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The design and SAR of a novel series of 2-aminopyridine based LRRK2 inhibitors

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ABSTRACT

Article history: Received Revised Accepted Available online Leucine-rich repeat kinase 2 (LRRK2) has attracted considerable interest as a therapeutic target for the treatment of Parkinson's disease. Compounds derived from a 2-aminopyridine screening hit were optimised using a LRRK2 homology model based on mixed lineage kinase 1 (MLK1), such that a 2-aminopyridine-based lead molecule **45**, with *in vivo* activity, was identified.

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Keywords: 2-Aminopyridines Parkinson's Homology model LRRK2 Kinativ

Leucine-rich repeat kinase 2 (LRRK2) has attracted considerable interest as a therapeutic target for Parkinson's disease (PD)¹⁻⁵, since autosomal-dominant missense mutations in LRRK2 have been associated with an increased risk of this neurological disorder. The pathogenic LRRK2 variant G2019S has elevated kinase activity, and so potent, selective and brain-penetrant inhibitors of LRRK2 which reduce its kinase activity, are needed to validate LRRK2 inhibition as a means of therapeutic intervention for PD. Compounds such as LRRK2-IN-1 (1)⁶, GNE-7915 (2a)⁷, PF-06447475 (2b)⁸ and MLi-2 (2c)⁹ have been used to elucidate the biology of LRRK2 in preclinical models.



We initiated a medicinal chemistry effort to identify novel LRRK2 inhibitors with potential for lead optimization. The 2-aminopyridine **3a** was identified as a hit from our in-house screening collection. 2-Aminopyridines are well known to possess kinase inhibitory activity: for example, Crizotinib **3b** is a *c*-Met/ALK inhibitor approved for the treatment of non-small cell lung carcinoma (NSCLC) in the US¹⁰.



In order to guide the optimization of **3a**, a homology model was constructed, based on mixed lineage kinase 1 (MLK1) and refined using known LRRK2 binders. The binding model of compound **3a** was modelled using Glide¹¹ and shown in Figure 1A. The hinge binding scaffold of compound 3a is suggested to be the 2-aminopyridine group, which forms two hydrogen bonds to the backbone atoms of Glu1948 and Ala1950 in the hinge of the ATP binding site of the LRRK2 kinase domain. The methyl pyrazole group positions its methyl substituent close to Ala2016, a residue important for selectivity as this position varies across kinases. The phenyl at the 5-position of the pyridine ring extends along the hinge region towards the solvent. Compound 3a demonstrated good apparent permeability in the MDCK cell line, indicating potential for central nervous system (CNS) penetration, as detailed in Table 1. This was accompanied by high in vitro intrinsic clearance, observed in both human and rat

liver microsomes. A low molecular weight of 264, a CNS multiparameter optimization (MPO) score¹² of 5.4, and a ligand lipophilicity effiency¹³ (LLE) towards LRRK2 G2019S of 3.71, however, encouraged us to pursue **3a**. The aim of the initial hit exploration was to improve the *in vitro* potency and the pharmacokinetic profile sufficiently for identifying a lead molecule with *in vivo* potency. Herein, we report the SAR around this 2-aminopyridine scaffold, where the 3-pyrazolyl and 5-tolyl substituents of **3a** are modulated.



Figure 1. (A) Binding mode of 3a (green) in LRRK2 homology model. The hinge region of LRRK2 ATP binding site is shown in grey tube. Two hydrogen bonds formed between 3a and LRRK2 are highlighted in broken magenta lines. (B) Binding mode of 2a (GNE-7915, magenta) in same LRRK2 homology model and superposed with 3a (green). Hydrogen bonds between the hinge binding motif and LRRK2 are highlighted in broken magenta lines.

Table 1. In vitro profile of 2-aminopyridine hit 3a.

LRRK2 G2019S IC50	6.7 μM
(LRRK2 G2019S calc. K _i	0.46 μM, LE 0.43)
	16
LKKKZ WTIC ₅₀	16 μινι
(LRRK2 WT calc. K _i	0.51 μM, LE 0.44)
Human Liver Microsomes	6 L/kg/h
Rat Liver Microsomes	17 L/kg/h
	16.0 10.76
илоск Рарр	10.9 X 10 6 cm/s
MDCK (B-A/A-B) Batio	0.55
	0.55

Compound **3a** and analogues were prepared according to chemistries outlined in Schemes 1–6. Compounds where the 3pyrazole was replaced whilst the 5-tolyl substituent was kept constant are shown in Scheme 1, and this approach was used for the preparation of compounds **3a** and **28–31**. The tolyl group was introduced by Suzuki coupling between 2-amino-5bromopyridine **4** and 4-methylphenyl boronic acid to give **5**. Subsequent bromination gave **6**, which allowed the introduction of a heteroaryl group *via* a second Suzuki or Stille coupling to give **7**. Compounds **36**, **37** and **42** were prepared as shown in Scheme 2. 3-Bromo-2-aminopyridine **8** could be employed to introduce the 3-heteroaryl ring via Suzuki coupling to give **9**, followed by bromination to give **10**, and then a second coupling to give **11**. Additionally, 3-heteroaryl rings could be constructed, as shown in Schemes **3**, **4**, **5** and **6**.

Scheme 1



Reagents and conditions: (a) 4-Methylphenylboronic acid, Pd(PPh₃)₄, 1,4dioxane, H₂O, 100 °C, 3h, 88%; (b) *N*-bromosuccinimide, acetonitrile, 30 min, 64%; (c) R¹B(OH)₂ or R¹SnBu₃, Pd(Ph₃P)₄, Cs₂CO₃, 1,4-dioxane.

Scheme 2



Reagents and conditions: (a) R¹B(OH)₂ or R¹B(C₂O₂(CH₃)₄), Cs₂CO₃. Pd(PPh₃)₄, 1,4-dioxane, H₂O; (b) *N*-bromosuccinimide, KOAc, DMF, 80 °C, 60 min; (c) R²B(OH)₂, Pd(Ph₃P)₄Cs₂CO₃, 1,4-dioxane, H₂O.

Triazole derivative **16** was prepared as shown in Scheme 3. 5-Bromo-3-aminopyridine **12** was converted to ethyl carbamate **13**. Introduction of the tolyl group using Suzuki methodology gave **14**. Hydrolysis of the ethyl carbamate and subsequent conversion of the aniline to the nitrofluoropyridine **15** allowed S_NAr displacement using 4-methyl-1*H*-(1,2,3)-triazole and subsequent reduction of the nitro group to obtain triazole derivative **16**.

Scheme 3



Reagents and conditions: (a) ClCO₂Et, 0°C, 30 min; (b) H₂SO₄, HNO₃, 0°C to r.t., 16 h; (c) 4-tolylboronic acid, Pd(PPh₃)₄, Cs₂CO₃, 1,4-dioxane-water (7:3), 90°C, 16 h; (d) KOH, H₂O, 100 °C, 6 h; (e) HBF₄, NaNO₂, 0 °C to r.t., 4h; (f) 4-methyl-1H-(1,2,3)-triazole, K₂CO₃, DMF; (g) H₂, Pd/C, H₂, EtOH.

The 2-methyloxazole derivative **18** was prepared, as shown in Scheme 4. Introduction of an acetyl group by reaction of **6** with (1-ethoxyvinyl)tributyltin under palladium catalysis gave **17**. This then allowed formation of the 2-methyloxazole derivative **18**, using dimethylacetamide dimethyl acetal and hydroxylamine.

Scheme 4



Reagents and conditions: (a) tris-*n*-butyl(1-ethoxyvinyl)stannane, Pd(PPh₃)₂Cl₂, 1,4-dioxane, 100 °C, 18 h; (b) (i) *N*,*N*-dimethylacetamide dimethylacetal, 100 °C, 18 h; (ii) NH₂OH.HCl, EtOH, 90 °C, 24 h.

1,3,4-Oxadiazole derivatives **32–35**, **38–40** and 1,2,4-oxadiazole **24** were prepared as shown in Scheme 5. 2-Amino-nicotinic acid **19** was brominated to give **20**. This was converted to the 1,3,4oxdiazole **21** using the appropriately-substituted acetyl hydrazine, or to the 1,2,4 oxadiazole **23** using *N*hydroxyacetamidine. Subsequent Suzuki coupling of **21** or **23** with the desired aryl boronic acid afforded 1,3,4-oxadiazoles of the general structure **22**. In the case of compound **35**, coupling of 5-*N*-methylindolylboronic acid and a final reductive step using triethysilane was employed (step e). Suzuki coupling of 5indolylboronic acid yielded 1,2,4-oxadiazole **24**.

Scheme 5



Reagents and conditions: (a) Br₂, AcOH, r.t., 18 h; (b) R¹CONHNH₂, POCl₃, 100 °C, (c) *N*-hydroxyacetamidine, TBTU, HOBt, DMF, r.t. 12 h, 78%. , (d) R²B(OH)₂, Pd(PPh₃)₄, K₂CO₃, dioxane, water, 100 °C, 18 h (e) cpd **35** only Et₃SiH, TFA, 0 °C, 2 h, 50% ;(f) 5-Indolylboronic acid, Pd(PPh₃)₄, Cs₂CO₃, dioxane, water, 100 °C, 6 h, 3%

Triazole derivatives **41** and **43–45** were prepared as shown in Scheme 6. Cycloaddition of the alkyne **25** with isopropyl azide gave triazole **26**. Coupling under Suzuki conditions with the appropriate boronic acid gave the final product **27**.





Reagents and conditions: (a) Isopropyl azide, CuI, *t*-BuOH/H₂O, 16 h, 65%; (b) R²-boronate pinacol ester, Pd(PPh₃)₄, Cs₂CO₃, ethylene glycol dimethyl ether/H₂O, 140 °C, microwaye, 6 h.

Initial structural exploration of 3a by variation of R^1 with a range of substituted 5-membered nitrogen-containing heterocycles is described in Table 2. Removal of the methyl substituent, as in 28, or the addition of the larger ethyl (30) had modest effects on activity. Addition of an extra methyl in the 1,5-dimethylpyrazole 29 abolished activity. The 4-(1-methylimidazole) 31 was weakly active, whilst the 1,3-oxazole 18 and triazole 16 showed comparable potencies to 3a. An improvement in activity was observed with the 2-cyclopropyl-1,3,4- oxadiazole substitution, as seen with 32.

Amongst all groups tried at R^1 , oxadiazole **32** showed the greatest improvement in LRRK2 inhibition, compared to starting point 3a. To understand the reasons for this, compound 32 was modelled in the same LRRK2 homology model as described earlier. In Figure 2, the binding mode of 32 was predicted to be very similar to compound 3a regarding hinge binding motif. A difference in coplanarity between compounds 32 and 3a was observed. The dihedral angle (ϕ) between 2-aminopyridine and oxadiazole was calculated to be 2.9 degrees (Figure 3), as opposed to 21 degrees for compound **3a**. The higher φ value required for compound **3a** is to avoid steric clashes of protons coming from the amino group and the 3'-position of the pyrazole. On the contrary, a much lower φ was predicted for the oxadiazole because one of the oxadiazole nitrogens is now able to intramolecularly hydrogen bond to the amino NH. The coplanarity is further enhanced by the presence of oxygen in the 5-membered aryl ring not incurring further twist with respect to the pyridine ring. Such coplanarity appears to be beneficial for LRRK2, possibly because of binding site complementarity. In addition, the cyclopropyl affords better contact with Ala2016, which was not possible with compound 3a.

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Table 2. Effect of pyrazole ring R^1 modifications on LRRK2 inhibition.

 R^1

Compound

 NH_2

IRRK2

G2019S

LRRK2 WT

magenta lines. The cyclopropyl group of 32 is in close contact with Ala2016. The dihedral angle (ϕ) between the 2-amino and oxadiazole group is predicted to be 2.9 degrees. The potential intramolecular hydrogen bond between the amino and oxadiazole groups is shown as a broken black line.

The clear improvement in potency at the R¹ position with the 1cyclopropyl-1,3,4-oxadiazole was followed up with a small variation of the 5- position as shown in Table 3. The 5-indole substituent 33 was moderately potent, whilst potency improvements were observed with the N-methylmorpholine derivative 34 and the N-methyl 5-indoline 35.

Table 3. Effect of tolyl R² replacements on LRRK2 inhibition.



Figure 2. Binding mode of 32 (orange) in LRRK2 homology model. The hinge region of the LRRK2 ATP binding site is shown in grey tube. Two hydrogen bonds formed between 32 and LRRK2 are highlighted in broken

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Table 4. Effect of R¹ and R³ substitution on LRRK2 inhibition.



Comp	-1	-3	LRRK2	
ound	R	R⁻	G2019S	LRRK2 WI
36		н	13/ 0.8	75% inhib
	Ϋ́́Ν		,	@ 200 μM/ n.d.
	Ň			
27	5	ц	65% inhih @	/8% @200 uM/ n d
57			40 μM/ n.d.	40/0 @200 μίνι/ π.α.
	N_N			
38	1	н	3.6/0.25	n.d.
	N N			
	°{			
24	1	L	na/nd	na/nd
24	× N	п	11.a./ 11.u.	11.d./ 11.u.
	0-N			
39	λN	н	0.91/0.063	n.d.
	N			
	0			
40	₹. N	н	2.9/0.17	77% inhib
	N N			@22µM/0.19
	°(
	1			
	N, N			
41	<u>п</u> м́	Me	0.54/0.037	0.55/0.013
	\succ			
	,			
	٦			
	L _N		\cap	
42	Υ	Ме	5.8/0.48	64% inhib
-				@ 30µM/n.d.
	•			

Based on proposed binding models of the 2-aminopyridine series (Figures 1 and 2), it was clear that the 4 position of the R^2 phenyl points to solvent, hence a good vector to use for improving physicochemical properties. Attempts to improve the physicochemical properties of this series of 2-aminopyridine based LRRK2 inhibitors by replacement of the indole with water solubilizing groups attached to the 4 position of the R^2 phenyl group are shown in Table 5. As can be seen, little difference was observed in LRRK2 inhibitory activity between compounds 43, 44 and 45 suggesting there was space for incorporation of solubilizing groups in this position.

 Table 5. Effect of morpholine substitution on LRRK2 inhibition.





Encouragingly, the most potent compound 45 (LRRK2 G2019S calc. K_i 11 nM) had an LE of 0.39, which compared favourably with that of the start point 3a (LE 0.43, based on LRRK2 G2019S calc. K₁460 nM). Compound 45 had an aqueous solubility measured to be 36 µg/mL at pH 7.4; an improvement compared to 11 μ g/mL for compound **3a**. Compound **45** was profiled in more depth to ascertain its suitability for lead optimization. The compound was assessed in the human MDCK assay as having good permeability with no efflux liability. Intrinsic clearance was assessed to be low in human and moderate in rat liver microsomes (LM). These properties, together with a high MPO score of 5.70, LLE of 5.90 and acceptable molecular weight of 378.5, encouraged us to investigate this compound further.

Table 6. Key in vitro parameters for 45.

LRRK2 G2019S IC ₅₀	160 nM
(LRRK2 G2019S calc. <i>K</i> i	11 nM, LE 0.39)
LRRK2 WT IC₅₀	300 nM
(LRRK2 WT calc. <i>K</i> i	7 nM, LE 0.40)
Human Liver Microsomes	1.2 L/kg/h
Rat Liver Microsomes	9.4 L/kg/h
MDCK Papp	26.33 x 10 ⁻ 6 cm/s
MDCK Ratio (B-A)/(A-B)	0.68

Good CNS penetration was observed in mouse brain at a dose of 10 mg/kg po, with a total b/p ratio of 1.3 ($K_{p u,u}=0.76$) and a free brain concentration estimated to be 159 nM based on in vitro estimation of unbound brain fraction using equilibrium dialysis of brain homogenate and buffer. Cellular potency was estimated by monitoring inhibition of Ser935 phosphorylation in HEK293 cells transiently expressing LRRK2 WT or LRRK2 G2019S. The cell-based IC₅₀'s were measured to be 2100 and 920 nM, respectively.

Kinase selectivity of compound 45 was assessed in human peripheral blood mononuclear cells at 1 μ M using the KinativTM screening technology.¹⁴ Good selectivity was demonstrated against 208 kinase sites with cross reactivity only being observed against ULK (40.8%) and MAP3K1 (83.3%). Activity against LRRK2 was moderate, with 48.5% inhibition observed.

A study of the *in vivo* pharmacodynamic effect of **45** on inhibition of LRRK2 Ser935 phosphorylation was undertaken. *In vivo* dosing of **45** at 50 mg/kg sc in mice showed 76% and 79% inhibition of Ser935 phosphorylation in brain and kidney respectively. Mean plasma and brain free concentrations of **45** were 1451 nM and 877 nM, respectively.

In summary, using a LRRK2 homology model based on MLK1, we have undertaken optimisation of a novel class of LRRK2 inhibitors in order to identify lead(s) such as compound **45**, which are sufficiently potent and brain penetrant to have *in vivo* activity and as such are useful for further exploration.

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Supplementary Material

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Description of the protocol for the LRRK2 G2019S and WT Lanthascreen assay, Kinativ[™] screening data for compound **45** and synthesis of compound **45**.