

Handling Nuisance Compounds at CZ-OPENSOURCE

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**UNIVERSITY OF
CHEMISTRY AND TECHNOLOGY
PRAGUE**

CZ-OPENSREEN

SERVICES



HTS & MS



PROFILING



MEDCHEM



CHEMINFO

HIGH-THROUGHPUT SCREENING

Provides comprehensive services encompassing the identification of biologically active compounds by screening of large compound libraries using biological assays and state-of-the-art technologies integrated in robotic systems.











DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH-THROUGHPUT/HIGH-CONTENT SCREENING ASSAYS

APPLY

HIGH-THROUGHPUT SCREENING AND ANALYSIS

APPLY

HIGH-CONTENT SCREENING AND ANALYSIS

APPLY

MASS SPECTROMETRY & HIGH-THROUGHPUT MASS SPECTROMETRY

APPLY



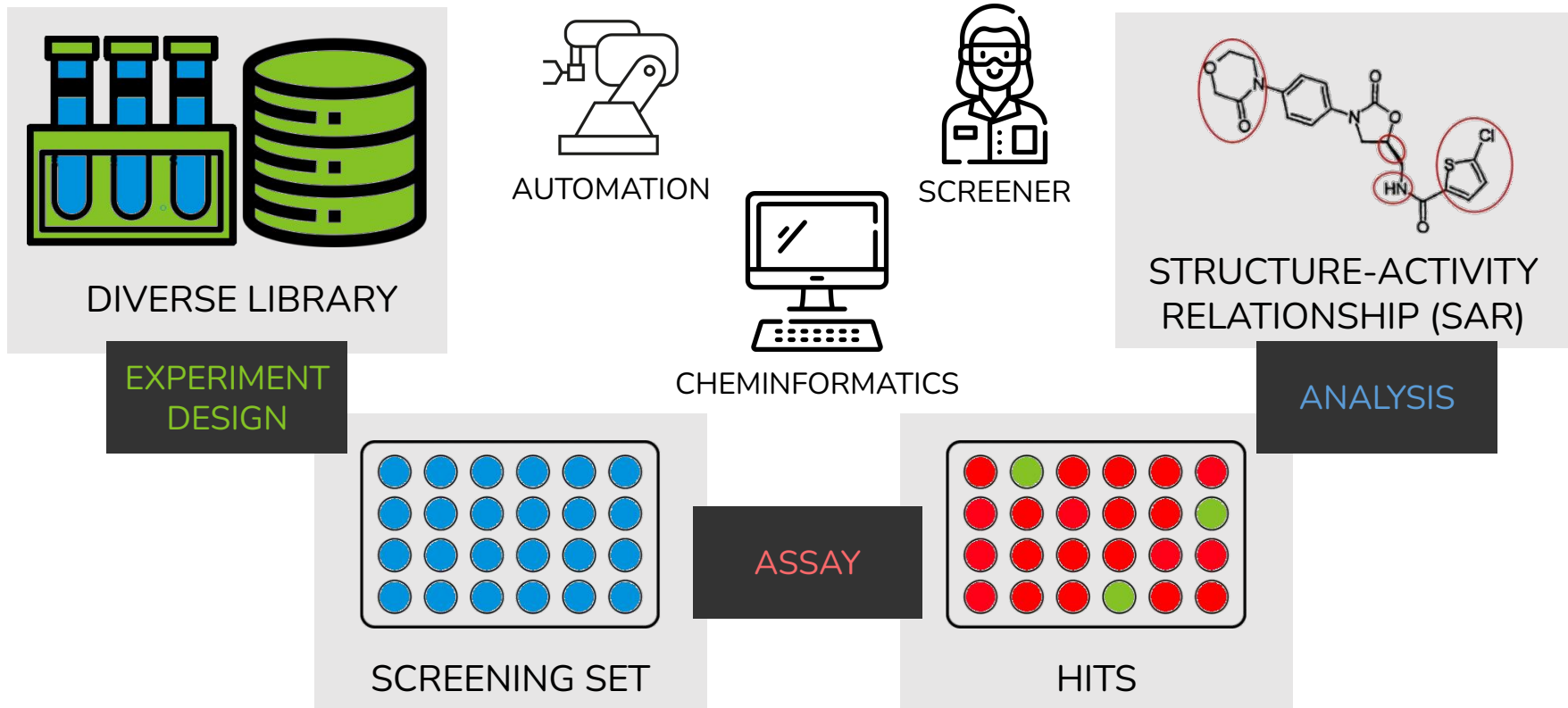
ASSAYS >

MASS SPECTROMETRY >

COMPOUND LIBRARY >

EQUIPMENT >

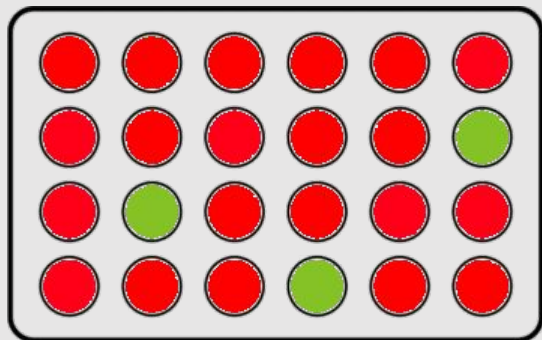
HTS Pipeline



Nuisance Behaviour

FALSE POSITIVE

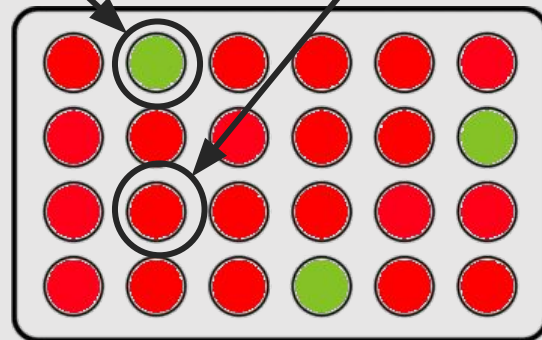
FALSE NEGATIVE



TRUE ACTIVITY

NUISANCE BEHAVIOR

- ~95% of hits not genuine
- PAINS, frequent hitters
- aggregation, autofluorescence, cytotoxicity
- format-dependent



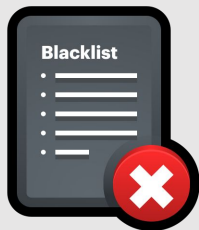
HITS

ANALYZING HITS RIDDLED WITH FALSE POSITIVES
LEADS TO SIGNIFICANT RESOURCE LOSS

Existing Tools

BAD COMPOUND LISTS

- Nuisance Compounds in Cellular Assays
- most reliable

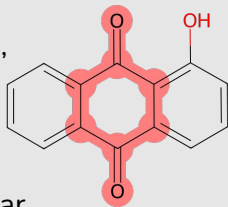


SIMILARITY SEARCH

- against curated lists
- can't advise on novel chemistry
- AggregatorAdvisor

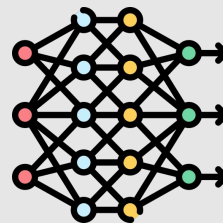
SUBSTRUCTURE FILTERS

- PAINS, Eli Lilly, GSK, BMS
- usually SMARTS
- easy to share, popular



MACHINE LEARNING MODELS

- e.g. HitDexter
- can capture more complex relationships
- hard to share



A compound that behaved badly before is likely to do so again

Weaknesses of SMARTS structure filters

No experimental context

In what context should the filter be considered
Fluorescence or luminescence?
Cells or biochemical?

No quantification

Filter = binary classification
Some filters are much more serious than others
Warning vs. Alert

Imperfect redundancy

Different facilities run into the same issues
but describe them slightly differently
-> Equivalent filters that do not cluster trivially

SMARTS quirks

creating good SMARTS filters is not simple
some non-obvious rdkit shenanigans

→ At CZ-OPENSOURCE experiments record mandatory metadata about FORMAT and METHOD used

Our approach

I Empirical pipeline

Nuisance flags from our own screening history

II Unified filter library

Non-redundant, labeled SMARTS filter set

annotates

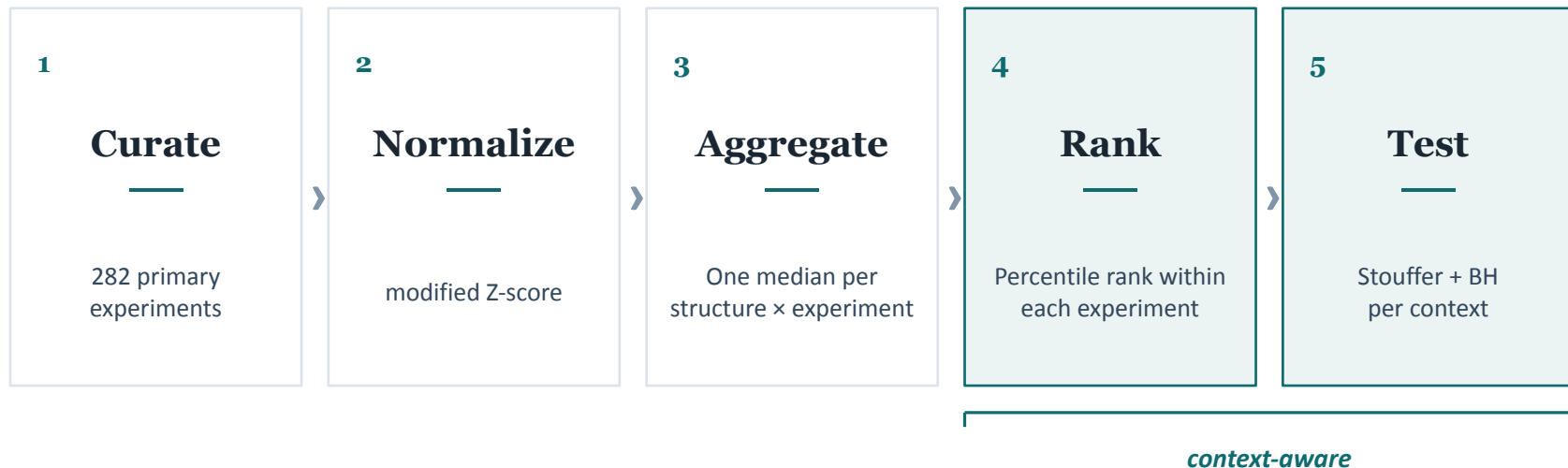
provides scaffolds

Context-aware substructure-filter library

each warning carries its empirical nuisance evidence per assay context

Context-aware annotation pipeline

Context = detection method + assay format + direction

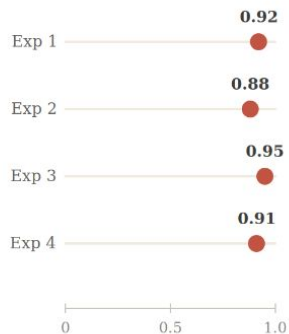


Scope: 282 primary experiments ~7.9 M datapoints · 202 K structures · 10 assay contexts

Identifying anomalous compounds

PERCENTILE RANK

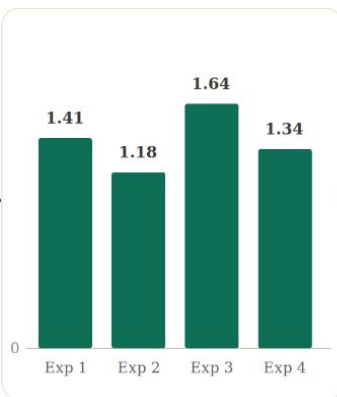
one compound, 4 experiments



probit
transform

Z-SCORES

$z = \Phi^{-1}(\text{rank})$



Stouffer
combine

COMBINED Z

$Z = \sum z_i / \sqrt{n}$

Z = 2.78

raw $p = 0.0027$

BH
correction

ADJUSTED P-VALUE

FDR-controlled

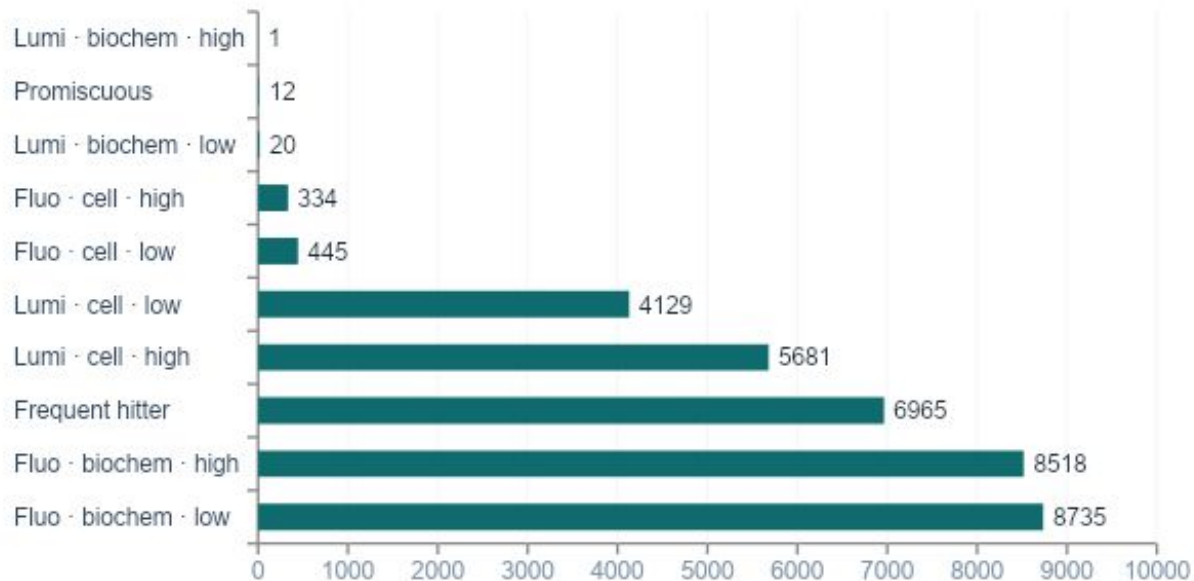
$\tilde{p} = 0.018$

flag · severe nuisance

Per-experiment ranks → z-scores → combined Z → adjusted p-value

Severe flags across assay contexts

117 K samples annotated · 18 764 severe flags



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Clustering by matching sets

Compared by what they match, not by how they are written.

SMARTScompare - Compare Chemical Patterns

Could not generate SMARTScompare
Error: Invalid output, no similarity found

SMARTS pattern:

[C;\$(C(O)N),\$(C(N)O*)]

SMARTS to compare:

[C;\$(C(N)O),\$(C(N)O*)]

More Options

Go!

Equivalent patterns, not recognised

THE APPROACH

Matching every filter against ChEMBL and PubChem

matching set = vector

Compare filters by their sets

Jaccard distance from matching set pairs

Hierarchical Clustering on the similarity

filters form equivalent groups

2 902 raw filters → **2 051** non-redundant clusters

SMARTS matching is not trivial

Naive use of canonical PAINS filters: 355 of 480 match nothing in ChEMBL.

1

Hydrogen suppression

require MergeQueryHs=True
(not the default)

2

qmol typecasting

SMARTS-only constructs need it;
SMILES-like patterns break with it

3

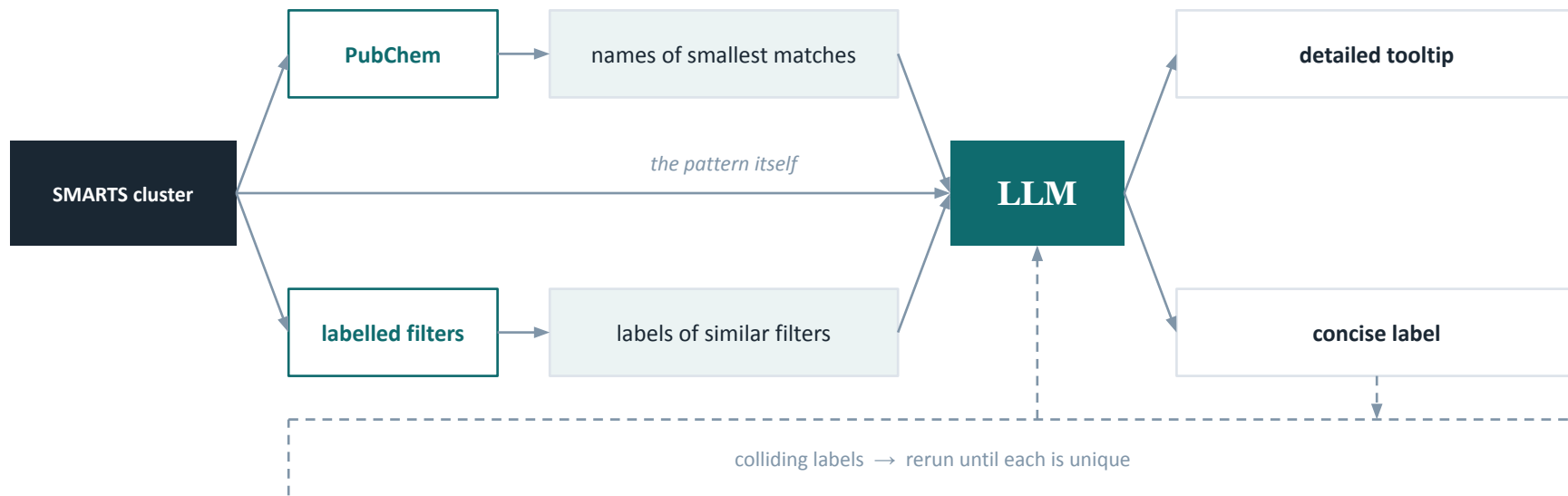
Hydrogens in OR statements

rdkit currently can't suppress them

→ *recommended reading: John Mayfield - PAINS in the butt presentation*

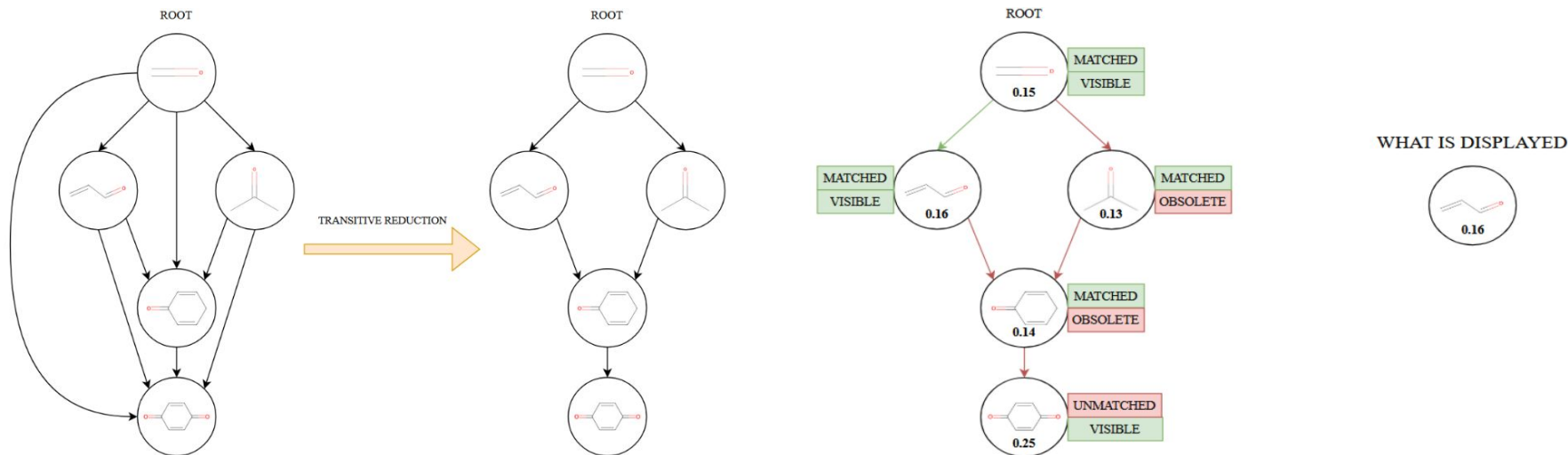
SMARTS LLM Annotator

The model reads the SMARTS; the prompt gives it evidence and examples to lean on.



→ ongoing benchmarking and implementation · github.com/hanzlika/smarts_llm_annotator

Hierarchical organization of filters



Only the most specific matched, non-obsolete node is shown

2 051 clusters → **375** statistically validated (adjusted pval < 0.05 AND enrichment > 2x in ≥ 1 context)

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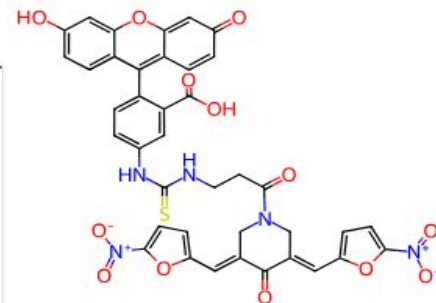
Context-aware substructure-filter library

each warning carries its empirical nuisance evidence per assay context

Integration

ONE BADGE PER STRUCTURE

fluo/biochem



ANALYSIS RESULTS

Data Uploaded	Echo Log	Normalization B_score ↑↓	Hits Selected 795	Warnings 303
ID 36867 105563 B-score: 2.491	ID 63493 Z805962858 B-score: 9.298	ID 100357 9121396 B-score: 3.721	ID 73736 Z1270867534 B-score: 27.729	ID 90123 5721039 B-score: 8.221
ID 65548 Z285682368 	ID 86029 Z51931897 	ID 49166 Z300233624 	ID 65551 Z383577378 	ID 36682 105307

DETAILED TOOLTIPS

nonspecific

Frequent hitter: active in 53.4% of assays screened (71/133, $p < 0.0001$)
 Frequent high signal in fluorescence / biochemical assays: 61.5% ($n=65$, $p < 0.0001$)
 Poly-target: active against 37.5% of targets tested (9/24, $p = 0.0601$)
 Substructure match: 17.6% of matched compounds are associated with frequent high signal in fluorescence / cell-based assays.
 Substructure match: 16.8% of matched compounds are associated with frequent low signal in luminescence / biochemical assays.
 Substructure match: 16.5% of matched compounds are associated with frequent high signal in fluorescence / biochemical assays.
 Substructure match: 15.7% of matched compounds are associated with frequent signal in all assay types (nonspecific).
 Substructure match: 15.3% of matched compounds are associated with frequent low signal in fluorescence / cell-based assays.
 Substructure match: 14.6% of matched compounds are associated with frequent low signal in luminescence / cell-based assays.
 Substructure match: 14.3% of matched compounds are associated with frequent low signal in fluorescence / biochemical assays.

HO

Integration

STRUCTURAL ALERTS

20

Context
All contexts ▲

Show all (48)

All contexts

6 14

Nonspecific

2 6

Luminescence / cell (high signal)

2

Fluorescence / cell (high signal)

Luminescence / biochemical (high signal)

Fluorescence / biochemical (high signal)

5 4

Luminescence / cell (low signal)

1 4

Fluorescence / cell (low signal)

1

Luminescence / biochemical (low signal)

7

Fluorescence / biochemical (low signal)

4



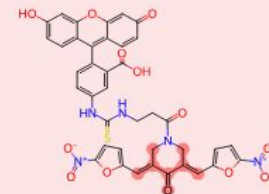
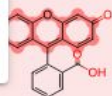
Rhodamine (N,O,S)

NIBR

Matches 43 (0.02%) structures

Enrichment: 12.7x

↑ fluo/biochem

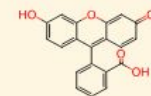

α,α-Bis(alkenyl) Cyclic Ketone
(Substituted)

NIBR, PAINS

Matches 75 (0.03%) structures

Enrichment: 5.3x

↓ fluo



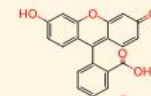
Triphenylmethyl Group

Inpharmatica

Matches 501 (0.23%) structures

Enrichment: 4.0x

↑ fluo/biochem



What's next?

Gap analysis

- Look at structures with confirmed nuisance that are not covered by good filters
- Design new filters
- Improve existing filters via editing to increase enrichment
- EU-OPENSECREEN/ECBD level validation and implementation
- validation against a real assay

Thank you — questions welcome.

Acknowledgement



Milan Voršilák

MSc. supervisor



Ctibor Škuta

PhD supervisor



Petr Bartůněk

consultation



Tomáš Muller

consultation

Funding:

Supported by **National Infrastructure for Chemical Biology** (LM2023052), funded by the **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports** under the **Large RDI Infrastructures Programme**, 2023–2026.

CZ-OPENSREEN is the Czech node of **EU-OPENSREEN ERIC**, providing open-access research in chemical biology and genetics.