



## Original Research Article

Sensing of Lomustine Drug by Pure and Doped C<sub>48</sub> Nanoclusters: DFT Calculations

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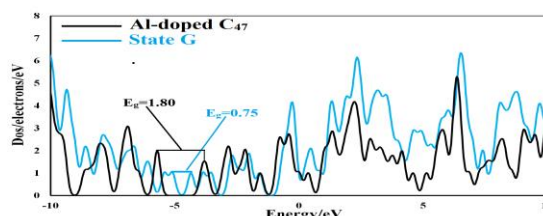
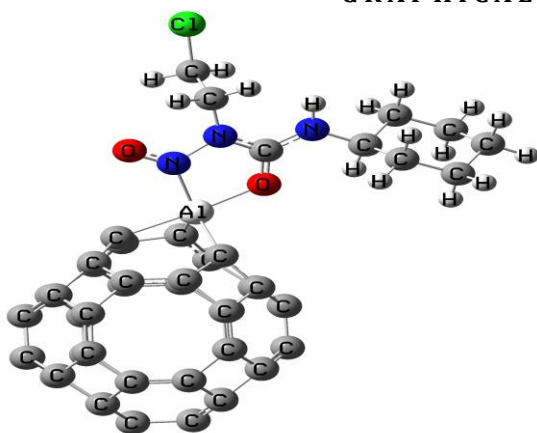
Detection

Adsorption

## ABSTRACT

Interaction of lomustine with pure C<sub>48</sub> and Al-, Si-, Ge-, and Ga-doped C<sub>47</sub> nanoclusters was reviewed. The calculation was done using density functional theory (DFT) with the GAMESS software to find an efficient sensor for lomustine detection. The adsorption energy of pure C<sub>48</sub> was about -3.35 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>. The results indicated weak interaction and sensitivity in the lomustine/C<sub>48</sub> complex. In addition, lomustine was adsorbed on the Si-, Al-, Ge-, and Ga-doped C<sub>47</sub> nanoclusters. Thermodynamic calculations were shown the interaction between lomustine and Si-, Al-, Ge-, and Ga-doped C<sub>47</sub> are spontaneous and exothermic. Although Si-, Al-, Ge-, and Ga-doped C<sub>47</sub> demonstrated strong adsorption, only sensitivity increased in Al-doped C<sub>47</sub> (reduced from 1.80 eV in Al-doped C<sub>47</sub> to 0.75 eV in complex form). Furthermore, Al-doped C<sub>47</sub> showed a convenient short recovery time. It was concluded that the Al-doped C<sub>47</sub> nanocluster is a good candidate for identifying lomustine drug.

## GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



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## Introduction

Lomustine drug is an alkylating nitrosourea utilized to treat different kinds of cancer [1]. However, its clinical utility is limited by dose-dependent toxicity, such as pulmonary and hematologic toxicity [2, 3]. Furthermore, since lomustine has a hydrophobic structure, intravenous injection is associated with significant side effects like blood respiratory system failure and vessels embolization [4]. Therefore, a rapid and reliable lomustine detection technique is essential.

Chromatographic and spectrophotometric techniques are generally time-consuming, expensive, and more complicated. Besides these, it has been specified that chemical sensors based on nanostructures can detect various materials at low concentrations because of the high surface/volume ratio [5-7]. The utilization of sensors has many advantages, such as easy construction against the easy analytical instrument, short reply time, small size, and low cost [8]. Various nanomaterials like nancone, nanotubes, nanowires, nanosheets, and nanoclusters have been widely used for chemical sensors [9-17].

Among various nanostructures, fullerenes are known as suitable candidates for chemical sensors of different compounds regarding their appropriate properties such as unique spherical structure, highly symmetrical nature, and hydrophobic characteristics [18-22]. Kroto et al.

introduced fullerene ( $C_{60}$ ) in 1985 [23]. After introducing fullerene  $C_{60}$ , the stability and structure of nanoclusters (fullerenes) with less than 60 carbon atoms have attracted considerable attention [24-26]. Different sizes of fullerenes such as  $C_6$ ,  $C_{12}$ ,  $C_{24}$ , and  $C_{48}$  were common resources for chemical sensors and diverse medical applications [27, 28]. Among various sizes of fullerenes studied, the  $C_{48}$  nanocluster has gained special attention due to its possible structure flexibility [29, 30]. Therefore, in the current work, the interaction of lomustine with the  $C_{48}$  nanocluster was initially investigated using density functional theory (DFT) calculations. Moreover, we inserted Al, Si, Ge, and Ga atoms instead of a C atom in the  $C_{48}$  (Al-, Si-, Ge-, and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$ ) to find an efficient sensor for lomustine detection.

## Computational Method

Adsorption of lomustine onto the pure  $C_{48}$  and Si-, Al-, Ge-, and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  nanoclusters surface was calculated using DFT. All calculations were done with the GAMESS software [31] with the B3PW91/6-311G(d, p) level of theory [32, 33]. The previous studies were reported that the B3PW91 method is one of the best methods [34, 35], and 6-311G(d, p) basis set known as convenient for nanocarrier systems [36, 37]. The adsorption energies ( $E_{ad}$ ) of lomustine onto the pure and doped carbon nanoclusters were obtained with the following equations:

$$E_{ad} = E(\text{lomustine}/C_{48}) - E(C_{48}) - E(\text{lomustine}) \quad (1)$$

$$E_{ad} = E(\text{lomustine}/\text{Si-doped } C_{47}) - E(\text{Si-doped } C_{47}) - E(\text{lomustine}) \quad (2)$$

$$E_{ad} = E(\text{lomustine}/\text{Al-doped } C_{47}) - E(\text{Al-doped } C_{47}) - E(\text{lomustine}) \quad (3)$$

$$E_{ad} = E(\text{lomustine}/\text{Ge-doped } C_{47}) - E(\text{Ge-doped } C_{47}) - E(\text{lomustine}) \quad (4)$$

$$E_{ad} = E(\text{lomustine}/\text{Ga-doped } C_{47}) - E(\text{Ga-doped } C_{47}) - E(\text{lomustine}) \quad (5)$$

Where  $E(\text{lomustine}/C_{48})$ ,  $E(\text{lomustine}/\text{Si-doped } C_{47})$ ,  $E(\text{lomustine}/\text{Al-doped } C_{47})$ ,  $E(\text{lomustine}/\text{Ge-doped } C_{47})$ , and  $E(\text{lomustine}/\text{Ga-doped } C_{47})$  are the total energies of the  $C_{48}$ , Si-, Al-, Ge-, and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  interacted with lomustine, and  $E(\text{lomustine})$ ,  $E(C_{48})$ ,  $E(\text{Si-doped } C_{47})$ ,  $E(\text{Al-doped } C_{47})$ ,  $E(\text{Ge-doped } C_{47})$ , and  $E(\text{Ga-doped } C_{47})$  are the total energy of the lone lomustine,  $C_{48}$ , Si-, Al-,

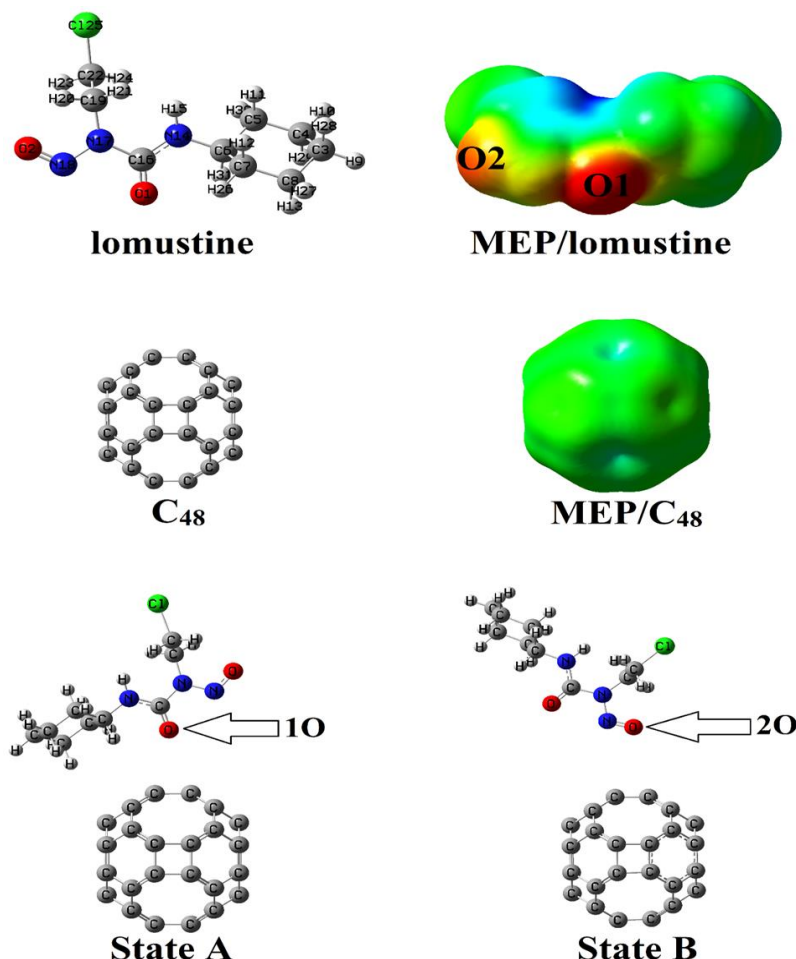
Ge-, and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$ , respectively. Thermodynamic parameters (enthalpy ( $\Delta H$ ), entropy ( $\Delta S$ ), and Gibbs free energy ( $\Delta G$ )) were further investigated at the same method to check the validity of the optimization. Moreover, the density of states (DOS), molecular electrostatic potential (MEP), natural bond orbital (NBO), and all energy calculations analyses were reviewed.

## Results and Discussion

### Adsorption of lomustine onto the C<sub>48</sub>

The lomustine optimized structure and molecular electrostatic potential (MEP) plot were indicated

in Figure 1. As indicated in the MEP plot of lomustine, the negative charges are mainly localized at the 10 and 20 atoms (red color), which can be adsorbed on the electron-withdrawing parts of the nanoclusters [38].



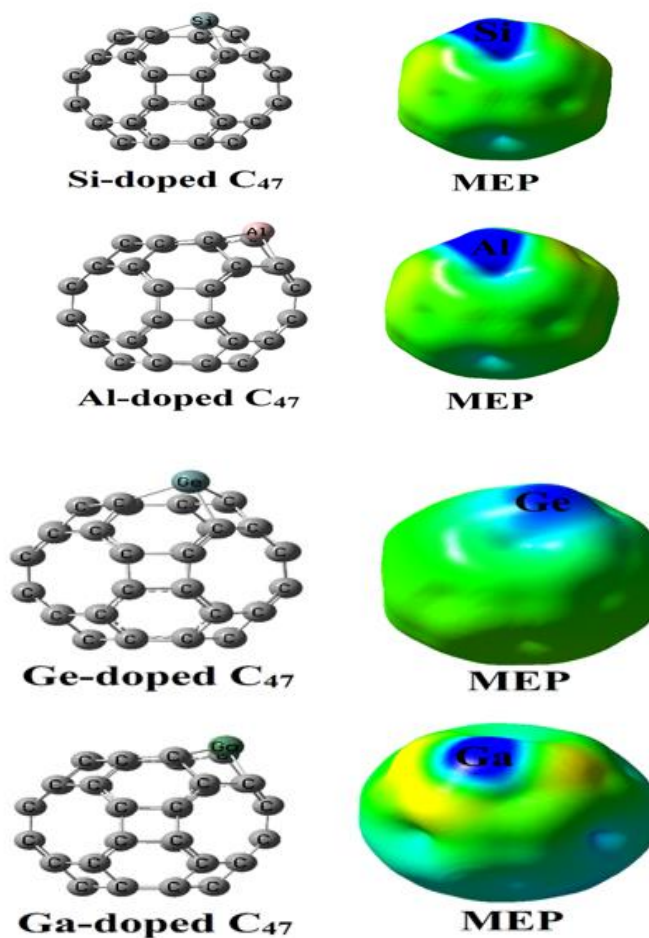
**Figure 1:** Optimized structure and MEP plots of the letrozole drug and C<sub>47</sub> and the most stable complexes in states A and B

The optimized nanocluster of C<sub>48</sub> includes four 4-membered (4-R), four 6-membered (6-R), and two 8-membered (8-R) rings displayed in Figure 1. The angles in C-C-C bounds for octagons is 134.99, for hexagons is 120.01 and for tetragons is 90.01. The C<sub>48</sub> nanocluster structural properties indicated that three C-C bonds with a bond distance of 1.46, 1.36, and 1.50 Å are correlated to the 6R-4R, 6R-8R, and 4R-8R mutual bonds, respectively, which completely agrees with the previous work [39]. First, the C<sub>48</sub> nanocluster was selected to investigate the adsorption of lomustine. The reactivity of lomustine with C<sub>48</sub> was reviewed in diverse

adsorption sites (Figure 1). After relaxation, two main orientations were found judging from the values of the thermodynamic calculation and E<sub>ad</sub> (10 and 20 atoms of lomustine and C atom of C<sub>47</sub> which their names is states A and B), as indicated in Figure 2. The E<sub>ad</sub> of lomustine with the C<sub>48</sub> in states A and B were obtained to be -3.05 and -2.99 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> with equilibrium distances of 3.41 and 3.69 Å, respectively (Table 1). Thus, the adsorption of the lomustine (from its 10 orientation) on the C<sub>48</sub> nanocluster (state A) is the most stable complex since E<sub>ad</sub> values were indicated in state A are more negative than that of state B, and equilibrium distance is shorter

than the state B. The  $E_{ad}$  of lomustine with the  $B_{24}N_{24}$  nanocluster was calculated  $-10.73 \text{ kcal mol}^{-1}$  [38]. Therefore, the  $E_{ad}$  values indicated appropriate binding in the  $B_{24}N_{24}$  nanocluster compared with the  $C_{48}$  nanocluster. The natural bond orbital (NBO) calculations were depicted charge transfers from the lomustine to the  $C_{48}$  in states A and B to be 0.007 and 0.006 e, respectively. Positive values of the NBO charge of

lomustine illustrated that the charge transferred from the drug to  $C_{48}$ . After lomustine adsorption on the  $C_{48}$  nanocluster, the  $\Delta H$  parameters were investigated about 6.92 and 8.42  $\text{kcal mol}^{-1}$ , and the  $\Delta G$  values were calculated 21.92 and 27.51  $\text{kcal mol}^{-1}$  in state A and B, respectively. These results confirmed the  $E_{ad}$  values that the lomustine adsorption is stronger in state A.



**Figure 2:** Optimized structures and MEP plots for the Si-, Al-, Ge-, and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$

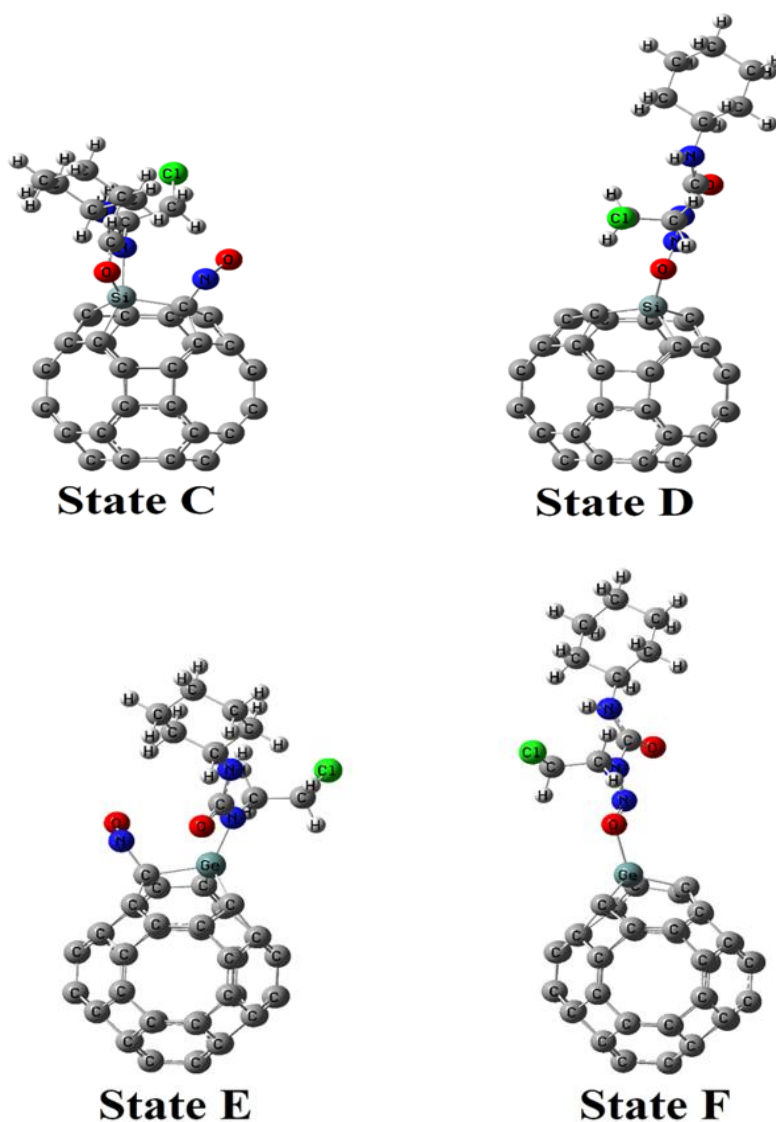
#### *Adsorption of lomustine onto the Si-, Al-, Ge-, and Ga-doped $C_{47}$*

The  $E_{ad}$  of lomustine with  $C_{48}$  showed a weak interaction. Thus, a Carbon (C) atom of  $C_{48}$  was altered with Silicon (Si), Aluminum (Al), Gallium (Ga), or Germanium (Ge) atom (Si-, Al-, Ga, and Ge-doped  $C_{47}$ ) for lomustine adsorption. The MEP plots and most stable structures of Si-, Al-, Ga-, and Ge-doped  $C_{47}$  are depicted in Figure 2. MEPs of doped nanoclusters revealed Si, Al, Ge, and Ga

atoms have more metallic characteristics than the C atoms. The bond length in Si-, Al-, Ge, and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  nanoclusters for doped atoms-C are longer than the corresponding C-C bonds in the  $C_{48}$ . The most stable structures of lomustine/ Si-, Al-, Ge, and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  complexes in the two states are demonstrated in Figures 3 and 4. After lomustine adsorption on nanoclusters, the calculated  $E_{ad}$  of lomustine/Si-doped  $C_{47}$  in states C and D are  $-67.32$  and  $-24.21 \text{ kcal mol}^{-1}$ , and for

lomustine/Ge-doped  $C_{47}$  in states E and F are -45.88 and -27.17 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. Similar to the  $C_{48}$ , the lomustine adsorption from its 10 atom with Si-doped  $C_{47}$  and Ge-doped  $C_{47}$  (states C and E) are the most stable states. When lomustine interacts from its 10 atom with Si and Ge atoms of nanocluster in states C and E (the most stable states), the N-O atoms (2O and 18N) of lomustine are transferred to the carbon atom of the nanoclusters (Figure 3). This decomposition process of the lomustine can destroy drug efficiency. The  $E_{ad}$  of lomustine/Al-doped  $C_{47}$  and lomustine/Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  complexes in states G, H, I, and J was calculated to be -45.00, -32.81, -29.76, and -23.06 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>,

respectively (Table 1). The equilibrium distances in states G, H, I, and J were determined at 1.93, 1.92, 2.00, and 2.05 Å. The NBO calculation indicated charge transfer from the lomustine to Al- and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  nanoclusters, and values revealed charge transfer in the Al- and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  are more than the pure  $C_{48}$ . The  $\Delta H$  and  $\Delta G$  values in Al-doped  $C_{47}$  and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  nanoclusters were obtained negative values. Thus, negative values indicated that the adsorption of lomustine on the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  is exothermic, and the lomustine's adsorption is spontaneous. The  $E_{ad}$  calculated values are more negative than the  $\Delta G$  values, indicating  $\Delta S$  reduction.



**Figure 3:** Optimized structures for the Si-doped  $C_{47}$  and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  complexes in different states



**Table 1:** Calculated adsorption energy ( $E_{ad}$ /kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>), bond distance between lomustine and nanoclusters (D/Å), NBO charge on the lomustine in complexes (QNBO/e), HOMO energies ( $E_{(HOMO)}$ /eV), LUMO energies ( $E_{(LUMO)}$ /eV), energy gap ( $E_g$ /eV), and % $\Delta E_g$  change in electrical conductivity after the lomustine adsorption, dipole moment (DM/Debye), enthalpy ( $\Delta H$ /kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>), Gibbs free energy ( $\Delta G$ /kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>) and entropy ( $\Delta S$ /kcal K<sup>-1</sup> mol<sup>-1</sup>), in gas phase

Name	$E_{ad}$	D	QNBO	$E_{(HOMO)}$	$E_{(LUMO)}$	$E_g$	% $\Delta E_g$	DM	$\Delta H$	$\Delta G$	$\Delta S$
Lomustine	-	-	-	-6.88	-2.04	4.84	-	5.11	-	-	-
C48	-	-	-	-5.59	-4.48	1.11	-	0.00	-	-	-
A	-3.05	3.40	0.007	-5.45	-4.23	1.23	10.81	5.53	6.92	21.92	-0.05
B	-2.99	3.69	0.006	-5.43	-4.21	1.22	9.91	6.52	8.42	27.51	-0.06
Si-doped C <sub>47</sub>	-	-	-	-5.61	-4.59	1.02	-	1.48	-		0
C	-67.32	1.49	-0.299	-5.22	-4.07	1.15	12.75	8.50	-61.46	-46.59	-0.05
D	-24.21	1.77	0.048	-4.84	-4.20	0.64	-37.25	16.25	-20.17	-12.26	-0.03
Ge-doped C <sub>47</sub>	-	-	-	-5.59	-4.58	1.02	-	1.85	-		0
E	-45.88	1.48	-0.412	-5.34	-4.15	1.19	16.67	5.93	-39.41	-27.58	-0.04
F	-17.16	1.99	0.150	-4.73	-4.21	0.52	-49.02	19.81	-13.18	-6.15	-0.02
Al-doped C <sub>47</sub>	-	-	-	-5.69	-3.89	1.80	-	3.33	-		0
G	-45.00	1.93	0.302	-5.09	-4.34	0.75	-58.33	7.39	-38.81	-25.14	-0.05
H	-32.81	1.92	0.164	-4.96	-4.19	0.77	-57.22	20.48	-28.95	-16.27	-0.04
Ga-doped C <sub>47</sub>	-	-	-	-5.72	-3.94	1.78	-	2.51	-		0
I	-29.76	2.00	0.190	-5.03	-3.48	1.55	-12.92	16.62	-23.58	-15.92	-0.03
J	-23.06	2.05	0.158	-5.03	-3.90	1.13	-36.52	18.96	-19.65	-11.83	-0.03

#### Evaluation of the electrical properties of lomustine on the nanoclusters

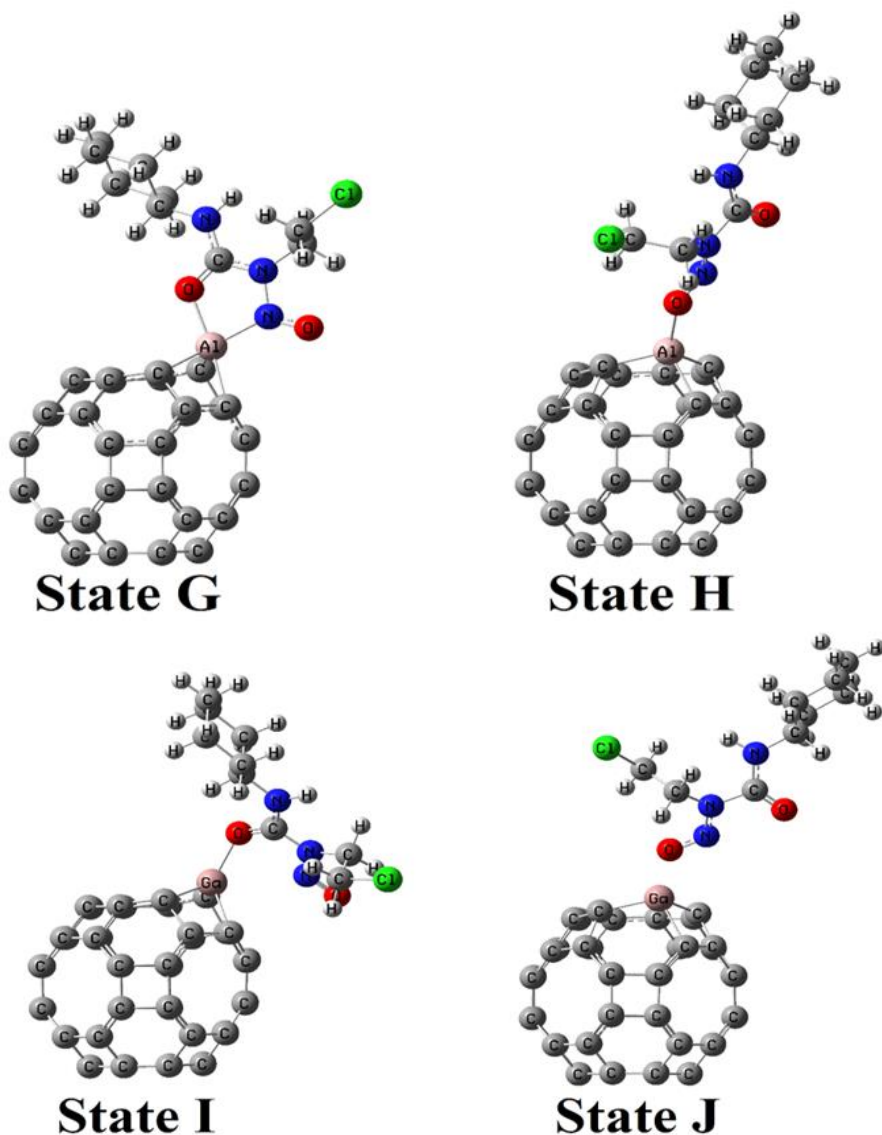
Electronic properties of nanoclusters after and before interaction of the lomustine drug were reviewed in Table 1. In the C<sub>48</sub> nanocluster, the HOMO and LUMO energies are about -5.59 and -4.48 eV, respectively. Therefore, the  $E_g$  (LUMO-HOMO) was calculated at 1.11 eV. Likewise, Kamali *et al.* calculated the  $E_g$  of C<sub>48</sub> 1.11 eV at the same level of theory of the current work [39]. The HOMO and LUMO values changed in the doped nanoclusters. The HOMO energies for Si-, Ge-, Al-, and Ga-doped C<sub>47</sub> were calculated -5.61, -5.59, -5.69, and -5.79 eV, respectively. Furthermore, LUMO values of Si-, Ge-, Al-, and Ga-doped C<sub>47</sub> were calculated -4.59, -4.58, -3.89, and -3.94 eV, respectively. These results demonstrated that replacing the Si or Ge atoms instead of the C atom stabilizes the HOMO and LUMO levels, and replacing the Al or Ga atoms stabilizes the HOMO and destabilizes the LUMO levels. Therefore, in the Si-, Ge-, Al-, and Ga-doped C<sub>47</sub> nanoclusters, the

$E_g$  values were changed 8.11%, 8.11%, -62.16%, and -60.36% compared with the C<sub>48</sub> nanocluster. After lomustine adsorption, in the most stable complex of the lomustine/C<sub>48</sub> (state A), the  $E_g$  value was not sensibly changed (10.81%). The LUMO and HOMO values in the Si-, Ge-, and Ga-doped C<sub>47</sub> were altered to higher values after adsorption of lomustine and destabilized the LUMO and HOMO levels. However, in the Al-doped C<sub>47</sub>, the LUMO value is stabilized by altering from -3.89 to -4.34 eV, and the HOMO value is destabilized by about 0.60 eV. Thus, in the most stable Si-, Ge-, Al- and Ga-doped C<sub>47</sub> complexes (states C, E, G, and I), the  $E_g$  changed about 12.75%, 16.67%, -58.33%, and -12.92%. The  $E_g$  values indicate sensitivity and reactivity. The lower levels indicate higher electrical conductivity, sensitivity, and reactivity since the changing in  $E_g$  values corresponds to the population of conduction elections, as stated by Equation 6 [40, 41].

$$\sigma = AT^{3/2} \exp(-E_g/2KT) \quad (6)$$

Where  $K$ ,  $A$ , and  $T$  are a constant in Boltzmann's constant, electrons/ $\text{m}^3 \cdot \text{K}^{3/2}$ , and temperature, respectively. Taking Equation 6 into account, the population of electrical conductivity exponentially increases as  $E_g$  decreases, which is changed into an electrical signal. Thus, it is clear that the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  is more sensitive than other

nanoclusters. Reduce the  $E_g$  through the interaction of lomustine revealed the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  can sense the lomustine drug. DOS diagram plays a substantial role in the adsorption characteristics of lomustine with the nanoclusters [41-43], as displayed in Figure 5.



**Figure 4:** Optimized structures for the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  and Ge-doped  $C_{47}$  complexes in different states

After the adsorption of lomustine on the Al-doped  $C_{47}$ , the DOS plot of the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  was changed in the LUMO, HOMO and  $E_g$  region. The MEP plots of lomustine/Al-doped  $C_{47}$  in the state G (the most stable state) in Figure 5 demonstrate a considerable change after adsorption in the electrostatic potential. The MEP plot was revealed that the lomustine drug is more positive after interaction with nanocluster (blue and

green colors). Therefore, this result indicated charge transfers from lomustine to the Al-doped  $C_{47}$ , and it could be corroborated the result of NBO charge transfers.

#### Recovery time

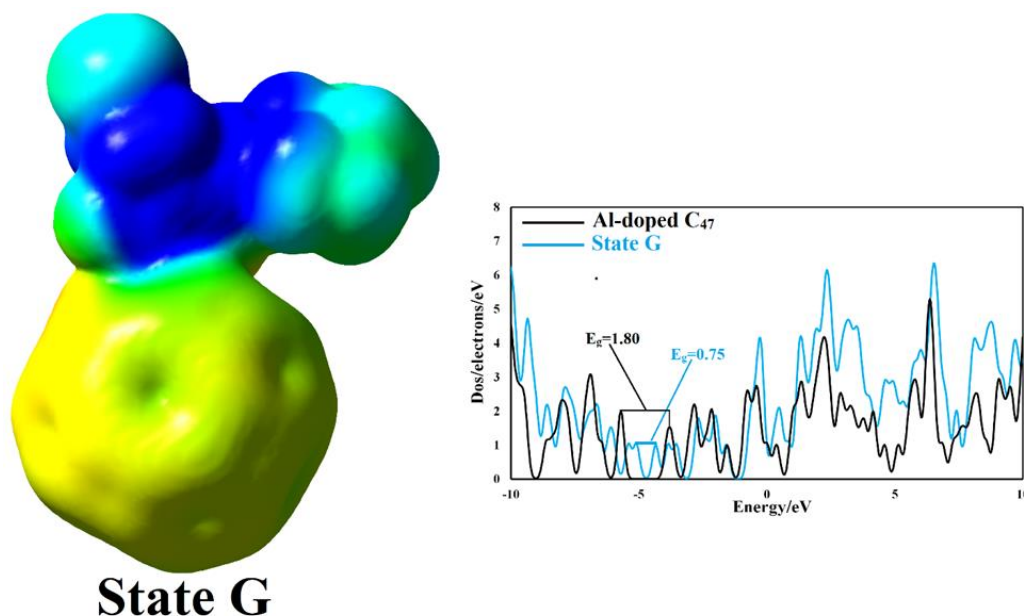
The kind of recovery time and interaction is significant for sensor development. Since strong interactions often cause long recovery times,

which are not suitable for the detection process. The recovery time is recognized experimentally by exposure to the UV light or heating the adsorbent to higher temperatures [44]. Hence, the recovery time was calculated with the following equations:

$$\tau = \nu_0^{-1} \exp(-\Delta G/KT) \quad (7)$$

Where  $T$ ,  $K$ , and  $\nu_0$  are the temperature, Boltzmann's constant, and attempt frequency,

respectively. If UV of  $10^{18} \text{ s}^{-1}$  ( $\nu \sim 10^{18} \text{ s}^{-1}$ ) is used for attempt frequency to extract the lomustine attached to Al-doped  $C_{47}$  nanocluster, the recovery time for the lomustine/Al-doped  $C_{47}$  will be about 2.58 s at 298 K. These results revealed that the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  has an ideal short recovery time. Therefore, the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  nanocluster is an appropriate candidate for sensing the lomustine drug.



**Figure 5:** DOS and MEP plots of lomustine/Al-doped  $C_{47}$  (state G)

#### Adsorption of lomustine in the solvent phase

To review the solvent effect on the adsorption process of lomustine on the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  nanocluster, the pure nanocluster and most stable complex optimized with taking water as a solvent by using the B3PW91/6-311G(d, p) level of theory. The calculated  $\Delta E_{\text{solv}}$  (total energy in aqua phase - total energy in gas phase) was -11.19 and 20.48 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> in the pure and complex form of Al-doped  $C_{47}$ , respectively. Therefore, the stability of the structures in the solution phase is significantly enhanced, and the high solvation energies exert their applicability as sensors in biological fluids. The  $E_{\text{ad}}$  values in the solvent phase were revealed no significant alterations in comparison with the gas phase.

#### Conclusion

In this work, the adsorption of lomustine on the pure  $C_{48}$  and Si-, Al-, Ge-, and Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  nanoclusters was reviewed to find a new system for detecting lomustine. The  $E_{\text{ad}}$  values between lomustine and pure  $C_{48}$  nanocluster showed a weak interaction. Lomustine adsorption on the Si- and Ge-doped  $C_{47}$  nanoclusters indicated strong interaction, which can decompose the drug. The investigations indicated the appropriate  $E_{\text{ad}}$  after lomustine adsorbed on the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  nanoclusters. In addition, the DOS plots and electrical conductivity indicated that the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  nanocluster has excellent sensitivity to the lomustine compared with the Si, Ge-, Ga-doped  $C_{47}$  nanocluster. Furthermore, the Al-doped  $C_{47}$  nanocluster indicated an appropriate short recovery time. Thus, the results of this study determined that the Al-doped  $C_{47}$



nanocluster can selectively identify the lomustine drug.

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## Authors' contributions

All authors contributed to data analysis, drafting, and revising of the paper and agreed to be responsible for all the aspects of this work.

## Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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