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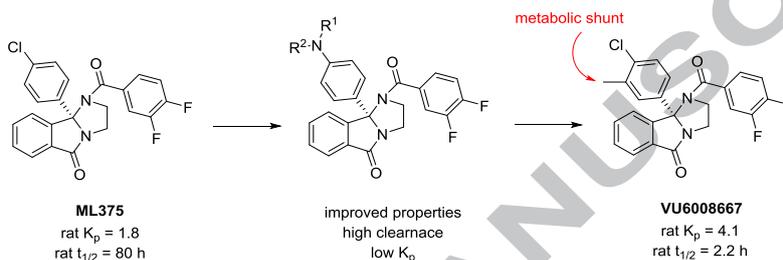
## Graphical Abstract

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**Continued optimization of the M<sub>5</sub> NAM ML375: Discovery of VU6008667, an M<sub>5</sub> NAM with high CNS penetration and a desired short half-life in rat for addiction studies**

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## Continued optimization of the M<sub>5</sub> NAM ML375: Discovery of VU6008667, an M<sub>5</sub> NAM with high CNS penetration and a desired short half-life in rat for addiction studies

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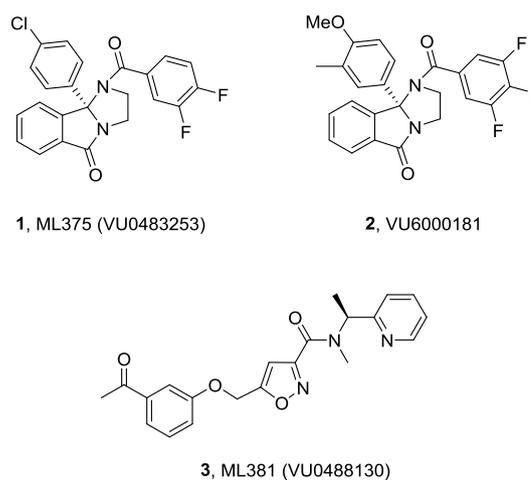
Structure-Activity Relationship (SAR)

### ABSTRACT

This letter describes the continued optimization of M<sub>5</sub> NAM ML375 (VU0483253). While a valuable *in vivo* tool compound, ML375 has an excessively long elimination half-life in rat ( $t_{1/2}$  = 80 hours), which can be problematic in certain rodent addiction paradigms (e.g., reinstatement). Thus, we required an M<sub>5</sub> NAM of comparable potency to ML375, but with a rat  $t_{1/2}$  of less than 4 hours. Steep SAR plagued this chemotype, and here we detail aniline replacements that offered some improvements over ML375, but failed to advance. Ultimately, incorporation of a single methyl group to the 9*b*-phenyl ring acted as a metabolic shunt, providing (*S*)-**11** (VU6008667), an equipotent M<sub>5</sub> NAM, with high CNS penetration, excellent selectivity versus M<sub>1-4</sub> and the desired short half-life ( $t_{1/2}$  = 2.3 hours) in rat.

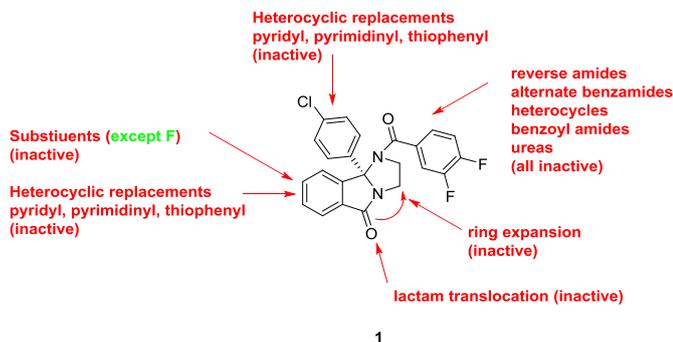
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Recently, we reported on the discovery of highly selective muscarinic acetylcholine receptor subtype 5 (M<sub>5</sub>) inhibitors (both negative allosteric modulators (NAMs), represented by ML375 (VU0483253), **1**, and VU6000181, **2**)<sup>1,2</sup> and an orthosteric antagonist, ML381 (VU0488130), **3** (Figure 1). Based on these chemotypes, we also performed a ligand-based virtual screening campaign, but no highly subtype selective M<sub>5</sub> inhibitors were identified.<sup>4</sup> Pharmacological recapitulation of the strong genetic data (from M<sub>5</sub> knock-out mice) linking this receptor to a role in addiction<sup>5-7</sup> with a selective small molecule inhibitor is of great interest. Excitingly, we have now achieved that validation in models of cocaine addiction with ML375.<sup>8</sup> However, the excessively long elimination half-life of ML375 in rat ( $t_{1/2}$  = 80 hours)<sup>1</sup> is problematic in the context of addiction studies involving reinstatement paradigms and washout periods. Both **2** and **3** possessed PK profiles not suitable as *in vivo* tool compounds.<sup>2,3</sup> Ideally, we desired an M<sub>5</sub> NAM with high CNS penetration and reasonable potency but with a short to moderate half-life in rat ( $t_{1/2}$  < 4 hours) to further assess this novel mechanism for the treatment of addiction. Yet, these series typify the worst caveats of allosteric modulator SAR – tremendously steep SAR.<sup>1-3,9-11</sup> In this Letter, we detail the continued optimization of ML375 that ultimately afforded an M<sub>5</sub> NAM with high CNS penetration and the desired short half-life in rat useful for evaluation in rat models of drug addiction.



**Figure 1.** Structures of M<sub>5</sub> NAMs ML375 (**1**, VU0483253), VU6000181 (**2**) and the highly selective orthosteric M<sub>5</sub> antagonist ML381 (**3**, VU0488130).

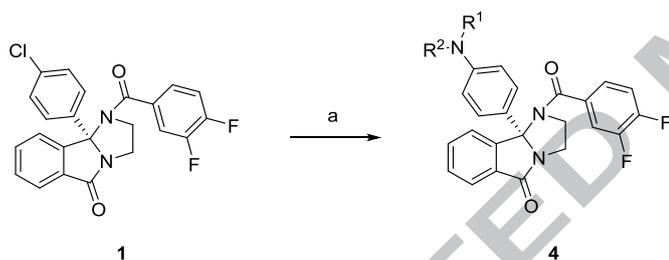
As SAR to almost all portions of the ML375 scaffold resulted in largely inactive analogs (Figure 2), we directed our focus to further modifications to the 9*b*-phenyl moiety and explored installing aniline moieties to replace the chlorine atom. This was



**Figure 2.** Summary of unproductive SAR with the M<sub>5</sub> NAM ML375 (**1**, VU0483253). Only fluoro substituents retained activity, but led to higher clogPs and very poor physiochemical properties.

attractive for three reasons: 1) the ability to form a salt (and hopefully improve physiochemical and DMPK properties), 2) the ease of installation onto chiral **1** (which we had in bulk) and 3) the diversity of amines for the requisite Buchwald coupling. In the event (**Scheme 1**), analogs **4** were prepared in a single step, employing a microwave-assisted Buchwald coupling in moderate to good yields (45-92%). In short order, over 100 analogs **4**

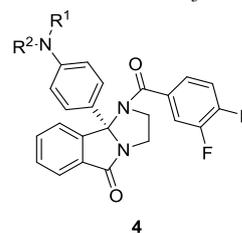
**Scheme 1.** Synthesis of M<sub>5</sub> NAM analogs **4**.<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup>Reagents and conditions: (a) HNR<sup>1</sup>R<sup>2</sup> (3.0 equiv.), 5 mol% Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>, 15 mol% SPhos, toluene (0.25 M), microwave, 20 min, 45-92%.

were synthesized, purified, and screened in our hM<sub>5</sub> functional assay (intracellular calcium mobilization); however, and true to the steep SAR in observed with this chemotype,<sup>1,2</sup> only about 10% of the analogs displayed M<sub>5</sub> NAM activity (**Table 1**). While none of the analogs **4** proved to more potent than **1**, several (**4d**, **4f** and **4m**) were comparable in terms of hM<sub>5</sub> NAM activity (hM<sub>5</sub> IC<sub>50</sub>s in the 1.3 to 1.8 μM range and rat M<sub>5</sub> potency with 2-fold), but superior in terms of aqueous solubility as the respective HCl salts (cf 10 mg/mL versus <0.01 mg/mL for **1**). However, only lipophilic amine moieties provided M<sub>5</sub> NAMs in this subseries **4**, which resulted in high clogPs (>4), high predicted hepatic clearance (rCL<sub>hep</sub> >65 mL/min/kg, hCL<sub>hep</sub> >18 mL/min/kg) based on microsomal CL<sub>int</sub> data, and low fraction unbound (rat and human *f*<sub>u,plasma</sub> <0.01). The series also displayed a robust *in vitro/in vivo* correlation (IVIVC) for clearance in rat, displaying CL<sub>r,s</sub> of >70 mL/min/kg and very short elimination half-lives (t<sub>1/2</sub> <30 min). Within analogs **4**, CNS distribution was variable in rat, affording brain:plasma partition coefficients (K<sub>p,s</sub>) either greater than 1, or below the limit of quantitation (no detectable brain levels). Thus, while we were excited to identify tractable SAR for this M<sub>5</sub> NAM chemotype and improvements in aqueous solubility, the uniformly poor disposition in rat precluded analogs **4** from further consideration as *in vivo* tools for addiction studies. Although, the improved solubility of congeners **4** should provide better tools for *in vitro* electrophysiology studies.

**Table 1.** Structures and activities for hM<sub>5</sub> NAM **1** and analogs **4**.



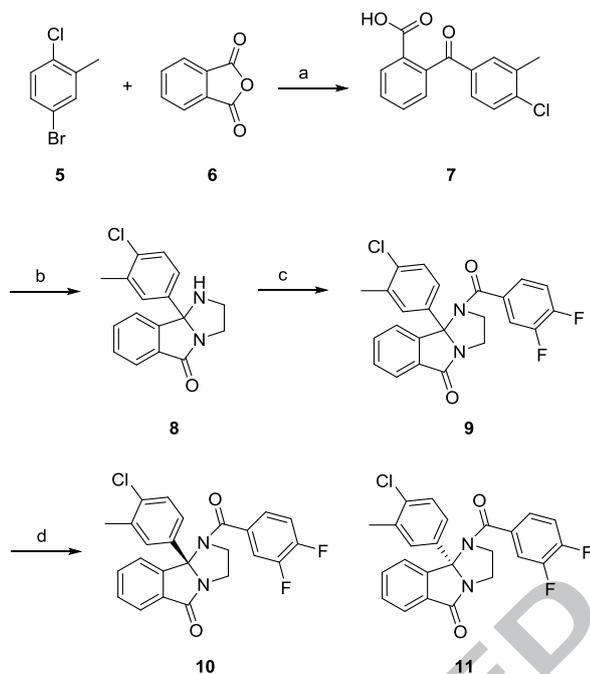
Cpd	NR <sup>1</sup> R <sup>2</sup>	hM <sub>5</sub> IC <sub>50</sub> (μM) <sup>a</sup> [% ACh Min ±SEM]	hM <sub>5</sub> pIC <sub>50</sub> (±SEM) <sup>a</sup>
<b>1</b> ML375	"Cl"	1.11 [2.3±0.3]	5.98±0.04
<b>4a</b>		6.04 [10.5±2.8]	5.22±0.04
<b>4b</b>		4.28 [13.6±1.0]	5.37±0.04
<b>4c</b>		6.36 [6.9±1.7]	5.20±0.03
<b>4d</b>		1.46 [3.1±0.2]	5.84±0.04
<b>4e</b>		5.70 [2.6±0.1]	5.84±0.04
<b>4f</b>		1.82 [3.1±0.2]	5.74±0.04
<b>4g</b>		3.42 [3.2±0.2]	5.47±0.03
<b>4h</b>		4.01 [3.6±0.2]	5.40±0.4
<b>4i</b>		7.29 [26.3±6.2]	5.14±0.05
<b>4k</b>		8.21 [20.1±7.7]	5.11±0.10
<b>4l</b>		4.55 [27.0±7.7]	5.35±0.05
<b>4m</b>		1.32 [2.6±0.9]	5.89±0.08
<b>4n</b>		6.92 [25.5±9.3]	5.17±0.08
<b>4o</b>		3.09 [3.3±0.3]	5.52±0.05
<b>4p</b>		>10 [26.2±3.5]	>5
<b>4q</b>		3.50 [6.0±0.3]	5.46±0.03
<b>4r</b>		9.49 [7.5±2.4]	5.06±0.14

<sup>a</sup>Mean of three independent determinations performed in triplicate via an intracellular calcium mobilization assay with recombinant hM<sub>5</sub> cells in the presence of an ACh EC<sub>80</sub>.

At this point, and with over 600 analogs synthesized and assayed in the ML375 series, it was not immediately clear where to go in the optimization effort to provide a short half-life analog

of **1**. The M<sub>5</sub> NAM **2**, harboring a 9*b*-(4-methoxy-3-methylphenyl) moiety, was of comparable potency to **1**, but demonstrated poor rat PK ( $t_{1/2} < 30$  min,  $CL_p > 70$  mL/min/kg), as well as limited CNS penetration.<sup>1,2</sup> Thus, we postulated that a hybrid of NAMs **1** and **2**, with incorporation of a 3-methyl group into the 9*b*-phenyl ring of **1**, might engender a metabolic shunt, and thus provide a balance between M<sub>5</sub> NAM activity, physicochemical properties and disposition (i.e., reduced rat  $t_{1/2}$ ).

**Scheme 2.** Synthesis of M<sub>5</sub> NAM analogs **9-11**.<sup>a</sup>

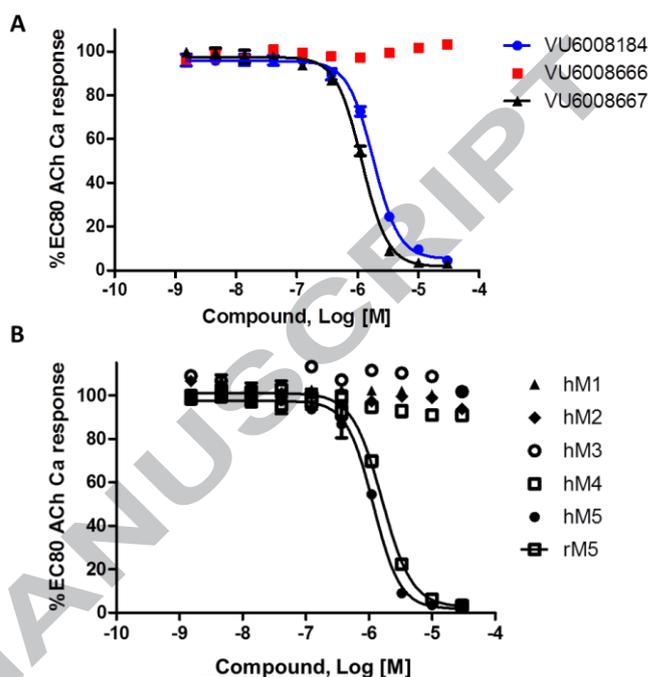


<sup>a</sup>Reagents and conditions: (a) nBuLi, THF, -78 °C, 2h, 50%; (b) ethylenediamine, pTsOH, 4Å sieves, toluene, 150°C μW 25 min, 70%; (c) 3,4-difluorobenzoyl chloride, DIPEA, DCM, 80%; (d) SFC, (CHIRALPAK IE, 20 mm × 250 mm column at 40 °C, back-pressure regulated at 100 bar, IPA cosolvent, 30% isocratic prep over 7 min at 80 mL/min).

The synthesis of the 9*b*-(4-chloro-3-methylphenyl)-containing M<sub>5</sub> NAM was straightforward (**Scheme 2**).<sup>1,12</sup> Lithium-halogen exchange on **5**, and addition of anhydride **6** affords benzoic acid **7** in 37% yield. Condensation with ethylenediamine, under microwave irradiation, provides the 1,2,3,9-tetrahydro-5*H*-imidazo[2,1-*a*]isoindol-5-one core **8** in 70%. Finally, acylation with 3,4-difluorobenzoyl chloride delivers racemic **9**. Chiral resolution by super critical fluid chromatography gave (*R*)-**10** and (*S*)-**11**.<sup>1,12</sup> Racemic **9** was indeed an M<sub>5</sub> NAM ( $IC_{50} = 1.8$  μM,  $pIC_{50} = 5.75 \pm 0.03$ ,  $2.9 \pm 0.29$  % ACh min). As has held true for this series, the (*R*)-enantiomer **10** was devoid of M<sub>5</sub> NAM activity ( $IC_{50} > 10$  μM), while the (*S*)-enantiomer **11** (human M<sub>5</sub>  $IC_{50} = 1.2$  μM,  $pIC_{50} = 5.93 \pm 0.02$ ,  $2.3 \pm 0.03$  % ACh min and rat M<sub>5</sub>  $IC_{50} = 1.6$  μM,  $pIC_{50} = 5.78 \pm 0.02$ ,  $2.6 \pm 0.03$  % ACh min) was the active enantiomer (**Figure 3A**), and equipotent to **1**. Moreover, **11** (VU6008667) was selective for M<sub>5</sub> over M<sub>1,4</sub> (**Figure 3B**). Next, we sought to assess if incorporation of a putative metabolic shunt into the framework of **1**, with **11**, would lower the 80 hour half-life in rat.

The *in vitro* DMPK profile of **11** was similar to **1** in terms of plasma protein binding ( $f_{u,plasma}$  rat = 0.014, human = 0.006) and rat brain homogenate binding ( $f_{u,brain} = 0.003$ ), but the predicted hepatic clearance, as we had hoped, was an order of magnitude higher (rat  $CL_{hep} = 67$  mL/min/kg and human  $CL_{hep} = 15$

mL/min/kg). Moreover, **11** was highly brain penetrant ( $K_p = 4.1$ ,  $K_{p,uu} = 0.88$ ). In a rat IV (1 mg/kg)/PO (3 mg/kg, solution dose) PK study, **11** displayed the desired diminished elimination half-life ( $t_{1/2} = 2.3$  hr) driven by a smaller (yet still large) volume ( $V_{ss} = 7.4$  L/kg) and higher clearance ( $CL_p = 82$  mL/min/kg), with moderate oral bioavailability (17% F). These results reveal a



**Figure 3.** Molecular pharmacology profile of M<sub>5</sub> NAMs **9-11**. A) hM<sub>5</sub> concentration response curves (CRCs) for **9**, **10** and **11**; B) mAChR CRCs for hM<sub>1-5</sub>, highlighting the exquisite selectivity for (*S*)-**11** as an M<sub>5</sub> NAM, as well as rat M<sub>5</sub>, showing no significant species differences. Data represent means from at least three independent determinations performed in triplicate via intracellular calcium mobilization assays in recombinant Chinese Hamster Ovary (CHO) cells stably transfected with the individual mAChRs.

dramatic impact of the addition of a single methyl group to **1** as a metabolic shunt, decreasing rat  $t_{1/2}$  by ~35-fold while maintaining M<sub>5</sub> NAM potency and favorable CNS penetration. Again, an M<sub>5</sub> NAM with this PK profile was key for addiction studies in rat examining reinstatement paradigms and washout, where **1** could be problematic.

In summary, the continued optimization of the long half-life M<sub>5</sub> NAM ML375 resulted in the discovery of (*S*)-**11** (VU6008667), an equipotent human and rat M<sub>5</sub> NAM with a desired short half-life in rat ( $t_{1/2} = 2.3$  hr). For many of the addiction studies underway on our labs, a short half-life M<sub>5</sub> NAM was required. New studies are underway to directly compare ML375 to (*S*)-**11** in a variety of paradigms and with multiple drugs of abuse, and results will be reported in due course.

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- Preparation of **12** (VU6008667): To a stirring solution of 4-bromo-1-chloro-2-methyl-benzene **5** (4.92 mL, 37.1 mmol) in THF (75 mL) cooled to -78 °C was added *n*-butyllithium (14.9 mL, 37.1 mmol) dropwise. The solution was stirred at -78 °C for 30 min and then was added to a stirring solution of phthalic anhydride **6** (5.00 g, 33.8 mmol) in THF (90 mL) at -78 °C. The reaction was stirred at -78 °C for 2 hrs before being quenched with 1N HCl (100 mL). The solution was allowed to warm to rt, the layers were separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc (3 x 100 mL). The combined organic layers were passed through a phase separator and concentrated. The crude material was purified using Teledyne ISCO Combi-Flash system (solid loading, 40G column, 40-80% EtOAc, 20 min run) to give 2-(4-chloro-3-methyl-benzoyl)benzoic acid **7** (4.67 g, 50.4% yield) as a white solid. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 8.10 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 7.68 (dt, *J* = 7.6, 1.2 Hz, 1H), 7.64-7.62 (m, 1H), 7.59 (dt, *J* = 7.9, 1.2 Hz, 1H), 7.44 (dd, *J* = 8.2, 2.2 Hz, 1H), 7.39-7.35 (m, 2H), 2.39 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 170.1, 136.8, 135.7, 133.6, 131.8, 131.7, 131.2, 131.1, 129.9, 129.6, 128.5, 127.9, 127.8, 20.3. To a solution of 2-(4-chloro-3-methyl-benzoyl)benzoic acid **7** (175.0 mg, 0.640 mmol) in toluene (1.59 mL) in a microwave vial was added ethylenediamine (0.09 mL, 1.27 mmol) followed by *p*-toluenesulfonic acid (8.48 mg, 0.040 mmol). The reaction subjected to microwave irradiation at 150 °C for 30 min. The reaction was diluted with EtOAc (10 mL) and quenched with saturated aqueous NaHCO<sub>3</sub> (5 mL). The layers were separated and the organic layer was washed with water (2 x 5 mL). The organic layer was dried (MgSO<sub>4</sub>) before concentration to dryness. The crude material was purified using Teledyne ISCO Combi-Flash system (solid loading, 24G column, 80-100% EtOAc, 18 min run) to give 9b-(4-chloro-3-methyl-phenyl)-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-imidazo[2,1-*a*]isindol-5-one **8** (135 mg, 70.9% yield) as a clear oil. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 7.82-7.77 (m, 1H), 7.55-7.53 (m, 1H), 7.50-7.45 (m, 3H), 7.34-7.28 (m, 2H), 3.86-3.78 (m, 1H), 3.68-3.64 (m, 1H), 3.29-3.15 (m, 2H), 2.37 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 172.8, 147.8, 137.8, 136.7, 134.7, 133.0, 131.9, 130.1, 129.6, 129.0, 125.3, 124.7, 123.5, 89.3, 50.9, 41.9, 20.4. To a stirring solution of 9b-(4-chloro-3-methyl-phenyl)-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-imidazo[2,1-*a*]isindol-5-one **8** (1.40 g, 4.69 mmol) in DCM (46.8 mL) was added 3,4-difluorobenzoyl chloride (0.884 mL, 7.03 mmol) followed by diisopropylethylamine (2.05 mL, 11.72 mmol). The reaction was stirred for 1.5 hrs. The reaction was quenched with saturated aqueous NH<sub>4</sub>Cl (50 mL) and the layers were separated. The aqueous layer was extracted with DCM (2 x 50 mL) and the combined organic layers were passed through a phase separator and concentrated to dryness. The crude material was dissolved in DMSO and purified using the Gilson LC system (30 x 100 mm column, 55-95%, 0.1% TFA water and ACN, 10 min run, 6 runs). The desired fractions were neutralized with saturated aqueous NaHCO<sub>3</sub> and concentrated to give racemic 9b-(4-chloro-3-methyl-phenyl)-1-(3,4-difluorobenzoyl)-2,3-dihydroimidazo[2,1-*a*]isindol-5-one **9** (1.66 g, 80.7% yield). The second eluting pure enantiomer **11** was separated via CO<sub>2</sub> supercritical fluid chromatography (CHIRALPAK IE, 20 mm x 250 mm column at 40 °C, back-pressure regulated at 100 bar, IPA cosolvent, 30% isocratic prep over 7 min at 80 mL/min) and was determined to have >98% ee by chiral HPLC analysis CHIRALPAK IE, 4.6 mm x 250 mm column at 40 °C, backpressure regulated at 100 bar, IPA cosolvent, 30% over 7 min at 3.5 mL/min. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 8.03 (dd, *J* = 6.4, 1.3 Hz, 1H), 7.91-7.87 (m, 1H), 7.62 (dpentet, *J* = 7.6, 1.6 Hz, 2H), 7.37-7.31 (m, 2H), 7.25-7.18 (m, 2H), 7.06-7.02 (m, 2H), 4.34 (ddd, *J* = 12.2; 7.8, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 4.01-3.93 (m, 1H), 3.79 (ddd, *J* = 9.6, 7.5, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 3.31 (ddd, *J* = 17.9, 9.9, 7.6 Hz, 1H), 2.35 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 172.2, 167.0, 145.9, 136.9, 136.8, 135.3, 133.6, 132.0, 130.7, 129.6, 129.1, 128.7, 124.9, 124.1, 123.8, 123.3, 118.2, 118.0, 117.0, 116.8, 87.5, 52.4, 39.8, 20.7. Specific Rotation [ $\alpha$ ]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup> = -147.2° (*c* = 1.00, CHCl<sub>3</sub>).