

Supramolecular organization and dynamics of mannosylated phosphatidylinositol lipids in the mycobacterial plasma membrane

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1	Supramolecular Organisation and Dynamics of
2	Mannosylated Phosphatidylinositol Lipids in the Mycobacterial Plasma
3	Membrane
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67 Abstract

Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb) is the causative agent of tuberculosis (TB), a 68 69 disease that claims ~1.6 million lives annually. The current treatment regime is long 70 and expensive, and missed doses contribute to drug resistance. Therefore, 71 development of new anti-TB drugs remains one of the highest public health priorities. 72 Mtb has evolved a complex cell envelope that represents a formidable barrier to 73 antibiotics. The Mtb cell envelop consists of four distinct layers enriched for Mtb 74 specific lipids and glycans. Although the outer membrane, comprised of mycolic acid 75 esters, has been extensively studied, less is known about the plasma membrane, 76 which also plays a critical role in impacting antibiotic efficacy. The Mtb plasma 77 membrane has a unique lipid composition, with mannosylated phosphatidylinositol 78 lipids (phosphatidyl-myoinositol mannosides, PIMs) comprising more than 50% of the 79 lipids. However, the role of PIMs in the structure and function of the membrane 80 remains elusive. Here, we used multiscale molecular dynamics (MD) simulations to understand the structure-function relationship of the PIM lipid family and decipher how 81 82 they self-organize to shape the biophysical properties of mycobacterial plasma 83 membranes. We assess both symmetric and asymmetric assemblies of the Mtb 84 plasma membrane, and compare this with residue distributions of Mtb integral 85 membrane protein structures. To further validate the model, we tested known anti-TB drugs and demonstrated that our models agree with experimental results. Thus, our 86 87 work sheds new light on the organization of the mycobacterial plasma membrane. This 88 paves the way for future studies on antibiotic development and understanding Mtb 89 membrane protein function.

90

91 Significance statement

92 Understanding the biophysical properties of mycobacterial membranes is of crucial 93 interest, especially in the context of drug discovery, but there is no realistic model of 94 mycobacterial membranes. In this work, we have developed models of inner 95 membrane of mycobacteria mainly constituted of mannosylated phosphatidylinositol 96 lipids. Our results provide significant and unexpected insights into the molecular 97 details of mycobacterial membranes. Especially, they highlight how recently 98 determined proteins can accommodate into this specific membrane and how its lipid 99 composition can affect antibiotics diffusion.

101 Introduction

102 Tuberculosis (TB) is caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb). In 2021 alone, 103 there were an estimated 10.6 million new *Mtb* infections, leading to 1.6 million deaths 104 (1). Thus, *Mtb* is one of the world's leading infectious killers, despite the availability of 105 both a treatment regime and vaccine. The current course of antibiotics for drug 106 susceptible TB cases can last as long as 6 months and consists of four drugs given in 107 combination (2). This is not only expensive and demanding for the patient, but also 108 encourages non-compliance that contributes towards the rise in multi-drug resistant 109 and extremely drug-resistant TB (3). It is obvious that new treatments and a better 110 vaccine are needed to meet the World Health Organization's 'End TB Strategy'. Their 111 plan aims to reduce TB-related deaths by 90% by 2030, and thereby curtail the 112 enormous public health cost caused by TB (4). The COVID-19 pandemic has undone 113 some of the progress that had been made in the treatment of TB as fewer people were 114 able to be diagnosed or access medication (5), which might result in a worldwide surge 115 of untreatable cases. Thus, there is a pressing need for innovative research into the 116 mechanisms of *Mtb* virulence and its ability to survive within the host for extended periods to help develop alternative intervention strategies. 117

118 One issue in anti-TB drug discovery is the complexity of the mycobacterial cell 119 envelope (6, 7). This cell envelope consists of an array of lipids contributing to both 120 hydrophobic and polar regions of various thicknesses and densities, making it 121 extremely challenging to predict how molecules will cross this barrier and enter the 122 cell. The Mtb cell envelope has four distinct layers: the outer layer (or the 123 mycomembrane) comprised of mycolic acid esters and other complex lipids (such as 124 dimycoserosates), an phthiocerol arabinogalactan-peptidoglycan layer, the periplasmic space and the inner membrane, or the plasma membrane (8). The 125 mycobacterial plasma membrane plays a key role in controlling nutrient/antibiotic 126 127 uptake and contains important membrane proteins that are targets for antitubercular 128 drugs (9), such as SQ109 that inhibits the transporter MmpL3 (10). The membrane 129 composition is also known to change during different growth stages of the bacteria (7) 130 and may modulate drug and membrane protein diffusion. Additionally, recent studies 131 showed that *Mtb* plasma membrane organization, such as the formation of functional membrane microdomains (11, 12), can affect the survival ability of mycobacteria. 132 133 Therefore, understanding the molecular organization and dynamics of the *Mtb* plasma 134 membrane is essential for developing effective drug candidates.

135 The mycobacterial plasma membrane is composed of a variety of lipids and glycolipids, 136 the most abundant being (Figure **1A**): cardiolipin (CL), 137 phosphatidylethanolamine (PE), phosphatidyl-myoinositol (PI), trehalose 138 monomycolate (TMM) and phosphatidyl-myoinositol mannosides (PIMs) (13), with the 139 PIMs accounting for over half the dry weight of the plasma membrane lipids (13). PIM₂ 140 lipids are comprised of a modified PI core decorated with two mannose residues and 141 one acyl chain (Figure 1B). Furthermore, additional modifications of an acyl group 142 and up to 4 mannose sugars can be added to the core headgroup, further diversifying 143 the PIM structure (14, 15) (Figure 1B and SI Figure 1). It is still unclear if the plasma 144 membrane is symmetric or asymmetric (16). In one widely cited and accepted study, 145 it is proposed to be asymmetric (13), with Ac₂PIM₂ being the dominant species in the 146 cytoplasmic leaflet accompanied by AcPIM₂, while the periplasmic leaflet is more 147 varied, containing AcPIM₂, AcPIM₆, Ac₂PIM₆, CL, PI, PE and TMM (6, 13, 17, 18). 148 PIM₆ lipids can be further modified to LM and LAM that make up the bulk of the 149 periplasmic space (19). Additionally, lipids have been shown to modulate membrane 150 protein function (20, 21). However, due to the complexity of the mycobacterial cell envelope, the dynamics and properties of the plasma membrane is extremely difficult 151 152 to probe experimentally.

153 Over the last decade, molecular dynamics (MD) simulations have emerged as 154 a powerful strategy for studying structural and functional aspects of biomembranes (22, 23). However, at the time of writing, there are no complete models of the 155 156 mycobacterial plasma membrane that capture a possible asymmetry and the diverse 157 range of lipids (24). This limits our ability to understand *Mtb* plasma membrane biology, 158 model drug-lipid interactions - important for anti-TB drug discovery efforts - and simulate mycobacterial membrane proteins in a native environment. Therefore, it is 159 160 essential to develop models of the major phospholipids of the mycobacterial plasma 161 membrane for application in MD simulations.

Herein, multiscale simulations were used to analyze the structure-function relationship of the four main PIM lipids (AcPIM₂, Ac₂PIM₂, AcPIM₆ and Ac₂PIM₆) found in the mycobacterial membrane. An asymmetric bilayer containing these lipids was assembled and simulated, showing the stability of this composition. To highlight the robustness of our approach, additional simulations representing (in total) two different asymmetric growth stages as well as symmetric membrane configurations were performed. Systematic analysis of the distribution of *Mtb* protein residues in contact with lipids reveals further indications that this membrane could possibly be asymmetric. We have also modelled how antibiotics, used to treat TB infections, diffuse through the membrane and interact with membrane proteins and demonstrated that our models agree with experimental results (25). Overall, we have developed robust possible representations of the mycobacterial plasma membrane that will enable studies of membrane dynamics, lipid interactions with integral membrane proteins, and diffusion of antibiotics across this barrier.

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- 177

178 Methods

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180 Building the coarse-grained lipid parameters

The CG models of the lipids were parametrized for the newly released MARTINI 3 181 182 force field (26) and generated using the protocol described for small molecules (27) 183 the MARTINI website (http://cgmartini.nl/index.php/martini-3on tutorials/parameterizing-a-new-small-molecule). The bead types and mapping to the 184 185 PIM molecules were performed manually, comparing with the recently published CG model of PI (28). Atoms were grouped according to functional groups, in sets of 3-5 186 187 non-hydrogen atoms. The CG mapping of Ac_xPIM_x is shown in **Figures 1B,C**. The parameter files that describe the bonds, constraints, and angles were assembled 188 189 based on the previously described data (26, 28, 29) as an initial estimate.

190 Simulations of each lipid were set up using a modified version of *insane.py* 191 python script (30), embedding one copy of a PIM lipid in a 10 x 10 nm² 192 phosphatidylcholine (PC) bilayer. The system was solvated with MARTINI water (26) 193 and neutralized with 150 mM NaCl, followed by minimization using the steepest 194 descents algorithm. The system was then simulated for 3 µs using a timestep of 20 fs 195 at 310 K. The lipids, solvent and ions were temperature coupled separately. The 196 velocity rescale (31) and Parrinello-Rahman (32) coupling methods were used with 197 the time constants $\tau_T = 1.0$ ps and $\tau_p = 12.0$ ps for temperature and pressure, respectively. Simulations were run using GROMACS version 2021.3 (33). The 198 199 reaction-field algorithm (34) was used for electrostatics interactions with a cut-off of 200 1.1 nm. A single cut-off of 1.1 nm was used for the van der Waals interaction. Five 201 repeats were performed for each lipid (SI Figure 2).

203 Generating atomistic data

204 Parameters for the atomistic (AT) Ac_xPIM_x lipids were generated using the CHARMM 205 force field (35). The CHARMM-GUI (36) server was used to set up the lipid systems 206 for GROMACS with the CHARMM36m force field (37, 38). One PIM lipid was embedded in an 8 x 8 nm² PC bilayer. The system was solvated with 150 mM NaCl 207 208 and minimized and equilibrated as per the CHARMM-GUI Membrane Builder workflow 209 (39). The system was further minimized using the steepest descents. Simulations 210 were run for 2 µs using a timestep of 2 fs at 310 K. The lipids, solvent and ions were 211 temperature coupled separately. The velocity rescale (31) and C-rescale coupling 212 methods were used with the time constants $\tau_T = 0.1$ ps and $\tau_p = 1.0$ ps for temperature 213 and pressure, respectively. Simulations were run using GROMACS version 2021.3 214 (33). The particle mesh Ewald (PME) (40) method was used for electrostatic 215 interactions with a cut-off of 1.2 nm. A single cut-off of 1.2 nm was used for the van 216 der Waals interaction. Three repeats were performed for each lipid (SI Figure 2).

217

218 Refining coarse-grained parameters

219 The AT and CG representations of the four main PIM lipids are shown in **Figure 1C**. 220 The distributions of the distances and angles were measured using the *gmx* tools 221 (distance, gangle and analyze). For the AT simulations, the atoms were grouped 222 according to their mapping and its center of geometry was used for calculations. The 223 values for each bond/constraint and angle were iteratively refined based on the 224 comparison of probability distribution, and the results are summarized in SI Figures 225 **3-8**. When there was agreement between the AT and CG data, the solvent accessible 226 surface area was measured using the gmx sasa tool to verify that the models behaved 227 the same (SI Figure 8C). Diffusion, shape of the lipids, clustering of ions, aggregation 228 and interaction with other lipids were also measured on a single lipid level (SI Methods 229 and SI Figures 9-19). As typical for MARTINI (41), dihedral terms are not defined in 230 the parameters.

231

232 Measuring area per lipid

Before setting up the complete bilayer system, the area per lipid was measured. The simulations were assembled as described above for CG, using a homogenous Ac_xPIM_x membrane (**SI Figure 2**). The area of *XY*-dimension was measured using *gmx energy* and then dividing the area by the number of lipids in one leaflet over the course of the trajectory, and the final values were extracted using *gmx analyze*, as per
the protocol described on the MARTINI website (http://cgmartini.nl/index.php/tutorials-

general-introduction-gmx5/bilayers-gmx5#Area-per-lipid).

239 240

241 Bilayer composition and set-up

The ratio of lipids in each bilayer was obtained by using their molecular weight and the previously reported dry masses (13) of the individual lipids, and the exact calculations can be seen in **SI Figure 20**. Since specific apolar lipids were not named, they were not included in this study. TMM was not included as there is no available refined AT model, the behavior of the mycolic acid is predicted to be complicated (42), and there is a relatively small proportion of TMM predicted to be present in the plasma membrane. The final composition of the plasma membrane is shown in **Figure 1A**.

The PI and PE lipids in mycobacteria are slightly different in structure to the corresponding *E. coli* lipids described in the MARTINI force field (26, 28): a methyl group replaces the alkene found in one of the acyl chains (**SI Figure 1**). Before assembling the membrane, the parameters for these lipids were modified by adapting the refined Ac_2PIM_2 acyl tail parameters and changing the existing tail. The CL parameters were transferred over from the MARTINI 3 beta force field (21).

255 Simulations of the bilayer were set up using a modified version of *insane.py* python script (30) using the composition shown in **Figure 1A**, where the area per lipid 256 for the periplasmic membrane was set to 0.92 nm² and the cytoplasmic leaflet set to 257 258 1.13 nm². The systems were then treated the same as described for the initial CG 259 systems with added equilibration steps as per the Membrane Builder workflow (39) 260 before the production simulation. There were two types of system assembled to 261 represent the asymmetric membrane previously mentioned (13). The first one had an initial simulation box size of 20 x 20 x 15 nm³ and one repeat was performed for 10 μ s 262 at 290 K, 300 K, 310 K, 320 K and 350 K (Figure 2A). The second one had an initial 263 box size of 50 x 50 x 15 nm³ and a single repeat was performed for 10 μ s at 310 K 264 265 (Figure 2C and SI Figure 2). The number of lipids in each system is summarized in 266 SI Figure 21.

To test how the membrane properties change with differing compositions, the same assembly procedure was followed to set up a symmetric membrane and an 'PIM-enriched' membrane (**SI Figure 22**), with one repeat for each in a simulation box of 20 x 20 x 15 nm³, and another in a box of 50 x 50 x 15 nm³, both at 310 K (**SI Figure** 271 **2**). Another membrane to capture an experimentally extracted membrane was 272 simulated for 10 μ s in a 20 x 20 x 20 nm³ simulation box at 310 K. The number of lipids 273 in each system is summarized in **SI Figure 21** and their compositions in **SI Figure 22**

274

275 Behavior of the membrane

276 To calculate the bending rigidities, the strategy proposed by Fowler et al. (43) to 277 extract the bending modulus from CG simulations was followed. The membrane 278 midplane position in Monge representation was determined by extracting the 279 coordinates of all CG beads at the extremities of lipid fatty acid chains. Using a built-280 in function of the Mathematica software package, the positions were interpolated to 281 get a smooth function before Fourier-transforming with a fast Fourier transform 282 algorithm. From the so-obtained Fourier modes, the spectral density (or power 283 spectrum) was estimated for a tensionless membrane:

$$S(q) = L^2 k_B T \left(1/(\kappa q^4) + 1/(\sigma_p r q^2) \right)$$

where L^2 is the projected area in the (x, y) plane, $k_B T$ is the thermal energy and $\sigma_p r \sim 0.1 \text{ J/m}^2$ is the tension associated with lipid protrusions at the nanometer scale. $S(q)q^4$ was plotted as a function of q and fit it with a second order polynomial P(q) = $a + bq^2$, from which estimates of κ (and $\sigma_p r$ if needed) were obtained (**SI Figure 23**). The error bars are standard deviations provided by the fitting function in Mathematica.

The density of each constituent was measured using *gmx density* (Figure 2B). Diffusion, bilayer thickness and number of neighbors was measured using LiPyphilic (44) (Figures 2D,E, SI Methods and SI Figures 24-27). The xy-positions of single lipids were tracked with PLUMED (45) (Figure 2E). Area per lipid for the membrane was calculated using FATSLiM (46) (Figure 2F). Plots were created using Matplotlib (47).

296

297 Analysis of the residue distribution in membrane proteins

All predicted protein structures from *Mtb* (taxonomy id:83332) and *E. coli* (taxonomy id:83333) labelled as transmembrane on UniProt (48) were downloaded from the AlphaFold database (49), totaling 729 for *Mtb* and 1,229 for *E. coli*. Alphafold was used to obtain a workable dataset of structures, expanding upon the number of experimentally determined *Mtb* and *E. coli* membrane protein structures available from the PDB. Each of 1,958 membrane protein structures was orientated in a membrane using memembed (50) with the *-n in* flag, then converted to CG using martinize2 (51)
and inserted into either the asymmetrical mycobacterial (see Figure 1A) or *E. coli*membrane (75% PE, 15% PG, 10% CL) using a modified version of the *insane.py*python script (30). Each system was simulated for 10 ns. The residues within 8 Å of
the lipids were selected and the density over the z-coordinate plotted (Figure 3, SI
Figure 28).

310

311 Antibiotic simulations

312 Bedaquiline (BDQ) and isoniazid (ISZ) were mapped to CG using PyCGTOOL (52) 313 following 200 ns AT simulations with parameters from CHARMM-GUI (53) (Figure 314 **4A**). The pK_a of the amine in BDQ is 8.91 (54), suggesting it will be protonated at 315 physiological pH. This was considered when assigning the MARTINI 3 bead type 316 (Figure 4A). To validate the use of the protonated state, the same simulations with a 317 neutral BDQ molecule were performed and analyzed (SI Figures 29A-C). This was 318 done by replacing the Q1 particle with a SC3 bead type (Figure 4A). In addition, the 319 LogP for these antibiotics were calculated by perturbing the antibiotic in a box 320 containing 878 MARTINI waters or 363 octanol and 32 waters. The Lennard-Jones 321 parameters for each molecule were decoupled over 11 evenly spaced λ windows, for 322 50 ns per window. Simulations were run with 20 fs time steps in the NPT ensemble 323 with the V-rescale thermostat at 323 K and an isotropic Parrinello-Rahman pressure coupling. Free energies were then computed using gmx bar and converted to 324 325 water/octanol partitioning constants. The values were then compared to data from the 326 ALOGPS online server (55). Alongside this, gmx sasa was used to calculate the 327 solvent accessible surface area for the antibiotics in both CG and AT. The calculations 328 were performed with 4800 dots per sphere and a probe size of 0.4 nm. Modified van 329 der Waals radii for CG beads of 0.264, 0.230, and 0.191 nm for R, S and T beads 330 were used respectively. For the Connolly surface generation, the calculations used 331 240 dots and a probe of 0.4 nm (SI Figure 30).

BDQ was first simulated with the mycobacterial membrane alone to confirm association with the membrane (**SI Figures 2,31**). The *Mtb* a- and c-subunits of F-ATPase, BDQ's target in the mycobacterial membrane, was modelled using SwissModel (56) based on a structure from *Mycobacterium smegmatis (25)* (PDB: 7JGC, **Figure 4C** and **SI Figures 32A,B**). The sequence identity between *Mtb* and *M. smegmatis* for the F-ATPase was calculated using Clustal Omega (57) at 80% and 338 72% for c- and a-subunits, respectively. The system with the protein in the asymmetric mycobacterial membrane (see Figure 1A) was assembled using martinize2 (51), 339 340 memembed (50) and the modified *insane.py* python script (30), with eight molecules 341 of BDQ placed either in the periplasmic or cytoplasmic leaflet with five repeats in each 342 membrane (SI Figure 2). Simulations were run for 10 µs using the same setting as 343 described above. The xyz-positions of BDQ, the lipids and the backbone beads were 344 tracked over the course of the simulations with PLUMED (45) and plotted with 345 Matplotlib (47), and the results are shown in Figure 4D and SI Figures 32C, D, 33. 346 The density of each constituent was measured using gmx density and plotted using 347 Matplotlib (47) and the results are shown in **Figure 4E** (with representative positions 348 shown in **Figure 4F**). The interaction of BDQ with the protein was calculated using 349 PyLipID (58) (Figure 4G and SI Figures 34,35). The same simulation set up was 350 performed with a model E. coli membrane (75% PE, 15% PG, 10% CL) and with the 351 symmetric mycobacterial membrane (SI Figure 22A). The z-position of BDQ is shown 352 in SI Figure 32 and SI Figures 36,37.

353

354 *PMF calculations*

355 The potential of mean force (PMF) calculations for the F-ATPase-BDQ interaction 356 were performed (59). First, a representative pose of BDQ bound to the protein was 357 produced using PyLipID from equilibrium simulations and built into a 12 x 20 x 11 nm³ 358 asymmetric mycobacterial membrane (see Figure 1A) membrane and minimized and 359 equilibrated, as described above. Light (50 kJ/mol/nm²) xy positional restraints were 360 added to Ala 66 on three c-subunits to prevent the protein from rotating in the 361 membrane. Following 50 ns of equilibration, the BDQ was steered away from the protein along the y axis at a rate of 1 nm/ns with a 1,000 kJ/mol/nm² restraint potential. 362 Frames were extracted at 0.1 nm spacing along this coordinate to seed a total of 58 x 363 1.5 µs production simulations with a static 1,000 kJ/mol/nm² umbrella potential 364 365 imposed to keep the system in the same position along the reaction coordinate. The 366 PMF mdp input files can be downloaded at https://github.com/chelsea-brown/PIM-367 lipids/tree/main/PMF-files. The PMF profiles were then constructed using the weighted 368 histogram analysis method in GROMACS (gmx wham (60, 61)), and employing 200 369 rounds of Bayesian bootstrapping to report statistical accuracy (Figure 4H).

For the membrane crossing PMFs, BDQ or ISZ was placed free in the solvent phase, 7 nm away from the membrane periphery in either an asymmetric 372 mycobacterial membrane (see Figure 1A) or *E. coli* membrane. The drug was then 373 steered towards and through the membrane and into the solvent phase on the other 374 side. Windows were extracted, simulated (1 µs for ISZ per window and 2 µs per 375 window for BDQ) and analyzed as described above (Figure 4B and SI Figure 29D for 376 BDQ neutral). The -cycl option was imposed when running *amx wham*.

377

378 **Results**

379

380 PIM properties

381 As an initial step towards developing an *in-silico* model of the mycobacterial plasma 382 membrane, we first examined lipid properties in our CG and AT models. As shown in 383 SI Figures 3-8, the probability distributions of bonds and angles from the CG and AT 384 simulations align well, which illustrates that the behavior of the acyl chains is similar 385 to other phospholipids (30). The Ac_xPIM_x aggregation in the AT and CG simulations is 386 comparable and shows no permanent clustering. When lipids did come into contact, 387 all areas of the molecule appear to play an equal role in the interactions (SI Figures 388 **15,17**). The interactions were not dominated by the sugars, as was seen with the 389 previous iteration of the MARTINI 2 force field (62), and the phospholipids present in 390 the mycobacterial membrane did not have strong interactions with the PIM lipids (SI 391 **Figure 18,19**). The PIM lipids show a higher affinity for ions than PC in CG simulations. 392 but the effect is less apparent in AT simulations (SI Figure 14). While the ion 393 concentrations were the same, the number of ions in the simulation box were different 394 (an order of magnitude higher for CG), which could explain these results. Overall, CG 395 simulations of these lipids behave similarly to AT models (interactions with ions as a 396 minor exception), therefore opening the door to significantly longer simulations by 397 decreasing the degrees of freedom in the system.

The area per lipid in CG for each species in a PC bilayer was found to be 0.93 nm² (AcPIM₂), 1.15 nm² (Ac₂PIM₂), 1.01 nm² (AcPIM₆), 1.14 nm² (Ac₂PIM₆), 0.6 nm² (PI), 0.55 nm² (PE) and 1.25 nm² (CL). The diffusion coefficients for each PIM species in a PC bilayer at 310 K are as follows: 6.7 x 10⁻⁷ cm²/s (AcPIM₂), 1.1 x 10⁻⁷ cm²/s (Ac₂PIM₂), 7.6 x 10⁻⁷ cm²/s (AcPIM₆), 6.5 x 10⁻⁷ cm²/s (Ac₂PIM₆) (**SI Figure 9**). The difference between AcPIM_x and Ac₂PIM_x shows the effect of the extra acyl tail in terms of how freely these lipids diffuse through the membrane. 405 The lipid shapes are approximately the same from AT to CG (SI Figures 10-13), which agrees with the comparison of the surface areas (SI Figure 8C) and the 406 407 sugar-phosphate z-distances in Ac_xPIM₆ (**SI Figures 5C,7C**). The additional mannose 408 moieties project upwards away from the membrane in both sets of simulations. 409 Interestingly, the lipid tail region is measured to occupy approximately the same 410 amount of space with three or four acyl chains. This is likely due to the placement of 411 the fourth tail, projecting downwards from the inositol sugar (as highlighted in red in 412 Figure 1B) and hence inhabiting space close to the other acyl chains.

Taken together, the lipid properties in our CG model broadly replicate those seen with AT resolution. This provided the confidence to assemble these lipids into a complex bilayer.

416

417 Mycobacterial membrane biophysical properties

418 Traditional MD simulations of bacterial membranes use symmetric bilayer 419 representation. However, a study has shown that the mycobacterial plasma 420 membrane could be an asymmetric bilayer, and we used the published composition 421 of the mycobacterial plasma membrane (13) (Figure 1A) (excluding apolar lipids and 422 TMM) to assemble an asymmetric bilayer (Figures 2A,C). This bilayer was found to 423 be stable during 10 µs simulation (SI Movie 1), and in good agreement with the 424 literature (8, 13). The thickness of the plasma membrane in our simulations was at 5.3 425 ± 0.1 nm (Figure 2B), which is slightly narrower than values obtained from imaging 426 studies (6.3 nm for *Mycobacterium bovis* and 7 nm for *Mycobacterium smegmatis*) 427 (63-65). However, we did observe thicknesses of up to 7 nm in the density plot (Figure 428 **2B**). In vitro culture conditions or growth stages of the bacteria (65) impact the 429 thickness on the membrane and could explain any minor differences with our model.

430 To test the phase behavior of this membrane, we performed simulations at various temperatures ranging from 290 K to 350 K. For the whole range of 431 432 temperatures, lipids were in the liquid phase and allowed to diffuse freely (Figure 2E 433 and SI Figure 24). The calculated diffusion coefficients for each species in the periplasmic leaflet at 310 K were as follows: $9.9 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ (AcPIM₂), $6.9 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ 434 $(AcPIM_6)$, 1 x 10⁻⁷ cm²/s (Ac_2PIM_6) , 1.3 x 10⁻⁷ cm²/s (PI), 1.5 x 10⁻⁷ cm²/s (PE) and 1.2 435 x 10^{-7} cm²/s (CL). In the cytoplasmic leaflet, the values were 6.1 x 10^{-8} cm²/s (AcPIM₂) 436 and 8.1 x 10⁻⁸ cm²/s (Ac₂PIM₂). Compared to isolated PIMs in a PC membrane, the 437 438 diffusion in this plasma membrane was roughly one order of magnitude slower.

AcPIM₂, which is the only lipid in both leaflets, diffused ~40% slower in the cytoplasmic 439 membrane compared with the periplasmic leaflet. Using a previously reported model 440 441 of mammalian plasma membrane (22), the diffusion coefficients of PE and PI were calculated to be 3.3×10^{-7} cm²/s and 2.8×10^{-7} cm²/s, showing that the diffusion in the 442 443 mammalian membrane is equivalent to that in the mycobacterial plasma membrane. 444 The membrane stiffness of our mycobacterial membrane was significantly lower at 445 κ =8.2 k_BT compared to 13.9 k_BT and 19.1 k_BT for the mammalian and PC membrane 446 models, respectively (SI Figure 23), highlighting a unique dynamic behavior for the 447 mycobacterial plasma membrane.

448 Lipid clustering was moderate and membrane composition remained 449 heterogenous over the course of each 10 µs simulation (Figure 2C). This can also be 450 seen in **Figure 2D** where the number of surrounding lipids of the same type for each 451 species in the periplasmic membrane was roughly equivalent to that of any other lipid 452 species. The distribution of the area per lipid in the membrane also suggests high 453 heterogeneity (Figure 2F). The average area per lipid in the membrane over the 454 course of the simulation was 0.89 nm² and 1.18 nm² for the periplasmic and 455 cytoplasmic leaflets, respectively. Thus, the cytoplasmic leaflet appears to be a little 456 denser than the periplasmic leaflet. This can be related to the packing of the four acyl 457 chains of Ac₂PIM₂ lipids present in high concentration in this leaflet (66). A movie for 458 the change in area per lipid for each leaflet over the course of the simulation can be 459 found in SI Movies 2,3.

As was seen for the individual lipids in CG the overall bilayer attracted ions; both Cl⁻ and Na⁺ concentration was much higher close to the bilayer, especially around the sugar head groups compared to bulk solution (**Figure 2B**). It has been shown that lipid-ion interactions can affect the biophysical properties of the membrane, such as fluidity and stiffness, as well as the structure, which could modify the interaction with proteins (67).

The mycobacterial plasma membrane has been reported to change at different growth stages (7, 68), but the study that originally proposed the composition was based solely on late-exponential-phase cells. To explore a wider range of possible membrane compositions, we designed an 'PIM-enriched' bilayer, where the amount of PIM lipids in the periplasmic leaflet was increased to reflect cells in rapid growth (7) (see compositions in **SI Figure 22**). In this case, the overall biophysical properties of that leaflet were very similar to those seen in **Figure 2**, but interestingly a change in the diffusion and density of the cytoplasmic leaflet was observed (**SI Figures 26,27**).
Increasing the proportion of lipids in the periplasmic leaflet that have 3 or 4 acyl chains
could mean that the lipid tails make more inter-leaflet interactions and hence slow
down diffusion and make the leaflet denser. This decrease in fluidity in the membrane
could impact antibiotic diffusion through the membrane (13, 69) which would make the
bacteria less susceptible to treatment at a time when it is most vulnerable.

479 We have also tested alternative plasma membrane compositions with a 480 symmetrical configuration. First, we performed a model of a membrane recapitulating 481 the composition being experimentally derived using a combination of mass 482 spectrometry and NMR (see composition in SI Figures 22,38). This symmetrical 483 configuration is stable, and the dynamics of PIM lipids in CG-MD simulations agreed 484 with solid state NMR results (see SI Figures 38,39). This data shows that the acyl 485 chains extremities are highly mobile, while the core of the acyl chains displayed a more 486 rigid structure. Interestingly, the sugar moieties adopted an intermediate dynamic 487 regime, as seen from experimental NMR results (SI Figure 38E) and MD simulations 488 (SI Figure 39B). We then designed a model of symmetrical membrane system with a 489 lipid composition that mimics *Mtb* membranes (see composition in SI Figure 22A). 490 This membrane showed similar interactions of lipids compared to the asymmetric 491 composition and also similar rates of diffusion (SI Figures 25,27). Clustering of ions 492 around the sugar headgroups was still observed.

Taken together our observations suggest that PIM lipids play a critical role in the dynamic and structuration of mycobacterial plasma membrane. Both the asymmetric and symmetric configurations of the membrane were equally stable and our analyses show that both share similar dynamic properties. This work demonstrates the plausible arrangements of the plasma membrane and provides a mechanism to easily study new membrane compositions based on future experimental results.

499

500 Asymmetrical distribution of residues at the surface of Mtb membrane proteins

The lipids of the plasma membrane do not exist in isolation, but rather in cooperation with membrane proteins. These proteins could provide insights into how this membrane exists natively (70). To explore this, we used the accurate, fast and reliable workflows of AlphaFold (49) and memembed (50), to insert all transmembrane proteins from *Mtb* and *E. coli* into their native-like membranes (**Figure 3A,B**). We then assessed the distribution of residues in proximity to the lipid bilayer (**Figure 3C**).

507 For *E. coli*, the distribution is as expected and similar to results previously shown (21). The asymmetry of Arg and Lys reflect the 'positive inside rule' (71-73) 508 509 present in bacteria which aids in the correct insertion of the transmembrane helices. 510 The symmetric nature of the lipid bilayer is otherwise reflected in the distribution of the 511 residues (Figure 3C, SI Figure 28). The *Mtb* distribution of Arg also shows a strong 512 'positive inside rule'. This is at a higher intensity than in *E. coli*, likely due to the low 513 levels of Lys observed (Figure 3C). Furthermore, the decrease in the bulky Phe and 514 Tyr residues (Figure 3C) in the cytoplasmic leaflet compared to the periplasmic leaflet 515 agrees with the increased density seen in an asymmetric membrane (Figure 2B and 516 SI Figure 26B).

517 These results add evidence to an asymmetric model previously proposed (13). 518 In addition to validating the model proposed in this work, it could aid understanding of 519 how mycobacterial membrane proteins differ from those found in other organisms and 520 hence aid targeted therapies.

521

522 Asymmetric interaction of the membrane with antibiotics

523 We were interested in testing how the organization of this membrane affects the 524 behavior of other molecules, such as antibiotics. We tested two widely used anti-TB 525 antibiotics: Isoniazid (ISZ) and Bedaquiline (BDQ) (Figure 4A). To validate the 526 behavior of these small molecules as well as the bond lengths/angles being account 527 for through PyCGTOOL (52) (SI Figure 30), the LogP and solvent accessible surface 528 area were calculated for each and compared to predicted values and atomistic values, 529 respectively. The values for LogP for neutral BDQ (5.92 for CG, 6.37 predicted) and 530 ISZ (-1.10 for CG, -0.71 predicted) agree very well, as do the solvent accessible surface area values (BDQ values $13.01 \pm 0.49 \text{ nm}^2$ for CG and 13.69 ± 1.11 for AT; 531 532 ISZ values $7.48 \pm 0.14 \text{ nm}^2$ for CG and 7.35 ± 0.04 for AT).

533 ISZ is a first line anti-TB treatment that targets InhA, a cytosolic enzyme that is 534 essential for mycolic acid synthesis (74). BDQ on the other hand is a last line antibiotic 535 that targets the membrane protein complex of the ATP synthase (75, 76). The PMF 536 results for ISZ and BDQ show that the mycobacterial membrane behaves as expected 537 regarding the passage of a small molecule through a lipid rich membrane, showing 538 favorable interactions with the largely hydrophobic BDQ and unfavourable interactions 539 with hydrophilic ISZ (Figure 4B). The positive charge present on BDQ could account 540 for the sharp free energy barrier at the membrane midplane. To assess the effect of

541 the charge on the passage of BDQ since the protonation state is unknown, we modeled a neutral BDQ where the charged Q1 bead (see Figure 4A) was replaced 542 543 by SC3. The PMF results with the neutral BDQ show a reduction in the energy barrier 544 at this point (SI Figure 29D). We note that the passage of these drugs through an E. 545 *coli* inner membrane is symmetric from the mid-plane of the membrane as expected. 546 The interactions of BDQ with the periplasmic leaflet of the mycobacterial membrane 547 were ~6 kJ/mol stronger than for the simple membrane and the mycobacterial cytoplasmic leaflet. This is possibly due to the presence of tetraacylated PIMs in the 548 549 mycobacterial periplasmic leaflet. Roughly the same difference between the 550 mycobacterial and simple membranes was observed for ISZ at the mid-membrane 551 region, showing less favorable passage through the membrane. These results suggest 552 that ISZ, a first-line TB drug, is unlikely to freely diffuse through the membrane, which 553 is in contrast with the previously proposed uptake mechanism based on passive 554 diffusion (77-79). Small differences were seen for ISZ interactions at the interfaces of 555 the mycobacterial and simple membrane periplasmic membrane. This could be due to 556 the presence of certain PIM lipids in this leaflet. In our simulations, when the BDQ starting position was in the bulk solvent, the drug quickly associated with the 557 558 membrane, as shown in SI Figure 31, and displayed no strong preference for either 559 leaflet in these simulations.

560 BDQ has been shown to target the mycobacterial ATP synthase (Rv1304-561 Rv1311), a membrane protein complex. A cryo-EM structure from *M. smegmatis* 562 (PDB: 7JGC) shows multiple binding sites for BDQ at the interface of the c-subunits 563 and the interface between the a- and c- subunits (25), where a highly negatively 564 charged area is located (SI Figure 32A,B). Using the available cryo-EM data, we 565 performed 10 simulations of 10 µs each to examine how *Mtb* ATP synthase complex 566 behaves in our asymmetric mycobacterial plasma membrane model. ATP synthase 567 was stable in the membrane and that there were no significant perturbations of the 568 bilayer by the protein. The lipids of the mycobacterial membrane did not show any 569 strong interactions with the protein (Figure 4D and SI Figure 33), apart from CL that 570 localizes in the a-subunit and around the c-ring (Figure 4D) in positions similar to 571 those observed in a previous study (80). The exact values for CL occupancy of each 572 residue are shown in SI Figure 35A. Minimal interactions between BDQ and the 573 ATPase occurred when the drug started in the periplasmic leaflet; however, when BDQ 574 was introduced in the cytoplasmic leaflet, significant occupation of the binding sites on

ATPase were observed (**Figures 4D-G** and **SI Figures 32C,D**). The interactions were reduced with the neutral BDQ model (**SI Figures 29A-C**). Of note, no such leaflet differences were observed when we tested the *E. coli* symmetric membrane model (**SI Figures 36C,D**; **SI Figure 37**), but with a symmetric mycobacterial membrane (**SI Figure 32**). This suggests that the lipid composition plays a crucial role in the regulation of antibiotic interactions.

581 Furthermore, the interactions of the charged BDQ we observed matched well 582 with what was previously seen in the cryo-EM structure (25), with an occupancy of 583 ~30% of the simulation time on some subunits (Figure 4G). The occupancy value 584 averaged over all subunits is shown in **SI Figure 35B**. The simulations were able to 585 identify all three types of sites reported previously (25). Most interactions were seen 586 through the leading site (46% of the time, $K_{off} = 5.2 \ \mu s^{-1}$) followed by the lagging site 587 (22% of the time, K_{off} = 7.6 µs⁻¹) and finally further interactions around the rotor (36% of the time, $K_{off} = 1.2 \ \mu s^{-1}$, **SI Figure 34**). For the leading site, the PMF calculations 588 589 confirm this as a binding site, giving a moderate energy well of approximately 7 kJ/mol 590 (Figure 4H) and making it equivalent to a typical cholesterol-protein binding interaction 591 (81). Tracking the z-position of the central bead from the antibiotic over the course of 592 the unbiased simulations with the protein shows that the binding sites are occupied to 593 some extent by each of the drug molecules and some are flipped to the outer leaflet 594 from the plasma leaflet, as shown in SI Figure 32C.

595 These studies illustrate that our asymmetrical mycobacterial plasma 596 membrane model can be combined with studies of antibiotics, as well as with studies 597 of membrane proteins and their interactions with lipids and/or antibiotics. Taken 598 together, our simulations suggest that BDQ must enter the target protein from the 599 cytoplasmic side, which agrees with resistance mechanisms against BDQ that involve 600 upregulation of MmpL5, a drug efflux pump (82, 83). Importantly, an *E. coli* membrane 601 could not capture this feature, highlighting that the mycobacterial membrane model is 602 a more accurate and functionally relevant representation of the Mtb plasma 603 membrane.

604

605 **Discussion**

Here, we provide models for lipids constituting the mycobacterial plasma membrane
focused on the PIM lipids, as they represent more than 50% of the total lipid content
in *Mtb*. Thus, understanding how these lipids behave on an individual level and as a

609 constituent of a membrane could provide key insight into the intrinsic resistance of *Mtb*610 to antibiotics.

611 In this CG model, clustering of ions around these lipids was observed at both 612 the single lipid and bilayer level, probing how this affects the biophysical properties of 613 the bilayer and whether this could be exploited for treatment of TB is an interesting area for future research. The lipids did not cluster together excessively over the 614 615 timescales studied and all diffused well through the membrane. This confirmed that 616 the mycobacterial cell envelope is dynamic, which could potentially be an important 617 insight into how this cell wall functions. A low membrane bending rigidity compared to 618 a PC and eukaryotic plasma membrane is interesting and could suggest the 619 importance of other cell envelope components in maintaining the shape of the cell.

620 The simulations confirmed that our asymmetric plasma membrane model is 621 stable with a composition of over 50% PIM lipids. However, considering that this 622 arrangement has not been experimentally validated, a symmetric and 'enriched PIM' 623 asymmetric membrane was also shown to share similar biophysical properties. The 624 high proportion of PIM lipids resulted in some unique properties, most notably lower 625 membrane stiffness, which may have important implications for membrane 626 microdomain formation, drug penetration, and integral membrane protein behavior. In 627 this context, the integral membrane proteins from *Mtb* are of interest for the 628 development of new antibiotics for TB (9), and we show evidence that our membrane 629 model can be used to simulate proteins in a native lipid environment to determine any 630 key lipid interactions, as illustrated by our study of antibiotic BDQ and its target, 631 ATPase. In addition, an overall comparison of plasma membrane protein residues 632 found in contact with the lipid bilayer revealed differences between Mtb and E. coli, 633 supporting the asymmetric nature of the mycobacterial plasma membrane model. This 634 potentially hints at topological differences between proteins in mycobacteria and those 635 within other bacteria. If this is the case, currently unknown proteins which maintain the 636 asymmetry might be present (such as those identified in animal cells (84)), and would 637 constitute interesting drug targets to explore.

638 Potential limitations of our model stem from the reduced type of lipids we 639 included in this initial development. Thus, future studies will focus on expanding the 640 model to include apolar lipids (such as triglycerides (17)), TMM and LM/LAM. 641 Moreover, future simulations with proteins and probing protein/lipid interactions with 642 atomistic resolution could help further elucidate the role of these complex lipids.

643 In conclusion, our study is a starting point for building an entire mycobacterial cell envelope, as done for gram-negative bacteria (85). Other mycobacterial lipids 644 645 have already been parameterized (86), and combining them with the model described 646 here has the potential to significantly advance the field that has been lacking 647 experimental strategies for plasma membrane investigations. Additionally, the 648 mycobacterial cell envelope is known to change at different growth stages during its 649 lifecycle (7, 68, 87, 88) and in response to different environments (69). With our model 650 and set-up methods, as shown with the multiple compositions simulated, it will be 651 possible to understand drug permeability or protein behavior at different stages of 652 infection. Taken together, integrating our mycobacterial plasma membrane model into 653 broader studies of this pathogen, its pathogen/host interactions, as well as into anti-654 TB drug discovery and development has a potential to reveal new functional insights 655 and yield improved therapies.

- 656
- 657 Data availability: https://github.com/pstansfeld/PIM-lipids
- 658 Atomistic systems and CG-membrane set-up can be performed using respectively
- 659 CHARMM-GUI bilayer builder (https://charmm-gui.org/input/membrane.bilayer) and
- 660 CHARMM-GUI MARTINI bilayer Maker (
- 661 <u>https://charmm-gui.org/?doc=input/martini.bilayer</u>)
- 662

663 Author contributions

C.M.B., R.A.C., W.I., P.J.S. and M.C. designed research; C.M.B., R.A.C., Y.G., Y.K.C.
and E.L. performed computational research; C.M.B., R.A.C. and N.D. analyzed
computational data; A.G., M.G., J.N. and A.L. performed experimental research and
analysis; C.M.B., R.A.C., A.L., P.J.S. and M.C. wrote the paper; J.N., A.L., E.F., W.I.,
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669

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691	Abbreviations		
692	AT:	Atomistic	
693	ATP:	Adenosine triphosphate	
694	BDQ:	Bedaquiline	
695	CG:	Coarse grained	
696	CL:	Cardiolipin	
697	ISZ:	Isoniazid	
698	LAM:	Lipoarabinomannan	
699	LM:	Lipomannan	
700	MD:	Molecular dynamics	
701	Mtb:	Mycobacterium tuberculosis	
702	NMR:	Nuclear magnetic resonance	
703	PC:	Phosphatidylcholine	
704	PE:	Phosphatidylethanolamine	
705	PG:	Phosphatidylglycerol	
706	PI:	Phosphatidylinositol	
707	PIMs:	Phosphatidyl-myo-inositol mannosides	
708	PIPs:	Phosphatidylinositol phosphates	
709	PME:	Particle mesh Ewald	
710	PMF:	Potential of mean force	
711	TB:	Tuberculosis	
712	TMM:	Trehalose monomycolate	
713	VdW:	van der Waal	
714			



715 716

Figure 1: The structure of the mycobacterial lipids. (A) Schematic of an asymmetrical model

of the mycobacterial plasma membrane and composition as previously defined (13). (**B**) Schematic of the core of the PIM lipids found in mycobacteria with the groupings for coarsegrained (CG) beads. The inositol core is highlighted in red. The bead types for MARTINI 3 are shown. (**C**) Overlay of the AT (sticks) and CG (spheres) models for each lipid, with chemical characteristics shown to the right.



723

724 Figure 2: A mycobacterial membrane model. (A) Side view of the membrane with each lipid 725 type depicted in a different color as shown in Figure 1A. (B) A density plot showing the density 726 of water, sugar groups, phosphate groups, tail groups and ions over the simulation box. (C) 727 Snapshots of the periplasmic and cytoplasmic leaflets whose compositions are: AcPIM₂22%. 728 AcPIM₆ 11%, Ac₂PIM₆ 10%, CL 24%, PE 20% and PI 13% (periplasmic leaflet) and AcPIM₂ 729 10% and Ac₂PIM₂ 90% (cytoplasmic leaflet). The system size is 50 x 50 x 15 nm. (**D**) Relative 730 number of neighbors of each lipid type for the periplasmic membrane. (E) Mean squared displacement (MSD_{xv}) (nm²) as a function of lagtime (ns) for each lipid type in the periplasmic 731 732 and cytoplasmic leaflets. The inserts show the position of the phosphate group of each lipid 733 type over the last 500 ns of the simulation. (F) Contour plots of the area per lipid (nm²) in each 734 leaflet at the starting frame (upper) and final frame (lower) of the simulation. A darker color 735 indicates a larger area per lipid.





738 Figure 3: The asymmetry of the mycobacterial membrane. (A) A simplified workflow for the 739 lipid contacts analysis from all membrane proteins. (B) An example of a protein (E. coli protein 740 MraY UniProt id: P0A6W3 and Mtb transporter MmpL3 UniProt id: P9WJV5) embedded in 741 either an E. coli or mycobacterial membrane. The orange spheres represent phosphates. For 742 E. coli membrane the cyan sticks show PG and the grey sticks PE. For mycobacterial 743 membrane, the lipid sticks are shown in the colors illustrated in Figure 1A. Selected residues 744 are colored according to the key in (C). (C) Graphs for E. coli and Mtb (top and bottom 745 respectively) showing the relative abundance of selected residues within 8 Å of lipids. The 746 gray lines show the position of the phosphates. The cytoplasmic region is shown by negative 747 z values, the periplasmic region by positive values.



749 750

751 Figure 4: The behavior of the antibiotics with mycobacterial membrane and proteins. (A) 752 Chemical structures of BDQ and ISZ with the CG groupings overlaid and bead types shown. 753 (B) PMFs of the two antibiotics being pulled through either a mycobacterial or simple 754 membrane in the z-direction. BDQ is shown in blue and ISZ in red, with the mycobacterial 755 membrane results having a solid line and simple membrane having a dashed line. The error 756 is shown in grey. A schematic of the PMF is shown to the left. (C) Structure of Mycobacterium 757 smegmatis ATP synthase (PDB: 7JG5) with the c-subunits shown in grey, the a-subunit shown 758 in cvan, and the other components shown as a gold surface. (D) Density in the x and y 759 dimensions of selected lipids and BDQ when starting in the cytoplasmic leaflet relative to the 760 protein shown in grey. (E) Density of the phosphates (orange) and BDQ over the course of 761 the simulations where the antibiotic started in either the periplasmic leaflet (green) or the 762 cytoplasmic leaflet (blue). (F) Snapshot of a single simulation containing a *Mtb* ATPase model 763 and 8 x BDQ models showing the main positions BDQ occupied. Phosphates are shown in 764 orange, BDQ shown in blue, c-subunits are shown in grey, and the a-subunit is shown in cyan. 765 The lipid sticks are shown in the colors illustrated in Figure 1A. (G) Comparison of the highest 766 occupancy sites identified with PyLipID (surface) and BDQ from the Cryo-EM structure (PDB: 767 7JGC) (sticks). (H) PMF of BDQ moving through a mycobacterial plasma membrane with the 768 error shown in grey. A schematic of the PMF is shown as an insert.

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