A Thesis for the Degree of Ph.D. in Engineering

Interactions between water molecules and biological materials: a molecular dynamics study

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Thesis Abstract

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Thesis Summary

In this study, we performed the molecular dynamics (MD) simulations to investigate interactions between water molecules and biological materials. 70 % of the mass of our body is water, and most biological materials express their functions with surrounding water molecules. Therefore, the interactions between water molecules and biological materials are crucial important for understanding the stability, functions, and behavior of the biological materials. Here, we conducted four researches about proteins and saccharides. First topic is the prion protein which is the causal protein of prion diseases. Since prion diseases are one of the neuro-degenerative diseases caused by aggregation of misfolding proteins, understanding the misfolding process of the prion protein is important for pathological elucidation. Our MD simulations provided evidence that the pathological mutation T188R unstabilizes internal water molecules, which may enhance the misfolding. Second study is related to rhodopsin. Rhodopsin is located in our retina, and the protein plays important roles for photoreaction process. Here, using MD simulations of active, inactive and intermediate states of rhodopsin, we identified the solvent pore on the cytoplasmic side. Moreover, trajectories of the water molecules clearly displayed configurations of the solvent pore. In the third research, we focused on monosaccharide which is a minimal unit of all saccharides. There are various isomers of monosaccharide; however, effects of the isomers on hydration-shell structure was unclear. Here, our MD simulations summarized effects of the isomers on hydration shells. We also found that the typical hydration structure does not change in different isomers and this hydration structure becomes unstable by increasing temperature and concentration. In the fourth research, using the ab initio MD simulations, we conducted spectral analysis of water molecules in monosaccharide solutions. Here, we observed that water molecules in the first hydration shell around monosaccharide exhibited blue shift. Moreover, these water molecules are distributed outside of the first hydration shell. In summary, these investigations elucidated the interactions between water molecules and biological materials, and our findings contribute to the development of physical chemistry and biology.