

Letter

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Synthesis and biological evaluation of polar functionalities containing nitroimidazooxazoles as anti-TB agents

Kushalava Reddy Yempalla,^{1,2,⊥} Gurunadham Munagala,^{1,2,⊥} Samsher Singh,^{2,3,⊥} Gurleen Kour,^{2,4} Shweta Sharma,¹ Reena Chib,^{2,3} Sunil Kumar,^{2,3} Priya Wazir,⁴ G. D. Singh,⁴ Sushil Raina,¹ Sonali S. Bharate,⁵ Inshad Ali Khan,^{2,3,*} Ram A. Vishwakarma^{1,2,*} and Parvinder Pal Singh,^{1,2,*}

¹Medicinal Chemistry Division, ²Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research, ³Clinical Microbiology, ⁴PK-PD and Toxicology Division, ⁵Preformulation Laboratory, CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, Canal Road, Jammu 180 001, India.

KEYWORDS: *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, MTB H₃₇Rv, Multidrug resistant-TB, 6-nitro-2,3-dihydroimidazooxazole, Structure activity relationship.

ABSTRACT: Novel polar functionalities containing 6-nitro-2,3-dihydroimidazooxazole (NHIO) analogs were synthesized to produce a compound with enhanced solubility. Polar functionalities including sulfonyl, uridyl and thiouridyl-bearing NHIO analogs were synthesized and evaluated against *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTB) H₃₇Rv. The aqueous solubility of compounds with MIC values ≤0.5 µg/ml were tested, and six compounds showed enhanced aqueous solubility. The best six compounds were further tested against resistant (Rif^R and MDR) and dormant strains of MTB and tested for cytotoxicity in HepG2 cell line. Based on its overall *in vitro* characteristics and solubility profile, compound **6d** was further shown to possess high microsomal stability, solubility under all tested biological conditions (PBS, SGF and SIF), favorable oral *in vivo* pharmacokinetics and *in vivo* efficacy.

Tuberculosis is a deadly infectious disease that has infected approximately one-third of the world's population. The current lengthy treatment for TB and the development of resistance toward existing drugs have further complicated the treatment of this disease.¹ New TB drugs that can shorten and simplify current treatment regimes and demonstrate potency against both drug-sensitive and drug-resistant TB are urgently needed.² In the past decade, the nitroimidazole skeleton has been of great interest to TB researchers,³ which led to the identification of one drug, delamanid or OPC-67683⁴⁻⁶ (a nitroimidazooxazole analog approved by the European union for MDR-TB) and two clinical candidates, pretomanid or PA-824⁷ and TBA-354^{8,9} (nitroimidazooxazine analogs in phase-II/III and phase-I clinical trials, respectively). Both of the advanced candidates, delamanid and pretomanid, are lipophilic, which may aid their entry through the highly lipophilic cell wall of MTB and lead to their high potency.¹⁰⁻¹² The highly lipophilic nature of these compounds has presented absorption issues during clinical trials, which have been managed by altering the formulation of the compound. To address these absorption issues, several groups have studied the nitroimidazooxazine scaffold (PA-824)¹³⁻¹⁹ and synthesized a newer generation analog, TBA-354, with improved physicochemical properties and *in vivo* efficacy.⁸ Despite the comparatively better anti-TB profile of OPC-67683, no efforts were made to improve the physicochemical properties of OPC-67683, and delamanid was approved for MDR-TB with a recommended dose of 100 mg twice daily.⁶ The recommendation of a twice-daily dose might limit its introduction in a first-line drug regi-

men, and efforts to improve its physicochemical properties are needed.

We therefore generated novel triazolyl- and isoxazolyl-containing nitroimidazooxazole (NHIO) analogs, of which the molecule IIIM/MCD-019 demonstrated good *in vitro* and *in vivo* profiles but high lipophilicity and poor aqueous solubility.²⁰ In this study, we synthesized polar functionalities containing nitroimidazooxazole (NHIO) analogs to improve the aqueous solubility. The present study also provides further insight into existing SARs of this class, as well as a new compound with a good activity profile, improved aqueous solubility, a favorable oral PK and *in vivo* efficacy.

Three series of analogs were synthesized with different polar functional moieties (sulfonyl, uridyl and thiouridyl) (Fig 2). In Series 1, a sulfonyl moiety was placed between ring C and ring D. In Series 2, a sulfonyl moiety was introduced between ring D and ring E. In Series 3, uridyl/thiouridyl moieties were introduced between rings C and D.

Results and discussion:

Chemistry:

First, the key phenolic intermediate **4** was synthesized from 4-methoxybenzene sulfonyl chloride **1** in two steps by coupling with secondary amines **2** in the presence of triethylamine and DMAP followed by demethylation using boron tribromide.²¹ Then, a key epoxy intermediate **5** was synthesized from 4-nitroimidazole in seven steps, as previously reported.²⁰ Finally, phenolic intermediate **4**, when treated with epoxide **5** in the presence of sodium hydride, afforded NHIO analogs **6a-g** of Series 1 (Scheme 1).

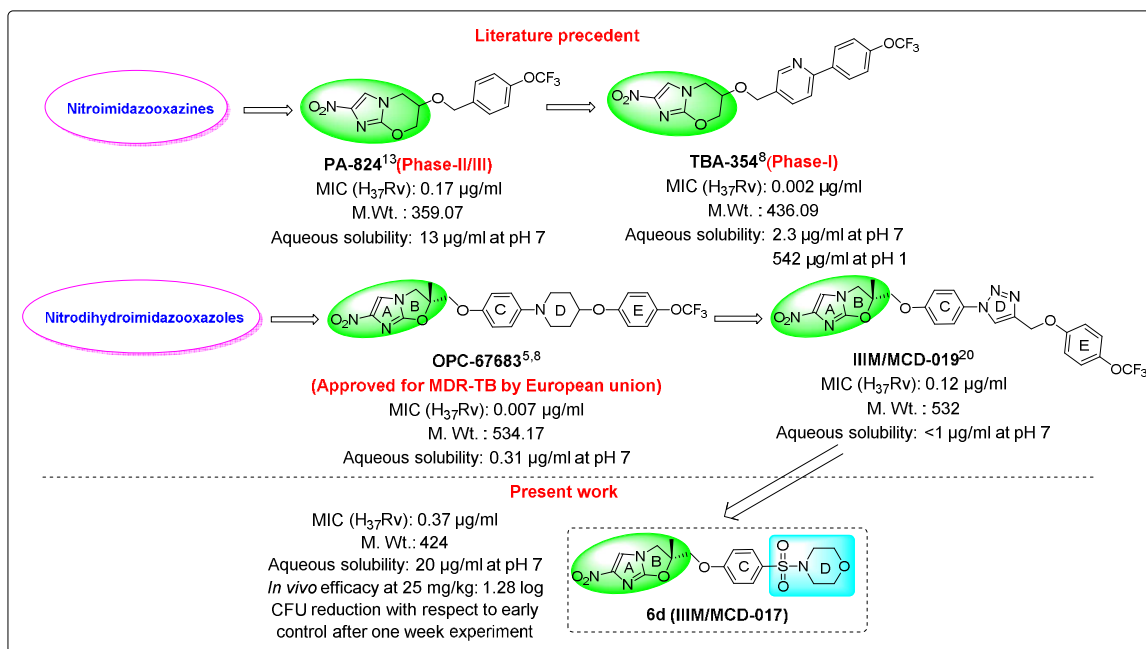


Fig 1: Nitroimidazole-containing anti-TB agents

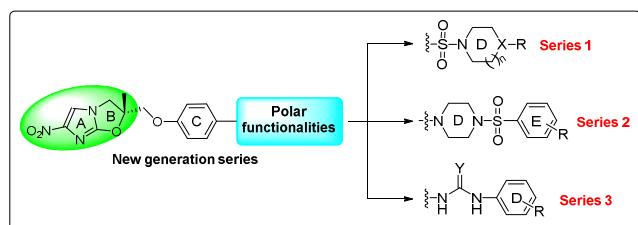
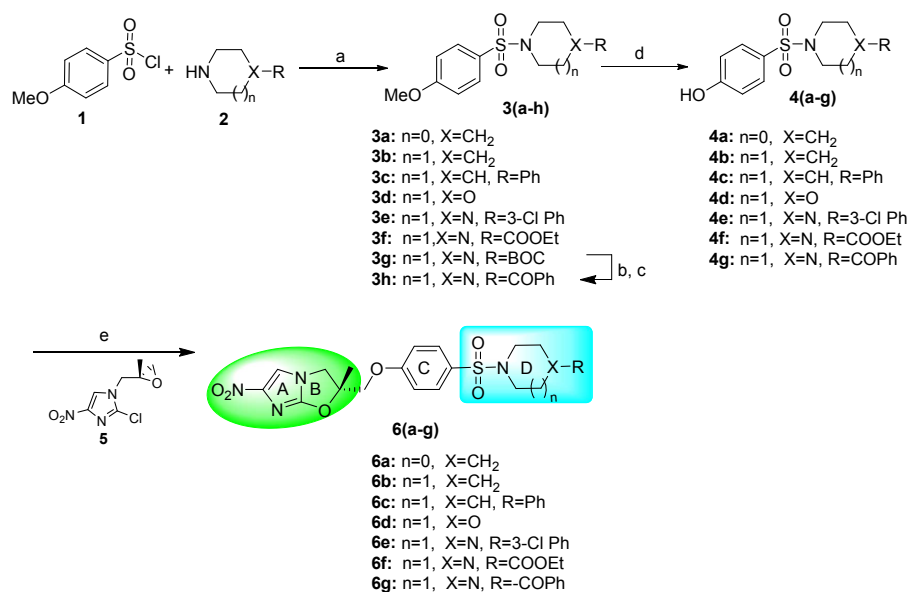


Fig 2: Medicinal chemistry approach

Next, NHIO analogs **13a-e** of Series 2 were synthesized as illustrated in Scheme 2. The key phenolic intermedi-

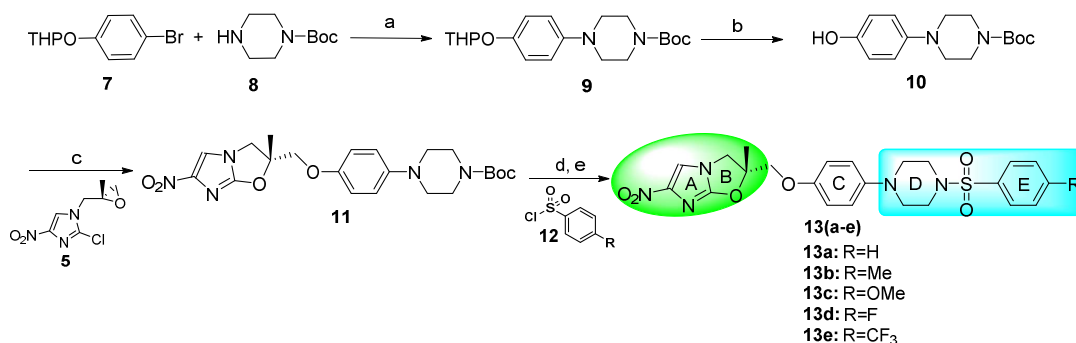
ate **10** for this series was synthesized in two steps wherein: i) *N*-Boc piperazine **8** coupled with THP protected 4-bromophenol **7** under Buchwald conditions²² gave product **9** and, ii) in the second step, THP-deprotection in the presence of pyridinium *p*-toluenesulfonate furnished key phenolic intermediate **10**. Intermediate **10** was coupled with intermediate **5** in the presence of sodium hydride to give compound **11**, followed by Boc deprotection and subsequent coupling with substituted benzene sulfonyl chlorides **12** in the presence of triethyl amine and DMAP to produce NHIO analogs **13a-e**.

Scheme 1: Synthesis of sulfonyl-containing NHIO analogs of Series 1



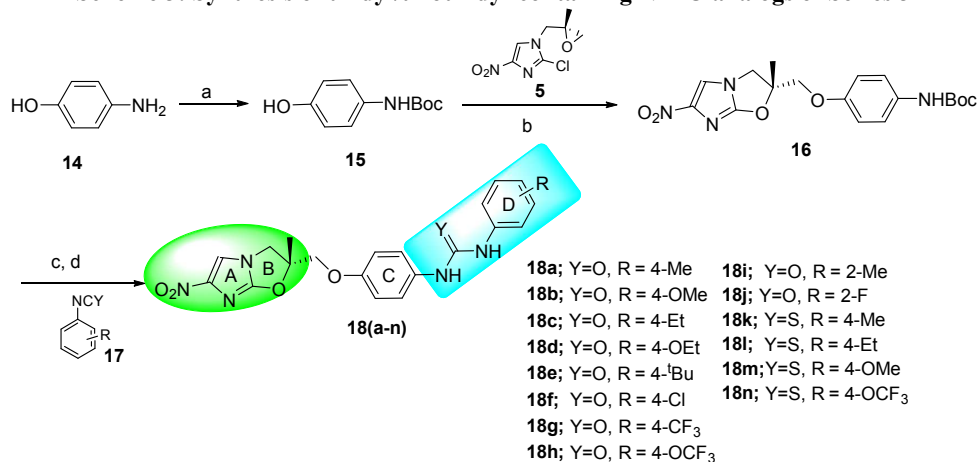
Reagents and conditions: a) Et₃N, DMAP, DCM, overnight, rt, 85-95%; b) TFA, DCM, rt, 1 h; c) benzoyl chloride, TEA, DMAP, DCM, rt, 3 h, 90%; d) BBr₃, DCM, 12 h, rt, 60-80%; e) NaH, DMF, 0 °C to 50 °C, 6 h, 25-35%.

Scheme 2: Synthesis of sulfonyl-containing NHIO analogs of Series 2



Reagents and conditions: a) Pd(OAc)₂, rac-BINAP, Cs₂CO₃, toluene, reflux, 1 h, 65%; b) pyridinium *p*-toluenesulfonate, EtOH, 70 °C, 24 h, 85%; c) NaH, DMF, 50 °C, 2 h, 32%; d) TFA, DCM, 1 h; e) TEA, DMAP, DCM, rt, 12 h, 80-90%.

Scheme 3: Synthesis of uridyl/thiouridyl-containing NHIO analogs of Series 3



Reagents and conditions: a) Boc_2O , NaOH , H_2O , rt, 4 h, 95%; b) NaH , DMF , 0°C to 50°C , 12 h, 35%; c) TFA , DCM , rt, 2 h; d) TEA , DCM , rt, 5 h, 60-80%.

The synthesis of uridyl- and thiouridyl-containing NHIO analogs **18a-n** of Series 3 was performed as illustrated in Scheme 3. The key phenolic intermediate **15** was synthesized from 4-aminophenol **14**. Treatment of intermediate **15** with intermediate **5** in the presence of sodium hydride gave the coupled product **16**. Boc-deprotection of compound **16** followed by coupling with substituted phenyl isocyanates or isothiocyanates **17** produced the NHIO analogs **18a-n** of Series 3.

Biological Evaluation:

A total of 28 new NHIO analogs, **6a-g**, **11**, **13a-e**, **16** and **18a-n**, were screened for *in vitro* activity against MTB H₃₇Rv (ATCC27294 strain) using the agar dilution method. The MIC was determined as the minimum concentration of the compound required to inhibit 90% of bacterial growth. The aqueous solubility was determined at pH 7. ClogP values were calculated by Schrodinger software. The MIC, aqueous solubility and ClogP values of all of the synthesized compounds are summarized in Table 1.

In Series 1, all seven synthesized NHIO analogs with varying cyclic secondary amine rings D attached to the sulfonyl group (**6a-g**) were screened against MTB H₃₇Rv. The MIC values of these compounds were between 0.37 and 4 µg/ml. Two NHIO analogs, with piperidyl **6b** and morpholinyl

6d rings attached to the sulfonyl group, possessed MIC values of 0.5 µg/ml and 0.37 µg/ml, respectively against MTB H₃₇Rv. The presence of a piperazine ring (**6e-g**) led to a decrease in activity.

In Series 2, all five synthesized NHIO analogs with varying substitutions on ring E (**13a-e**) were screened against MTB H₃Rv. The MIC values were between 0.06 and 1 µg/ml. All the 4-substituted ring E analogs had high MIC values and two compounds 4-F **13d** and 4-CF₃ **13e** showed the best activity, with MIC values of 0.06 and 0.25 µg/ml, respectively.

In Series 3, all fourteen synthesized NHIO analogs with varied substitutions on ring D and a uridyl/thiouridyl linker between the C and D rings (**18a-n**) were screened against MTB H₃₇Rv and found to have MIC values between 0.09 and 2 µg/ml. Among all of the tested analogs, uridyl-containing NHIO analogs demonstrated comparatively better activity than thiouridyl-containing NHIO analogs. In uridyl-based NHIO analogs, 4-Me **18a**, 4-*ter*-butyl **18e** and 4-Cl **18f** substitutions on ring D are favored and demonstrated comparatively better activity. Of the thiouridyl-based NHIO analogs, 4-OCF₃ substituted compound **18n** demonstrated the best activity with a MIC value of 0.25 µg/ml.

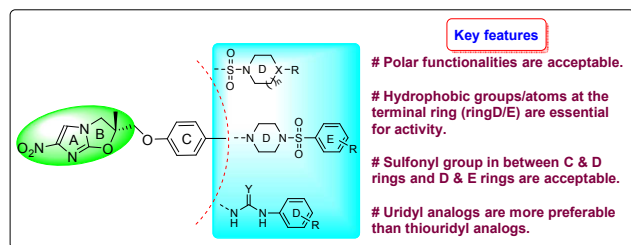
Based on the screening results of sulfonyl- and uridyl/thiouridyl-containing NHIO analogs, key structural features essential for anti-TB activity have been identified as

Table 1: *In vitro* activity and aqueous solubility of 6a-g, 11, 13a-e, 16 and 18a-n^a

Compound	MIC (H ₃₇ R _v) μg/ml	Solubility ^b (μg/ml)	ClogP ^c	Compound	MIC (H ₃₇ R _v) μg/ml	Solubility ^b (μg/ml)	ClogP ^c
6a	1	--	1.43	18c	0.5	<1	3.47
6b	0.5	13.33	1.8	18d	0.5	6.66	3.49
6c	0.67	--	3.52	18e	0.09	1.0	4.20
6d	0.37	20.0	0.92	18f	0.25	6.66	3.44
6e	0.83	--	3.48	18g	0.5	<1	3.92
6f	4	--	1.62	18h	0.67	--	2.90
6g	4	--	2.02	18i	1	--	3.28
11	6.67	--	3.93	18j	1.67	--	3.23
13a	1	--	2.66	18k	0.83	--	4.10
13b	0.5	<1	3.13	18l	1	--	4.61
13c	0.5	<1	2.72	18m	0.5	8.66	3.89
13d	0.06	8.33	3.01	18n	0.25	<1	5.06
13e	0.25	<1	3.66	IIIM/MCD-019	0.12	<1	5.25
16	1.34	--	2.88	Delamanid	0.007	0.31	6.19
18a	0.21	<1	3.26	Rifampicin	0.06	--	--
18b	2	--	4.08				

^aValues reported are the average of three individual measurements, ^bsolubility was determined at pH 7,^cClogP values were calculated by Schrodinger software.

follows; i) the introduction of polar functionalities is acceptable, ii) the presence of hydrophobic groups/atoms at the terminal rings are essential for activity, even in truncated analogs (compounds **6b** and **6d**), iii) the presence of a sulfonyl group either between rings C and D or between rings D and E is also acceptable and iv) among the uridyl/thiouridyl analogs, uridyl-containing NHIO analogs are more favorable (Fig 3).

Fig 3: Structural activity relationship of NHIO analogs and MTB H₃₇R_v.

Based on their preliminary *in vitro* profiles against MTB H₃₇R_v, NHIO analogs with MIC values ≤0.5 μg/ml were selected for an aqueous solubility study. The NHIO analogs **6b**, **6d**, **13d**, **18d**, **18f** and **18m** demonstrated comparatively better aqueous solubility between 6.66 and 20 μg/ml. These analogs were further assessed for activity against resistant strains (i.e., Rif^R and MDR) and non-replicating strains of MTB, and one analog, **6d**, was found to have single digit MIC values in all of the tested panels. Cytotoxicity was also evalu-

ated in the HepG2 cell line. None of the tested compounds were toxic in HepG2 cell line, and all of the compounds had acceptable safety indices (Table 2). Among the six selected NHIO analogs, **6d** had a comparatively better profile across the panel of assays performed.

Table 2: *In vitro* activity against non-replicating and resistant strains of MTB^a and cytotoxicity

Compound	MIC (NRP) ^b μg/ml	MIC (Rif ^R) μg/ml	MIC (MDR) μg/ml	CC ₅₀ ^c μg/ml	SI ^d
6b	10.67	3.34	>8	>20	>40
6d	1.34	1	2	>20	>40
13d	>8	1	>8	>20	>333
18d	1	1	>8	>20	>80
18f	4	0.67	>8	>20	>80
18m	>8	2	>8	>20	>80
IIIM/MCD-019	4	0.06	0.12	>20	>166
Delamanid ^e	0.37	0.005	0.02	107.5	10710
Rifampicin	2	256	128	--	--
GATI	1	--	0.5	--	--

^aValues reported are the average of three individual measurements, ^bNon-Replicating Phase of *M.tb*, ^cCytotoxicity (concentration causing death of 50% of cells; CC₅₀) to HepG2 cells, ^dSelectivity index: CC₅₀/MIC, ^edata for the delamanid was reported in ref. 8.

The best NHIO analog, **6d**, was further assessed for solubility, microsomal stability and *in vivo* oral pharmacokinetics (data shown in Table 3). Compound **6d** demonstrated a promising solubility of 20 µg/ml under all of the tested biological conditions (PBS, SGF and SIF). In microsomal stability studies, compound **6d** was found to have good stability, and 99.32% of the compound remained after 30 minutes in rat liver microsomes. Compound **6d** was evaluated by a snapshot *in vivo* oral PK study and was found to have a C_{max} value of 0.64 µg/ml and absorbed quickly into systemic circulation (T_{max} = 0.5 h). This compound also possesses a higher volume of distribution (V_d = 12,970 ml/kg) than both an earlier identified lead (IIM/MCD-019) and delamanid, moderate exposure with an AUC_{0-4} of 0.879 µg/ml* h, a two hour half-life ($t_{1/2}$ = 1.99 h) and moderate clearance (Cl = 75.2 ml/min/kg).

Table 3: Solubility, microsomal stability and *in vivo* pharmacokinetic studies in mice

Compound	Solubility (μg/ml) ^a			Microsomal stability ^a % remaining after 30 min in RLM	PK parameters ^e					
	PBS ^b	SGF ^c	SIF ^d		C _{max} (μg/ml)	AUC ₀₋₄ (μg/ml·h)	T _{max} (h)	t _{1/2} (h)	V _d (ml/kg)	Cl (ml/min/kg)
6d	20	20	20	99.32	0.64	0.879	0.5	1.99	12,970	75.2
IIIM/MCD-019	<1	<1	<1	90.84	0.54	7.428	2.00	4.01	377	0.38

^a Data were the average of three individual measurements. ^bPBS: phosphate buffer solution (pH 7.4). ^cSGF: simulated gastric fluid (pH 1.2). ^dSIF: simulated intestinal fluid (pH 6.8). ^eP.O. at 5 mg/kg and each value represents average of five determinations. Pharmacokinetic parameters were calculated by WINNONLIN software

The *in vivo* efficacy of compound **6d** was further evaluated in an intranasal model of acute infection in Balb/C mice (Fig 4). One week post MTB infection, compound **6d** was orally administered at 25 mg/kg once daily for 5 days. Rifampicin (20 mg/kg) and IIM/MCD-019 (100 mg/kg) were used as controls. Compound **6d** significantly reduced the bacterial load, demonstrating a 1.28 log CFU reduction compared to the early control (group at the start of treatment) and a 1.61 log CFU reduction compared to the untreated control (late control group run in parallel without drug treatment). Compound **6d** demonstrated better *in vivo* efficacy than our previously identified lead compound, IIM/MCD-019. Moreover, all of the mice remained healthy during the course of treatment.

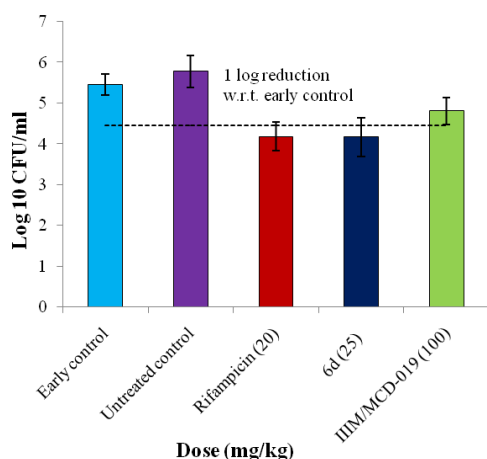


Fig 4: *In vivo* activity of **6d in intranasal model of acute infection in Balb/c mice. The mice were orally dosed once daily for 5 days (n = 6) starting on the day after infection with 10⁵ CFU of MTB.**

In conclusion, the present study suggests that the introduction of polar functionalities between rings D and C/E is acceptable. Overall, 28 new NHIO-based analogs were synthesized and evaluated against *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTB) H₃₇Rv. Potent compounds with MIC values ≤0.5 µg/ml were further selected for the determination of aqueous solubility. Based on the MIC values (H₃₇Rv) and the aqueous solubility data, 6 compounds were tested against both resistant (Rif^R and MDR) and dormant strains of MTB, and cytotoxicity was evaluated in the HepG2 cell line. Compound **6d** was found to have a good *in vitro* profile and to exhibit good aqueous solubility. In *in vivo* studies, compound **6d** exhibited a promising PK profile and showed significant log CFU reductions in an intranasal mouse model of acute infection. The present study presents new opportunities for modifications to compounds with poor physico-chemical characteristics and provides a novel compound with a simple structure, low molecular weight and improved aqueous solubility.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting information

Full experimental details for the synthesized compounds, NMR and MS spectra and descriptions of biological assays are provided. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

Tel.: +91-191-2585006, Fax: +91-191-2586333; E-mail: ppsingh@iiim.res.in, ram@iiim.res.in and ia Khan@iiim.res.in

Author Contributions

⁺KRY, GM and S Singh contributed equally to this work. KRY and GM performed the chemical synthesis. S Singh performed *in vitro* and *in vivo* anti-TB experiments. S Sharma helped with chemical synthesis. SK performed cytotoxic experiments. GK, RC, PW and GDS performed microsomal stability and *in vivo* PK studies. SSB performed the solubility study. PPS and KRY drafted the manuscript. PPS, IAK and RAV participated in the design and execution of this study.

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Kushalava Reddy Yempalla,^{1,2,⊥} Gurunadham Munagala,^{1,2,⊥} Samsher Singh,^{2,3,⊥} Gurleen Kour,^{2,4} Shweta Sharma,¹ Reena Chib,^{2,3} Sunil Kumar,^{2,3} Priya Wazir,⁴ G. D. Singh,⁴ Sushil Raina,¹ Sonali S. Bharate,⁵ Inshad Ali Khan,^{2,3,*} Ram A. Vishwakarma^{1,2,*} and Parvinder Pal Singh,^{1,2,*}

