Synthesis of 3a-(indol-3-yl)-1,2,3,3a,8,8a-hexahydropyrrolo[2,3-b]indole core of leptosins D-F based on nucleophilic substitution reaction on indole nucleus

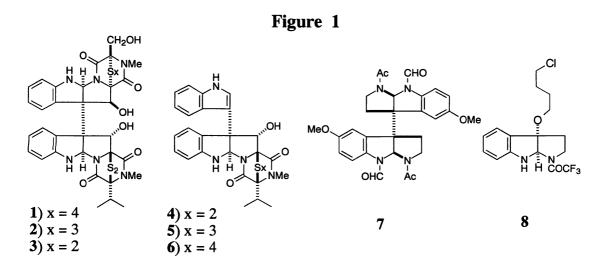
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SYNTHESIS OF 3a-(INDOL-3-YL)-1,2,3,3a,8,8a-HEXAHYDROPYRROLO-[2,3-b]INDOLE CORE OF LEPTOSINS D-F BASED ON NUCLEOPHILIC SUBSTITUTION REACTION ON INDOLE NUCLEUS¹

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Abstract — A simple and convenient synthetic methodology for 3a-(indol-3-yl)-1,2,3,3a,8,8a-hexahydropyrrolo[2,3-b]indole, the core structure of leptosins D-F is developed by applying nucleophilic substitution reaction of 1-hydroxy-tryptamines.

Leptosins A-C^{2,3} (1-3, Figure 1) and D-F³ (4-6) were isolated from the culture of a strain of *Leptosphaeria* sp. as cytotoxic substances against the P-388 lymphocytic leukemia cell line comparable to that of mytomycin C. Thusfar, only one group reported a synthetic study directed toward them.⁴ As for the biosynthesis of these types of compounds, we have proposed an intermediacy of 1-hydroxytryptamines (A) and/or -tryptophans (A) in our 1-hydroxyindole hypothesis⁵ as shown in general formula in Scheme 1. If we assume the 1-hydroxy group departs after being transformed to a good leaving group, an indolyl cation⁶ (B) is generated and then it can be trapped with various nucleophiles to give imine⁶ (C). Subsequent cyclization of *Nb*-nucleophile on the side chain results in the formation of pyrrolo[2,3-b]indole skeleton (D). Although such nucleophilic substitution reaction is quite rare⁷ in indole chemistry, we have discovered various examples⁵ based on 1-hydroxyindole chemistry. Quite recently we succeeded in demonstrating the evidence of indolyl cation (B) by trapping it with either *Nb*-acetyltryptamine⁸ or THF⁹ isolating 7 or 8, respectively.



Scheme 1

R,R',Z = an appropriate substituent

NuH or Nu = nucleophiles

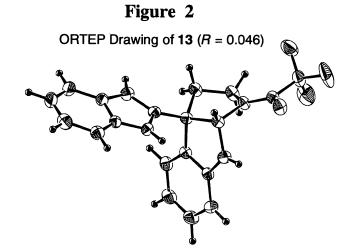
Scheme 2 NHCOCF₃ N TN COCF3 Three Steps 10 N = N AcH COCF₃ ÓН MsCl 9 10 15 16 Et₃N, THF Ac₂O, Pyridine Ac₂O, Pyridine NHCOCF₃ N N N N H H COCF3 N COCF₃ 11 12 13 14

Based on the above background, we planned to employ indole itself as a nucleophile to trap **B**, expecting to establish a simple methodology for the synthesis of leptosins and their analogs. Thus, 1-hydroxy-Nb-trifluoroacetyltryptamine (10, Scheme 2), readily available in three steps 10 from tryptamine (9), was treated with mesyl chloride in THF in the presence of indole (3 mol eq) and triethylamine at 0° C, thereby as expected, smooth reaction occurred to provide 1-trifluoroacetyl-1,2,3,8-tetrahydropyrrolo[2,3-b]indole 9 , 10 (11), 1-trifluoroacetyl-3a-(4-chlorobutoxy)-1,2,3,3a,8,8a-hexahydropyrrolo[2,3-b]indole 9 , 10 (12), 3a-(indol-2-yl)- (13), and 3a-(indol-3-yl)-1-trifluoroacetyl-1,2,3,3a,8,8a-hexahydropyrrolo[2,3-b]indole (14) in 25, 6, 8, 5, and 12% yields, respectively. When the reaction was carried out in CHCl₃, the yield of 14 was improved to 21% together with the formations of 11, 12, and 13 in the respective yields of 14, 4, and 5%. Under similar reaction conditions, the use of excess indole (10 mol eq) further raised the yield of 14 up to 30% in addition to the concomitant formations of 11, 12, and 13 in 4, 1, and 7% yields, respectively.

The high resolution MS and other spectral data of 13 and 14 show the presence of an extra indole moiety in both molecules. In the 1 H-NMR specta, 13 and 14 have characteristic C-(8a) proton signal at δ 5.63 and 5.91, respectively, proving the presence of hexahydropyrrolo[2,3-b]indole skeleton. Additionally, in the case of 14, a long-range coupled doublet proton (J = 2.5 Hz) at δ 6.92 is observed and assigned to be C(2')-proton, which is unusually shielded compared to the usual indole C(2)-proton. 2 , 4 Similarly, a double doublets proton (J = 2.2 and 0.7 Hz) resonated at δ 6.48 in the spectrum of 13 is attributed to the C(3')-proton. The structures of 13 and 14 were further confirmed by treating them with $Ac_{2}O$ and pyridine to afford the acetyl derivatives (15 and 16) in the respective yields of 65 and 56%.

From these data, 13 and 14 were deduced to be indol-2-yl and indol-3-yl compounds, respectively. Luckily, 13 became suitable prisms for X-Ray single crystallographic analysis and the structure was determined unequivocally as shown in Figure 2. As the indol-2-yl structure of 13 is established, then it follows that the other isomer (14) is the indol-3-yl compound.

The preferred formation of 14 to 13 is in accord with the well-known



positional order 3>2 for reactivity of unsubstituted indole. Although yields of 13 and 14 are not high, we expect that examinations of optimum reaction conditions would improve their yields. Application of the present methodology to the 1-hydroxy-L-tryptophan¹² derivatives would provide an asymmetric synthetic route to leptosins. Extentions of the present reaction to other various nucleophiles would also be promising for new pyrrolo[2,3-b]indole compounds (D).

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