the proposed 3D representation (whether based on a single frame image or a 60-frame video) has advantages compared to existing molecular representation approaches. We will further improve our VideoMol framework by inceasing the number of 3D frames and integrating other types of 3D representation (such as AlphaFold311) in the near future.

[11] Abramson J, Adler J, Dunger J, et al. Accurate structure prediction of biomolecular interactions with AlphaFold 3[J]. Nature, 2024: 1-3.

#### **Discussion**

Using a simple extension to VideoMol, we can allow the model to learn the correlations and variances between different conformations in the same molecule from videos of dynamic changes, thereby further playing an important role in molecular dynamics scenarios.

 We believe that it is promising to represent molecules and perform inferences through videos as molecular imaging techniques continue to

![](_page_17_Picture_195.jpeg)

## **Ref 2.2 – "Equivariant graph neural networks or transformers can be used to eliminate the need to perform augmentation for different rotations" –**

![](_page_17_Picture_196.jpeg)

![](_page_18_Picture_0.jpeg)

## **Ref 2.3 – "Design experiment to understand why video information does not lead to sensitivity to conformer" –**

![](_page_18_Picture_150.jpeg)

![](_page_19_Picture_222.jpeg)

# **Ref 2.4 – "Add more discussion about understanding from where exactly the accuracy improvement comes from" –**

![](_page_20_Picture_379.jpeg)

3D representation, we evaluated the representation advantages of 3D-based molecular videos without using any self-supervised tasks and fingerprint information. It is well known that the development of drug discovery depends on the understanding of basic information about molecules. Here, we use several of the most representative methods (such as GCN, GIN, EGNN, and the representation used by ImageMol) to inspect the model's ability to understand the 8 basic attributes of molecules, including molecular weight, MolLogP, MolMR, BalabanJ, NumHAcceptors, NumHDonors, NumValenceElectrons and TPSA.

We randomly collected 10,000 molecules from the pre-training dataset and use exactly the same experimental setup for a fair comparison. In detail, we split the training set, validation set, and test set using a ratio of 8:1:1 and report the results on the test set based on the best validation set score. As shown in **Extended Table 1** (the Revised Supplemental Table 1) below, we found that VideoMol based on only one frame outperformed traditional 2D graph-based methods, the 3Dbased graph method and the 2D image-based method, revealing the advantage of 3D representation. Specifically, compared with the second-place ImageMol without pre-training, the performance of video-1frame improved by 11%. When we utilized all video frames (video-60frame), the performance was further significantly improved from 12.469 to 7.55 with a 66% improvement rate.

 Overall, the proposed 3D representation (whether based on a single frame image or a 60-frame video) has obvious advantages over existing representations. In addition, integrating physical dynamics or conformational changes from 3D ligand-receptor structures or models (i.e., alphaFold3 [1]) may improve performance of ViodeMol further. We have added these new results and more detailed explanations in the revised manuscript.

**Extended Table 1** (the Revised Supplemental Table 1). The ability of VideoMol to distinguish different conformers. The percentile interval refers to sorting all RMSD values from small to large and selecting the value corresponding to the percentile interval.

![](_page_21_Picture_226.jpeg)

Reference

[1] Abramson J, Adler J, Dunger J, et al. Accurate structure prediction of biomolecular interactions with AlphaFold 3[J]. Nature, 2024: 1-3.

# **Ref 2.5 – "This difference may be due to data leak in the high ROC-AUC train-test data, inflating the apparent generalizability" –**

![](_page_22_Picture_208.jpeg)

# **Ref 2.6 – "Describe the computational requirements for pre-training and various downstream tasks" –**

![](_page_22_Picture_209.jpeg)

![](_page_23_Picture_259.jpeg)

**Ref 2.7 – "Correct Minor typos" –**

| Reviewer           | minor typos in text, highlighting one that is on figure in case it escapes   |
|--------------------|--|
| Comment            | proofreading: angel -> angle Fig 1b  |
| Author<br>Response | We have fixed this typo and further polish English of the entire manuscript. |

# **REVIEWERS' COMMENTS**

#### **Reviewer #2 (Remarks to the Author):**

I have carefully reviewed the detailed rebuttal and the revised manuscript. I am pleased to see that the authors have addressed all of the concerns I raised in my initial review. The additional experiments and clarifications provided have significantly strengthened the support for the claims. I am satisfied with the revisions and believe that the manuscript is now ready for publishing.

#### **Reviewer #2 (Remarks on code availability):**

The code is well organised, and the authors made the effort to provide guidelines for setting up an environment and running VideoMol.

#### **Reviewer #4 (Remarks to the Author):**

I have assessed the comments from the authors to Reviewers 3 concerns, and I believe the authors has responded well to the comments