

Article

A novel Parkinson's disease drug candidate with potent anti-neuroinflammatory effects through the Src signaling pathway

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ABSTRACT: Numerous drug treatments are available for Parkinson's disease (PD), an age-related neurodegenerative disease, but most cause serious side effects. Therefore, novel therapeutic strategies that halt disease progression and allow for long-term administration are urgently needed. Neuroinflammation critically contributes to the pathogenesis of PD. Here, we report the discovery and optimization of phloroglucinol derivatives, a novel class of anti-neuroinflammatory compounds. Structural modifications of the hit compound 3-methyl-1-(2,4,6-trihydroxyphenyl)butan-1-one produced 43 derivatives, including a preclinical candidate (compound **21**) that exhibited potent *in vitro* anti-neuroinflammatory effects, good blood-brain barrier penetration, and desirable safety margins in mice at a median lethal dose (LD₅₀) > 5000 mg/kg. Its *in vivo* efficacy was demonstrated in 1-methyl-4-phenyl-1,2,3,6-tetrahydropyridine (MPTP)- and MPTP/probenecid (prob)-induced sub-acute and chronic PD models, respectively, and α -synuclein transgenic mice. Mechanistic studies revealed neuroinflammation inhibition by targeting Src/phosphatase and tensin homolog deleted on chromosome 10 (PTEN)/Akt signaling. We highlighted the potential usefulness of phloroglucinol derivatives in PD treatment.

INTRODUCTION

Parkinson's disease (PD) is an age-related, progressive neurodegenerative disorder characterized by the loss of dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra pars compacta, which decreases the interstitial dopamine level and leads to bradykinesia, rigidity, and tremor.¹ Therefore, current treatment focuses on dopamine replacement, the inhibition of dopamine degradation using catechol-*O*-methyl-transferase (COMT) or monoamine oxidase type B (MAO-B) inhibitors, dopamine reuptake, and direct dopamine receptor agonists.²⁻⁵ The available PD medications offer valuable symptomatic relief, but they are often associated with significant and intolerable side effects. Furthermore, importantly, these drugs cannot slow PD progression. Therefore, the development of broader and more fundamental therapeutic approaches to PD is critical.⁶ The "neuroprotective therapy" concept has emerged as a potential treatment for PD and may effectively slow down or stop the disease progression.^{7,8}

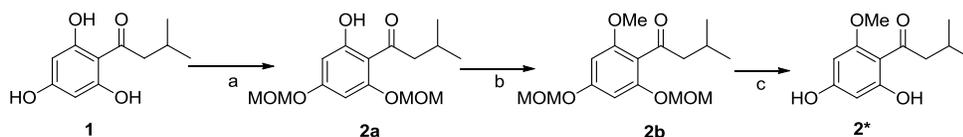
Neuroinflammation, which is well recognized as a key pathophysiological event contributing to progressive nigral dopaminergic neuron loss in PD,^{9,10} may be another target for neuroprotective therapy. Microglia and astrocytes are major mediators of neuroinflammation in PD. Several reports have demonstrated the activation of microglial and astroglial cells near damaged or dying dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra.¹¹⁻¹³ Positron emission tomography (PET) imaging of PD patients shows increased microglial activation, and elevated levels of proinflammatory mediators are evident in the substantia nigra during postmortem examinations.^{14,15} Epidemiological studies have demonstrated that nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) confer a decreased risk of PD.¹⁶ Therefore, preventative and curative treatments for PD have focused on discovering active substances that attenuate

Hit-to-lead medicinal chemistry optimization. With careful analysis, it was supposed that the three phenolic hydroxyl group contained in the hit compound might bring some negative effects as follows: 1) The polar of the molecule is strong, which may affect the absorption; 2) Glucuronidation of multi-hydroxyl groups may shorten the acting time of the compound within the body; 3) The stability of the compound is poor since the phenolic hydroxyl group is sensitive to chemical environment. Besides, the hit compound was not potent enough and its activity should be improved markedly. Therefore, structural modifications were performed to increase the anti-neuroinflammatory activities of the hit compound as well as improve its physicochemical properties. According to the basic principles of medicinal chemistry, the following strategies were used to achieve these purposes: 1) The structural skeleton of the hit compound was retained, and minimal modifications were made to adjust the lipid-water partition coefficients and/or improve its stability, such as changing the number of hydroxyl groups, methylating the hydroxyl groups at different positions, and altering the length of the sidechain. 2) Substantial changes were made by introducing various common nitrogen-containing activity-modifying pharmacophores into the molecule, such as amide, aminoketone, amino, propanolamine and furoxan units, to enhance the pharmacological effects. In the latter case, the number and methylation of hydroxyl groups, as well as the length of the sidechain can be modified simultaneously. As the hit compound was simple, slight change might lead to wide variation in the structure. Consequently, 43 phloroglucinol derivatives belonging six series (**2–8**, **9–10**, **11–17**, **18–25**, **26–43**, and **44**) were synthesized, 30 of which were new (indicated by *).

Compound **2** was synthesized from **1** by methylating the hydroxyl group at the ortho position of the carbonyl with Me₂SO₄ after protecting the other two with methoxymethyl (MOM) groups

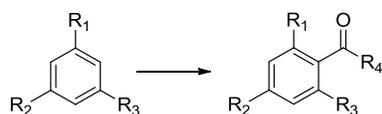
(Scheme 1), and **3–8** were prepared via Friedel–Crafts reactions, with $\text{BF}_3\text{--Et}_2\text{O}$ as a catalyst (Scheme 2).¹⁸

Scheme 1. Synthesis of compound **2**.^a



^aReagents and conditions: (a) $\text{CH}_3\text{OCH}_2\text{Cl}$, DIPEA, CH_2Cl_2 , 0 °C, 30 min; (b) Me_2SO_4 , K_2CO_3 , acetone, reflux, 5 h; (c) 2N HCl, reflux, 1 h.

Scheme 2. Synthesis of compounds **3–8**.^a

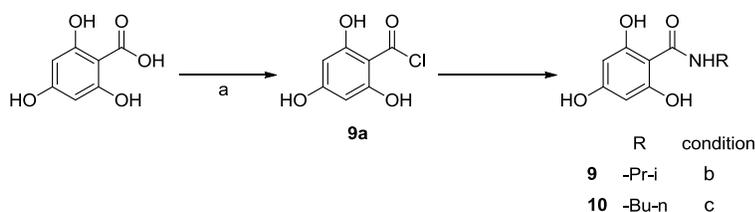


	R ₁	R ₂	R ₃	R ₄	condition
3	-OH	-OMe	-OMe	-Bu-i	a
4	-OMe	-OMe	-OMe	-Bu-i	a
5	-OH	-OMe	-H	-Bu-i	a
6	-H	-OH	-H	-Bu-i	a
7	-OH	-OH	-OH	-Bu-n	b
8	-OH	-OH	-OH	-Me	c

^aReagents and conditions: (a) isovaleryl chloride, $\text{BF}_3\text{--Et}_2\text{O}$, 80 °C, 2 h; (b) valeryl chloride, $\text{BF}_3\text{--Et}_2\text{O}$, 80 °C, 2 h; (c) acetyl chloride, $\text{BF}_3\text{--Et}_2\text{O}$, 80 °C, 2 h.

Amides **9** and **10** were synthesized as follows: 2,4,6-trihydroxybenzoic acid was reacted with oxalyl chloride to give acyl chloride, which reacted with amines to yield the corresponding amides (Scheme 3).

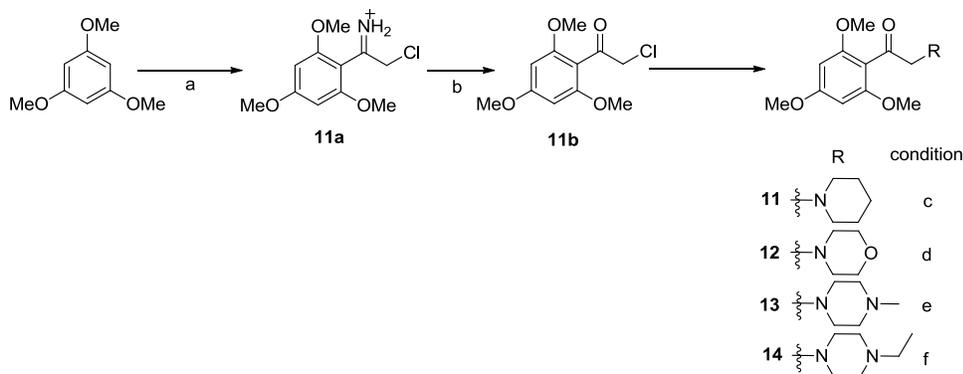
Scheme 3. Synthesis of compounds **9** and **10**.^a



^aReagents and conditions: (a) oxalyl chloride, DMSO, CH_2Cl_2 , rt, 1 h; (b) isopropylamine, THF, rt, 1 h; (c) butylamine, THF, rt, 1 h.

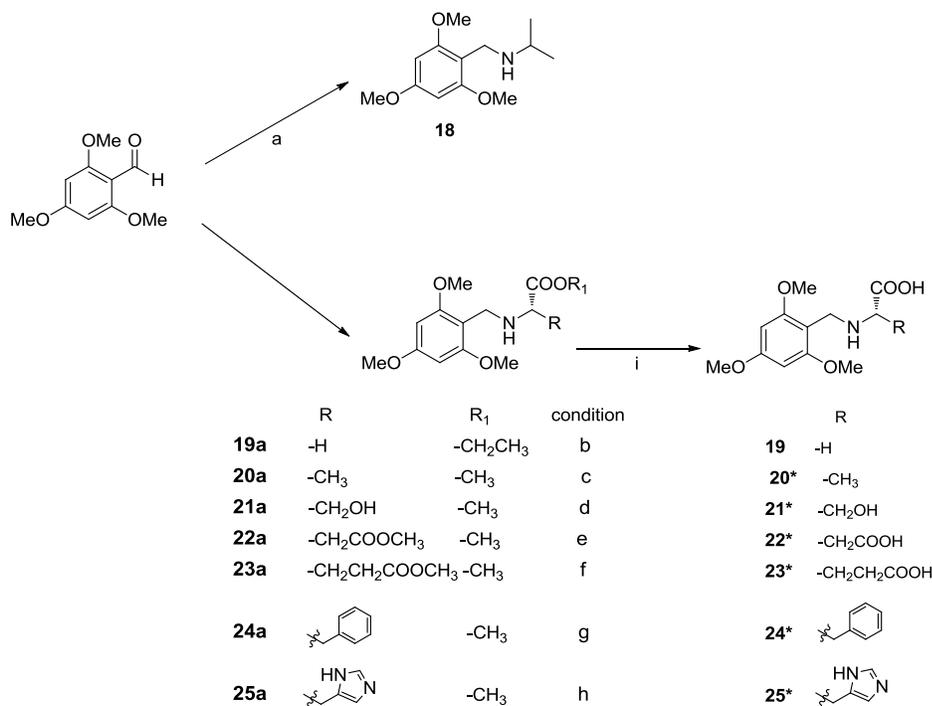
The aminoketone analogs **11–17** were prepared in two steps: acylation of 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene or phloroglucinol with an omega-chloro alkyl nitril through Houben–Hoesch reactions catalyzed by HCl gas and introduction of amino groups by replacing the chloro group with various amines in the presence of K_2CO_3 (Schemes 4 and 5).¹⁹ The order of the two steps could be reversed for the synthesis of **11–14**; however, the amines must first react with 4-chlorobutanenitrile for the synthesis of **15–17** because the hydroxyl groups of phloroglucinol were unstable in the alkaline environment created by K_2CO_3 .

Scheme 4. Synthesis of compounds **11–14**.^a



^aReagents and conditions: (a) chloroacetonitrile, HCl gas, PhCl, rt, 6 h; (b) H_2O , reflux, 1 h; (c) piperidine, K_2CO_3 , acetone, reflux, 24 h; (d) morpholine, K_2CO_3 , acetone, reflux, 24 h; (e) 1-methylpiperazine, K_2CO_3 , acetone, reflux, 24 h; (f) 1-ethylpiperazine, K_2CO_3 , acetone, reflux, 24 h.

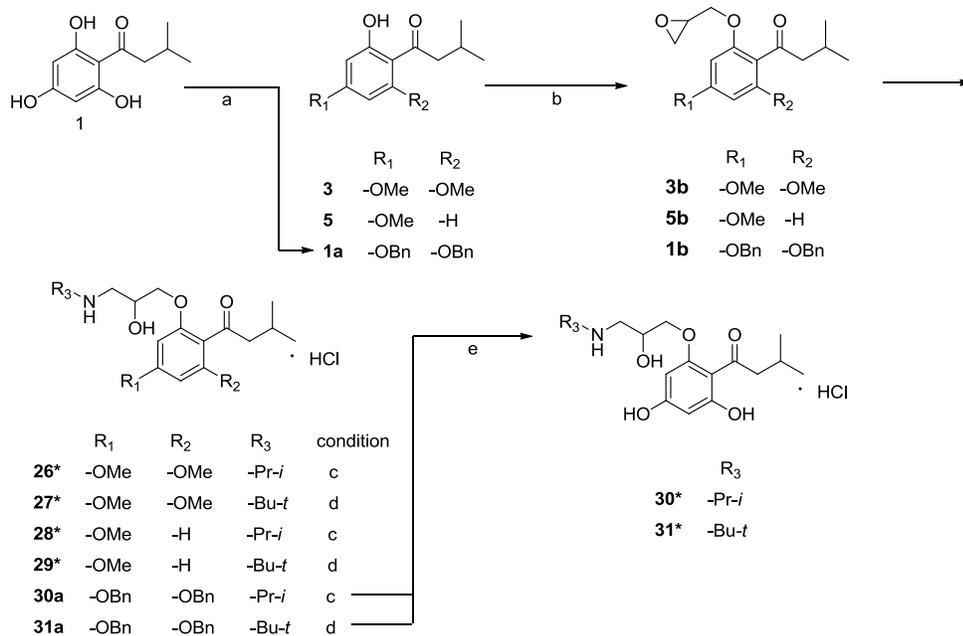
Scheme 5. Synthesis of compounds **15–17**.^a



^aReagents and conditions: (a) isopropylamine, NaBH₃CN, MeOH, HOAc, argon, rt, 3 h; (b) L-GlyOEt-HCl, NaBH₃CN, MeOH, argon, rt, 3 h; (c) L-AlaOMe-HCl, NaBH₃CN, MeOH, argon, rt, 3 h; (d) L-SerOMe-HCl, NaBH₃CN, MeOH, argon, rt, 3 h; (e) L-Asp(OMe)₂-HCl, NaBH₃CN, MeOH, argon, rt, 3 h; (f) L-Glu(OMe)₂-HCl, NaBH₃CN, MeOH, argon, rt, 3 h; (g) L-PheOMe-HCl, NaBH₃CN, MeOH, argon, rt, 3 h; (h) L-HisOMe-HCl, NaBH₃CN, MeOH, argon, rt, 3 h; (i) KOH, EtOH-H₂O (1:1), rt, 2 h, Amberlite 120 H⁺ Resin.

The synthesis of racemic aryloxypropanolamine hydrochloride salts **26–31** is outlined in Scheme 7. Condensations of 2-(chloromethyl)oxirane with **3**, **5**, and **1a**, the *O*-benzyl-protected product of **1**,²¹ which was achieved through treatment with NaH in anhydrous DMF, provided the epoxides **3b**, **5b** and **1b**, respectively. These subsequently reacted with various amines, resulting in the corresponding aryloxypropanolamines. The hydrochloride salts were obtained through treatment with ethereal HCl, followed by a deprotection step, if necessary.

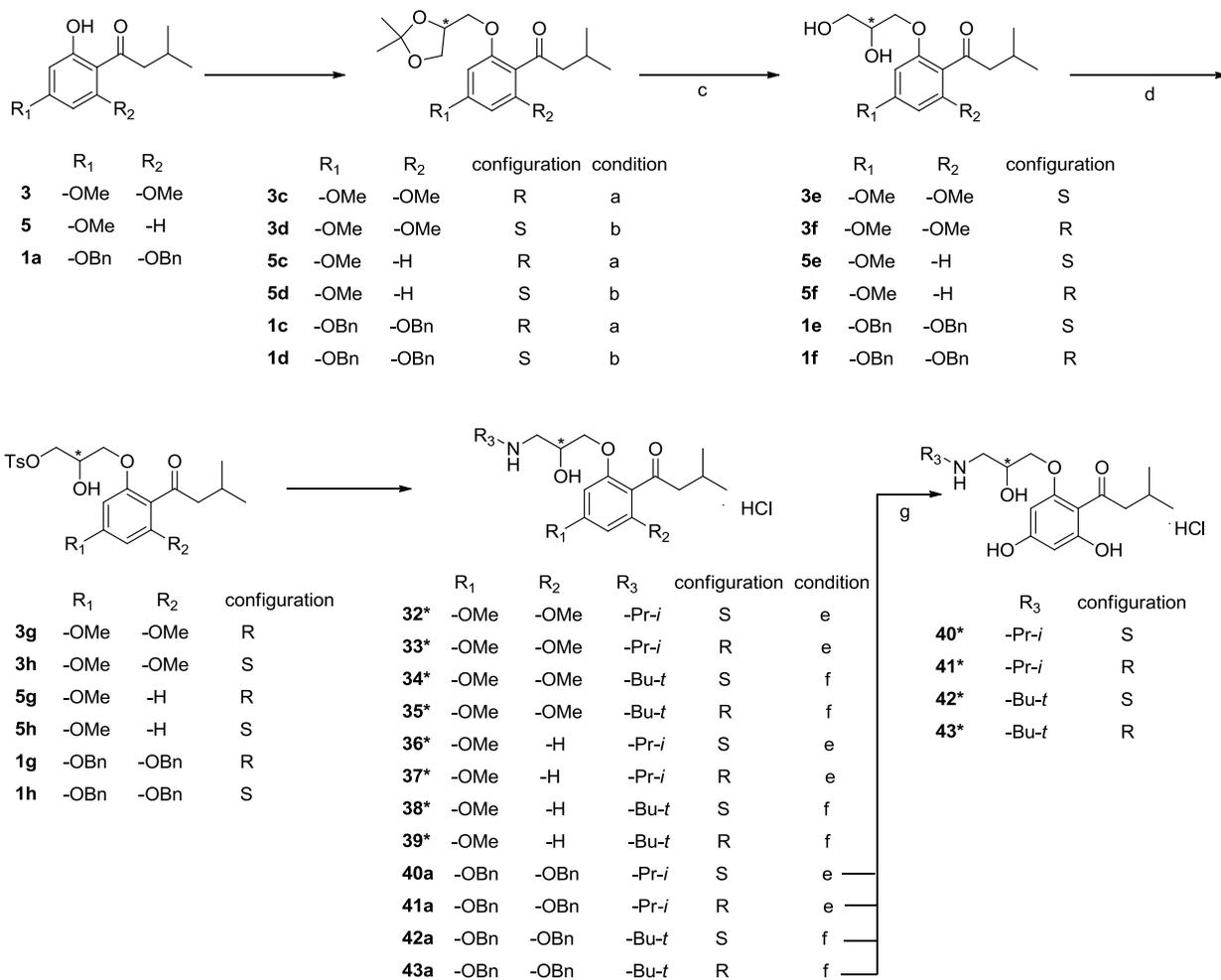
Scheme 7. Synthesis of compounds **26–31**.^a



^aReagents and conditions: (a) benzyl *p*-toluenesulfonate, K₂CO₃, acetone, reflux, 3 h; (b) 2-(chloromethyl)oxirane, NaH, DMF, N₂, 90 °C, 2 h; (c) (i) isopropylamine, 70 °C, 3 h; (ii) ethereal HCl, 10 min; (d) (i) *tert*-butylamine, 70 °C, 3 h; (ii) ethereal HCl, 10 min; (e) H₂, 3 atm, Pd-C, MeOH, HCl, rt, 12 h.

The synthesis of chiral aryloxypropanolamine hydrochloride salts **32–43** is shown in Scheme 8. Condensation of (*R*)- or (*S*)-4-(chloromethyl)-2,2-dimethyl-1,3-dioxolane with **3**, **5**, and **1a**, followed by hydrolysis of 1,3-dioxolane to diols, *p*-toluenesulfonylation of the primary alcohol-OH and amination with various amines resulted in the corresponding chiral aryloxypropanolamine, which had the following configuration.

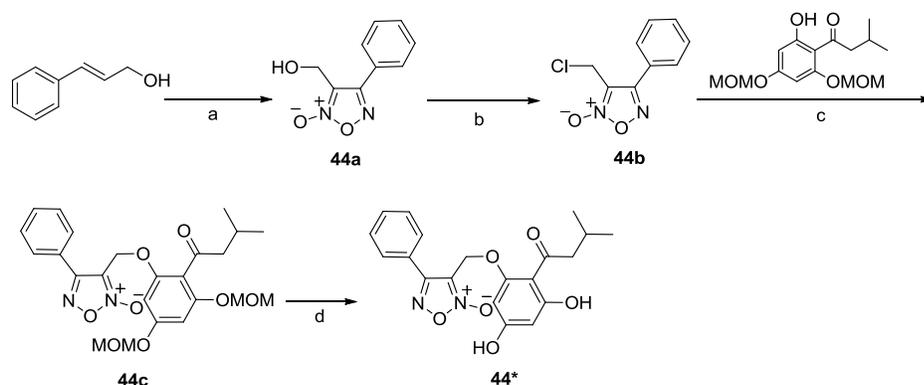
Scheme 8. Synthesis of compounds **32–43**.^a



^aReagents and conditions: (a) (*S*)-4-(chloromethyl)-2,2-dimethyl-1,3-dioxolane, NaH, DMF, N₂, 90 °C, 24 h; (b) (*R*)-4-(chloromethyl)-2,2-dimethyl-1,3-dioxolane, NaH, DMF, N₂, 90 °C, 24 h; (c) 4% H₂SO₄, THF, rt, 8 h; (d) TsCl, pyridine, CH₂Cl₂, rt, 48 h; (e) (i) isopropylamine, 70 °C, 3 h; (ii) ethereal HCl, 10 min; (f) (i) *tert*-butylamine, 70 °C, 3 h; (ii) ethereal HCl, 10 min; (g) H₂, 3 atm, Pd-C, MeOH, HCl, rt, 12 h.

Compound **44** was synthesized according to the sequence shown in Scheme 9. The reaction of cinnamyl alcohol and NaNO₂ in HOAc resulted in 4-hydroxymethyl-3-phenyl furoxan (**44a**),²² which was converted into 4-chloromethyl-3-phenyl furoxan (**44b**) through treatment with SOCl₂. Condensation of the resulting chloride with **2a** in the presence of K₂CO₃, followed by deprotection using 2N HCl, provided the desired product **44**.

Scheme 9. Synthesis of compound **44**.^a



^aReagents and conditions: (a) NaNO_2 , HOAc , H_2O , rt, 24 h; (b) SOCl_2 , pyridine, CH_2Cl_2 , rt, 3 h; (c) K_2CO_3 , KI, acetone, reflux, 5 h; (d) 2N HCl, reflux, 1 h.

All synthesized phloroglucinol derivatives were tested for anti-inflammatory activity using the same method as for the hit compound screen (Table 1). The activity profile exhibited varied results for each analogue, and their structure-activity relationships were discussed by structural series. Series 1: Compared with the hit compound **1**, the results of **2–6** showed that the numbers and positions of the phenolic hydroxyl groups and their methyl ethers greatly influenced the inhibitory activity against NO production in the LPS-induced BV2 cells. It seemed that reducing the number of hydroxyl groups to two (**5**) or one (**6**) might cause negative impact on the anti-inflammatory activity. While methylation of one (**2**) or all the three (**4**) rather than two (**3**) hydroxyl groups markedly increase the activity. Moreover, the results of **7** and **8** suggested that the length of the sidechain were also important for the activity, and valeryl would be more appropriate than isovaleryl and isobutyryl groups. Series 2 and 3: Introducing an amide (**9** and **10**) or an aminoketone (**11–17**) group seemed to make little sense to improve the activity. However, among the aminoketone analogues, **11–14** with substitution of methoxyl in place of hydroxyl groups and shorter length of the sidechain were slightly more effective. Series 4: Compounds **19–25**, which incorporated amino acid substituents, exhibited significantly different activities.

Weak inhibition of NO release was observed for compound **19**, which had a Gly substituent, whereas **21–23**, contained Ser, Asp, and Glu substituents, respectively, showed high inhibition levels, suggesting that sidechain substituents with a certain polarity and electrical properties might be necessary for activity. Furthermore, **24** and **25**, with Phe and His substituents, respectively, are mostly inactive, indicating that aromatic functional groups in the sidechain are not desirable. Series 5: Compounds **26–43** differed from the hit compound by an additional propanolamine unit at 2'-hydroxyl position, most of which showed moderate or marginal anti-neuroinflammatory activity except for compound **34** (IC₅₀ 11.2 μM). The absolute configuration of the chiral carbon in propanolamine unit had certain influence on the activity, but no clear regularity could be concluded. Series 6: Introduction a furoxan substituent by formation of ether resulted in significant improvement in the activity, which may provide an effective way to get more potent anti-neuroinflammatory product. But unfortunately, only one compound was synthesized for a variety of reasons.

In a word, the structure activity relationships of the phloroglucinol derivatives are very complicated. Both minimal and substantial modification may influence the anti-neuroinflammatory effect. Finally, compounds **2**, **21**, **23**, and **44**, which had IC₅₀ values of 5.8, 6.6, 8.4, and 8.5 μM, respectively, were selected as target compounds for further investigations. It is noteworthy that except for **2**, the other three proposed compounds are remarkably different from the hit compound in their structures, which may lead to a different mode of action.

Table 1. Inhibitory activities of compounds **1–44** against LPS-induced NO release in BV2 cells.

Compound	IC ₅₀ ^a (μM)	Compound	IC ₅₀ (μM)
1	50.7	24	—
2	5.8	25	—

1				
2				
3				
4	3	51.5	26	84.8
5	4	11.1	27	75.0
6				
7	5	113.4	28	—
8				
9	6	90.7	29	137.5
0				
1	7	11.2	30	74.0
2				
3	8	194.7	31	21.7
4				
5	9	92.6	32	138.4
6				
7	10	37.1	33	41.3
8				
9	11	24.9	34	11.2
0				
1	12	32.4	35	—
2				
3	13	95.3	36	25.6
4				
5	14	22.7	37	40.9
6				
7	15	182.2	38	53.8
8				
9	16	54.8	39	28.2
0				
1	17	— ^b	40	—
2				
3	18	—	41	—
4				
5	19	—	42	24.1
6				
7	20	39.1	43	37.3
8				
9	21	6.6	44	8.5
0				
1	22	14.4	Curcumin ^c	2.2
2				
3	23	8.4		

^a half-maximal inhibitory concentration. ^b inhibition rate was less than 50% at the maximal concentration of 0.01 M. ^c positive control.

***In vitro* efficacy of lead compounds in primary cultures.** The four promising compounds were further examined for anti-neuroinflammatory effects in primary mixed mesencephalic neuronal/glia cultures. The microglia were activated by LPS stimulation, as indicated by the over-expression of membrane Iba-1, a marker of microglia activation, and they showed increased production of IL-1 β and TNF- α . The neuroinflammatory response was greatly inhibited by

compounds **2**, **21**, **23**, and **44** at 10 μ M (Figure 2A–C). The LPS-induced neuroinflammation also induced dopaminergic neurotoxicity, as reflected by the reduced expression of tyrosine hydroxylase (TH), which was rescued by these compounds (Figure 2D). These data suggest that the four compounds potentially suppressed neuroinflammation and protected dopaminergic neurons.

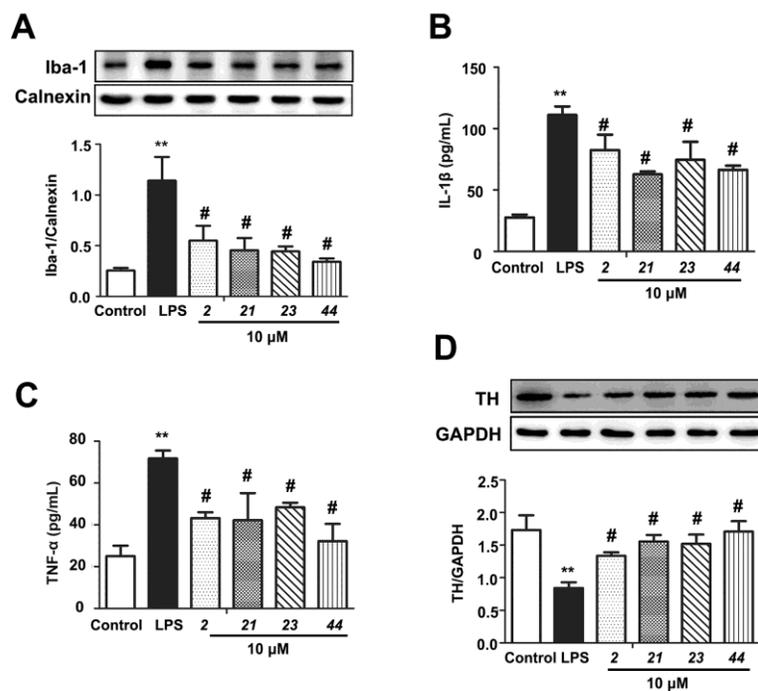


Figure 2. The effects of compounds **2**, **21**, **23**, and **44** on neuroinflammation and TH expression in primary mixed midbrain neuronal/glial cultures stimulated with LPS. Control group: primary mixed mesencephalic neuronal/glial cultures with no treatment; LPS group: primary mixed neuronal/glial cultures stimulated with LPS (100 ng/mL); Other groups: 10 μ M of **2**, **21**, **23** and **44** incubated with cells for 1 hour before LPS challenge, and then incubated for 5 h to detect cytokines, 24 h to measure Iba-1 expression and 7 days to measure TH expression. (A) Effects of the indicated compounds on Iba-1 expression in microglia (n = 4). A representative image is shown. Inhibitory effects of the indicated compounds on (B) IL-1 β and (C) TNF- α production in medium measured by ELISA assay (n = 6). (D) Effects of the

indicated compounds on TH expression measured by Western blot (n = 4). A representative immunoblot image is shown. Data are the mean \pm standard deviation (SD), *P < 0.05 and **P < 0.01 *versus* control cells; #P < 0.05 and ##P < 0.01 *versus* LPS-treated cells.

Pharmacokinetic properties and safety profiles. The *in vivo* preliminary pharmacokinetic properties of these four lead compounds were investigated in mice following the intragastric administration of each compound at a dose of 50 mg/kg (Table 2). All compounds were detectable in the plasma 5 min after administration. However, only **2** and **21** efficiently passed through the blood-brain barrier, whereas the concentrations of **23** and **44** in the brain were low (just above the limit of detection) and undetected, respectively. Therefore, compounds **2** and **21** were selected for further safety studies.

The results of *in vitro* toxicity study indicated that neither of the two compounds had selectivity for hERG. In the *in vivo* toxicity study, both showed satisfactory maximum tolerated doses after being orally administered to mice, with median lethal dose (LD₅₀) values of 2000 and >5000 mg/kg for compounds **2** and **21**, respectively. Nevertheless, the 14-day toxicity study showed that compound **2** exhibited hepatotoxicity and nephrotoxicity at a higher dose (1000 mg/kg), whereas compound **21** had no detectable adverse effects. Considering the long-term administration requirements for PD medications, compound **21** was chosen instead of compound **2** for further *in vivo* efficacy studies.

Table 2. Pharmacokinetic properties of the lead compounds.

Compound	Blood			Brain		
	AUC _{0-∞} (μg·[L·h]) ^a	t _{1/2} (h) ^b	C _{max} (μg/L) ^c	AUC _{0-∞} (μg·[L·h])	t _{1/2} (h)	C _{max} (μg/L)
2	610.8 \pm 42.2 ^d	6.4 \pm 0.7	1361.6 \pm 561.1	1981.2 \pm 346.7	3.4 \pm 0.6	4668.0 \pm 1624.4
21	5733.0 \pm	1.1 \pm 0.3	2590.0 \pm	497.1 \pm	1.5 \pm 0.4	192.0 \pm

	635.7		420.2	72.2		27.2
23	3195.1 ± 891.1	1.1 ±0.2	1645.0 ± 233.4	≈ LOD ^e	–	≈ LOD
44	37.6 ±18.0	1.2 ±0.7	26.5 ±8.4	ND	–	ND

^aThe area under the curve from 0 h to infinity. ^b Half-life. ^c Maximum concentration. ^dThe values are the mean ±SD (n = 6). ^e Limit of detection

***In vivo* efficacy of compound 21 in PD mouse models.** Compound **21** was successively evaluated in 1-methyl-4-phenyl-1,2,3,6-tetrahydropyridine (MPTP)- and MPTP/probenecid (prob)-induced sub-acute and chronic PD mouse models, respectively, and in α -synuclein (syn) transgenic mice. Obvious dopaminergic neuron dysfunction and neuroinflammatory responses were observed in the three different PD models. Compound **21** greatly improved the motor behavior dysfunction of the mice by increasing their staying time on the rod in the rotarod tests and their performance scores in the pole tests. Furthermore, it increased the dopamine levels in the striatum, reversed the decline in TH-positive neurons in the substantia nigra, and decreased the productions of proinflammatory molecules, such as IL-1 β and TNF- α , at doses of 10 and 20 mg/kg after short- (MPTP, 10-day) or long-term (MPTP/prob, 7-week and α -syn transgenic mice, 10-week) administration (Figures 3–5). The *in vivo* study demonstrated the potent neuroprotective effects of compound **21** on dopaminergic neurons, which were closely associated with its suppression of neuroinflammation in the brain.

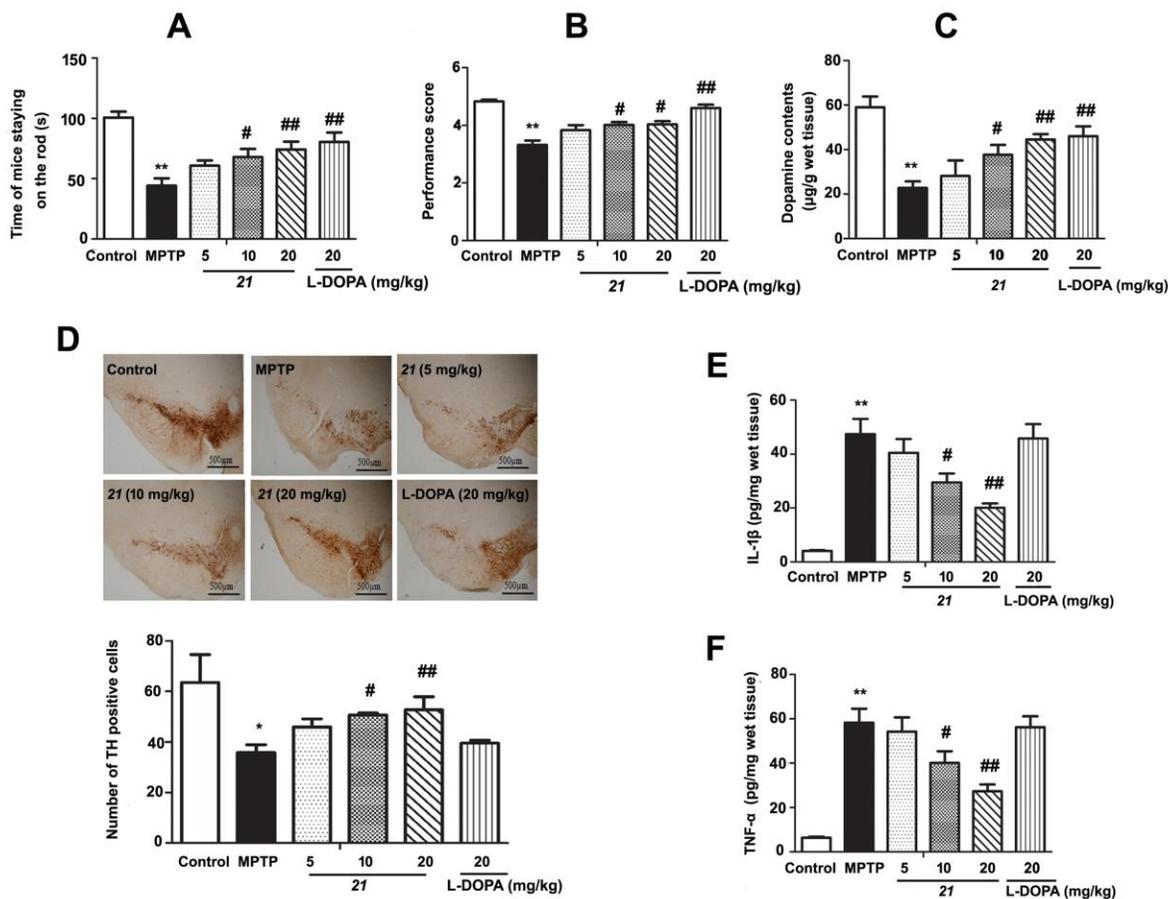


Figure 3. The effect of compound **21** on the MPTP-induced sub-acute PD mouse model. Control group: mice were treated with 0.5% sodium carboxymethylcellulose (CMC-Na); MPTP group: mice were injected with MPTP hydrochloride (30 mg/kg, i.p.) for 5 consecutive days; Other groups: mice were administered different doses of compound **21** (5, 10, 15 mg/kg) and L-DOPA (20 mg/kg) 30 min before each MPTP injection, and continued administered for the next 7 days. Compound **21** improved motor behavior of mice, as measured by (A) rotarod test and (B) pole test (n = 15). (C) The effect of compound **21** on dopamine level (n = 8). (D) The effect of compound **21** on the TH-positive staining neurons. Representative sections of substantia nigra from 5 mice are shown. Inhibitory effect of compound **21** on (E) IL-1 β and (F) TNF- α production in the mouse midbrain measured by ELISA assay on the 12th day after the

administration of compound **21** (n = 6). Data are the mean \pm SD; *P < 0.05 and **P < 0.01 versus control mice; #P < 0.05 and ##P < 0.01 versus MPTP/prob injected mice.

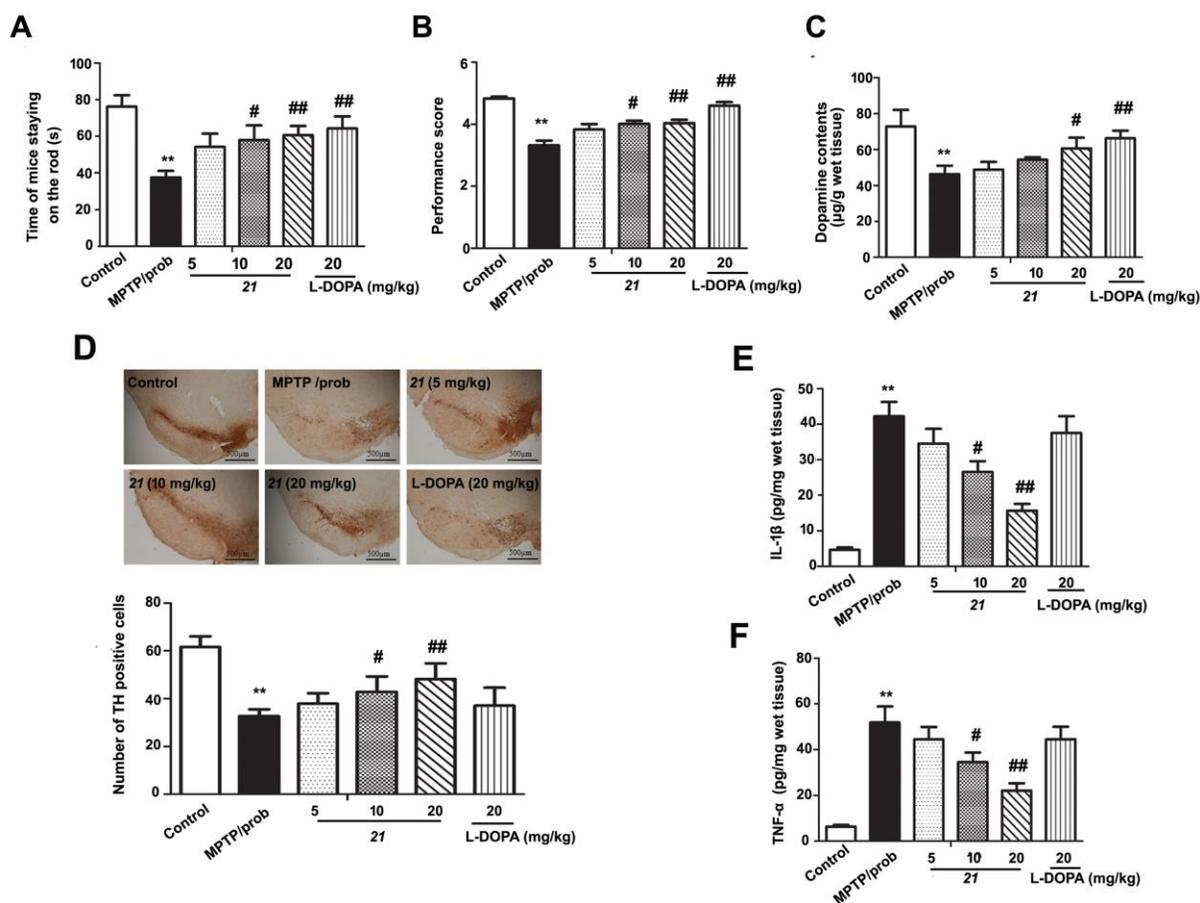


Figure 4. The effect of compound **21** on the MPTP/prob-induced chronic PD mouse model.

Control group: mice were treated with 0.5% CMC-Na; MPTP/prob group: mice were administered 10 doses of MPTP hydrochloride (25 mg/kg, subcutaneously, s.c.) in combination with probenecid (250 mg/kg, i.p.) on a 5-week schedule; Other groups: mice showing behavioural dysfunction after the last MPTP/prob injection were administered different doses of compound **21** (5, 10, 15 mg/kg) and L-DOPA (20 mg/kg) once a day for 7 weeks. Compound **21** improved motor behavior of mice, as measured by (A) rotarod test and (B) pole test (n = 15). (C)

The effect of compound **21** on dopamine level ($n = 8$). **(D)** The effect of compound **21** on the TH-positive staining neurons. Representative sections of substantia nigra from 5 mice are shown. Inhibitory effect of compound **21** on **(E)** IL-1 β and **(F)** TNF- α production in the mouse midbrain measured by ELISA assay ($n = 6$). Data are the mean \pm SD; * $P < 0.05$ and ** $P < 0.01$ versus control mice; # $P < 0.05$ and ## $P < 0.01$ versus MPTP/prob-treated mice.

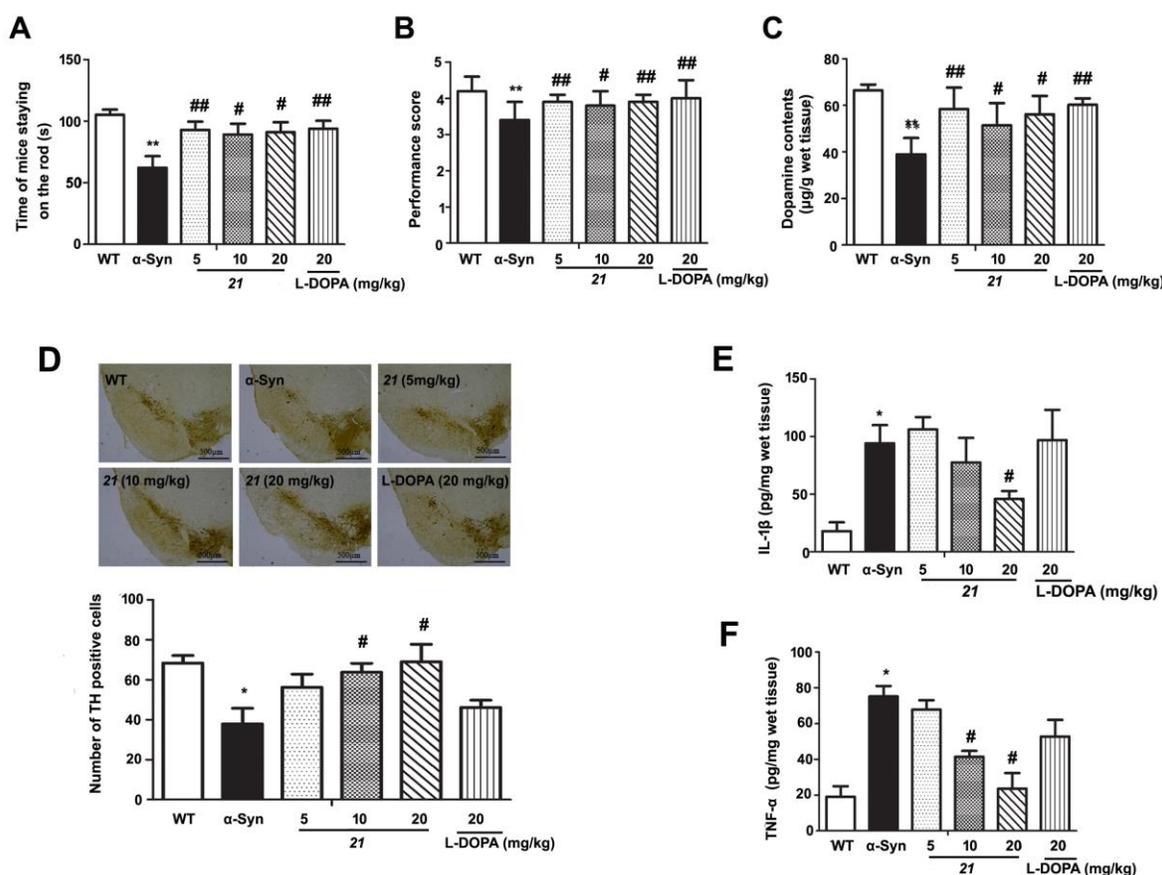


Figure 5. The effect of compound **21** on α -syn transgenic mice. WT group: mice were treated with 0.5% CMC-Na; α -Syn group: α -Syn (A53T) transgenic mice; Other groups: mice were administered different doses of compound **21** (5, 10, 15 mg/kg) and L-DOPA (20 mg/kg) once a day for 12 weeks. Compound **21** improved motor behavior of mice, as measured by **(A)** rotarod test and **(B)** pole test ($n = 15$). **(C)** The effect of compound **21** on dopamine level ($n = 8$).

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2
3 associated protein kinase 1 (ROCK1), which is frequently associated with functionally inactive
4 PTEN.^{26,27} Among these kinases, the expression levels of GSK3 β , ARHGAP21, ROCK1 and Src
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6 were affected by compound **21** in the proteomic quantization. The four proteins were then validated,
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8 and Src-tyrosine kinase was the most obviously altered by compound **21** (Supporting Information,
9
10 Figures S1 and S2). Src-tyrosine kinase is a major modulator in the proximal intracellular signaling
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12 pathways in innate cells and activates monocytes and macrophages.^{28,29} Inhibition of Src reportedly
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14 suppresses neuroinflammation and protects mice from ischemia-induced brain damage.³⁰ Our
15
16 present results revealed that in addition to PTEN and Akt phosphorylation, Src activation was also
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18 inhibited by compound **21** (Figures 6A–C). Src primarily phosphorylates PTEN at Tyr240,
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20 inactivating it and phosphorylating Akt.³¹ We knocked down the Src gene in primary microglia and
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22 midbrain mixed neuronal/glial cultures and stimulated the cells with LPS, 1-methyl-4-
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24 phenylpyridinium ion (MPP⁺), or α -synuclein. We found that the phosphorylation of PTEN and Akt
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26 decreased (Figure 6D), the inflammatory response was reduced, and the injury of dopaminergic
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28 neurons was alleviated (Figure 6E). Most importantly, we found that the suppression of
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30 neuroinflammation (Figures 6E and F) and the neuroprotective activity of compound **21** were
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32 mostly abrogated when Src was silenced (Figures 6G–I). The above data prove that Src tyrosine
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34 kinase was the main target of compound **21** in its neuroinflammation regulation and associated
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36 neuroprotection.
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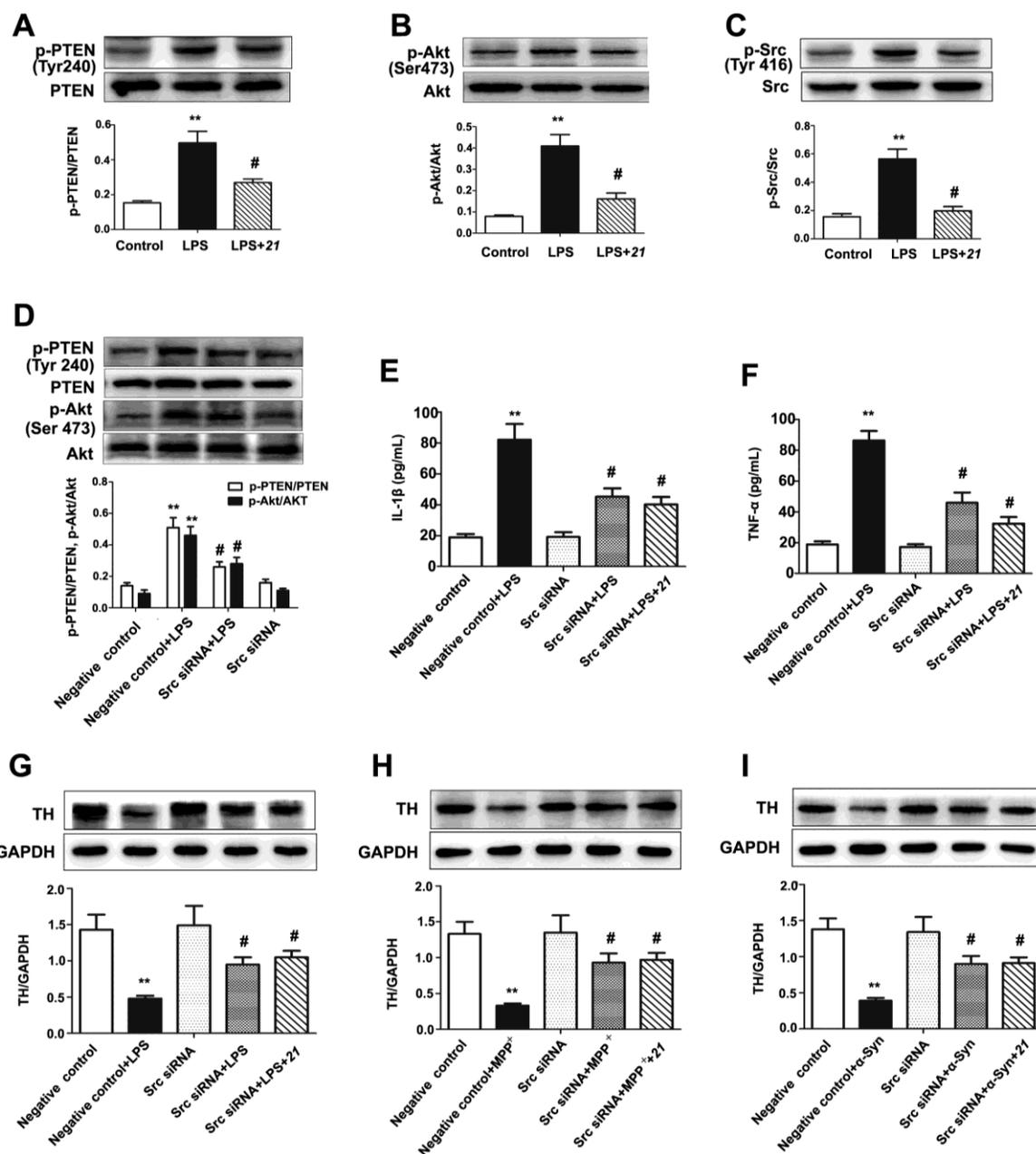


Figure 6. Compound **21** suppressed neuroinflammation by inhibiting Src signaling.

Control group: primary microglia with no treatment; LPS group: primary microglia stimulated with LPS (100 ng/mL); LPS + **21** group: the microglia was incubated with compound **21** (10 μ M) for 1 hour followed by LPS challenge; Negative control group: primary microglia or mixed mesencephalic neuronal/glial cultures were transfected with empty vector;

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3 was generally $\geq 95\%$, if not denoted. Preparative HPLC was performed on a Shimadzu LC-6AD
4 instrument with a SPD-20A detector using a YMC-Pack ODS-A column (250 \times 50 mm, 5 μ m).
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8 *1-(2,4-Dihydroxy-6-methoxyphenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one (2)*. To a stirred suspension of **1**
9 (2.10 g, 10.0 mmol) in anhydrous CH_2Cl_2 (50 mL) was added DIPEA (2.71 g, 21.0 mmol) and
10 the reaction mixture was stirred for 15 min at 0 $^\circ\text{C}$, and then $\text{CH}_3\text{OCH}_2\text{Cl}$ (2.00 g, 25.0 mmol) in
11 CH_2Cl_2 (20 mL) was added dropwise. The mixture was stirred for 1 h at room temperature and
12 subsequently poured into cold water (20 mL), and extracted with chloroform (3 \times 50 mL). The
13 combined organic layers were dried over Na_2SO_4 and concentrated in vacuo. The residue
14 obtained on column purification (silica, petroleum ether/EtOAc, 15:1 as eluent) afforded **2a** as a
15 colorless oil (1.40 g, 47%).
16
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18 To a solution of **2a** (0.30 g, 1.0 mmol) in anhydrous acetone (20 mL) was added anhydrous
19 K_2CO_3 (0.27 g, 2.0 mmol), and the reaction mixture was refluxed for 15 min, followed by
20 addition of Me_2SO_4 (100 μL , 2.0 mmol). After refluxing for an additional 5 h, the solvent was
21 removed in vacuo. Water (20 mL) was then added to the residue, and the aqueous layer was
22 extracted with EtOAc (3 \times 25 mL). The combined organic layers were dried over Na_2SO_4 and
23 evaporated in vacuo. The residue obtained on column purification (silica, petroleum ether/EtOAc,
24 30:1 as eluent) afforded **2b** (0.25 g, 60%) as a yellow oil.
25
26

27 To a solution of **2b** (0.25g, 0.8 mmol) in MeOH (10 mL) was added 2N HCl (2 mL), and the
28 reaction mixture was refluxed for 1 h. Then the solvent was removed in vacuo, and the resulting
29 residue was dissolved in EtOAc (50 mL) and washed with water. The organic layers were dried
30 over Na_2SO_4 and concentrated in vacuo. The residue obtained on column purification (silica,
31 petroleum ether/EtOAc, 5:1 as eluent) afforded **2** as a white solid (0.18 g, 83%, mp 122–123 $^\circ\text{C}$).
32 ^1H NMR (500 MHz, $\text{DMSO}-d_6$) δ 13.59 (br s, OH-2', OH-4'), 5.94 (1H, s, H-5'), 5.85 (1H, s, H-
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3'), 3.80 (3H, s, OCH₃), 2.77 (2H, d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, H-2), 2.07 (1H, m, H-3), 0.89 (6H, d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, CH₃-4, CH₃-5); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 204.0, 165.7, 164.4, 162.4, 104.2, 95.3, 90.9, 55.3, 51.9, 24.5, 22.2 (2C); HRESIMS *m/z* = 225.1126 [M + H]⁺ (calcd for C₁₂H₁₇O₄, 225.1121).

General Procedure for Acylation by Friedel–Crafts Reaction for Compounds 3–8 (GP1). The phenolic precursor (10.0 mmol) was dissolved in BF₃–Et₂O (20 mL), and an amount of 1 equiv of acyl chloride was added, and the reaction mixture was stirred at 80 °C for 2 h. After cooling, the reaction mixture was poured into ice-cooled 5% KOAc solution (50 mL), and extracted with EtOAc (3 × 30 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with saturated NaHCO₃ solution and dried over Na₂SO₄ and concentrated in vacuo. The resulting product was obtained by column chromatography.

1-(2-Hydroxy-4,6-dimethoxyphenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one (3). This compound was prepared from 3,5-dimethoxyphenol and isovaleryl chloride by means of GP1 as a white solid (1.70 g, 71%, mp 54–55 °C). Eluent for column chromatography: petroleum ether/EtOAc (30:1); ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 13.59 (1H, s, OH-2'), 6.09 (1H, s, H-5'), 6.07 (1H, s, H-3'), 3.84 (3H, s, OCH₃-4'), 3.79 (3H, s, OCH₃-6'), 2.78 (2H, d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, H-2), 2.08 (1H, m, H-3), 0.91 (6H, d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, CH₃-4, CH₃-5); ESIMS *m/z* = 237 [M + H]⁺.

1-(2,4,6-Trimethoxyphenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one (4). This compound was prepared from 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene and isovaleryl chloride by means of GP1 as a colorless oil (1.23 g, 49%). Eluent for column chromatography: petroleum ether/EtOAc (30:1); ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 6.24 (2H, s, H-3', H-5'), 3.79 (3H, s, OCH₃-4'), 3.72 (6H, s, OCH₃-2', OCH₃-6'), 2.48 (2H, d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, H-2), 2.03 (1H, m, H-3), 0.87 (6H, d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, CH₃-4, CH₃-5); ESIMS *m/z* = 275 [M + Na]⁺.

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3 95–97 °C). ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 6.23 (2H, s, H-3', H-5'), 3.78 (3H, s, OCH₃-4'),
4
5 3.71 (6H, s, OCH₃-2', OCH₃-6'), 3.35 (2H, s, H-2), 2.43 (4H, br s, H-2'', H-6''), 2.30 (4H, br s,
6
7 H-3'', H-5''), 2.26 (2H, q, *J* = 7.0 Hz, H-1'''), 0.95 (3H, t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, H-2'''); ESIMS *m/z* = 323
8
9 [M + H]⁺.
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2
3 *General Procedure for Introduction of Aminoketone Unit for Compounds 15–17 (GP4)*. To a
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5 suspension of 4-chlorobutanenitrile (1.03 g, 10.0 mmol), anhydrous K₂CO₃ (1.40 g, 25.0 mmol)
6
7 in anhydrous acetonitrile (20 mL) was added an amount of 1 equiv of amines (10.0 mmol), and
8
9 the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 20 h, and then concentrated in vacuo. To the
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1 residue was added water (25 mL) and extracted with EtOAc (3 × 15 mL). The combined organic
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3 layers were dried over Na₂SO₄ and concentrated in vacuo to give a clear oil.
4
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7 To a solution of the crude oil in nitrobenzene (20 mL) was added phloroglucinol (1.26 g, 10.0
8
9 mmol), and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature with HCl gas bubbled in for 12
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1 h. Then water (15 mL) was added to the mixture until the precipitate was dissolved. The organic
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3 layer was decanted and washed with water (20 mL), and the washing added to the aqueous layer,
4
5 which was refluxed for 1 h subsequently. The mixture was cooled to 0 °C and a precipitate
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7 appeared. The precipitate was filtered off and recrystallized in EtOH/H₂O to afford the resulting
8
9 product.
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3 *4-(Piperidin-1-yl)-1-(2,4,6-trihydroxyphenyl)butan-1-one hydrochlorate (15)*. This compound
4
5 was prepared from piperidine by means of GP4 as a white solid (0.67 g, 21%, mp 204–205 °C).
6
7 Solvent for recrystallization: EtOH/H₂O (5:1); ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 12.23 (2H, s,
8
9 OH-2', OH-6'), 10.45 (1H, s, OH-4'), 5.81 (2H, s, H-3', H-5'), 3.43 (2H, br d, *J* = 11.5 Hz, H-2''a,
0
1 H-6''a), 3.08 (2H, t, *J* = 6.5 Hz, H-2), 3.05 (2H, overlap, H-4), 2.86 (2H, m, H-2''b, H-6''b), 1.94
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3 (2H, m, H-3), 1.79 (2H, br d, *J* = 14.0 Hz, H-3''a, H-5''a), 1.65 (2H, overlap, H-3''b, H-5''b), 1.60
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159.7, 159.7, 99.5, 90.9, 90.9, 60.9, 59.3, 56.0, 56.0, 55.6, 38.7; HRESIMS $m/z = 284.1136$ [M – H][–] (calcd for C₁₃H₁₈NO₆, 284.1140).

(*S*)-2-((2,4,6-Trimethoxybenzyl)amino)succinic acid (**22**). This compound was prepared from L-aspartic acid dimethyl ester hydrochloride by means of GP5 as a white solid (138 mg, 44%, mp 138–139 °C). Eluent for column chromatography: petroleum ether/EtOAc (5:1); Conditions for prepared HPLC: CH₃CN/H₂O/TFA (10:90:0.03, 5 mL/min, $t_R = 41$ min); $[\alpha]_D^{20} = -7.3^\circ$ ($c = 0.333$, CH₃OH); ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 6.28 (2H, s, H-3', H-5'), 4.17 (1H, d, $J = 13.0$ Hz, H-1a), 4.13 (1H, d, $J = 13.0$ Hz, H-1b), 3.99 (1H, t, $J = 6.0$ Hz, H-3), 3.80 (3H, s, OCH₃-4'), 3.79 (6H, s, OCH₃-2', OCH₃-6'), 2.84 (2H, br s, H-5); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 171.1, 169.2, 162.5, 159.6, 159.6, 99.2, 90.8, 90.8, 56.0, 56.0, 55.5, 54.7, 39.0, 34.0; HRESIMS $m/z = 312.1092$ [M – H][–] (calcd for C₁₄H₁₈NO₇, 312.1089).

(*S*)-2-((2,4,6-Trimethoxybenzyl)amino)pentanedioic acid (**23**). This compound was prepared from L-glutamic acid dimethyl esters hydrochloride by means of GP5 as a white solid (155 mg, 48%, mp 121–123 °C). Eluent for column chromatography: petroleum ether/EtOAc (5:1); Conditions for prepared HPLC: CH₃CN/H₂O/TFA (13:87:0.03, 5 mL/min, $t_R = 29$ min); $[\alpha]_D^{20} = +10.8^\circ$ ($c = 0.333$, CH₃OH), ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 6.26 (2H, s, H-3', H-5'), 4.03 (1H, d, $J = 13.0$ Hz, H-1a), 3.97 (1H, d, $J = 13.0$ Hz, H-1b), 3.79 (6H, s, OCH₃-2', OCH₃-6'), 3.78 (3H, s, OCH₃-4'), 3.44 (1H, t, $J = 6.5$ Hz, H-3), 2.41 (1H, m, H-5a), 2.32 (1H, m, H-5b), 2.01 (1H, m, H-6a), 1.94 (1H, m, H-6b); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 173.7, 169.9, 162.3, 159.6, 159.6, 99.9, 90.7, 90.7, 58.8, 55.9, 55.9, 55.5, 38.5, 30.3, 24.9; HRESIMS $m/z = 326.1247$ [M – H][–] (calcd for C₁₅H₂₀NO₇, 326.1245).

(*S*)-3-Phenyl-2-((2,4,6-trimethoxybenzyl)amino)propanoic acid (**24**). This compound was prepared from L-phenylalanine methyl ester hydrochloride by means of GP5 as a white solid

(115 mg, 33%, mp 102 °C). Eluent for column chromatography: petroleum ether/EtOAc (10:1); Conditions for prepared HPLC: CH₃CN/H₂O/TFA (30:70:0.03, 5 mL/min, t_R = 47 min); [α]_D²⁰ = +6.5° (c = 0.333, CH₃OH), ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 7.32 (2H, t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, H-3'', H-5''), 7.26 (1H, t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, H-4''), 7.22 (2H, d, *J* = 7.5 Hz, H-2'', H-6''), 6.27 (2H, s, H-3', H-5'), 4.07 (2H, br s, H-1), 3.91 (1H, br s, H-3), 3.80 (3H, s, OCH₃-4'), 3.78 (6H, s, OCH₃-2', OCH₃-6'), 3.32 (1H, dd, *J* = 13.5, 4.5 Hz, H-5a), 3.09 (1H, dd, *J* = 13.5, 8.0 Hz, H-5b); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 169.2, 162.4, 159.6, 159.6, 134.8, 129.3, 129.3, 128.4, 128.4, 127.1, 98.8, 90.6, 90.6, 59.3, 55.8, 55.8, 55.4, 38.3, 34.9; HRESIMS *m/z* = 346.1653 [M + H]⁺ (calcd for C₁₉H₂₄NO₅, 346.1649).

(*S*)-3-(1*H*-Imidazol-5-yl)-2-((2,4,6-trimethoxybenzyl)amino)propanoic acid (**25**). This compound was prepared from L-histidine methyl ester hydrochloride by means of GP5 as a white solid (70 mg, 21%, mp 110–112 °C). Eluent for column chromatography: petroleum ether/EtOAc (5:1); Conditions for prepared HPLC: CH₃CN/H₂O/TFA (10:90:0.03, 5 mL/min, t_R = 54 min); [α]_D²⁰ = +7.5° (c = 0.333, CH₃OH), ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 8.95 (1H, s, H-3''), 7.47 (1H, s, H-5''), 6.26 (2H, s, H-3', H-5'), 4.13 (1H, d, *J* = 13.5 Hz, H-1a), 4.07 (1H, d, *J* = 13.5 Hz, H-1b), 4.07 (1H, br s, H-3), 3.79 (3H, s, OCH₃-4'), 3.77 (6H, s, OCH₃-2', OCH₃-6'), 3.34 (1H, dd, *J* = 15.5, 6.0 Hz, H-5a), 3.24 (1H, dd, *J* = 15.5, 8.0 Hz, H-5b); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 168.9, 162.6, 159.8, 159.8, 134.5, 127.6, 117.8, 99.1, 90.8, 90.8, 57.4, 55.9, 55.9, 55.6, 38.5, 24.8; HRESIMS *m/z* = 336.1556 [M + H]⁺ (calcd for C₁₆H₂₂N₃O₅, 335.1554).

General Procedure for Introduction of Propranolamine Unit for Compounds 26–31 (GP6). To a solution of the phenolic precursor (**3**, **5**, or **1a**, 5.0 mmol) in anhydrous DMF (60 mL) was added NaH (0.12 g, 5.0 mmol), and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 20 min under an argon atmosphere, followed by the addition of (±)2-(chloromethyl)oxirane (2.31 g,

25.0 mmol), and then stirred at 90 °C for 2 h. After cooling, the mixture was poured into ice-cooled water (100 mL), and extracted with EtOAc (3 × 30 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with water, and dried over Na₂SO₄, and concentrated in vacuo. The residue obtained on column purification using petroleum ether/EtOAc (30:1~10:1) as eluent afforded the corresponding epoxide.

The epoxide (1.0 mmol) was dissolved in amine (3 mL), and the solution was allowed to stand at 80 °C for 3 h in a sealed tube, and then evaporated in vacuo. To a stirred solution of the residue in absolute diethyl ether (15 mL) was added dropwise a saturated HCl-diethyl ether solution (1 mL), and a precipitate appeared, which was filtered off to afford the resulting hydrochlorate.

1-(2-(2-Hydroxy-3-(isopropylamino)propoxy)-4,6-dimethoxyphenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one hydrochlorate (26). This compound was prepared using **3** and isopropylamine by means of GP6 as a white solid (110 mg, 19%, mp 128–130 °C). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 6.27 (1H, br s, H-5'), 6.26 (1H, d, *J* = 1.5 Hz, H-3'), 4.14 (1H, m, H-2''), 4.01 (1H, dd, *J* = 10.4, 4.8 Hz, H-1''a), 3.96 (1H, dd, *J* = 10.4, 5.6 Hz, H-1''b), 3.79 (3H, s, OCH₃), 3.72 (3H, s, OCH₃), 3.29 (1H, m, H-5''), 3.02 (1H, m, H-3''a), 2.88 (1H, m, H-3''b), 2.54 (2H, br d, *J* = 5.6 Hz, H-2), 2.02 (1H, m, H-3), 1.25 (3H, d, *J* = 6.0 Hz, CH₃-6''), 1.17 (3H, d, *J* = 6.0 Hz, CH₃-7''), 0.88 (6H, d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, CH₃-4, CH₃-5); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 202.7, 161.8, 157.7, 156.5, 113.4, 91.9, 91.5, 70.4, 65.0, 55.9, 55.6, 53.5, 49.9, 46.7, 24.3, 22.6, 22.6, 18.6, 18.2; HRESIMS *m/z* = 354.2277 [M + H]⁺ (calcd for C₁₉H₃₂NO₅, 354.2275).

1-(2-(2-Hydroxy-3-(tert-butylamino)propoxy)-4,6-dimethoxyphenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one hydrochlorate (27). This compound was prepared using **3** and tertbutylamine by means of GP6 as a white solid (200 mg, 34%, mp 114–115 °C). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 6.27 (1H, br s, H-5'), 6.25 (1H, br s, H-3'), 4.14 (1H, m, H-2''), 4.04 (1H, dd, *J* = 10.4, 4.8 Hz, H-1''a), 3.98 (1H,

25.0, 25.0, 25.0, 24.6, 22.6, 22.6; HRESIMS $m/z = 338.2331$ $[M + H]^+$ (calcd for $C_{19}H_{32}NO_4$, 338.2326).

1-(2,4-Dihydroxy-6-(2-hydroxy-3-(isopropylamino)propoxy)phenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one hydrochlorate (30). To a solution of **1** (3.00 g, 14.3 mmol) in acetone (200 mL) were added anhydrous K_2CO_3 (25.00 g, 181.0 mmol) and benzyl *p*-toluenesulphonate (7.86 g, 30.0 mmol), which was synthesized according to the method by Dewick, and the reaction mixture was refluxed for 3 h. After cooling, the solvent was removed in vacuo. The residue was dissolved in water (150 mL) and extracted with EtOAc (3 × 50 mL). The combined organic layers were dried over Na_2SO_4 and concentrated in vacuo. The residue obtained on column purification (silica, petroleum ether/EtOAc, 30:1 as eluent) afforded **1a** as a white solid (2.98 g, 53%).

30a was prepared from **1a** and isopropylamine by means of GP6 as a white solid (400 mg, 60%).

To a solution of **30a** (170 mg, 0.3 mmol) in MeOH (30 mL) was added a catalytic amount of Pd-C, and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 12 h under H_2 at 3 atm. After filtration, the filtrate was concentrated in vacuo, and the residue obtained on prepared HPLC purification afforded **30** as a white solid (50 mg, 49%, mp 186–187 °C). Conditions for prepared HPLC: $CH_3CN/H_2O/TFA$ (22:78:0.03, 5 mL/min, $t_R = 35$ min); 1H NMR (500 MHz, $DMSO-d_6$) δ 5.90 (1H, s, H-3'), 5.89 (1H, s, H-5'), 4.00 (1H, dd, $J = 8.0, 3.5$ Hz, H-1''a), 3.92 (1H, overlap, H-1''b), 3.88 (1H, m, H-2''), 2.93 (1H, dd, $J = 16.0, 7.0$ Hz, H-3''a), 2.84 (1H, dd, $J = 16.0, 6.5$ Hz, H-3''b), 2.77 (1H, m, H-5''), 2.72 (1H, dd, $J = 13.5, 6.5$ Hz, H-2a), 2.60 (1H, dd, $J = 13.5, 7.0$ Hz, H-2b), 2.13 (1H, m, H-3), 1.00 (3H, d, $J = 6.0$ Hz, CH_3-6''), 0.99 (3H, d, $J = 6.0$ Hz, CH_3-7''), 0.90 (3H, d, $J = 6.5$ Hz, CH_3-4), 0.88 (3H, d, $J = 6.5$ Hz, CH_3-5); ^{13}C NMR (125 MHz,

DMSO-*d*₆) δ 204.7, 166.2, 165.5, 162.3, 104.7, 95.9, 92.2, 71.6, 68.2, 52.3, 49.9, 48.5, 24.5, 22.7, 22.7, 22.6, 22.6; HRESIMS $m/z = 326.1968$ [M + H]⁺ (calcd for C₁₇H₂₈NO₅, 326.1962).

1-(2,4-Dihydroxy-6-(2-hydroxy-3-(tert-butylamino)propoxy)phenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one hydrochlorate (31). The intermediate **31a** was prepared from **1a** and tertbutylamine by means of GP6 as a white solid (450 mg, 66%). And the end product **31** was obtained from **31a** (150 mg, 0.3 mmol) as a white solid (59 mg, 64%, mp 205–206 °C) by catalytic hydrogenation as described in synthesis of **30**. Conditions for prepared HPLC: CH₃CN/H₂O/TFA (22:78:0.03, 5 mL/min, $t_R = 39$ min); ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 5.90 (1H, br s, H-3'), 5.81 (1H, br s, H-5'), 4.01 (1H, dd, $J = 9.5, 4.0$ Hz, H-1''a), 3.89 (1H, overlap, H-1''b), 3.84 (1H, m, H-2''), 2.94 (1H, dd, $J = 16.0, 7.0$ Hz, H-3''a), 2.85 (1H, dd, $J = 16.0, 6.5$ Hz, H-3''b), 2.64 (1H, dd, $J = 12.0, 5.0$ Hz, H-2a), 2.62 (1H, dd, $J = 12.0, 6.0$ Hz, H-2b), 2.13 (1H, m, H-3), 1.03 (9H, s, CH₃-6'', CH₃-7'', CH₃-8''), 0.90 (3H, d, $J = 7.0$ Hz, CH₃-4), 0.89 (3H, d, $J = 7.0$ Hz, CH₃-5); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 204.4, 166.3, 166.2, 162.3, 104.6, 95.9, 92.3, 71.5, 68.7, 52.3, 50.2, 45.4, 28.6, 28.6, 28.6, 24.6, 22.7, 22.6; HRESIMS $m/z = 340.2123$ [M + H]⁺ (calcd for C₁₈H₃₀NO₅, 340.2118).

General Procedure for Introduction of Chiral Propranolamine Unit for Compounds 32–43 (GP7). To a solution of the phenolic precursor (**3**, **5**, or **1a**, 20.0 mmol) in anhydrous DMF (60 mL) was added NaH (0.48 g, 20.0 mmol), and the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 20 min under an argon atmosphere, followed by the addition of an amount of 1.25 equiv of (*R*)- or (*S*)-4-(chloromethyl)-2,2-dimethyl-1,3-dioxolane (25.0 mmol), and then stirred at 90 °C for 12 h. After cooling, the reaction mixture was poured into ice-cooled water (100 mL), and extracted with EtOAc (3 × 50 mL). The combined organic layers were dried over Na₂SO₄ and concentrated

91.9, 91.5, 70.3, 65.4, 56.4, 55.9, 55.6, 53.5, 44.3, 24.9, 24.9, 24.9, 24.4, 22.6, 22.6; HRESIMS $m/z = 368.2437 [M + H]^+$ (calcd for $C_{20}H_{34}NO_5$, 368.2431).

(R)-1-(2-(2-Hydroxy-3-(*tert*-butylamino)propoxy)-4,6-dimethoxyphenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one hydrochlorate (**35**). This compound was prepared using **3**, (*R*)- 4-(chloromethyl)-2,2-dimethyl-1,3-dioxolane and *tert*butylamine by means of GP7 as a white solid (75 mg, 5%, mp 113–114 °C). $[\alpha]_D^{20} = + 23.9^\circ$ ($c = 0.333$, CH_3OH); 1H NMR (300 MHz, $DMSO-d_6$) δ 6.27 (1H, d, $J = 1.8$ Hz, H-5'), 6.25 (1H, d, $J = 1.8$ Hz, H-3'), 4.15 (1H, m, H-2''), 4.06 (1H, m, H-1''a), 3.97 (1H, m, H-1''b), 3.79 (3H, s, OCH_3), 3.72 (3H, s, OCH_3), 3.04 (1H, m, H-3''a), 2.86 (1H, m, H-3''b), 2.54 (2H, d, $J = 6.9$ Hz, H-2), 2.02 (1H, m, H-3), 1.29 (9H, s, CH_3-6'' , CH_3-7'' , CH_3-8''), 0.87 (6H, d, $J = 6.6$ Hz, CH_3-4 , CH_3-5); ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, $DMSO-d_6$) δ 202.7, 161.8, 157.7, 156.5, 113.4, 91.9, 91.5, 70.3, 65.4, 56.4, 55.9, 55.6, 53.5, 44.3, 24.9, 24.9, 24.9, 24.4, 22.6, 22.6; HRESIMS $m/z = 368.2433 [M + H]^+$ (calcd for $C_{20}H_{34}NO_5$, 368.2431).

(S)-1-(2-(2-Hydroxy-3-(*isopropylamino*)propoxy)-4-methoxyphenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one hydrochlorate (**36**). This compound was prepared using **5**, (*S*)- 4-(chloromethyl)-2,2-dimethyl-1,3-dioxolane and *isopropylamine* by means of GP7 as a white solid (93 mg, 7%, mp 98–99 °C). $[\alpha]_D^{20} = - 1.4^\circ$ ($c = 0.333$, CH_3OH); 1H NMR (300 MHz, $DMSO-d_6$) δ 7.59 (1H, d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, H-6'), 6.64 (1H, d, $J = 1.8$ Hz, H-3'), 6.60 (1H, br d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, H-5'), 4.30 (1H, m, H-2''), 4.13 (2H, br s, H-1''), 3.82 (3H, s, OCH_3), 3.34 (1H, m, H-5''), 3.15 (1H, m, H-3''a), 3.00 (1H, m, H-3''b), 2.85 (1H, dd, $J = 16.2, 6.9$ Hz, H-2a), 2.79 (1H, dd, $J = 16.2, 6.9$ Hz, H-2b), 2.08 (1H, m, H-3), 1.27 (3H, d, $J = 6.0$ Hz, CH_3-6''), 1.26 (3H, d, $J = 6.0$ Hz, CH_3-7''), 0.87 (6H, d, $J = 6.6$ Hz, CH_3-4 , CH_3-5); ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, $DMSO-d_6$) δ 199.7, 163.8, 159.2, 131.8, 121.1, 106.3, 99.3, 70.7, 65.1, 55.7, 51.9, 49.9, 47.0, 24.6, 22.6, 22.6, 18.6, 18.3; HRESIMS $m/z = 324.2178 [M + H]^+$ (calcd for $C_{18}H_{30}NO_4$, 324.2169).

1,3-dioxolane and tertbutylamine by means of GP7 as a white solid (75 mg, 4%, mp 151–153 °C). $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{20} = +3.4^{\circ}$ ($c = 0.333$, CH₃OH); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 7.59 (1H, d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, H-6'), 6.64 (1H, d, $J = 2.1$ Hz, H-3'), 6.60 (1H, dd, $J = 8.4, 2.1$ Hz, H-5'), 4.29 (1H, m, H-2''), 4.17 (2H, br s, H-1''), 3.82 (3H, s, OCH₃), 3.17 (1H, m, H-3''a), 2.97 (1H, m, H-3''b), 2.85 (1H, dd, $J = 16.2, 6.6$ Hz, H-2a), 2.80 (1H, dd, $J = 16.2, 6.6$ Hz, H-2b), 2.09 (1H, m, H-3), 1.32 (9H, s, CH₃-6'', CH₃-7'', CH₃-8''), 0.87 (6H, d, $J = 6.9$ Hz, CH₃-4, CH₃-5); ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 199.7, 163.8, 159.2, 131.8, 121.2, 106.3, 99.3, 70.6, 65.4, 56.4, 55.7, 51.9, 44.5, 25.0, 25.0, 25.0, 24.6, 22.6, 22.6; HRESIMS $m/z = 324.2332$ [M + H]⁺ (calcd for C₁₉H₃₂NO₄, 338.2334).

(*S*)-1-(2,4-Dihydroxy-6-(2-hydroxy-3-(isopropylamino)propoxy)phenyl)-3-methylbutan-1-one hydrochlorate (**40**). The intermediate **40a** was prepared using **1a**, (*S*)-4-(chloromethyl)-2,2-dimethyl-1,3-dioxolane and isopropylamine by means of GP7 as a white solid (168 mg, 7%). The end product **40** was obtained from **40a** (168 mg, 0.3 mmol) as a white solid (58 mg, 52%, mp 207–209 °C) by catalytic hydrogenation as described in synthesis of **30**. Conditions for prepared HPLC: CH₃CN/H₂O/TFA (22:78:0.03, 5 mL/min, $t_{\text{R}} = 35$ min); $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{20} = -4.2^{\circ}$ ($c = 0.067$, CH₃OH); ¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 5.90 (1H, d, $J = 1.5$ Hz, H-3'), 5.81 (1H, d, $J = 1.5$ Hz, H-5'), 3.99 (1H, dd, $J = 8.5, 3.0$ Hz, H-1''a), 3.92 (1H, overlap, H-1''b), 3.88 (1H, m, H-2''), 2.93 (1H, dd, $J = 16.0, 7.0$ Hz, H-3''a), 2.84 (1H, dd, $J = 16.0, 6.5$ Hz, H-3''a), 2.77 (1H, m, H-5''), 2.72 (1H, m, H-2a), 2.62 (1H, dd, $J = 11.5, 6.5$ Hz, H-2b), 2.13 (1H, m, H-3), 1.00 (3H, d, $J = 6.5$ Hz, CH₃-6''), 0.99 (3H, d, $J = 6.0$ Hz, CH₃-7''), 0.90 (3H, d, $J = 6.5$ Hz, CH₃-4), 0.88 (3H, d, $J = 6.5$ Hz, CH₃-5); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 204.7, 166.2, 165.5, 162.3, 104.6, 95.9, 92.3, 71.6, 68.1, 52.3, 49.9, 48.5, 24.5, 22.7, 22.7, 22.6, 22.6; HRESIMS $m/z = 326.1972$ [M + H]⁺ (calcd for C₁₇H₂₈NO₅, 326.1962).

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3 127.6, 125.6, 112.3, 105.2, 96.9, 92.6, 59.1, 52.2, 24.5, 22.3, 22.3; HRESIMS $m/z = 385.1395$
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5
6 $[M + H]^+$ (calcd for $C_{20}H_{20}N_2O_6$, 385.1394).
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8 **BV-2 cell culture and treatment.** BV-2 cells were cultured at 37 °C in an atmosphere of 5%
9
0 CO_2 in Dulbecco's modified Eagle medium (DMEM) supplemented with 10% foetal bovine
1
2 serum (FBS), 100 U/mL penicillin, and 100 μ g/mL streptomycin. For the compound screening
3
4 experiments, the cells were plated in 96-well plates at a density of 5×10^3 cell/well and 24 h later
5
6 were treated with compounds **1–44** at six different concentrations (100, 50, 10, 1, and 0.1 μ M,
7
8 respectively). Then, 1 h later the cells were treated with LPS (300 ng/mL), incubated for another
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2 24 h, and the culture media were collected for the detection of the NO concentration.
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3 **Primary mixed mesencephalic neuronal/glial culture and treatment.** Neuronal-glial
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5 cultures were prepared from the ventral mesencephalic tissue of embryonic day-14 Sprague-
6
7 Dawley rats (Beijing Vital River Animal Center). Briefly, the whole brain was removed,
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9 mesencephalon was dissected, blood vessels and meninges were removed, and then pooled
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3 mesencephalic tissues were dissociated using mild mechanical trituration in ice-cold phosphate-
4
5 buffered saline (PBS, pH 7.4). After pelleting and centrifugation, the cells were resuspended and
6
7 plated (5×10^5 /well) into 24-well cell culture plates pre-coated with 10 mg/mL poly-D-lysine.
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4 The cells were maintained at 37 °C in a humidified atmosphere of 95% air/5% CO_2 in minimal
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6 essential medium (MEM) containing 10% FBS, 10% horse serum, 1 μ g/mL glucose, 2 mM L-
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8 glutamine, 1 mM sodium pyruvate, 100 μ M non-essential amino acids, 100 U/mL penicillin, and
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6 100 μ g/mL streptomycin. Seven-day-old cultures were used for the experiments, the cells were
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8 treated with LPS (100 ng/mL) in the presence or absence of the indicated compounds at different
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3 concentrations (added 1 h before LPS stimulation), and then incubated for 5 h, 24 h, and 7 days
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5
6
6 to determine cytokine, Iba-1, or TH expressions, respectively.
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3 incubated with compound **21** and then treated with LPS (100 ng/mL), MPP⁺ (30 μM), or α-syn
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5 (250 nM) 4 h later. The TH expression was measured 7 days later.
6
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8 ***In vitro* NO production assay.** The NO accumulation in the medium was assayed by
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0 measuring the production of nitrite (NO²⁻) using the Griess assay as described previously.³²
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3 **Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) of cytokines.** Following the predetermined
4
5 treatments, the cell culture media were collected, and the IL-1β and TNF-α levels were detected.
6
7 For cytokine assay of the brain tissue, the midbrain samples were homogenised with non-
8
9 denaturing lysis buffer containing a protease inhibitortease. IL-1β and TNF-α levels were
0
1 subsequently measured using commercially available ELISA kits (R&D System, MN, USA)
2
3 following the manufacturer's instructions.
4
5

6 **Western blot analysis.** The cells and midbrain were lysed in non-denaturing lysis buffer and
7
8 the immunoblotting was performed as described previously.³³ The blot was developed using the
9
0 LAS3000 chemiluminescence system (Fujifilm, Tokyo, Japan), and the densities of the bands
1
2
3 were determined using the Gel-Pro Analyzer 4.0 software.
4
5

6 **Pharmacokinetic analysis.** Male ICR mice weighing 22-25 g (Animal Center of the Chinese
7
8 Academy of Medical Sciences) were intragastrically administered compounds **2**, **21**, **23**, and **44**,
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0 each at a single dose of 50 mg/kg after a 16-h fast. Then, blood samples and brain tissue were
1
2 collected at 5, 15, and 30 min, and 1, 2, 4 and 8 h after dosing, following decapitation of the
3
4 animal. All experimental procedures were performed in accordance with the guidelines of the
5
6 Beijing Municipal Ethics Committee for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. The plasma
7
8 was prepared by centrifuging the blood at 4000 rpm for 5 min. The brains were homogenised
9
0 with saline, centrifuged at 12000 rpm for 25 min, and then a 5-μL aliquot of the plasma or brain
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2
3 extract was injected into the liquid chromatography/tandem mass spectrometry (LC/MS/MS)
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3 assessed. The experimental procedures were performed in accordance with the guidelines of the
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5 Beijing Municipal Ethics Committee for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals.
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8 **Establishment of PD mouse models and drug administrations.** Male C57/BL mice (Animal
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0 Center of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences) weighing 22–25 g were used to establish
1
2 the MPTP- and MPTP/prob-induced PD models. Male B6; C3H mice over-expressing mutant α -
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4 syn (A53T) were supplied by the Model Animal Research Center of Nanjing University and
5
6 were maintained on a 12-h light/dark cycle at 24 °C in a room with a relative humidity of 60%.
7
8 Furthermore, the animals were provided with food and water *ad libitum* and allowed to adapt to
9
0 the conditions described above for 1 week, before the experimentation. In the sub-acute PD
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2 model, MPTP (30 mg/kg of MPTP hydrochloride, intraperitoneally, i.p.) was injected into the
3
4 mice consecutively for 5 days. Compound **21** (5, 10, and 20 mg/kg) and L-DOPA (20 mg/kg)
5
6 suspended in 0.5% CMC-Na were administered 30 min before each MPTP injection and after the
7
8 last injection of MPTP, the compounds were continually administered to the mice for the next 7
9
0 days. In the chronic study, the mice were administered 10 doses of MPTP hydrochloride (25
1
2 mg/kg in saline, s.c.) in combination with probenecid (250 mg/kg in DMSO, i.p.). The 10 doses
3
4 were administered on a 5-week schedule. After the last MPTP/prob injection, the mice were
5
6 subjected to the rotarod behavioural test. Only those showing behavioural dysfunction were used
7
8 in the subsequent experiments. Then, the mice were randomly divided into the MPTP/prob-,
9
0 compound **21** (5, 10 and 20 mg/kg) and L-DOPA-treated groups. Compound **21** and L-DOPA
1
2 were administered to mice once a day for 7 weeks. In the α -syn (A53T) transgenic mice,
3
4 compound **21** and L-DOPA were administered once a day for 12 consecutive weeks, which
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6 commenced when they were 4-month-old. All experiments were performed in accordance with
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3 the guidelines of the Beijing Municipal Ethics Committee for the Care and Use of Laboratory
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6 Animals.

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8 **Rotarod test.** The rotarod test, which requires animals to balance and walk on a rotating
9
0 cylinder, is used to measure coordinated motor skills. The mice were positioned on the rotarod,
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2 which was then set to revolve at 14 rpm for up to 120 s. The rotarod automatically recorded the
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4 time when the animals first fell off the rod, which was designated as the latency. The mice were
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6 tested thrice, and the latency was recorded each time. The animals were allowed to rest for 1 h
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8 between each trial.

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2 **Pole test.** The pole test was originally used to evaluate bradykinesia in PD mice. The pole
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4 used in this study was constructed of wood with height and diameter of 50 and 3 cm, respectively,
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6 and wrapped in gauze to prevent slipping while the base was positioned in the home cage. A
7
8 wooden ball was glued to the top of the pole to prevent animals from sitting there and to help
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0 position the animals on the pole. The performance of the mice while they descended the pole was
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2 then scored with 5 and 1 as the highest and lowest scores, respectively. If the mouse did not
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4 descend within 60 s, it was guided down. The mice were pre-trained before the experimentation,
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6 and they each performed two successive trials, with a 1-h interval between the trials.

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2 **Histochemical analysis.** The TH immunohistochemical analysis was performed as previously
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4 described⁷. Briefly, the brains of the mice were fixed and cut into 40- μ m sections using a
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6 freezing microtome and the coronal sections through the substantia nigra were processed. The
7
8 sections were incubated with primary antibodies against TH (Abcam, MA, USA) and the
9
0 labelled proteins were visualized using 0.04% hydrogen peroxidase and 0.05% 3,3'-
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2 diaminobenzidine. The sections were observed using a light microscope (NIKON E600, Japan),
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3 and the number of positively stained cells in each group was recorded. All quantifications were
4 performed blindly.
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8 **Striatal dopamine analysis.** The mouse striatal dopamine was analysed using HPLC as
9 described previously.³⁴ Briefly, the striatum was suspended in 0.6N perchloric acid, sonicated,
0 and then centrifuged. Potassium dihydrogen phosphate solution consisting of potassium citrate
1 20 mM, potassium dihydrogen phosphate 300 mM, and ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
2 (EDTA) Na₂ (2 mmol) was added to the supernatant and centrifuged. An aliquot of the
3 supernatant was subsequently analysed using an HPLC system (Waters, MA, USA).
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7 **Statistical analysis.** The data were expressed as mean \pm SD and were analysed using a one-
8 way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Dunnett's post hoc test. $P < 0.05$ was
9 considered statistically significant.
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2 ASSOCIATED CONTENT

3
4 **Supporting Information.** The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS
5 Publications website at DOI:
6

7 NMR (¹H and ¹³C) spectra of all target compounds (PDF)

8 HPLC analysis of compounds (PDF)

9 Proteomics studies (PDF)

0 Proteomics data (CSV)
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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

PD, Parkinson's disease; MPTP, 1-methyl-4-phenyl-1,2,3,6-tetrahydropyridine; LD50, median lethal dose; COMT, catechol-O-methyl-transferase; MAO-B, monoamine oxidase type B; PET, positron emission tomography; NSAIDs, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs; NO, nitric oxide; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; IC50, half-maximal inhibitory concentration; MOM, methoxymethyl; THF, tetrahydrofuran; DMSO, dimethyl sulfoxide; DMF, dimethylformamide; DIPEA, N,N-diisopropylethylamine; Gly, glycine; Ala, alanine; Ser, serine; Asp, aspartic acid; Glu, glutamic acid; Phe, phenylalanine; His, histidine; IL-1 β , interleukin-1 β ; TNF- α , tumor necrosis factor- α ; GAPDH, glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase; TH, tyrosine hydroxylase; CMC-Na, sodium carboxymethylcellulose; prob, probenecid; syn, synuclein; iTRAQ, isobaric tags for relative and absolute quantification; PTEN, phosphatase and tensin homolog deleted on chromosome 10; NOS, NO synthase; PI3K, phosphoinositide 3-kinase; GSK3, glycogen synthase kinase-3; CK2, casein kinase 2; LKB1, liver kinase B1; GTPases, guanosine

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3 triphosphatases; ROCK1, Rho-associated protein kinase 1; ARHGAP21, Rho guanosine
4 triphosphatases activating protein 21; MPP⁺, 1-methyl-4-phenylpyridinium ion; CC,
5 column chromatography; DMEM, Dulbecco's modified Eagle medium; FBS, foetal
6 bovine serum; MEM, minimal essential medium; EGTA, ethylene glycol tetraacetic acid;
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3 ATP, adenosine triphosphate; EDTA, ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid.
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Table of Contents Graphic

