# A Multiscale Computational Model Predicts Human Liver Function From Single-Cell Metabolism

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## ABSTRACT

Understanding how liver function arises from the complex interaction of morphology, perfusion, and metabolism from single cells up to the entire organ requires systems-levels computational approaches. We report a multiscale mathematical model of the Human liver comprising the scales from single hepatocytes, over representation of ultra-structure and micro-circulation in the hepatic tissue, up to the entire organ integrated with perfusion. The model was validated against data on multiple spatial and temporal scales. Herein we describe the model construction and application to hepatic galactose metabolism demonstrating its utility via i) the personalization of liver function tests based on galactose elimination capacity (GEC), ii) the explanation of changes in liver function with aging, and iii) the prediction of population variability in liver function based on variability in liver volume and perfusion. We conclude that physiology- and morphology-based multiscale models can improve the evaluation of individual liver function.

## INTRODUCTION

The liver is the metabolic center of our body performing hundreds of functions including the homeostasis of numerous plasma metabolites; producing bile; detoxification of xenobiotics; and clearance of drugs and substances like galactose. In the past 30 years enormous progress in the knowledge and management of liver disease has been achieved, yet approximately 29 million people in the European Union still suffer from a chronic liver condition with underlying mechanism often being unclear {Blachier2013}. Liver function is the result of complex interplay of hepatic morphology, perfusion and metabolism across multiple spatial domains, from the cellular level up to the entire organ {Rappaport1979}. Computational models are uniquely positioned for the analysis of such complex systems and to capture the connectivity between these divergent scales and.

### Liver Architecture

Liver architecture is unique in that it consists of a multitude of microscopic functional units termed lobules, which are connected in parallel to the blood flow. Within a single lobule a network of capillaries, the liver sinusoids transport the blood from the outer periportal regions, supplied via the portal vein and hepatic artery, to the central perivenous region, drained by the central vein {Sasse1992, Rappaport1979, Rappaport1973}. The sinusoidal unit, a single capillary perfused with blood and lined by a layer of hepatocytes forms the smallest functional unit of the liver (Figure 1) {Bass1977}. The fenestrated endothelial cells of the liver sinusoids act as a dynamic filter that permits exchange of fluid, solutes and particles between the sinusoidal lumen and space of Disse adjacent to the hepatocytes {Cogger2003}.

### GEC as Liver function test

Quantification of liver function is necessary to assess the degree of liver impairment, to evaluate response to treatment and to select transplant recipients {Dufour1992}. Most function tests are based on the rate with which a given test substance is cleared specifically by the liver. Particularly, the liver is the primary organ for clearance and whole-body metabolism of galactose {Bernstein1960, Berry2000, Segal1971}. The determination of the maximal galactose removal rate, the galactose elimination capacity (GEC) {Marchesini1988, Schirmer1986, Tygstrup1966}, which is an established test of liver function measured in numerous studies {Jepsen2009, Fabbri1996}. Impairment of the liver in diseases like cirrhosis {Henderson1982, Jepsen2009} are associated with reduced GEC. Preoperative GEC predicts complications and survival after hepatic resection {Redaeli2002} and as predictor of survival in cirrhosis {Merkel1991, Salerno1996}.

### Alterations in Aging

The percentage of deaths attributed to liver disease increases dramatically in humans beyond the age of 45 years {Schmucker2005}. In the elderly, a marked reduction in quantitative liver function measured by GEC {Schnegg1986, Marchesini1988} as well as major physiologic changes affecting liver function, i.e. decline in liver volume and blood flow {Anantharaju2002, Wynne1989, Marchesini1988}, are observed. In addition, characteristic changes in ultrastructure termed pseudocapillarization occur with aging, characterized by defenestration, thickening of the endothelium, and deposition of basal lamina and extracellular matrix in the space Disse {McLean2003, LeCouteur2001 , Cooger2003}. Age-related changes in the liver sinusoids are implicated in the association between ageing and impaired clearance of drugs {LeCouteur1998} and may provide a mechanistic link between primary aging processes and age-related disease {LeCouteur2002, Cogger2003}. Surprisingly, it is not clear to which extent age-inherent alterations in microangio-architecture, microvascular haemodynamics and liver volume and perfusion are contributing factors of age-related susceptibility of the liver {Vollmar2002}.

### Multiscale-Model

Systems-level computational approaches are required to elucidate the complex interaction of organ structure, perfusion, and metabolism on multiple scales and to understand how these influence liver function, here the clearance of galactose and GEC. They are uniquely positioned to capture the connectivity between these divergent scales, as they can bridge the gap in understanding between isolated in vitro experiments and whole-organ in vivo models {Walpole2013}. Our objective was to develop such a multiscale computational model which i) describes physiology, morphology and function of the human liver; ii) can be applied to the evaluation of liver function tests, i.e. GEC; iii) can predict the effects of altered perfusion, liver volume and ultrastructure like occurring in aging on liver function; iv) can be integrated with patient data, and v) has clinical relevance.

## RESULTS

We present a multiscale mathematical model of the human liver bridging the scales from individual cellular processes to the level of the entire organ. The model describes physiology, morphology and function of the human liver by integrating hepatic galactose metabolism with perfusion and liver structure (Figure 1). The model integrates and predicts experimental data on multiple temporal and spatial scales: i) prediction of hepatic multiple indicator dilution curves (Figure 2); iii) prediction of heterogeneity within sinusoids (hepatic zonation) and between sinusoids (Figure 2 and 3); prediction of galactose extraction, clearance and extraction fraction (Figure 4); iii) prediction of individual GEC, population variability in GEC and alterations in GEC with aging (Figure 4). We developed a classifier for liver disease based on our personalized model predictions for GEC outperforming regression approaches in a retrospective analysis of a large cohort study (Figure 4). We demonstrate possible clinical application of the presented systems biology approach by implementation of the classifier into a web application for simple use (Figure 5).

### Multiscale Model of Human Liver

Our approach was … (independent units which could be tested, i.e. self consistent cell model,.. integration of scales & approaches)

**Hepatocyte** - Our model combines detailed kinetic models of cellular metabolism (Figure 1A) with a tissue-scale perfusion model of the sinusoid (Figure 1B). Despite the importance of the hepatic galactose metabolism for the systemic galactose clearance and formation of precursors for glycosylation reactions no detailed mathematical model of this pathway is available hitherto. This work presents to our knowledge the first kinetic model of galactose metabolism in hepatocytes (Figure 1A) comprising among others the three key enzymatic steps of galactose metabolization: i) the phosphorylation of galactose (gal) to galactose 1-phosphate (gal1p) catalysed by galactokinase (GALK, EC 2.7.1.6); ii) the conversion of gal1p to UDP-galactose (udpgal) by galactose-1-phosphate uridyl transferase (GALT, EC 2.7.7.10) and iii) the interconversion of udpgal and UDP-glucose (udpglc) by UDP-galactose 4´-epimerase (GALE, EC 5.1.3.2) {Novelli2000, Petry1998}. Galactose can enter glycolysis as glucose-1 phosphate (glc1p), one of the GALT reaction products, or can be incorporated as udpgal, the substrate donor of all galactosylation reactions, in glycoproteins and glycolipids {Novelli2000}.

**Sinusoidal Unit** - The cellular model is integrated into a realistic tissue-scale model of the sinusoidal liver unit based on known histological parameters (geometry, cell numbers, architecture, perfusion rates, … ) (Figure 1C). Important features of liver architecture important for elimination, namely fenstraeted endothelial cells and space of Disse are explicitely represented in the model (see Methods).

**Lobulus** - Regional liver metabolism was modelled as weighted average across the heterogeneous contributions of tissue-scale models with differing in blood flow rates and tissue structure (Figure 1D, Figure 2A for parameter distributions). Similar to the classical distributed models of liver elimination {Bass1978}, but with an explicit description of ultrastructure and detailed kinetic models in the hepatocytes.

Mean sinusoidal unit & the integrated response over the heterogeneous contributions of sinusoids based on heterogeneity in ultra-structure and microcirculation are presented.

Liver anatomy ensures that periportal concentrations are common in all sinusoidal units. Outflow concentrations cv are assumed to be well mixed when they reach the hepatic vein.

**Organ** - Finally, the function of the entire organ is modelled by scaling of the regional output based on individual liver perfusion and liver volume, resulting in individualized liver function.

**Personalization** - Personalized multiscale models are generated based on individual anthropomorphic information in combination with fitted relationships describing the dependencies of hepatic volume and blood flow on these features.

### Multiple Dilution-Indicator Curves

An indicator substances introduced into the blood flowing into the liver become dispersed in the effluent blood and the concentrations oft he substances in the effluent blood form an indicator dilution curve {Goresky1973}. The rapid injection of labeled red blood cells (a vascular indicator), labeled sucrose and albumin (extracellular references), and labeled galactose under various galactose concentrations into the portal vein in combination with rapidly sampled venous blood were simulated {Goresky1973, Goresky1983} were simulated.

In a first step the model was validated multiple-indicator dilution curves (Figure 2BC) {Goresky1973}. The single-injection, multiple-indicator dilution approach provides a method to determine the composition of the liver and the rates of hepatic processes {Goresky1973}. Labeled red blood cells (RBC) are used as vascular reference. Larger materials are excluded from the space of Disse. The outflow concentration of each tracer is divided by the total injected, providing a normalized value, an outflow fraction per ml. The integrated behavior based on molecular detailed description of single cell behavior give the correct multiple dilution indicator curves, consequently describing correctly the distribution of substances in the various spaces.

At low blood galactose concentrations, the labeled galactose appears at the outflow with labeled sucose, but is much reduced in magnitude, and exhibits a long tailing. Its outflow recovery is much reduced. At high blood galactose concentrations, the initial part of the profile increases towards that for labeled sucrose, the tailing becomes much larger in magnitude, and the outflow recovery becomes virtually complete {Goresky1973}. The shift of the dilution-indicator curves observed and explained by Goresky as different free volumes of the substances are a consequence of the different diffusion coefficients for the substances, and consequently altered distribution kinetics within the sinusoid and space of Disse resulting in a delayed appearance of the substances perivenous. None of the data was used for model fitting, all model parameters result from the geometric constraints of the system and the physiochemical properties of the substances transported within the sinusoid and the space of Disse. Only the exchange rates between hepatocytes and the space of Disse could be adapted, in the case of water freely, in case of galactose these fluxes are constrained by the total galactose elimination per volume tissue.

### Heterogeneity between Sinusoids and within sinusoids

Our multiscale-model allows predictions about the cell to cell variability and the heterogeneity within the lobulus, i.e. between different sinusoidal units. By explicitly accounting for the observed heterogeneity in sinusoidal blood flow and ultrastructure (Figure 2A) we could analyze the local heterogeneity between different sinusoidal units in the tissue (Figure 2D). Due to the detailled modeling of the individual hepatocytes along the sinusoid the zonation patterns and gradients from periportal to perivenous could be analysed (Figure 3).

Individual cells within the sinusoid as well as different sinusoid show large differences in their time courses and local concentrations. Depending on local flow and morphology as well as location along the periportal-perivenous axis the acual concentration profiles are very heterogenous under identical periportal input concentrations.

Discuss, implications (Could explain the observed heterogeneity observed in NAFDL, locally differnent concentrations, ...).

Discussion => not possible to reproduce dilution curves with single model with the correct Perfusion (i.e. mean perfusion). All single models completely underestimate the heterogeneity & are unable to reproduce dilution curves under physiological perfusion rates and volumes.

### Hepatic Galactose Elimination

Comparison with individual human data from multiple studies {Keiding1988, Tygstrup1958, Tygstrup1954, Waldstein1960, Henderson1982, Winkler1965, Palu1965}

Central to understanding the physiology of organ function and pathophysiology of organ dysfunction is the awareness of organ perfusion {Schirmer1986}.

The extent to which flow or metabolic function determines the rate of clearance depends on the biochemical efficiency of the liver for removal of the substrate relative to flow {Schirmer1986}.

Via integration of the heterogenous sinusoidal units the hepatic galactose clearance, extraction ratio (ER) and the galactose elimination capacity for given perfusion in a liver volume can be calculated (see methods). The model reproduces the observed saturation in galactose clearance, the dependency of the extraction ration of galactose on the perfusion (Figure 4AB).

Hepatic galactose elimination follows Michaelis-Menten saturation kinetics {Keiding1973, Keiding1976} with a concentration-dependent (first-order) elimination phase at low galactose concentrations and a definable clearance maximum, the galactose elimination capacity (GEC), at higher concentrations (zero-order phase) {Schirmer1986}. Important determinants in galactose clearance are hepatocyte function and liver blood flow, with low galactose clearance measuring the estimated hepatic blood flow, whereas high galactose concentration measures the hepatic functional capacity (Figure 4C).

[Figure 4 will be discussed in the context of enzyme limited & flow limited below]

Three hepatic clearance regimes (flow-limited, general and enzyme-limited) can be defined from a model of hepatic perfusion-elimination relationships {Winkler1978}

**High galactose (GEC) - The enzyme limited clearance regime**

The functional capacity can be evaluated by measuring the rate of elimination at a sufficiently high concentration, where the eliminatory mechanisms are saturated {Winkler1978}.

Under high galactose concentrations like occuring in the galactose clearance tests the model predicts a capacity limited galactose clearance, thereby measuring the galactose elimination capacity. Hepatic vein catheterization at high concentrations revealed a constant hepatic arterial-hepatic venous concentration difference {Tygstrup1954, Tygstrup1958}. Since all hepatocytes are thought to participate maximally in the removal of galactose, the test has been regarded as a measure of the functioning liver cell mass (Lm) {Tygstrup1966}.

The clearance does not vary with the perfusion and is proportional to Vmax (substances with Vmax/FKm ≪1) {Winkler1979, Schirmer1986}

**Low galactose - The flow limited clearance regime** Galactose Clearance at low concentrations has proven to be as near ideal a method for estimating the effective hepatic blood flow (EBHF) because most of the plasma galactose entering the liver also leaves the liver without being metabolized {Schirmer1986}. Henderson et al. confirmed the near complete extraction of galactose across the liver (ER = 0.94) in subjects without hepatic disease by performing hepatic vein catheterization {Henderson1982}. Similar results were obtained by Keiding et al. with ER = 0.91士3 {Keiding1988}.

The most extensive work on galactose elimination kinetics was done by Keiding and co-workers {} [43-45, 48, 50, 85, 99]. “These kinetic studies on the clearance of galactose at concentrations of 0 to 10 mg/dl (0 to 0.555 mmol/l) show that it approaches the ideal test substance for measuring effective liver blood flow (EHBF) (a) it is kinetically simple to analyse at steady state during continuous infusion (b) it is avidly removed by the liver, with minimal extrahepatic clearance and c) there is indirect evidence supporting virtually complete extraction by functional liver tissue on each pass.

*When a substance is removed in the liver by a process with a large amount of enzyme and a high affinity (low Km) relative to the hepatic blood flow (Vmax/FKm ≫ 1) the removal is completely determined by the perfusion (all substance removed in a single passage). This flow-limited regime can be used for the measurement of the perfusion.*

*It is not always possible to design tests of liver functions based on a measurement of Vmax at high blood concentration in man, because these may be toxic or have unwanted haemodynamic or osmotic effects or because the large amount of test substances may be expensive* {Winkler1978}. A model which provides means to calculate the complex interactions between perfusion and metabolism in the various elimination regimes can evaluate also the cases where flow has a strong effect on clearance

**Galactose Elimination**

Waldstein demonstrated that the extra-renal elimination of galactose from the body would reach a maximum during galactose infusions {Waldstein1960}.

**Galactose Clearance**

**Galactose Extraction Ratio**

**Arterio-hepatic venous concentration difference**

Liver-vein catheterization studies have shown that the arterio-hepatic venous concentration difference is constant in a wide concentration interval [Tygstrup & Winkler 1954].

**Metabolic effects**

“In animals with saturated meatbolism (i.e. blood galactose concentrations > 2mmol/l), the liver concentrations are significantly increased in relation to the control animals for galactose-1-p, and UDP-galactose, and a significant reduction is seen for UDP-glucose, ATP and the sum of adenine nucleotides {Keiding1973, rat}.

“Subjects with no liver disease have a hepatic galactose extraction fraction of around 0.90 [5,8]. To see whether the galactose clearance consequently could be used as as 90% approximation measure of hepatic flow in subjucts, galactose clearance was recently compared to flow rate measured by ICG (Keiding). It was found to be systematically and significantly about 50% higher than the flow rate -> galactose elimination outside of the liver => necessary to correct the clearance at low galactose concentration (Keiding 1987)”

### Personalized GEC prediction

Reference ranges play an important role in clinical medicine, with values that lie outside the reference range viewed as an indication for further investigation and/or treatment {Cole2009}.

“The physiological variation in GEC (refs, Figure …) implies that it may be impossible to decide if the liver function is normal or not from a single determination of GEC, but if a reference value is obtainable, either in the same subject or in a comparable group, small variations in the liver function may be detectable {Tygstrup1964}“

The estimation is based on predicted liver volumes and blood flows.

The liver volume is the deterimening factor, but for other drugs / eliminated compounds the flow could be important (depending on the clearance regime of the substance.

‘The significant correlation of GEC to BSA may indicate that the elimination capacity depends on the size of the liver (liver mass, Lm) {Tygstrup1964}

The regional galactose elimination curves giving the integrated galactose elimination within a lobulus/region of interest of the liver based on the occuring heterogeneity for given perfusion in the region can be scaled to the total liver by scaling the response of a region to total liver volume and perfusion. We developed a method of estimating individual hepatic blood flow and liver volume from anthropomorphic information, i.e. age, gender, bodyweight, height and body surface area (BSA), based on predictive nonlinear models. Thereby it becomes possible to estimate the expected liver volume and liver blood flow for the given anthorpomorphic information and with this to calculate the expected clearance for the person. We employed this method to predict population variability in GEC. Of special interest were the changes in aging.

‘The mechanistic parameters, namely liver volume and hepatic blood flow were described with probability density functions (PDF) estimated from individual subject data (LMS, GAMLSS) approach. Since each PDF depicts the frequency of occurence of all expected values for each parameter in the population, the effects of multiple sources of uncertainty and variability were accounted for in the estimated distribution of GEC in the population.

Predicted vs. experimental data points are shown in Figure 5AB.

**Population Variability** Given a cohort with anthropomorphic features for the the individuals our model allows the prediction of expected distribution of GEC values for the individuals in the cohort. If the cohort is representative for the population, the population variability of liver function can be estimated. We estimate the population variability in the US population based on the NHANES cohort {NHANES} (Figure 5BC). Not only GEC and GECkg are predictied correctly, but other pairwise correlations like the dependency of liver volume and blood flow from age, bodyweight, height and BSA (see Figures supplement). The presented methods allows thereby an estimation of the distribution of liver function based on the variability of hepatic perfusion and liver volume in the population.

**GEC in aging** A significant negative correlation as observed between age and both liver volume and apparent liver blood flow above 30 years. The reduction in liver volume, apparent liver blood flow and perfusion may at least partly account for the decline in the clearance of many drugs undergoing liver metabolism, which has been noted to occur with aging in man {Wynne1989, Schnegg1986}. Also during childhood major absolute and relative changes per body weight occur in liver volume and bloodflow. To test if this underlying changes in liver morphology and perfusion can explain the age-dependent changes

Application of the model revealed that variability of galactose clearance in aging is mainly explained by changes in liver structure, perfusion and morphology during lifetime. These alterations with age have important implications for drug dosing.

TODO: discuss the effects of ultrastructur changes, only effects under low concentration clearance.

### GEC classification

The predicted distribution of liver function (GEC) for an individual can be employed for an improved evaluation of the result of a liver function test. I.e. if the further the measured GEC from the expected GEC, the higher the probability for liver disease. This approach was evaluated retrospectively in a large cohort study {Fabbri1996} and with data available from the literature (see table ?), which measured GEC in combination with anthropomorphic information.

A classifier based on our predictive GEC model outperformed classifiers for liver disease based on logistic regression with GEC predictor (Figure 5E), and was comparable to more complex classifiers using GEC as well as age, gender, bodyweight and sex into account. The GEC prediction in combination with the classifier for liver disease was implemented in a web application allowing the presented calculation of GEC range and classification of liver disease based on the presented model (Figure 6). We demonstrate the application of a personalized multiscale model of the human liver providing improved evaluation of an established liver function test.

* Earlier detection of liver disease, earlier intervention

GEC as predictor in survival of cirrhosis {Merkel1991}

This has important consequences for the evaluation of the functional capacity/reserve and the detection of impairments and disease, both crucial for organ evaluation in transplantation or in the calculation of proper drug dosage depending on age.

## Discussion

We have developed a multiscale. model that accounts for …

* explains a variety of emergent behaviors in terms of molecular interactions.
* *Our model accurately recapitulates a broad set of experimental data*
* *provides insights into several biological processes for which experimental assessment is not readily feasible, and enables ...*

*mathematical modelling to make testable predictions and gain*

*insight about a biological system’s behaviour.*

The model includes the common key processes that lead to liver diseases, metabolism, perfusion and ultrastructure of the liver. The multiscale model's explicitly modeled tires of resolution provide information beyond that which can be obtained by independently exploring single scales in isolation.

A clear and immediate need exists for evidence-based guidance for the identification of people being at risk of liver disease, and follow-up in deteriotation / improvement of liver function.

*Model assumptions*

A mathematical model is always only a selective representation of reality. Certain model assumption had to be made due to lack of data and the boundaries of the model

* We could not retrieve correlation data between sinusoidal blood flows and ultrastructural parameters of the liver. The distributions of sinusoidal parameters were assumed statistically independent from each other.
* No changes in gene expression, protein levels were taken into account. Galactose metabolism and GEC are quit constant. Adult rats fed a 40% galactose diet for 5 days did not show an increase in GEC although 20 days on the diet resulted in a 20% increase in Vmax suggesting that adaptive mechanisms are slow [Schirmer1986 ->18]. This lack of inducability and relatively constant Vmax is desirable in clearance methodology as a fluctuating Vmax/FKm would certainly complicate clearance interpretations. An important part of the individual GEC is the actual protein expression of the key enzymes. With the availablity of omics data these can readily be integrated in the model to further improve personalized predictions of elimination rates.  
  Results from rats fed low protein diets indicate that GEC in rats deprieved of dietary protein is determined by the amount of hepatic protein. GEC was signifcantly decreased to appoximately half of control values with hepatic protein content reduced to the same extent {Vilstrup1976}

#### Dispersion of dilution peaks in the large vessels and runtime differences were not modelled. It is assumed that no displacement occurs between reference intravascular and diffusible tracers in the large vessels: all displacement occurs in the exchanging vessels (sinusoids). The interrelations between whole-organ outflow reference and diffusible tracer curves will depend not only on the phenomena occurring within each sinusoid but also on the way the transit times in larger vessels and sinusoids are interrelated. Various combinations are possible, depending on the structure of the network and the kind of flow coupling in the system. The pattern corresponding to the liver was found to lie at a simple extreme in this possible spectrum [Rose1976, Goresky1970]. The distribution of out-flow transit times was found to correspond to the distribution transit of sinusoidal times in large transit times; the distribution of vessels was so compact that a single value could be assumed [Rose1976, Goresky1970] supporting the model assumption.

#### The other question is if heterogeneity in sinusoidal blood flow and transit times exist. Goresky et al.1 previously have considered two models representing the extreme cases, i.e., no heterogeneity, and maximum heterogeneity in capillary transit times. Multiple indicator-dilution data from the liver fit the latter model well [Rose1976].

* Heterogeneity in local blood flow in the liver was not taken into account.
* Part of the model relies on predictive models of liver volume and bloodflow which were trained with trainingssets based on multiple studies. The predictions reflect this subset of data used for model fitting. Care was taken only to use data for Caucasian/Western individuals with normal bodyweight range and without any liver disease. Nonetheless the regression models reflect the used trainingssets.

Most of these assumptions are necessary to a lack of experimental data or the focus of the current modeling question. We see this model as a first draft. The model and all source code is made freely available under xxx licence and is available from.

### Comparison to other liver models

* Höhme (no detailed blood flow & heterogeneity, no metabolism, based on rat data, no space of Disse, fenestraetion, no evaluation against multiple indicator data & at same time total rates)
* Chaloubh & other simple sinusoid models without flow heterogeneity (missing parameter distributions, only briding the gap to the sinusoidal unit, not possible to simulate the different effects of heterogenous variations of parameters, no scaling to liver)  
  These models do not reflect the reality of highly heterogeneous bloodflow and liver on sinusoidal scale.
* Distributed models, simple clearance models (Bass, Keiding, …) -> no detailed metabolism, can not answer the effects on cell level (good approximations for many cases)
* Ricken & other porous media approaches (human cast model!) (only on lobulus level, no modeling of actual ultrastructure, different approach for different questions, material-properties, stiffness)

All models fail in accounting … & and none could demonstrate clinical relevance.

### Classifier

The here presented classifier has the large advantage of independence of cohort data. Constructed based on underlying physiological principles, i.e. how is the liver architecture, how is galactose metabolized and how are the observed liver volumes and blood flows in the population. No overfitting to cohort data, and direct interpretation of the parameters. Provides platform for testing hypothesis for liver function and disease mechanisms.

No fitting to prediction data, but independent development.

=> wide applicability

### Significance

**drug dosing & timing**

“The capacity of the liver to eliminate various substances from the blood is important clinically. The elimination of several drugs depends on liver function, and correct dosage presumes information on their hepatic elimination kinetics. {Keiding1976}”

### Towards a virtual liver & future applications

Bridging the scales from cellular processes over the coupling of single cells within the tissue-architecture towards whole-organ models is a crucial step in understand physiological function of organs in the normal state and in pathophysiologies. Only by modelling the different scales explicitly the emerging behaviour on a liver scale can be properly understood.

* the systems biology approach, i.e. the interaction between biological experiments and mathematical modelling, is to be transferred to application-oriented liver research as a next step
* In order to use the understanding of these processes to develop novel treatment and prevention approaches, disease-relevant and, if possible, personalized multiscale models are to be derived.

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The authors declare no commercial or financial conflict of interest.

All source code, model data and results are freely available <https://github.com/matthiaskoenig/multiscale-galactose>).

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