

23.4. SOLVENT STRUCTURE

3.1 Å. The closer peak corresponds to interactions with deprotonated nitrogen ($N\delta$), where the lone pair of electrons renders the deprotonated nitrogen more negatively charged than the corresponding protonated nitrogen ($N\epsilon$) and, therefore, the deprotonated nitrogen pulls the water molecule closer. The peak at 3.1 Å is due to water interactions with the protonated nitrogen ($N\epsilon$) of His. There is a strong preference for the water molecules to lie in the plane of the ring. Relatively few water molecules exist within 3.5 Å of Trp. They mostly cluster around the $N\epsilon$ nitrogen at varying distances. The number of water molecules interacting with His and Trp within 5.0 Å of the ring increases greatly and peaks at a distance of about 4 Å, as discussed below for hydrophobic residues in general (Walshaw & Goodfellow, 1993).

Overall, there seem to be weaker geometric constraints on oxygen acceptors compared to nitrogen donors. Furthermore, the water interaction with oxygen atoms peaks at a distance of about 2.8 Å, while the interactions with protonated nitrogen atoms occur at a somewhat longer distance of about 3.1 Å. This is possibly due to the larger van der Waals radius of nitrogen (1.8 Å) versus that of oxygen (1.7 Å) (Thanki *et al.*, 1988). A more recent study of hydration around polar residues is based on seven proteins solved to better than 1.4 Å resolution (Roe & Teeter, 1993). The authors used cluster analysis to derive a predictive algorithm to locate water sites around polar side chains on protein surfaces, given the atomic coordinates of the protein alone. These more precise results confirm the general conclusions outlined above. The authors find that the water–oxygen distance is less than that of water–nitrogen by 0.07 Å and suggest the difference to be due to a van der Waals radius of 1.5 Å for nitrogen and 1.4 Å for oxygen (Roe & Teeter, 1993). Although the two groups cite different atomic radii for nitrogen and oxygen, this does not have an effect on the statistical analysis of the data. Roe & Teeter (1993) also find that the clusters associated with nitrogen atoms are approximately two times denser than those around oxygen atoms.

The analysis of the local water structure around the apolar side chains Ala, Val, Leu, Ile and Phe was extended to a distance 5.0 Å from the atom of interest, since these residues show only a few water molecules within the 3.5 Å cutoff used to analyse interactions with polar residues. The most noticeable observations from the analysis of apolar side chains are the water peak at a distance of 4 Å from the carbon atoms of interest and the presence of a polar protein atom within a hydrogen-bonding distance for 75% of these water molecules (Walshaw & Goodfellow, 1993). Phe prefers in-plane interactions and has peaks corresponding to the direction of the $C\epsilon 1$, $C\epsilon 2$, $C\delta 1$ and $C\delta 2$ atoms from the centre of the ring. Otherwise, any clustering observed for water molecules near apolar side chains is due to interactions with polar protein atoms and, consequently, is modulated by secondary structure.

A study of protein hydration based on atomic and residue hydrophilicity presents general results consistent with those discussed above, but also adds information that can be correlated with various experimentally and computationally derived hydrophilicity–hydrophobicity scales (Kuhn *et al.*, 1995). The authors used 10837 water molecules found in 56 high-resolution protein crystal structures to obtain the average number of hydrations per occurrence over each amino-acid type and specific atom types. The hydration of the various amino-acid residues has already been discussed above. The atomic hydrophilicity values calculated for the different protein-atom types are of interest. Fig. 23.4.3.2 and Table 23.4.3.1 show that, regardless of where these atoms are found, neutral oxygen atoms exhibit the greatest hydration level per occurrence, closely followed by negatively charged oxygen atoms, which in turn are followed by positively charged nitrogens and neutral nitrogens, in that order. Carbon and sulfur atoms are indistinguishable in terms of hydration per occurrence and are grouped together as the least hydrated atoms (Kuhn *et al.*, 1995).

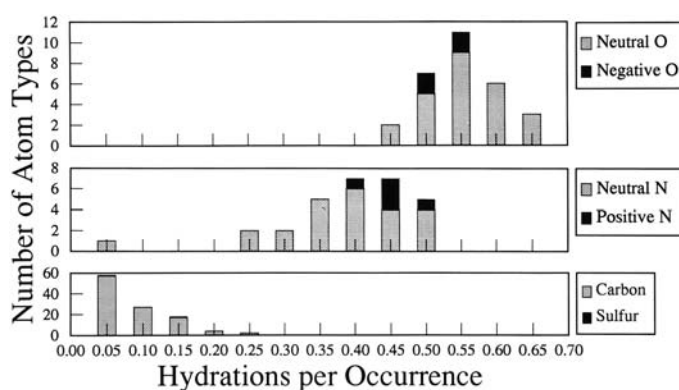


Fig. 23.4.3.2. Distribution of atomic hydration values. To determine which atoms are similar or distinct with respect to water binding, we plotted the number of atom types (*e.g.* Ala amide nitrogen, Ala $C\alpha$, . . .) at each hydration per occurrence value. Each atom type contributed one vertical unit to the graph. Oxygen atoms were the most hydrated (top graph), with negatively charged oxygen (black bars) slightly less hydrated on average than neutral oxygen (grey bars). Nitrogens (middle graph) were the next most hydrated, overlapping the oxygen distribution, and positively charged nitrogens (black bars) were somewhat more hydrated than neutral nitrogens (grey bars). Proline's amide nitrogen, with no hydrogen-bonding capacity, had the lowest nitrogen hydration value (leftmost bar). Carbon and sulfur atoms (bottom graph; note change of y-axis scale) were the least hydrated, with sulfur values at 0.05 and 0.15 hydrations per occurrence. Reproduced from Kuhn *et al.* (1995). Copyright (1995) Wiley-Liss, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Wiley-Liss, Inc., a division of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

23.4.3.2. The effect of secondary structure on protein–water interactions

The main effect of secondary structure is on the hydration of main-chain carbonyl oxygens and amido nitrogen atoms. The clustering of water molecules around the small aliphatic apolar side chains (Walshaw & Goodfellow, 1993) and the Ser and Thr side chains (Thanki *et al.*, 1990) were also found to be guided by interactions with main-chain atoms belonging to a specific secondary structure. Other side chains are too large to have their hydration significantly affected by secondary structure. The broad solvent distribution around Ser and Thr side-chain hydroxyl oxygen atoms results from the combination of complex, but distinct, patterns that emerge when hydration around these side chains is examined separately in α -helices and β -sheets. Preferential hydrogen-bonding positions around Ser and Thr residues result from water molecules bridging between the hydroxyl group and another polar protein atom within the α -helix or β -sheet. These positions are dependent both on the χ_1 torsion angle and the type of secondary structure within which these residues are found (Thanki *et al.*, 1990).

Table 23.4.3.1. Specific hydrophilicity values for protein atoms

Atom type	Hydrations per occurrence *
Neutral oxygen	0.53
Negative oxygen	0.51
Positive nitrogen	0.44
Neutral nitrogen	0.35
Carbon, sulfur	0.08

* The average number of hydrations per occurrence was calculated over all atoms within each group.