

# Atomistic Graph Analysis in Estrogen Receptor Alpha

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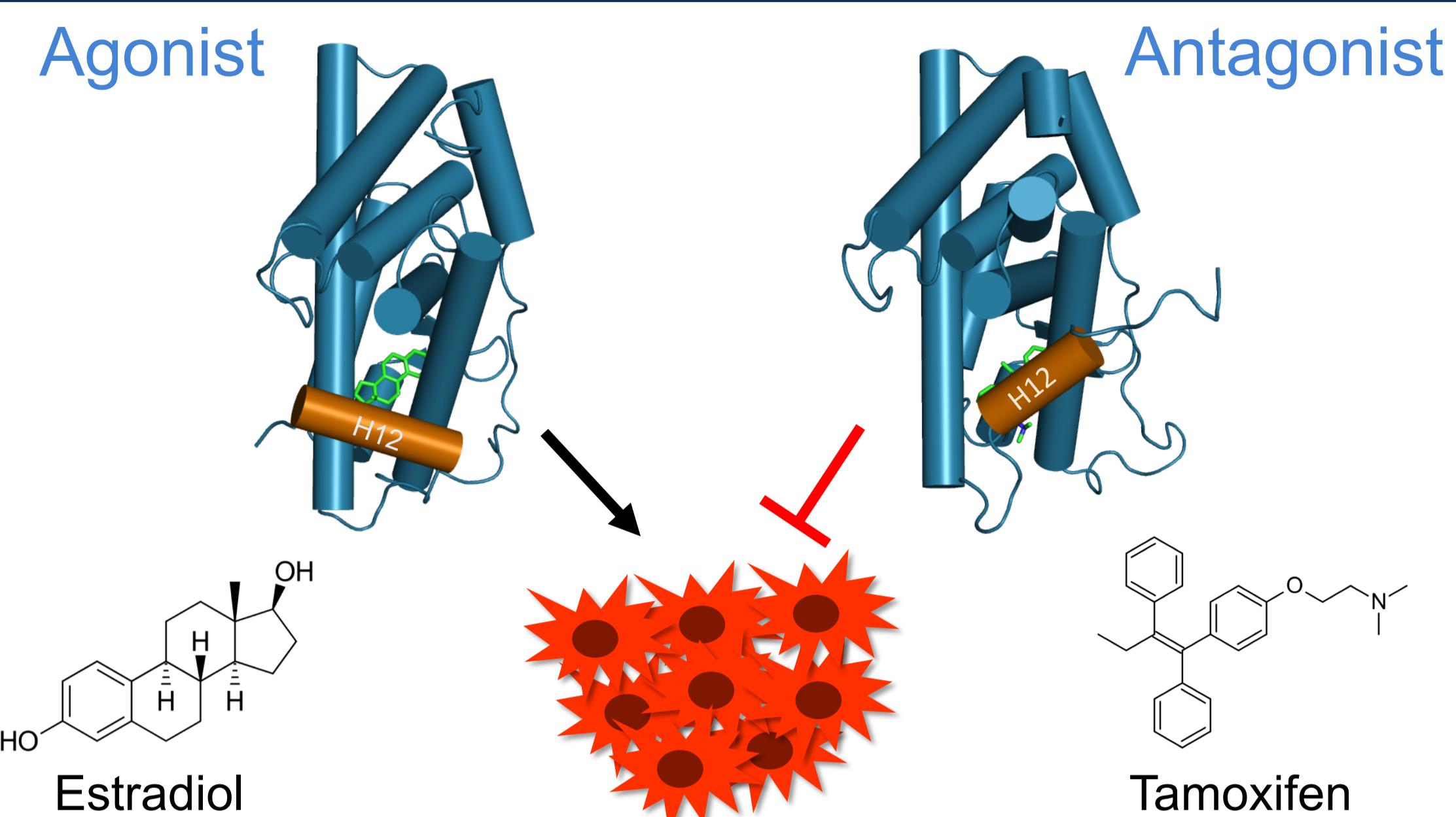
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## Estrogen receptor alpha is a key player in breast cancer

Estrogen receptor alpha (ER $\alpha$ ) is the main driver in breast cancer (BC) development and progression, and drugs inhibiting ER $\alpha$  are the main focus of treatment in BC. Current chemotherapies based on inhibiting ER $\alpha$  become ineffective when recurrent tumours develop resistance against anti-estrogens.

We here present the application of novel diffusion-based approaches to identify potential new target sites in ER $\alpha$  and explore underlying resistance mechanisms.

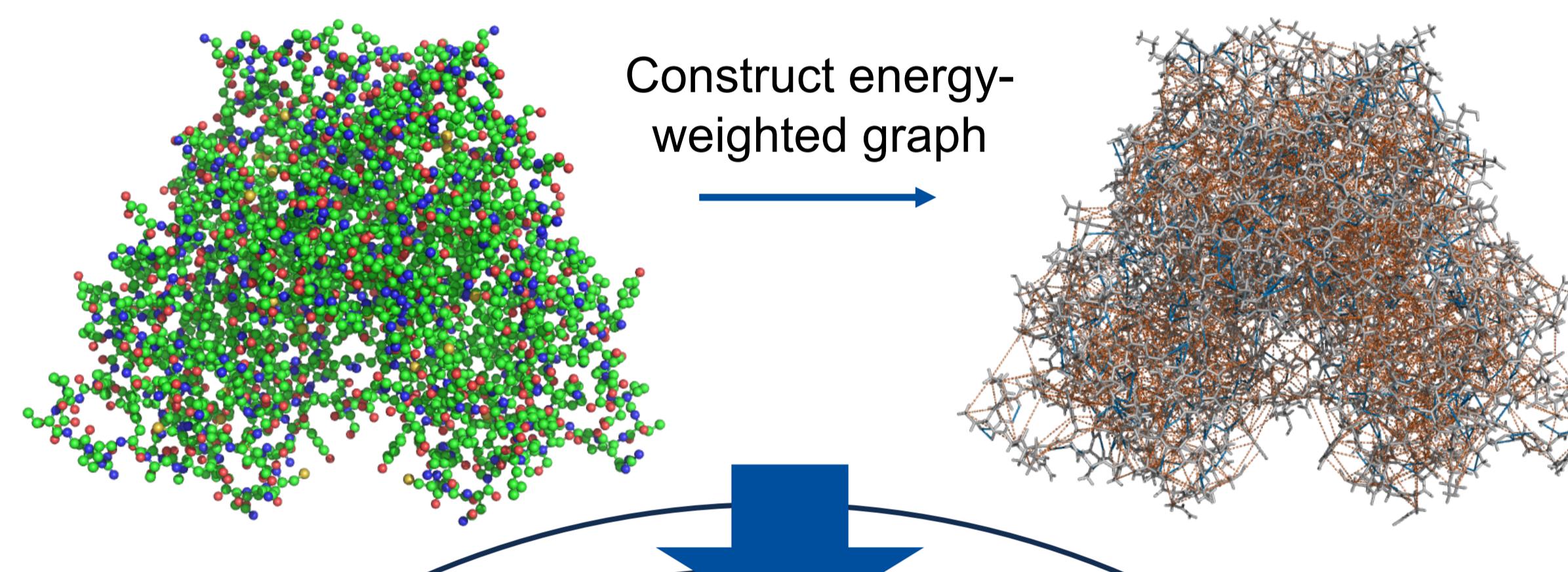
This presents an alternative approach to investigate a well studied protein by providing an atomistic resolution of the molecular mechanism of ER $\alpha$ .



Atomistic graph models reveal molecular mechanism of ER $\alpha$  and allow investigation of cancer mutations with high efficiency.

## 1. Atomistic, energy-weighted graph construction based on biological structure

Each atom in a biological structure is represented as a node in a graph. This allows us to preserve atomistic detail and distinguishes our methodology from coarse-graining approaches<sup>1,2</sup>.

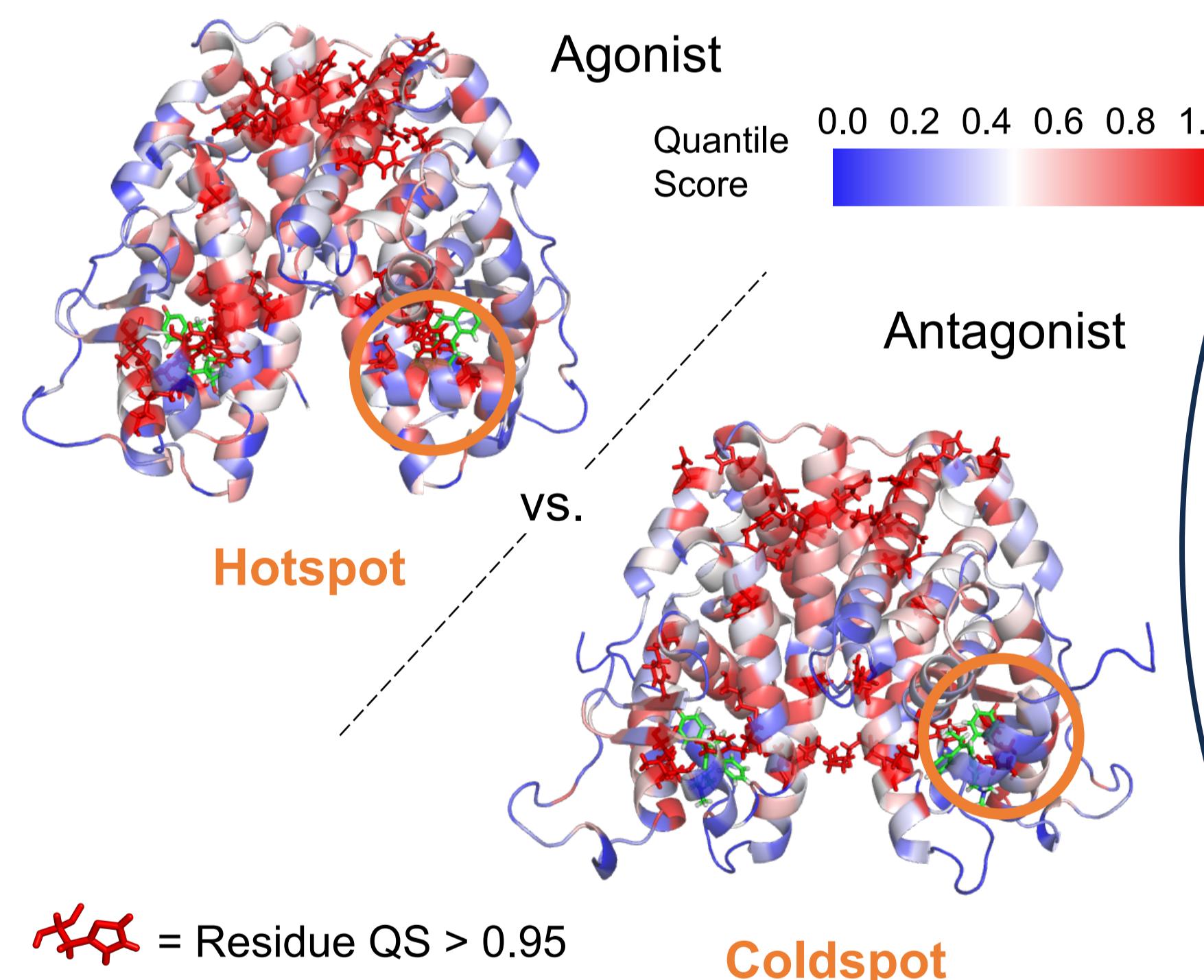


Assigning edge weight according to bond type captures physico-chemical properties of the structure.

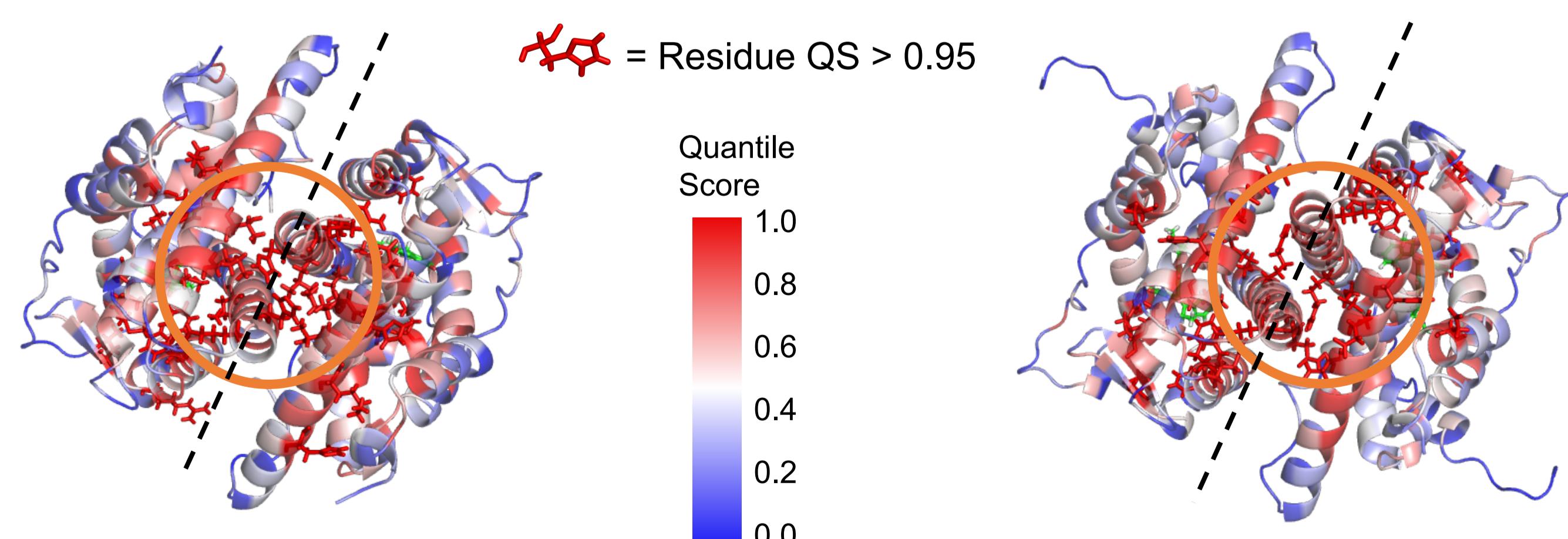
The following bond types are encoded:

1. Covalent bonds
2. Hydrogen bonds
3. Hydrophobic interactions
4. Electrostatic interactions

## 3. Bond-to-bond propensities reveal communication within ER $\alpha$



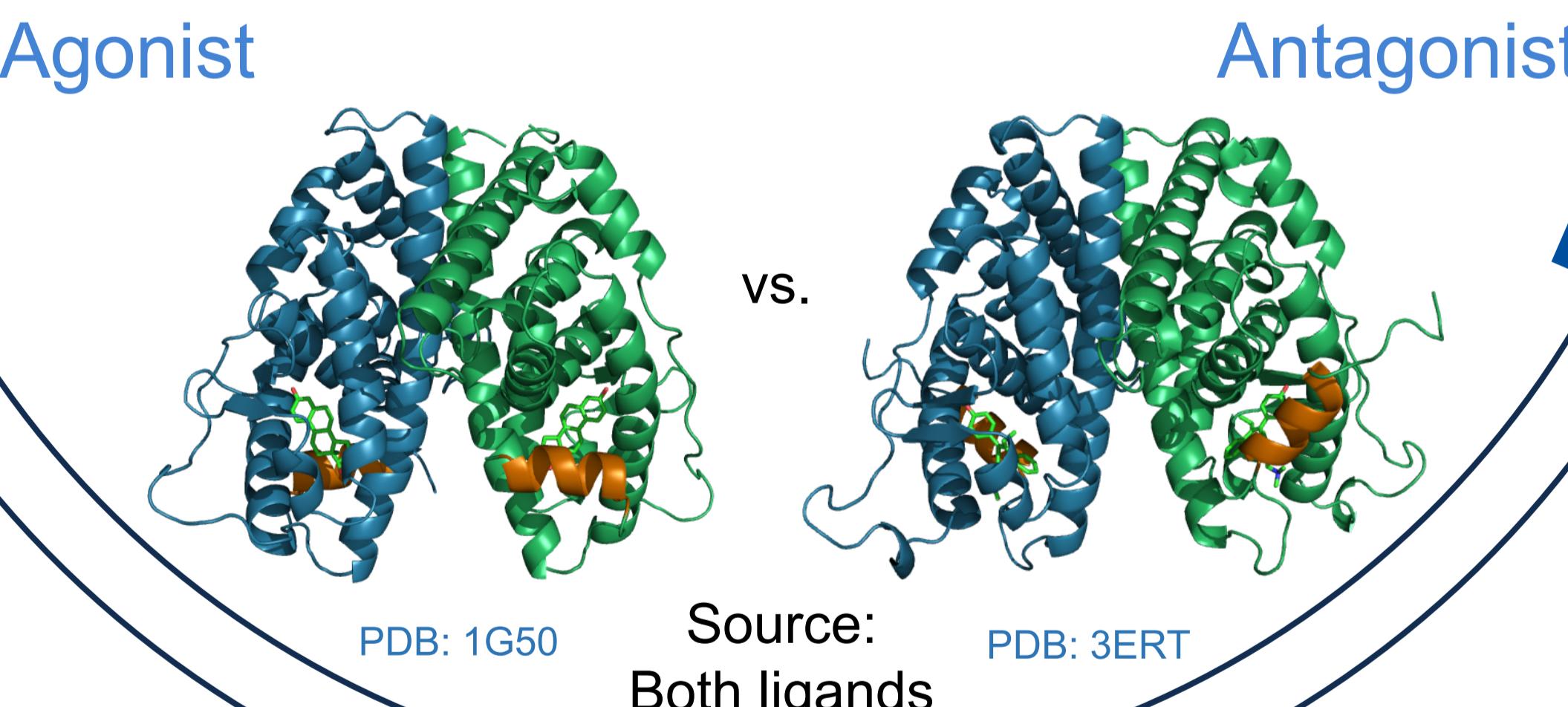
We confirm the molecular mechanism of ER $\alpha$  by calculating the connectivity for each residue respective to the active site. We find a high connectivity between estradiol and helix 12 which is not present in the inhibited protein. This also provided evidence for the necessity of dimer formation that is observed *in vivo*<sup>4</sup>.



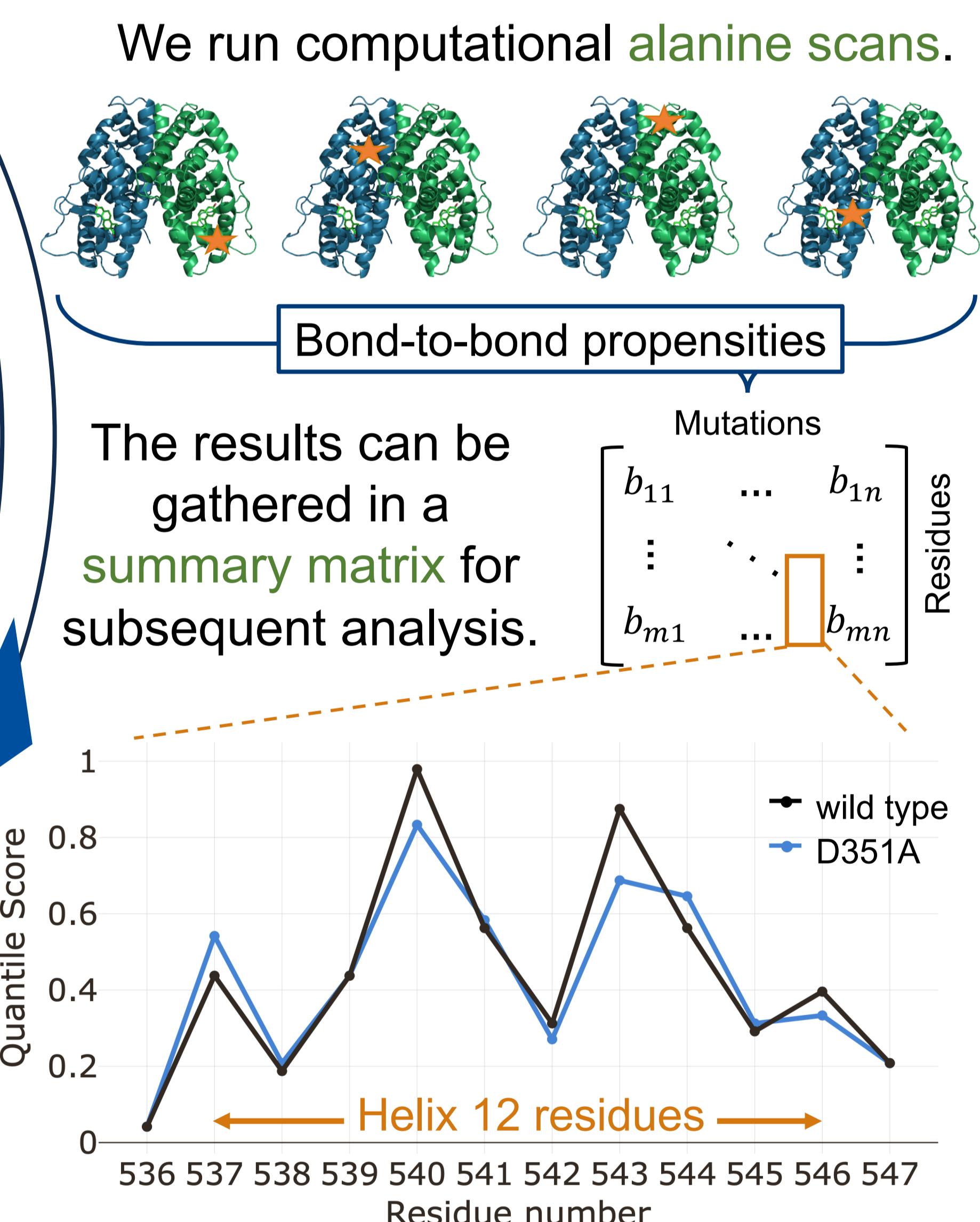
Our methods validate the basis of ER $\alpha$  functionality: positioning of helix 12 and necessity of dimerization.

## 2. Bond-to-bond Propensities

Measure the impact of energy fluctuations of source bonds on any other protein bond. Allows discovery of instantaneous communication between source and target bonds. Quantile regression allows a quantitative ranking of all bonds and subsequently residues. Detects allosteric pathways and sites in proteins and biological complexes<sup>3</sup>.



## 4. In-silico mutational studies identify path-disrupting mutations



Zooming into the data, we can gain insights on changes in communication towards helix 12: D351A is a mutation which decreases connectivity with H12 and might hint to a new drug target.

The computational efficiency of our methodology allows mutational studies to identify impactful residues.

## Try it yourself!

Our methodologies will be available online in form of a user-friendly, interactive webserver: [proteinlens.io](http://proteinlens.io)

ProteinLens

